Amazonia Cantos at Art Vault

by Jorge Misium | September 19, 2025

Richard Mosse's solo show at Art Vault in Santa Fe features the Thoma Foundation's recent film acquisition, *Broken Spectre*, the 2023 video work *Grid*, and a wide selection of large-format photographs. I returned to the exhibition after its June opening, drawn back by the need for a more immersive encounter before reckoning with the implications of such an ambitious and timely report from the ecological front.

Mosse has an uncanny ability to find prophetic shots. I asked him during the opening if kids called him Moses at school; he said they did and that he liked signing Moses as his name. I remain haunted by one of his early images of a church with a gaping hole in the back after being bombed during the Balkan Wars. He was just 21 and on his own at the time.



Richard Mosse, "Kosova II, Podujevo, Republic of Kosovo"

If the mythical image is not there, Mosse will fabricate it. For example, when arranging found objects along the US-Mexico border for the Nothing to Declare series. His film *Broken Spectre* (2018-22) creates otherworldly images

by shooting with infrared and ultraviolet cameras. Aerial images render the jungle in reddish tones, microscopic soil images create bluish landscapes, and human activity appears in grayscale.



Richard Mosse with some of his work at Art Vault's public opening, alongside Kathleen Forde, Director and Curator, Media Arts, at the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation. Photo by Jorge Misium

We have become accustomed to images from a camera as reflections of what we see, even though our eyes and mind work quite differently from the "one-eyed monster," as I like to call the pervasive device. I told Mosse that his film confronts us with renditions from three different one-eyed monsters, which made him laugh. Does the battle of monsters work? It does aesthetically because the images mesmerize. But the film and photographs often obfuscate an already elusive reality, unless the approach is documentarian, as when showing men felling trees with chainsaws.



A still image from Richard Mosse's "Broken Spectre"

Mosse pursues aesthetic highs with the ambition of a Renaissance painter. We often see the world upside down, reflected in the water, or in shadows. Why are

we distracted by the shadows of Indigenous protesters in Brasilia? Why does the film end with superimposed neon-colored tree trunks? These interludes are seductive, but they don't transform our apathy. The jungle is ultimately a subject for the artist's work, which risks another form of exploitation.

We experience what seems to be a different planet instead of the largest tropical forest on Earth, Amazonia. In Brazil, the Amazon is the river that flows from Manaus after the confluence of the deep-red tannin-rich Rio Negro descending from the north and the muddy Solimões from the west. In 2020, the pandemic stranded me near the headwaters of the Rio Negro. That is when I learned that Amazonia overwhelms. A void with a trillion trees clamoring that we leave. Some locals told me they felt that uneasiness too; others manifested through alcoholism or drug abuse.

The film in its artistic pursuits doesn't capture the overwhelming power of Amazonia. We never see rain in the films while in reality daily storms rule life: from rivers rising and receding with mighty force to frogs alternating their songs. No dry season here, only rainy and rainier ones. Locations are not specified either. Amazonia is vast, and Mosse, by his own account, traversed much of it. Rain and place are not "details" but the pulse of a living creature.

Grid, a 2023 video installation upstairs, shows the artist returning to his photojournalist roots while seeking beautiful images. This later work abandons the non-visible spectra. On one screen, we see Indigenous people demanding help from the miners' destruction and violence, extending from a similar breathtaking moment in the original film. On another screen, aerial images flicker in a grid as a counterpoint to the protesting voices. I hugged Richard and congratulated him for stepping back from the sublime.

About 40 million people live in Amazonia. The *Broken Spectre* film portrays them as culprits. Yes, they are the destructors. But then, we are the ones who make them so. Hypocrisy abounds in those from *the first inferno* (the so-called first world) admonishing those in the third one not to destroy nature.

The Art Vault patron, Carl Thoma, told me he made his money in "what is called private equity," and added, "The evil words," upon my "Oooooh!" response. He also said in a 2024 interview, "…there's a lot of little things you can do to drive performance and giving somebody three times their money in four years." I doubt any of the ranchers, miners, loggers, and bandidos who toil in the jungle dream of that kind of return for their work.

Thoma also humbly responded when I asked him why he supports the arts:
"We are trying to introduce people to innovative artists." He and his wife deserve credit for their onerous effort.

The show mesmerizes with beauty and flawless execution. It also alienates us from Amazonia by seeking the spectacular, which risks numbing us further. At Art Vault, we find a reminder that the largest ecosystem on Earth nears a tipping point. Feeling and acting on the finality of the situation may hinge on embracing the personhood of that living void. Amazonia: Paradise on Earth. She is alive and magical.

PHOTOSTORIES

PhotoVogue Festival 2025 Lectio Magistralis | The Burning World by Richard Mosse

In this presentation, photographer Richard Mosse understands light as a form of heat and uses both to unpack complex geopolitical movements.

BY PHOTOVOGUE

January 29, 2025



Dweller on the Threshold Richard Mosse

SAVE

The PhotoVogue Festival, the first conscious fashion photography festival that focuses on the common ground between ethics and aesthetics, returns for its eighth edition. From March 6th to 9th, 2025, BASE Milano will host a series of exhibitions and talks analysing the interrelation between humans and Nature, and the relations of kinship we can create with animals, complemented by satellite events at the city's finest galleries.

Synopsis

A careful look at resource extraction and ecology wars through military and industrial ways of seeing in Richard Mosse's photographic practice — in this lecture, Mosse understands light as a form of heat and uses both to unpack complex geopolitical movements that cause and effect dramatic changes in weather patterns and global heating, from rare earth mining and illegal charcoal production in eastern DR Congo to the waves of migration across the Middle East and North Africa, to man's wilful ecocide in the Amazon rainforest, and the places between. Mosse will also explain how he sees his hard earned documentary imagery as a form of 'parafiction'.



Burnt Forest I, Amazonas



Dweller on the Threshold



Richard Mosse

For more about the PhotoVogue Festival 2025, check out: All you need to know about the PhotoVogue Festival 2025

PhotoVogue Festival is a project directed by Alessia Glaviano (Head of Global PhotoVogue) and co-curated by Caterina De Biasio (Visual Editor, PhotoVogue) and Daniel Rodríguez Gordillo (Senior Manager, Education & Community Initiatives Condé Nast).

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Chronogram

"Landmines" Opens at the Dorsky Museum at SUNY New Paltz

Work by Dawoud Bey, Christina Fernandez, Richard Mosse, and Rick Silva will be on display.

By Sparrow



Western Fronts: Cascade Siskiyou, Gold Butte, Grand Staircase, Escalante, and Bears Ears, Rick Silva, 2018, video, 18 minutes, 32 seconds, courtesy the artist and Art Bridges.

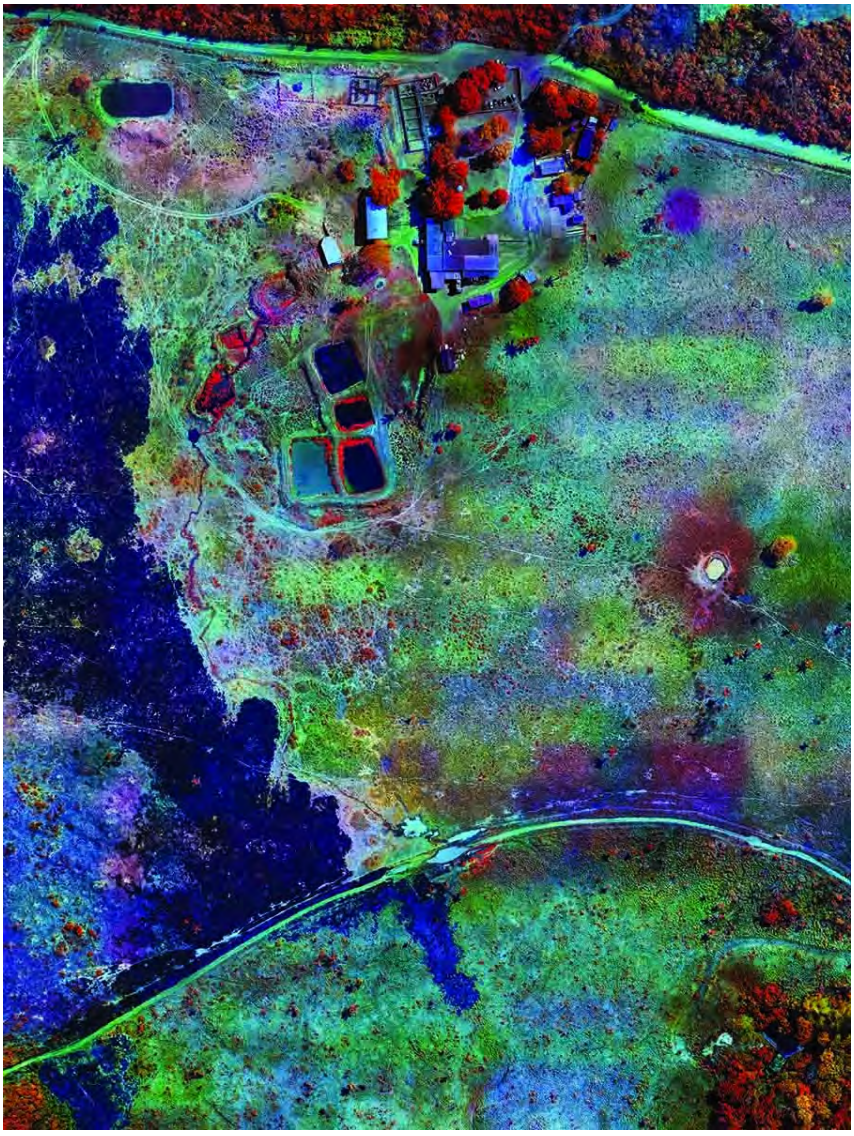
Nowadays most of us depict a landscape by turning our cell phones sideways and snapping a photo. To commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Hudson River School of art, the **Dorsky Museum** has assembled works by four contemporary photographers, in a show titled "Landmines," which opens February 8.

But these photographers are doing a lot more than wielding cell phones. In fact, they deploy some of the newest innovations in art photography. Irish artist Richard Mosse uses multispectral satellite imagery to show the environmental devastation in and around the Amazon Basin. It's like seeing through a machine's eyes, though the pastel colors are surprisingly gentle. *Slaughterhouse, Rondonia* (2021) recalls the abstract canvases of Richard Diebenkorn. *Burnt Eucalyptus Plantation, Rondonia* (2020) looks like a worn piece of Victorian embroidery.

The art most closely linked to the show's title is Rick Silva's. "Landmines" is, in part, a pun referencing mines extracting subterranean minerals. In his video *Western Fronts* (2018), Silva presents drone footage of four remote areas that lost their status as National Monuments under the first Trump administration, superimposing images of minerals lying beneath the soil. Elections have consequences, even for the innocent Earth.

The most topical work in the show is by Los Angeles photographer Christina Fernandez, who has spent years documenting migrant farmworkers in California. As we wait to see how many millions of immigrants will be deported by our new president, it's sobering to view *Untitled Farmworker* (1989/2022), a solemn memorial to laborers who died from pesticide poisoning or were injured while working. Index cards bearing their names are embedded in soil, in neat rows, like artichokes or cabbages.

In 1825 the English artist Thomas Cole, fleeing the industrial desolation of Northeast England, sailed up the Hudson until he reached Catskill Landing. His paintings celebrating the majesty of his new home gave birth to the Hudson River School of art. If one could draw a picture of Manifest Destiny, it would look like a Hudson River School painting: a lush American landscape, bathed in the light of God. The Dorsky is a teaching museum as well as a community gallery, so numerous theoretical and historical issues are raised here. This exhibition could be subtitled "Manifest Destiny and Its Discontents."



Slaughterhouse, Rondonia, Richard Mosse, 2021, archival pigment print, courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery

To begin with, the virgin land Cole depicted was a myth. Millions of people already successfully dwelt on this continent, in large and small tribal groups. In 1818, for example, the Stockbridge-Munsee Indians of Oneida, New York, were forcibly removed to Wisconsin.

And the continent the Europeans conquered was not equally shared. Some rode westward in triumph; others trudged in chains. In 2019, MacArthur fellow Dawoud Bey photographed abandoned Louisiana plantations. "The history of trauma, of slavery, haunts them," remarks Sophie Landres, curator and exhibitions manager at the museum, who curated the show. Architecture tells the bitter story: wooden shacks for the slaves, a genteel white mansion for the owners. *Cabin and Spanish Moss* is dominated by a venerable (oak?) tree bristling with moss resembling barbed wire, behind which a windowless cabin crouches. Black-and-white film—the only photographic medium available in the 19th century—gives the work a historical veneer. Also, black and white are the colors that defined American slavery.

"Landmines" begins with one of Thomas Cole's sketchbooks from 1828, accompanied by a video showing its contents page by page. The show ends with *Provenance* (2023), an installation by Erin Lee Antonak of the Oneida Nation. A single moccasin rests on a pile of soil; nearby is a story, on paper, of Antolak losing a moccasin her mother made for her when she was a child—a loss symbolizing an entire lost culture.

Location Details

Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art

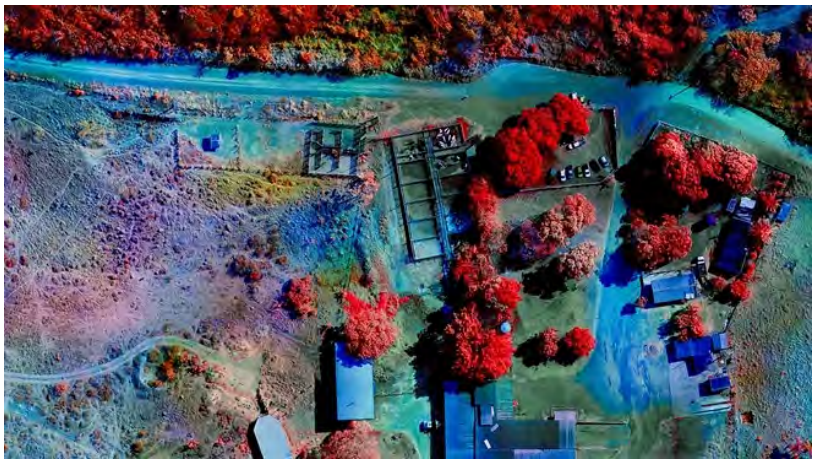
1 Hawk Dr, New Paltz, NY, New Paltz
(845) 257-3844
www.newpaltz.edu/museum



Event Details

"Landmines"

Feb. 8-July 13



Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art
1 Hawk Dr, New Paltz, NY, New Paltz

FAMILY STYLE

FINGER FOOD

GUTTING GEOGRAPHIES

by

Rachel Summer Small

January 13, 2024

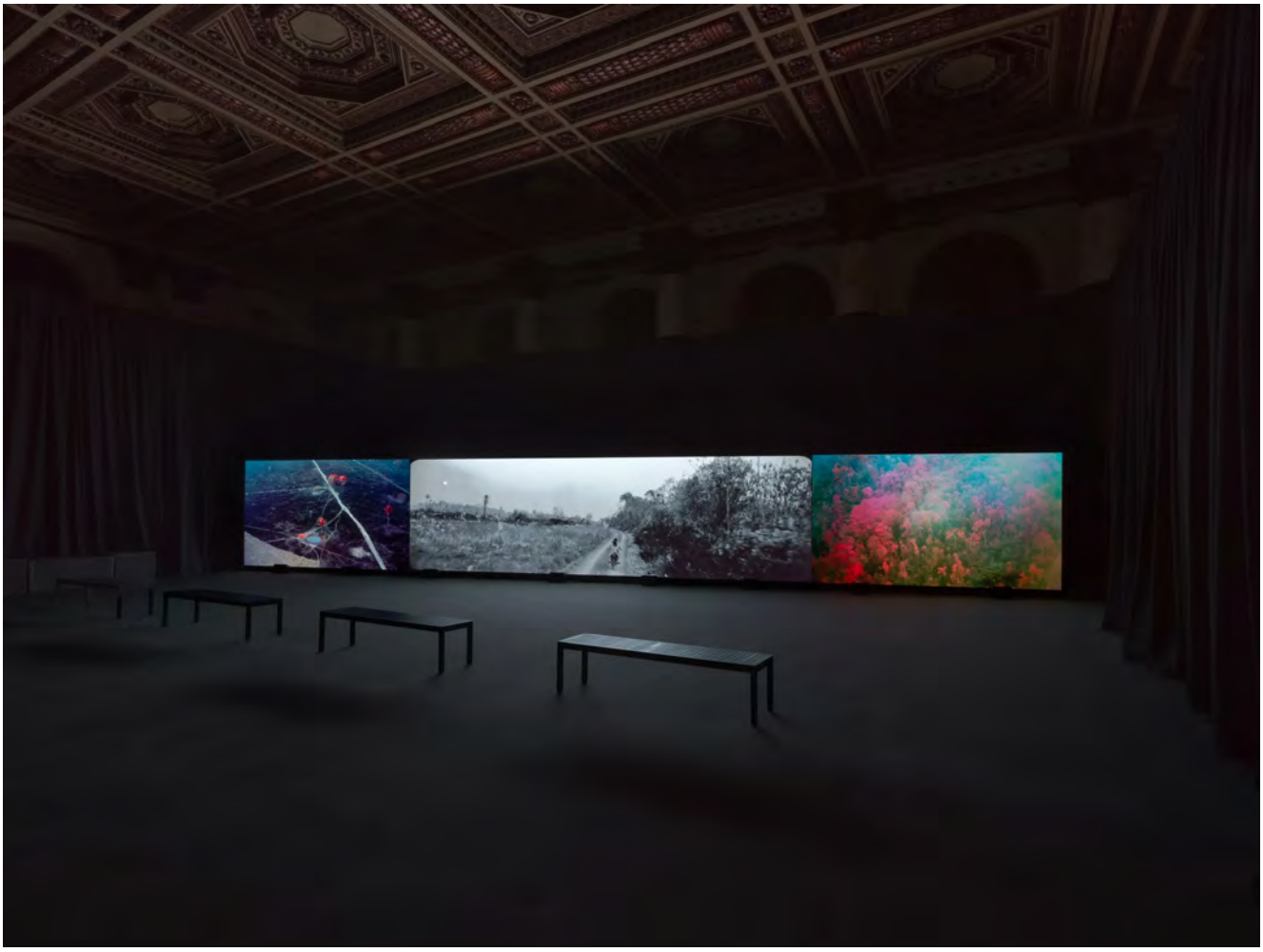


Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre*, 2018-2022, (still). Image courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Pondering how to address climate change through his art, Richard Mosse decided to do what he describes as a "case study" in the Amazon rainforests of Brazil and Ecuador. Over the past 15 years the Irish photographer has built a reputation for visually phantasmagorical yet categorically brutal renderings of humanitarian crises, including but not limited to war-torn locales in the Congo and the migration crisis across Europe. But by 2018, he was in search of a project that required a less breakneck pace.

Four years in the making, the intricately-made, 74-minute-long *Broken Spectre* is beyond moving. The breathtaking, multi-channel documentary stitches together sweeping vistas of the Amazonian wilderness

alongside snapshots of its ongoing erosion through a range of industrial ventures, including agriculture, logging, and mining. After simultaneously opening at the National Gallery of Victoria International in Melbourn and London's 180 Studios in October 2022, the work makes its NYC debut this week at Jack Shainman, where it is shown alongside four photographs taken over the course of the artist's visits to the region and also inaugurates the Chelsea gallery's new TriBeCa space.



Installation view of Richard Mosse's "*Broken Spectre*," 2018-2022. Image courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Mosse, 44, realized the film using three modes of camerawork: bird's eye views, with a multispectral camera; a "human scale" on 35 mm black-and-white infrared film; and at a microbial level via ultraviolet microscopy. Spliced together, the trio of perspectives lends a comprehensiveness that, as the artist describes, was essential to exploring such wide-reaching themes. "The Amazon is such a big subject," he says. "And climate change itself is so all-encompassing that I was struggling to find the right scale that would speak as a storyteller." Designed to register a range of electromagnetic waves—including those beyond the capabilities of the human eye—Mosse's cameras capture invisible light rays throughout. "I decided to pitch across the electromagnetic spectrum to tell different aspects of the story. I wanted to leap perspectives and points of view to force the viewer to look at the subject from different angles."

Exhaustive in concept, the cumulative effect is displayed across three screens at the center of the new gallery. Its experience is more surreal than a one-to-one conversation with reality: as forest canopies stretch into the horizon, they appear side-by-side with the pulsing energies emitted by living creatures too small or otherwise amorphous to register. One of Mosse's most impactful sequences even caught the attention of John Kerry. It arises from an unforgettably gut-wrenching display of human grief and anger, the sort that art cannot fully mimic and rarely gets the chance to capture. The several-minute-long scene shows a woman from an indigenous tribe in a remote enclave off the Amazon River addressing the camera. Donning traditional face paint and flanked by other members of her community, she demands action from those with power in the wake

of repeated deadly attacks on her village from illegal miners that have encroached on their territory in search of gold.



Photography Ganbaa Ganseree. Image courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery.

Of the manifold juxtapositions between video channels and physical scale in the installation, another scene of men chainsawing down “ancient” trees has brought many viewers to tears. “I try to understand why that is,” Mosse reflects. “I think it’s because it’s preceded by these ultraviolet, microscopic shots of biomass from the forest floor. As a viewer, you almost unconsciously start to feel the power of the forests—the beauty of it, certainly—through the power of beauty and aesthetics. You feel how special it is. All of a sudden, we switch to a scene in a different medium with the guys chopping down the tree. I suppose, your heart combines the two… or your intellect… or your imagination. That’s what I’m trying to do as an artist: try to force the viewer to have this emotional, psychological connection with the non-human, which is hard to do, because we don’t relate to forests.”

The artist pauses before adding with a wry laugh: “We don’t relate to trees but that’s what artists can do. Art can make people feel new and powerful things, to feel in new ways.”

“Broken Spectre” by Richard Mosse is on view through March 16, 2024, at Jack Shainman Gallery at 46 Lafayette Street, New York, 10013.

Rachel Summer Small is Family Style*’s Culture Editor and a writer and critic based in New York.*

Art Market

Jack Shainman Gallery debuts new Tribeca space with Richard Mosse exhibition.

Maxwell Rabb

Jan 12, 2024 1:39PM, via Jack Shainman Gallery



Richard Mosse, installation view of *Broken Spectre* at NGV International in Melbourne, 2018–2022. Photo by Tom Ross. Courtesy of NGV International.

Today, Jack Shainman Gallery—commemorating its 40th anniversary—opens its new space in Tribeca's historic Clock Tower Building. The grand opening is headlined by an exhibition from Irish artist Richard Mosse, featuring his video installation *Broken Spectre* (2018–2022), which explores the environmental challenges facing the Amazon rainforest.

Located at 46 Lafayette Street, the new gallery space occupies 20,000 square feet within the Italian Renaissance Revival building. Formerly a Beaux-Arts bank hall, the venue is adorned with 29-foot-high ceilings and elegant white marble columns, providing the gallery with the space for large-scale installations.

Jack Shainman Gallery is renowned for championing artists like El Anatsui and Kerry James Marshall. Established in 1984 and headquartered in Chelsea since 1997, Shainman's gallery has been instrumental in uplifting the New York City art scene. In March, the gallery will close to complete renovations before re-opening to present a new body of work by Nick Cave in September. ∎

Maxwell Rabb
Maxwell Rabb is Artsy's Staff Writer.

The New York Times Style Magazine

NEWSLETTER

The T List

VISIT THIS

A New Destination to See Art in an Old TriBeCa Building



The main hall of Jack Shainman's new gallery, with its bank vault and coffered ceilings. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: Dan Bradica

By Kurt Soller

A few years ago, when the New York gallerist Jack Shainman toured the 20,000-square-foot Beaux-Arts space that he'll open this week as the Hall, his new TriBeCa gallery, he told his staff to play it cool around the real estate agent — and then, once inside the long-neglected lower floors of the Clock Tower Building (46 Lafayette Street), quickly showed his hand: "It's like buying a living sculpture: the columns, the marble, the stairs," he said on a recent afternoon, gesturing at a row of large, arched windows. After acquiring it, he and his partner, the Spanish painter Carlos Vega, waited two years while developers renovated and restored the landmarked lobby and adjacent rooms, all built around 1898 by the firm McKim, Mead & White and once home to the New York Life Insurance Company. Now nearly complete, Shainman's gallery is not only a new cultural center where people can see ambitious free exhibits; it also offers visitors a rare chance to marvel at some historic Manhattan architecture, with its complex, preserved bank vault and ornate, 29-foot-high coffered wood ceilings.

Compared to the white box that Shainman's had in Chelsea since 1997, which will remain open, or the School, his quirkier upstate venue founded in 2013, this spot will be a much larger place that the artists he represents can transform to suit their needs, whether monumental or more intimate. It'll officially open in September, when the artist Nick Cave will unveil, among other new works, a 16-foot-tall bronze sculpture. But as of Jan. 12, anyone can walk in and see "Broken Spectre," the Irish artist Richard Mosse's immersive 74-minute multi-spectral video installation about the destruction of the Amazon, filmed between 2019 and 2022. It's the first time the piece — presented on 60 feet of new, vivid LED screens with an enveloping soundscape — is being shown in Manhattan, and the deep connections between the city's capitalist bedrock (and this building's, in particular) aren't lost on the artist or his gallerist: "Here was a bank that traded on the lives of enslaved people," Mosse says. "This was the wealth that Manhattan was built on, that *America* was built on, and there's a direct connection to what's happening in the Amazon. Rather than disavow it, or pretend it never happened, [Jack and Carlos and I] are trying to be honest about it: This is history, and it's still ongoing." *"Broken Spectre" is on view from Jan. 12 through March 16, jackshainman.com.*

ARTISTS



Richard Mosse, Still from *Broken Spectre*, 2022, four channel 4K video with 12.1 surround sound, 74min 12sec. The rainforest burns in Rondônia. The film's black and white scenes were shot on monochrome infrared S35mm film. This is possibly the second time that B&W infrared film has been used to create motion picture sequences. The other were scenes from *Soy Cuba*, 1964. Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier|gebauer

Richard Mosse

Contradictions: A Conversation with Richard Mosse

Charles Stankievech



A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry

AFTERALL

CONTRADICTIONS: A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD MOSSE

Charles Stankievech

Charles Stankievech: I first met you when you were making *The Enclave* (2013), an immersive installation that documented the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in infrared light. You continued to work beyond the invisible spectrum, using different technology, with *Incoming* (2017), and now you've pushed these strategies to their extremes with your newest work *Broken Spectre* (2022). How do you choose the technology for what you're shooting? Is there some relationship between these technical choices and the subject matter that you're dealing with?

Richard Mosse: For the last dozen years or so, I've been working with specific media that see beyond the visible light spectrum. When I was working in eastern DRC, from 2010 to 2015, I was working with an infrared surveillance film stock called Kodak Aerochrome that was invented during World War II for camouflage detection. I specifically chose to work in a Western military reconnaissance technology to foreground and encode invisible systems into the materiality of the image, to marry those mediatic histories – in this case one that was entwined with military photogrammetry, but which was also used in the detection of rare earth minerals – with the complex narratives being depicted. So, I was hoping to mediate aspects of the stories I was telling through the medium itself, adding depth to and complicating the pictorial composition of the documentary image.

CS: That reminds me of the famous Marshall McLuhan quip: 'the medium is the message.' Interestingly, when McLuhan made this statement, he was studying early media uses within the colonial situation of British occupied Africa (though not as critically as we would like according to the architectural historian Ginger Nolan). After *The Enclave*, how did you shift your technological gaze?

RM: I wanted to push the use of invisible wavelengths further in my work, to portray the European refugee crisis between the years 2014 to 2018, when there was an exponential wave of more than a million people per year landing by sea on the shores of Europe, extremely dangerous journeys. In this case, I chose to use a weapons-grade long-range thermal imaging camera that was designed specifically by multinational companies and sold to the police and militaries of European nation-states to enforce EU borders, which Foucault might have described as a 'technology of power'. The camera is also used for battlefield situational awareness, insurgent detection, tracking and targeting, and search and rescue. So again, there is this encoding of larger invisible systems within the camera's scopic regime, which to me speaks directly to EU immigration policies, Biopolitics, the body, and the precarious limbo state of asylum seekers across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. This thermal camera is a sinister technology that can detect human body heat from 30km away day or night, so it carries within it aspects of the EU's dehumanising immigration policies. On a literal level too, it *indexically* reveals human body heat, foregrounding the dangers faced by millions of refugees making these journeys across cold sea waves, in tent cities, risking death by exposure and hypothermia.

CS: And now you've included the other end of the invisible spectrum – ultraviolet – in your newest work?

RM: Well, like your recent film, *The Eye of Silence* (2023), we're both referencing and in conversation with forms of scientific imaging. While my earlier projects engaged forms of military reconnaissance, *Broken Spectre* is closer to your new film in terms of being in conversation with the ways scientists look at the forest and understand things that we can't see with the human eye. But also – and here's where what I call 'aggravated media' comes in – the newer project engages research that draws on multispectral imaging technologies carried in remote sensing satellites that have been observing the Amazon for decades.

CS: Something I wrote about in your *Enclave* publication as one of six uses in the history of infrared photography

RM: Right, and that photography and data has been effectively used in recent reports to understand the tipping points, where the rainforest can no longer generate its own rain due to deforestation. But the same technology of multispectral imaging is also used as a tool to facilitate extractive violence by multinational agribusiness and mining companies, as well as ranchers to understand the nature of their operations. Mining companies, for example, use GIS (Geographic Information Systems) imaging to pinpoint rare earth minerals. When I began the project in 2019, it was the same year that Jair Bolsonaro came to power and one of the first things he did was pass a bill opening ancestral Indigenous territories to mining companies to lay stakes, which they did through remote sensing

GIS survey analysis employing multispectral and hyperspectral cameras.

CS: In Canada, at the other end of the continental chain, the history of settler colonialism and resource extraction has also been a tragic affair. But the situation playing out today is more complicated than what often appears in the binary of the settler/Indigenous. One often thinks of associating the protection of nature with Indigenous beliefs pitted against Western instrumentalism – the old 'Cowboy vs Indian' [*sic*] conflict. But today, depending on each Indigenous community, the alignment for or against development depends on the wealth of the individual community, their strategic control over real estate or their style of governance. Echoing other economic situations, landlock communities are often at odds with coastal communities. Some First Nations communities are supportive of say pipelines to the surprise of the popular impression. The politics are not monolithic. Did you find these complicated dynamics in your experiences?

RM: Some of Brazil's Indigenous communities are pro-Bolsonaro and very much willing to play ball with his forms of economics, but most are strongly in opposition, as we saw at the ATL (*Acampamento Terra Livre*, 'Free Land Camp') mass rallies in Brasília, which form a key scene in *Broken Spectre*. I was also recently in Kichwa territory on Rio Tigre on Peru's border with Ecuador, where a huge network of pipelines and wells were drilled in the 70s by the American company Occidental Petroleum. Now that infrastructure lies corroding in the forest, leaking toxic oil spills onto Indigenous land and all the territory it runs through. A federation of Indigenous communities, PUINAMUDT, has allied to demand a clean-up and reparations. They invited me to visit their land and document the hydrocarbon pollution, which is widespread.

I was looking at your recent exhibition and saw you have a work in which the bacteria *Alcanivorax borkumensis* metabolises a pool of oil in the gallery. That is the most effective and least destructive way to clean up oil pollution, especially in the rainforest, which is full of biodiversity. But the best way to remediate the land is also the most expensive. It's far cheaper to just burn the oil. I would imagine the key to what a community wants – what all of us wawnt – are stable jobs, a stable life and to drink water that's not going to poison our children and give them cancer. It's no surprise they want clean water, but they also want jobs. Their community was not consulted when these pipelines were built in the 70s, yet I think that they will probably accept the pipeline in a cleaned-up and rehabilitated state, which is currently under discussion. So, yes, there are shades of ambiguity.

But especially in Brazil, there were certain motifs that we kept seeing, as you noted, that unfolded across the United States and Canada only 150 years ago, which are being repeated in real time today in the Amazon basin: all of these ideas – the spirit of Manifest Destiny, the idea of the frontier settled by Evangelical pioneers, the invasion and colonisation of Indigenous lands, a sense of entitlement to clear the forest and convert it into an endless plain of cattle pasture and monoculture plantations. For me, all of that is embodied by the figure of the cowboy, complete with ten-gallon hat, pointed boots and belt buckles, a common sight along the Trans-Amazonian Highway, herding cattle through the charred remains of the burnt rainforest, an uncanny, almost Ballardian image I observed in the field. I'm spending a lot of time on the road with these communities observing before I decide what I'm trying to say, because I'm trying to let the subject speak. Cowboy culture originated in Spain centuries ago and was exported around the world where it found local variations, such as the *gauchos* of the Pampas or the *vaqueiros* of the northeast of Brazil. But the cowboy culture popular in Brazil's Amazon was quite different – much closer to the *caubói Texano* of the United States, as proven by the popularity of rodeos, *contri* music, line dancing, the specific forms of dress, etc. These cowboys are one of the big cultural agents of deforestation in the Amazon, which was why *Broken Spectre* alludes to the fraught iconography of the Western – to provide a window of association for audiences in the United States and Europe.

CS: Speaking of Western motifs in Broken Spectre, I think one of the most powerful editing moments in the film is the diptych of the drowned church juxtaposed beside a floating raft of cattle. Normally the film is composed of four different frames and the brain is struggling to process the overwhelming montaged image you've captured of the Amazon (purposefully overwhelming like the Amazon itself is), but then at a certain moment there is this focussed, slow diptych that resonates as an iconic tableau.

RM: Yes, that was filmed when the Amazon River experienced historic flooding and cattle had to be saved by being put on rafts, an absurd image of the end of the world – when editing, we borrowed titles from Ballard's novels to help us structure the edit: *The Drowned World*, *The Burning World*, *The Crystal World*, etc. Now, as

I write, the Amazon and Rio Negro are in severe drought and the water levels are lower than anyone has ever seen them, deeply alarming as the rainforest's weather system breaks down. The beloved pink Amazon River dolphins are dying en masse. The shot of the flooded church is salient because the Evangelical church is a big pro-Bolsonaro lobby in Brazil, a huge part of his base. They're also very present along the Trans-Amazonian Highway.

CS: I don't want to take this in a spiritual direction, but there is this famous line from the artist Paul Klee that has stuck with me since school and been a sort of guiding principle in my work. 'Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.'[1] For myself, that's why using ultrasound or X-rays in my work seemed justified. I'm curious if it's also been inspirational to you?

RM: Oh, absolutely. It's an important quote for all of us in art because that is art's unique power. I was impressed that you use ultrasonic recording devices. The composer I collaborate with, Ben Frost, looked at what I was doing in my early attempts to work with ultraviolet light, shifting what we can't see into the visible spectrum, which he emulated in sound by finding an ultrasonic recording device designed for listening to bats. He pitched the recordings down to the wavelength of human hearing. Eighty per cent of animal life in the Amazon communicates in a higher pitch than we can hear, so this was a fascinating way to represent the sound of the forest.

CS: Well I grew up in ranching and oil country, where I was an industrial X-ray and ultrasound technician working for a petrochemical engineering company. I worked in the local Albertan tar sands, Union Carbide chemical plants and west coast pulp and paper mills. The original images I made before becoming an artist were all in the invisible spectrum – either for the resource economy or forensic analysis. I think because of this transition from industrial into art, I've always been suspicious of the image. However, you as an accomplished photographer create these iconic images that are incredibly powerful. And to go back to the Klee quote, I agree the power of an artist is to create these iconic images that evoke emotion that perhaps present a complexity, that witness or document.

RM: But I've always struggled with the concreteness of photography: you have to put the subject in front of the lens. There's a real skill in getting the right camera in the right place at the right time. But in my own work, I am often at a loss, because the subjects I'm attempting to convey are so complex, layered or abstract. They can verge on the ineffable. It's difficult to make an adequate image. A strategy that I've found useful is to try to identify what I call 'aggravated media'. By this, I simply mean a form of photography that carries some complicity or agency within the subject that I wish to examine and communicate.

Like you, I'm suspicious of photography, much of which emerged from military R&D or was developed for state surveillance, Biopower, cadastral mapping to establish private property or the frontiers of the modern nation-state or is involved in resource extraction or industry. The ways in which photography is implicated in the subjects that I attempt to examine is an important aspect of the story that I feel is worth leaning into as a photographer. I've found this approach useful to unpack and think through the larger invisible systems involved in each story. Those can be embedded in the medium's materiality, adding another layer of meaning. And of course, these media often carry incongruous or unfamiliar aesthetic qualities, which can disarm the viewer and resuscitate exhausted documentary imagery.
CS: Your artwork is technically spectacular and often shot in sublime landscapes, but you also really focus on the human as the centre of your investigations. What does the affective art form of immersive installations allow you versus the photograph? Do you sense any dangers working with such intensity?

RM: Plenty of art is insider jokes – a banana taped to the wall of the art fair booth or a urinal in a museum gallery. I'm a big fan of that sort of thing, but what if we want to speak about important subjects to a much wider audience than preaching to the choir? That's the reason why museums go to great lengths to install my immersive videos correctly, because they attract wide audiences and viewers do tend to spend time with the work. My work is advocacy in some ways, and it's very important to me that I reach a lot of people. I've never been shy of saying that beauty is the sharpest tool in the box when it comes to making people feel something. Affect is too. These are both powerful arrows in the quiver that we can use to strike the heart of the viewer, to make them look, listen and feel. But my immersive videos are disorienting and oneiric, combining a hybrid of references to electronic music and cinema. I work with composer Ben Frost and cinematographer Trevor Tweeten because they are such powerful storytellers and allow me to reach a much wider audience than I could with photography alone. I feel that's important because I want people to learn about the subjects I've spent years researching and want to convey. That's the power of the documentary

image. It's a way of saying to someone else, 'I've seen this, it's important, and I want you to see it.' If there are tools that will amplify my potential to do that, I will use them. There are dangers to this, of course, but anyone who works with musical forms has to navigate those risks, and a visual artist who embraces their aesthetic potential must also. Same goes for a film-maker working with montage and scale. These are powerful tools that can be misused, like all forms of representation. But they can also be used to speak in powerful ways to larger audiences than the art world tends to reach, to move people in original ways.

The interview was conducted online on 7 May 2023 between San Francisco and Tokyo.

1 Paul Klee, *Creative Confessions*, London: Tate Publishing, 2013 [1920], p.7.





Richard Mosse, Still from *Broken Spectre #102*, 2017, digital C print on metallic paper, 29 x 51cm. Red Cross emergency worker works to revive a swaddled hypothermia victim on the pier of Molyvos, Lesbos, 2015. The thermal camera reveals the warmth of the hand prints. Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier|gebauer



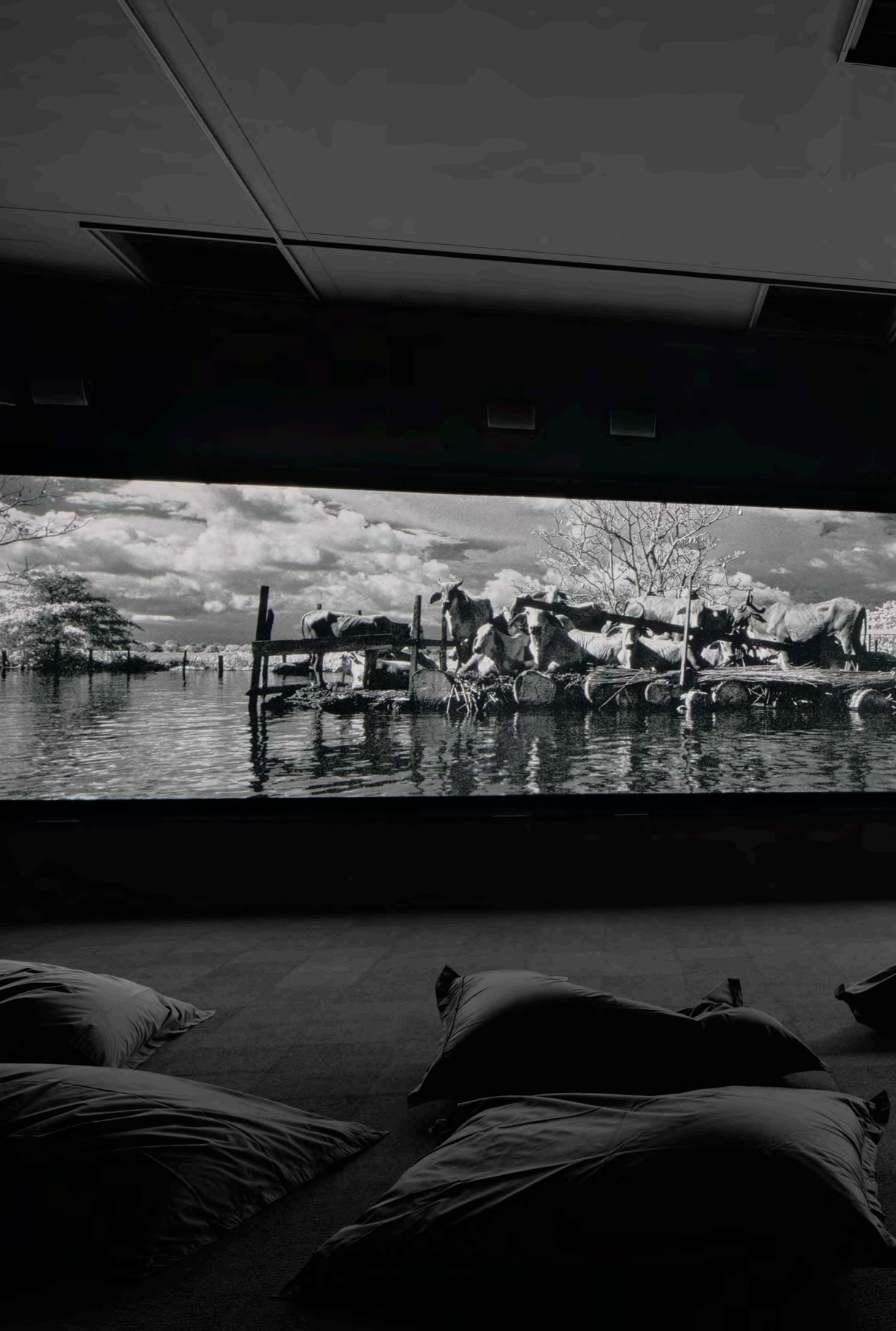


Richard Mosse, *Love Is The Drug*, 2012, 279 x 533cm, digital C print. The River Rusizi in South Kivu forms the natural border dividing the Democratic Republic of Congo (right) from the Republic of Rwanda. Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier|gebauer





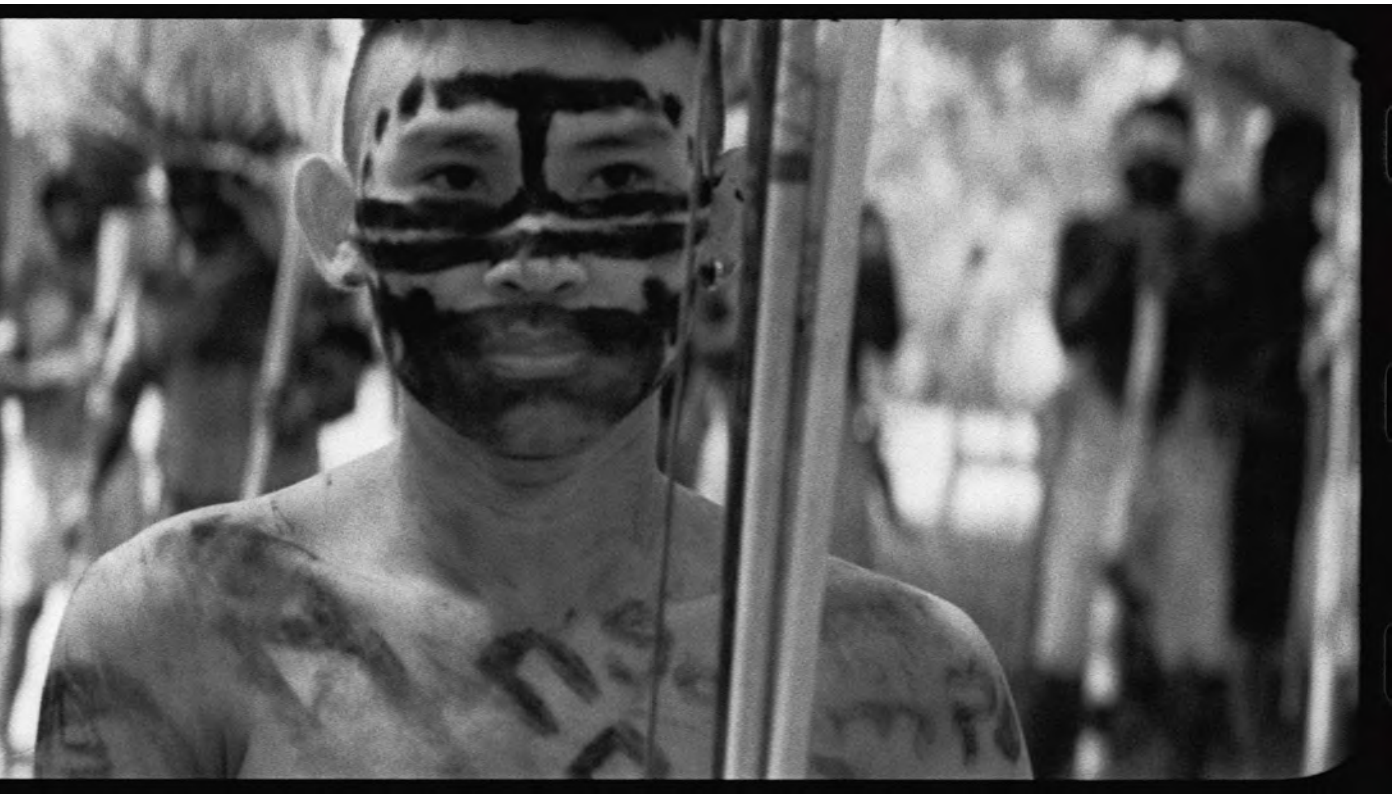
Richard Mosse, Still from *Broken Spectre*, 2022, digital C print, 41 x 75cm. Scenes of mass clearing of rainforest in Rondônia captured by custom built multispectral video camera attached to nose of helicopter. Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier|gebauer







Previous spread:
Richard Mosse, Still from *Broken Spectre*, 2022, four channel 4K video with 12.1 surround sound, 74min 12sec. This still shows Adneia and Sidcley Yanomami speaking about the crisis at Aldeia Palimi-ú, Yanomami Territory, Roraima, 2021. At this time, the community of Palimi-ú were under regular attack at night from illegal goldminers (garimpeiros), strafing their huts with automatic weapons and launching tear gas canisters into the village, reprisals for a confrontation that turned violent when the community established a wire blockade across the River Uraricoera to stop gold miners invading their land. Gold mines (garimpos) in this area have been infiltrated by elements of the PCC, a notorious Brazilian drug cartel. Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier|gebauer



Richard Mosse, Still from *Broken Spectre*, 2022, four channel 4K video with 12.1 surround sound, 74min 12sec. This still shows Adneia and Sidcley Yanomami speaking about the crisis at Aldeia Palimi-ú, Yanomami Territory, Roraima, 2021. At this time, the community of Palimi-ú were under regular attack at night from illegal goldminers (garimpeiros), strafing their huts with automatic weapons and launching tear gas canisters into the village, reprisals for a confrontation that turned violent when the community established a wire blockade across the River Uraricoera to stop gold miners invading their land. Gold mines (garimpos) in this area have been infiltrated by elements of the PCC, a notorious Brazilian drug cartel. Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier|gebauer





RICHARD MOSSE
au-delà de l'image

interview par Aurélie Cavanna

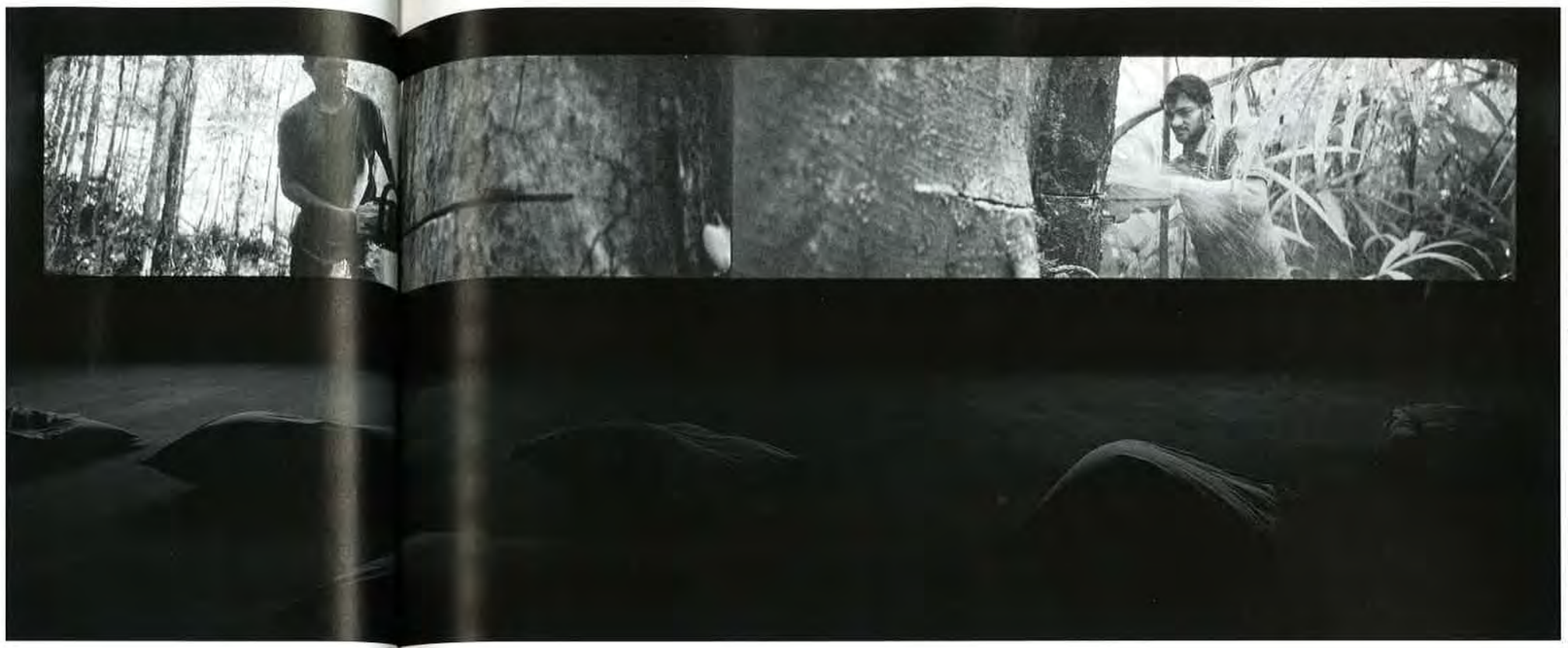
Richard Mosse se rend sur des terrains de crise en s'affranchissant des conventions du reportage. Ses images font de la technologie et de la beauté des armes de sensibilisation « post-documentaires ». À Lausanne, Photo Élysée présente son dernier projet sur la crise environnementale : *Broken Spectre*, grande installation vidéo (3 nov. 2023-25 fév. 2024). Retour sur près de 20 ans de carrière.

■ Guerres, crises migratoires, humanitaires et écologiques, vos sujets sont ceux de photojournalistes. Vous avez d'ailleurs commencé par en être un. Pourquoi avoir arrêté ? C'était l'idée de départ, mais je ne peux pas prétendre avoir été photojournaliste. J'ai étudié la littérature anglaise à Londres, puis j'ai déménagé à Berlin où j'ai travaillé comme plongeur dans un pub irlandais afin d'économiser suffisamment d'argent pour voyager dans les Balkans d'après-guerre et y réaliser mon premier projet. Je voulais documenter la crise des personnes disparues dans l'ex-Yougoslavie. Les corps de centaines de milliers de personnes, pour beaucoup enterrés dans des fosses communes, n'avaient toujours pas été retrouvés. Leur absence tragique, inscrite dans le paysage, formait un vide terrible dans ces sociétés. Je souhaitais documenter cette absence, mais on ne peut pas photographier ce qui n'existe pas. Je trouvais le langage du photojournalisme trop limité et la pratique photographique elle-même trop concrète. Comment peut-on représenter l'absence de centaines de milliers de personnes ? J'ai lu Judith Butler, Andreas Huyssen, Elaine Scarry, Walter Benjamin, et je me suis tourné vers l'art pour tenter de comprendre cet échec. J'étais fasciné par l'*Angelus Novus* de Paul Klee et les photographies des villes allemandes d'après-guerre de Thomas Struth, qu'il appelle des « paysages embarrassés ». Pour Struth, l'architecture évoque la honte de l'Holocauste et de la guerre, et pourtant ce n'est qu'une photographie de rue. Je crois qu'une image tirée de l'observation attentive de son environnement en dit plus long sur la société qu'une photographie merveilleusement composée de Cartier-Bresson, par exemple. Je me suis aussi intéressé à Ori Gersht, un photographe israélien établi à Londres, et aux images fortes qu'il a réalisées à Auschwitz et en Bosnie. J'ai vendu mon Nikon pour acheter une vieille chambre photographique : un Linhof 4x5 pouces (10 x 12,5 cm). Ça a été la meilleure chose que j'aie jamais faite, car ça m'a obligé à regarder le monde autrement.

MÉDIUMS AGGRAVÉS

Pourquoi avoir choisi les images précisément pour montrer ce qu'on ne peut pas voir ? J'ai toujours eu du mal avec le caractère concret de la photographie. Je me sens parfois désemparé dans ma pratique, parce que mes sujets sont très opaques, complexes, stratifiés ou abstraits. Ils peuvent être à la limite de l'ineffable ou, comme l'a écrit Samuel Beckett, de « l'innommable ». Ce sont des choses que la photographie a du mal à transmettre. En particulier la photographie documentaire qui, bien que puissant vecteur de preuves, de témoignages et de spécificités, est intrinsèquement limitée à ce qui se passe devant l'objectif.
Ma stratégie consiste à essayer d'identifier ce que j'appelle les « médiums aggravés » (*aggravated media*). J'entends par là une forme de photographie comportant une part de complicité (ou d'action) avec le sujet. On peut dire que je suis un documentariste réticent, car je me méfie de la photographie. Une grande partie de la photographie est en effet issue de la recherche militaire, développée comme outil de colonisation, de surveillance d'État, de biopouvoir, de cartographie cadastrale pour établir la propriété privée, délimiter les frontières, ou utilisée dans l'extraction des ressources et l'industrie. La façon dont elle est impliquée dans les sujets que j'essaie d'examiner permet de démêler ces grands systèmes sous-jacents dans chaque histoire. Ils peuvent être « encodés » dans la matérialité du support, ajoutant une couche de signification à l'image brute.
Il s'agit de technologies très difficiles à utiliser sur le terrain. Rétro-concevoir leur utilisation pour un récit documentaire exige une bonne dose de patience et d'ingéniosité, et de comprendre comment la technologie s'articule et ce qu'elle peut révéler. Construire mon propre langage visuel devient une manière de méditer le sujet lui-même. Et bien sûr, le médium utilisé possède souvent des qualités esthétiques étranges, incongrues, qui peuvent à la fois désarmer le spectateur et ressusciter l'imagerie documentaire à bout de souffle.

Pouvez-vous donner des exemples de « médium aggravé » ? *Incoming* (2017), mon film (1) sur la crise des réfugiés, en est un. J'y utilise une caméra infrarouge à ondes moyennes capable d'enregistrer la chaleur rayonnante à très longue distance. Dans des conditions de test, elle peut détecter le corps humain à 30 km, de jour comme de nuit. Elle a initialement été conçue pour les forces armées et la police afin d'assurer le contrôle des frontières. C'est une manifestation de ce que Foucault appelait la « technologie du pouvoir ». Je considère cette caméra comme un élément central des politiques d'immigration déshumanisantes de l'Union européenne et de notre incapacité, à grande échelle, à assumer notre responsabilité légale d'accorder l'asile aux réfugiés, que chaque nation européenne a ratifiée dans le cadre des Conventions de Genève après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. C'est ce qui est encodé par l'appareil (et sa façon de *voir*) dans l'imagerie que je produis des traversées dangereuses et des conditions de vie précaires des millions de demandeurs d'asile qui ont débarqué sur les côtes européennes entre 2014 et 2018.
Mes précédents travaux, la série *Infra* et le film *The Enclave*, réalisés dans l'est de la République démocratique du Congo (2010-15), passent aussi par un « médium aggravé ». La pellicule Kodak Aerochrome que j'ai chargée dans mon appareil photo capte le paysage infrarouge dans des roses et rouges lumineux.



À l'origine, elle a été conçue pour la détection du camouflage et la reconnaissance aérienne des champs de bataille ; elle a aussi été utilisée en géologie et minéralogie pour localiser les minéraux de terres rares : une des causes profondes du cycle de guerres violentes dans l'est du Congo. Le médium est donc en grande partie le message et, dans ce cas précis, il a également des effets intéressants en termes de psychologie perceptive : le rose et le rouge suscitent l'appréhension et déclenchent l'alerte – une palette utile pour attirer l'attention sur une catastrophe humanitaire ignorée.

L'utilisation de technologies militaires n'est pas anodine. Cela peut soulever des questions éthiques, voire poser problème à certaines personnes. Comment réagissez-vous à cela ? Ces technologies sont révélatrices des fondements de notre société en ce qui concerne notre façon de voir, qu'il s'agisse de cartographier la forêt tropicale en vue de l'extraction des ressources ou de révéler les corps des demandeurs d'asile avec une technologie militaire pour les refouler à nos frontières. Il est important de ne pas l'ignorer. Je documente des réalités qui sont délibérément cachées, comme les camps de réfugiés et les sites de transit dans la série *Heat Maps* (2016-18). La plupart de ces camps n'existent plus, ils ont été démantelés et nettoyés comme s'ils n'avaient jamais existé, ou alors ils sont cachés en marge de notre infrastructure de pays industrialisés, ou exportés vers des nations autoritaires telles que la Turquie ou la Libye. Loin des yeux, loin du cœur. C'est un désaveu de l'histoire. Retourner ce système, retourner ce regard sur lui-même est, selon moi, assez révélateur. Et si les gens sont contrariés, c'est très bien. Qu'attendez-vous de l'art aujourd'hui ? Aux États-Unis, où je vis actuellement, on ne peut même plus accrocher une peinture de Philip Guston au mur parce qu'elle est jugée trop dérangeante. Je suppose que je viens d'une école plus européenne, où l'avant-garde a toujours été plus transgressive que rassurante. Je pense qu'il est important de soulever des questions éthiques sur ces enjeux et dévoiler notre complicité, plutôt que de nous célébrer nous-mêmes. Au fond, quelle est la responsabilité de l'artiste ? En plus de faire de l'art, devons-nous aussi réparer la société ? En plus de poser les questions, devons-nous aussi apporter les réponses ?

LA BEAUTÉ COMME OUTIL

Comment choisissez-vous vos sujets et les procédés que vous utilisez ? J'aime commencer par le médium. Souvent, la spécificité du support me conduit au sujet, plutôt que l'inverse. En 2009, par exemple, avec l'essor des technologies numériques, Kodak a arrêté la production de cette pellicule dont la sensibilité est proche de l'infrarouge, l'Aerochrome. À ce moment-là, elle était vouée à la disparition. J'étais persuadé que c'était un outil puissant pour raconter des histoires, sans savoir encore comment. À mon retour d'Irak et de Gaza, je me sentais à nouveau frustré par les limites du reportage conventionnel ; une partie de moi voulait en subvertir la pratique, ou la dépasser. J'ai commencé à me documenter sur le conflit dans l'est du Congo. L'ampleur de cette catastrophe humanitaire était stupéfiante : selon une étude de l'International Rescue Committee, 5,4 millions de personnes avaient été tuées lors de la guerre, entre 1998 et 2008. Mais le sujet semblait échapper aux médias de masse tant il était kaléidoscopique. Après le génocide rwandais de 1994, une partie du peuple hutus rwandais s'est exilée au Congo, et pas seulement les *génocidaires*. Comme ils étaient solidement armés, cela a déstabilisé toute la région et déplacé un grand nombre de Congolais. Plus de cinquante groupes armés et milices Maï-Maï se sont formés pour défendre certaines communautés et tribus contre les paramilitaires hutus rwandais FDLR « Interahamwe » – chacun des groupes ayant des objectifs concurrents et des alliances changeantes. À mon avis, même les forces de maintien de la paix de l'ONU ont contribué à l'aggravation du problème.
Tout cela a créé un désordre immense, complexe, difficile à comprendre, où les faits étaient difficilement vérifiables, un désordre impossible à résumer en une phrase lapidaire ou dans un titre de journal. Il y a eu une sorte d'échec du journalisme. Cette situation a rendu le cycle brutal de ces conflits relativement inaudible au niveau international. Cela semblait correspondre à mon support, car l'Aerochrome peut révéler l'invisible, littéralement, par l'infrarouge – cette longueur d'onde de la lumière que nous ne pouvons pas percevoir à l'œil nu. De plus, la pellicule pouvait capter toute la chlorophylle de la forêt équatoriale du Congo oriental dans une palette de couleurs saisissantes : magenta, rose, rouge, vert cyan, bleu sarcelle. Ce conflit cruel n'avait jamais été vu sous un tel jour. C'était un défi directement lancé aux conventions du photojournalisme classique, et à l'école de Robert Capa en particulier, qui est une façon très différente de décrire la guerre. Mais le projet a commencé à prendre de l'ampleur. Il est devenu viral sur internet et a été largement publié dans les journaux et les magazines. Finalement, il a sensibilisé les gens au conflit oublié dans l'est du Congo – à sa manière. Je ne l'aurais jamais imaginé, mais c'est arrivé. D'une certaine façon, l'Aerochrome m'a fait devenir ce que je craignais le plus : un photojournaliste.

Comment vous positionnez-vous par rapport à la beauté et au sublime, qui semblent presque absurdes, voire insensés, face à la violence de ce que vous représentez ? L'art n'est pas impuissant face à la violence réelle. L'histoire nous l'a démontré. Il peut changer le monde, et il le fait, parce qu'il a le pouvoir d'émouvoir les gens, de les rassembler et de générer une masse critique autour de certaines idées. Je ne dis pas que nous devrions attendre qu'un messie de l'art comme Ai Weiwei nous reconduise au paradis. Je dis seulement que les artistes peuvent, aux côtés d'auteurs comme vous, et de chacun d'entre nous en

Broken Spectre. 2022. Projection 4K à 4 canaux, son surround 12.1. 74 min 2. Vue d'installation *view*. (Commande *commission* National Gallery of Victoria, VIA Art Fund, Westridge Foundation et Serpentine Galleries ; Soutien *support* Collection SVPL et Jack Shainman Gallery ; Ph. Tom Rossi).
Double page précédente, de gauche à droite
previous spread: Dionaea Muscipula with Mantodea. 2018. Projet Broken Spectre. Digital C-print. 162 x 122 cm.
Biomasse du sol forestier, Waqanki, Pérou, éclairée de nuit par des lampes ultraviolettes à 365nm.
Mineral Ship, Pará. 2020. Projet Broken Spectre. Archival pigment print. 150 x 166 cm. Un navire minéralier sur la rivière Crepori. Les dragues d'extraction d'or raclent et pompent violemment la vase du lit de la rivière pour extraire l'or, dévastant la vie aquatique.
(Tous les visuels *all pictures:* © Richard Mosse)



tant que citoyens, changer le monde. Les seuls artistes ne peuvent pas faire grand-chose, mais nous sommes très doués pour véhiculer des idées et sensibiliser les gens. Beaucoup d'œuvres d'art sont des blagues d'initiés – une banane scotchée au mur d'un stand de foire d'art ou un urinoir dans la galerie d'un musée. Je suis un grand admirateur de ce genre de choses, mais qu'en est-il si nous voulons parler de sujets importants à une large audience plutôt que de prêcher auprès d'un public de connaisseurs ? C'est la raison pour laquelle les musées se démènent pour installer correctement mes vidéos immersives – parce qu'elles attirent de nombreux spectateurs et qu'ils ont tendance à passer du temps avec l'œuvre. Mon travail est en quelque sorte un plaidoyer, c'est pourquoi je trouve important de toucher beaucoup de personnes. Je n'ai jamais hésité à dire que la beauté était l'outil le plus efficace lorsqu'il s'agissait de faire ressentir quelque chose aux gens. Sans la beauté et le sublime, nous perdons notre humanité.

Quelle éthique vous imposez-vous ? Être fidèle au sujet et l'examiner attentivement. La photographie documentaire est un ensemble de compétences inhabituelles, car elles comprennent 99 % de logistique, dont une grande partie intuitive : il faut placer le bon appareil photo au bon endroit et au bon moment. Cela peut être un travail très difficile, parfois à la limite du masochisme, car on doit passer beaucoup de temps sur le terrain et être à l'affût. C'est l'une des seules compétences que je possède. Et je l'ai utilisée du mieux que j'ai pu pour communiquer, pas de façon didactique, mais en tant qu'artiste. Je ne me considère pas vraiment comme un activiste. J'espère garder mon sujet ouvert, rester fidèle à l'ambiguïté de l'expérience humaine et laisser les gens décider, les faire travailler un peu aussi, s'ils veulent regarder mon travail, ce qui est leur prérogative. En tant qu'artiste, je ne suis pas soumis aux règles du World Press Photo, et je considère qu'il est moralement impératif de parler et de faire des images librement, n'étant lié au sujet que par mon humanité – et je suis souvent intervenu, comme n'importe quel humain le ferait.

DE LA VIE

Après les conflits armés et leurs conséquences, comment en êtes-vous venu à traiter de l'écologie dans votre dernier projet, *Broken Spectre* (2018-2022) ? Ces projets peuvent sembler différents mais je les considère comme liés. Ce qui se passe dans le bassin amazonien est une sorte de guerre contre les non-humains, tandis qu'une grande partie des gens qui apparaissent dans *Incoming* sont des réfugiés climatiques fuyant leur terre qu'ils ne peuvent plus cultiver. C'est le cas au Sahel, dans la Corne de l'Afrique, ainsi que dans certaines régions de Syrie. Certains réfugiés que j'ai rencontrés en réalisant cette série quittaient l'Afrique subsaharienne à cause de la guerre pour les minerais et les terres rares – ce qui était aussi le sujet de mon précédent travail au Congo. Le déplacement humain est le fil conducteur.
Mais si j'ai choisi de m'intéresser à l'Amazonie en particulier, c'est parce qu'en 2018, ayant travaillé intensément pendant huit ans sur le terrain tout en inaugurant en parallèle des dizaines d'expositions et en publiant de nombreux livres, je voulais me reposer et réaliser un projet personnel, mettre le surmoi de côté et faire des photos pour mon propre plaisir. J'étais épuisé, légèrement traumatisé, et j'avais envie d'essayer de photographier à la lumière ultraviolette. Les abeilles arrivent à voir cette longueur d'onde de la lumière, et les fleurs, qui dépendent d'elles pour se reproduire, ont développé, afin de les attirer et polliniser, des marques très graphiques semblables à des pistes d'atterrissage, visibles seulement à ces longueurs d'onde. Enthousiaste, j'ai voyagé au Pérou et en Équateur avec des lampes UV, et j'ai commencé à faire des portraits d'orchidées et d'autres objets fluorescents comme des bijoux iridescents et des feuilles métalliques teintées, ou encore des photographies nocturnes de la forêt tropicale. Il y a avait quelque chose de curatif dans le fait de travailler toute la nuit dans cet univers minuscule peuplé d'épiphytes, de mantes et de katydides lumineux.
Mais Jair Bolsonaro a été élu président du Brésil et, après sa prise de pouvoir en 2019, la forêt a commencé à brûler de manière exponentielle. J'ai senti qu'il était temps de travailler sur un projet plus vaste et ambitieux pour tenter de comprendre cette déforestation massive. Parmi les nombreux exemples de catastrophes environnementales et du changement climatique provoqués par l'Homme que l'on peut observer dans le monde, l'Amazonie est unique dans le sens où il s'agit d'une situation très récente. En 1970, nous n'avions perdu que 1 % de la forêt. Aujourd'hui, les chiffres s'élèvent entre 18 et 20 %. Cela s'est produit en seulement cinquante ans, c'est-à-dire de mémoire d'homme. À ce rythme, il ne nous reste que peu de temps pour la sauver.

C'est votre projet le plus complexe : multiples technologies, niveaux de narration, échelles. Pourquoi cette complexité ? C'est une œuvre maximaliste. Pour revenir à l'idée de l'ineffable, j'ai eu l'impression que le sujet était trop grand pour le langage : l'Amazonie s'étend sur neuf pays, mais le changement climatique est encore plus vaste. Ils se rapportent tous les deux à ce que Timothy Morton appelle un « hyperobjet ». Comment trouver un objectif suffisamment large pour en rendre compte ? Je voulais décomposer le sujet sur plusieurs échelles pour le décliner selon différents points de vue : le macro, le micro et l'échelle humaine, chacun ayant son propre médium. J'ai filmé les scènes macro depuis un hélicoptère en utilisant une caméra vidéo multispectrale fabriquée sur mesure, proche de celles que l'on trouve sur les satellites de télédétection dans l'espace et qui sont utilisées par les scientifiques de l'environnement. Un tel équipement était nécessaire pour montrer l'organisation massive et systématique des groupes mafieux, financés par des investissements d'entreprises multinationales, qui défrichent d'immenses étendues de forêt tropicale. Au niveau microscopique, j'ai utilisé des lampes UV pour révéler la biodiversité foisonnante qui se trouve dans chaque centimètre carré du sol de la jungle. Et, pour l'échelle humaine, j'ai utilisé des films infrarouges analogiques en noir et blanc, ainsi que des objectifs anamorphiques, avec un rendu cinématographique auquel il est plus facile de s'identifier, qui rappelle l'ambiance tendue des westerns.
Chaque médium était employé pour des raisons spécifiques, mais la magie opère dans le montage, lorsque le film passe d'un médium à l'autre et d'une échelle à l'autre, créant ainsi une dissonance visuelle saisissante. Une femme m'a dit avoir dû quitter la salle parce qu'elle n'arrivait pas à s'arrêter de pleurer lors de la scène où des arbres centenaires sont coupés à la tronçonneuse. Je lui ai demandé pourquoi elle trouvait cette scène si troublante, et elle m'a répondu être émue car cette scène suivait celle d'images du sol de la forêt en ultraviolet. Son émotion était due au processus de montage. Ces sauts entre les échelles et les médiums sont perturbants pour de nombreux spectateurs. Ils sont difficiles à détecter, mais à l'origine d'une grande partie de la puissance du film.

Y a-t-il une présence croissante du vivant dans votre travail (la végétation dans *Infra* et *The Enclave*, puis le corps humain dans *Incoming* et *Heat Maps*, et maintenant la forêt amazonienne) ? Je n'y avais pas pensé, mais c'est vrai. Christine Jakobson, de l'université de Cambridge, a écrit une thèse intitulée « Camera Mortis: Ethics and Aesthetics in Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Mosse » (Camera Mortis : éthique et esthétique chez Emmanuel Levinas et Richard Mosse). J'ai eu du mal à l'accepter parce que je n'ai jamais vraiment eu l'intention de photographier la mort, même si, bien sûr, je l'ai fait. Je suis très heureux que vous voyiez dans mon travail ce que James Joyce appelait « la vie chaleureuse ». L'imagerie multispectrale révèle aussi bien la santé de la forêt que sa dégradation, l'imagerie thermique montre la chaleur du corps humain, et l'Aerochrome saisit la lumière infrarouge réfléchie par la chlorophylle. Tout s'articule autour de la vie, vraiment. ■

Traduit depuis l'anglais (États-Unis) par Felix Macherez



1 Richard Mosse réalise ses films avec Ben Frost, compositeur, et Trevor Tweeten, directeur de la photographie.

En parallèle de l'exposition à Photo Élysée, Richard Mosse publie ses photographies de *Broken Spectre* aux côtés de photogrammes : *Broken Spectre*, Loose Joints, en collaboration avec 180 Studios et Converge 45, 440 p. 58 euros.

Richard Mosse
Né en *born in* 1980 en *in* Irlande
Vit et travaille à *lives and works in* New York
Représenté par *represented by* Jack Shainman Gallery, New York ; Carlier | Gebauer, Berlin - Madrid
Expositions personnelles (sélection) *Solo shows:*
2023 *Broken Spectre*, Photo Élysée, Lausanne
2022 *Broken Spectre*, 180 The Strand, Londres, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
2019 *Incoming*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Le Lieu Unique, Nantes
2017 *Incoming*, The Curve, Barbican Centre, Londres
2013 *The Enclave*, pavillon irlandais, Biennale de Venise
2012 *Infra*, Centre culturel irlandais, Paris

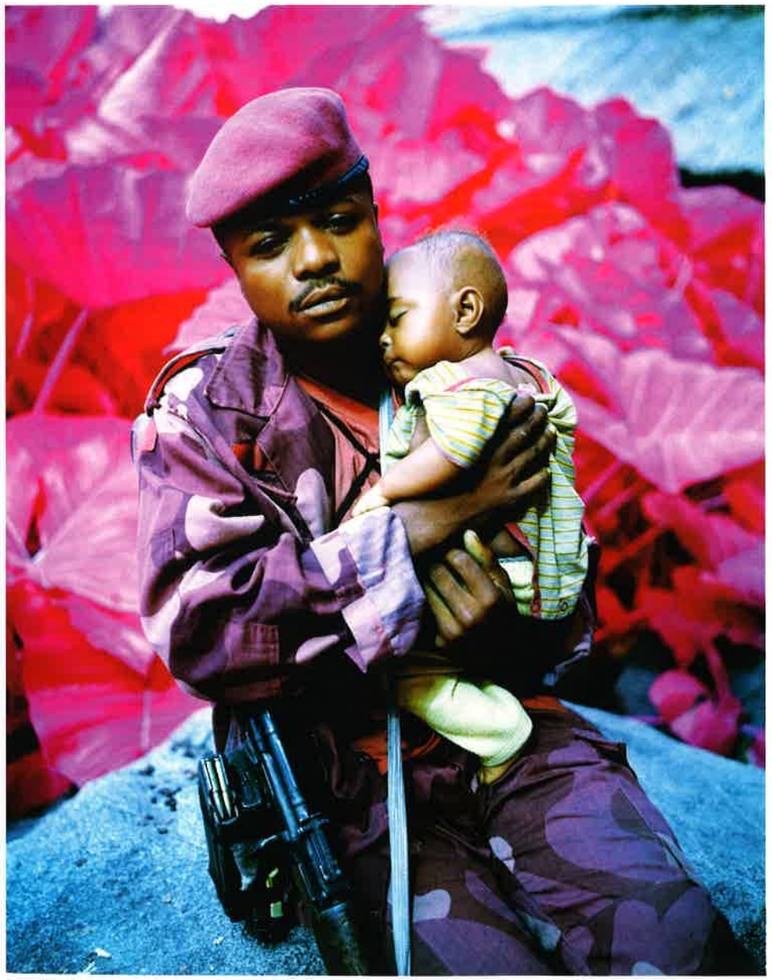


Page de gauche *left page:*
Idomeni camp, Greek-Macedonian border, March 2016. 2016. Série Heat Maps *series*. Digital C-print sur papier métallique *on metallic paper*. 103 x 304 cm. La Macédoine a fermé ses frontières aux demandeurs d'asile en mars 2016, fermant le couloir des Balkans à ceux qui tentaient de se rendre en Europe du Nord. On estime à 14 000 le nombre de réfugiés bloqués dans le camp de fortune d'Idomeni. Les conditions y étaient très mauvaises. Le camp a été démantelé en mai 2016.
Cette page, de haut en bas *this page from top:*
Still from Incoming #102. 2017. Digital C-print sur papier métallique. 29 x 51 cm. Un secouriste de la Croix Rouge tente de réanimer une victime d'hypothermie sur la jetée de Molyvos, Lesbos, 2015. La caméra thermique révèle la chaleur des empreintes de mains.
Incoming. 2017. Vidéo HD à 3 canaux, son surround 7.3, 52 min 10. Vue d'installation *view*. (Commande *commission* National Gallery of Victoria et Barbican Art Gallery)

Richard Mosse, Beyond Images

interview by Aurélie Cavanna

Richard Mosse travels to crisis areas, breaking free from the conventions of photo-reportage. His images use beauty and technology as "post-documentary" weapons in order to raise awareness. In Lausanne, Photo Élysée is presenting his latest project about the environmental crisis: *Broken Spectre*, a huge video installation (Nov. 3rd, 2023-Feb. 25th, 2024). A look back over a career spanning almost 20 years.



Wars, migratory crises, humanitarian, and ecological crises—your subjects are those of photojournalists. In fact, you started out as one. Why did you stop? That was the initial impulse, but I can't pretend that I was ever a photojournalist. I studied English Literature in London then moved to Berlin and worked as a dishwasher in an Irish pub to save up enough money to travel in post-war Balkan nations to begin my first project. I wanted to try to document the missing persons crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The bodies of hundreds of thousands of people were still unrecovered—many of them buried in mass graves. Their tragic absence, written on the Bosnian landscape, formed a terrible hole in these societies. I wanted to document that absence, but you can't photograph what isn't there. I found the language of photojournalism too limited and photography itself too concrete—how can you possibly depict the absence of hundreds of thousands of people?

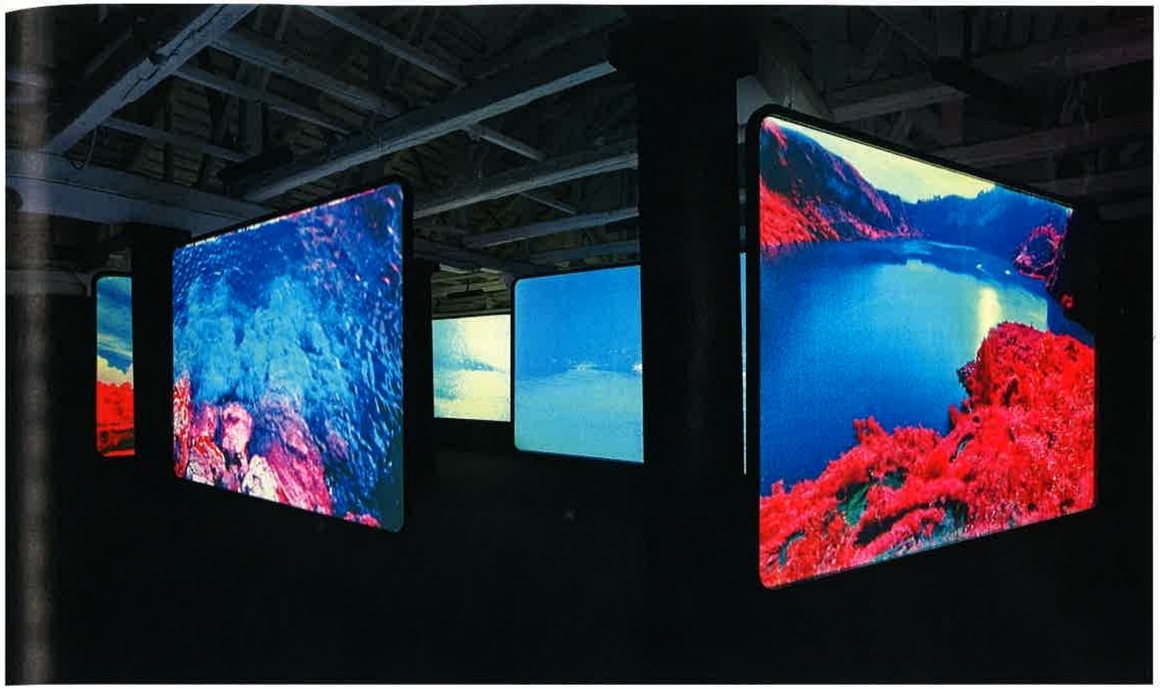
I read around the subject. Judith Butler, Andreas Huyssen, Elaine Scarry, Walter Benjamin. I looked at art to try to understand this failure. I was drawn to Paul Klee's 'Angelus Novus' and Thomas Struth's photographs of post-war German towns and cities, which he calls "embarrassed landscapes". The architecture spoke, to him, of the shame of the Holocaust and of the war, and yet it's just a picture of the street. To me, a very carefully observed image of the lived environment revealed more about society even than a wonderfully composed photograph by, for example, Cartier-Bresson. I was also looking at Ori Gersht, an Israeli photographer living in London, and his strong photographs made in Auschwitz and Bosnia. I sold my Nikon camera to buy an old Linhof 4x5 inch field camera. It was the best thing I ever did, because it forced me to look in a different way.

AGGRAVATED MEDIA

Why have you chosen images precisely to show what we can't see? I've always struggled with the concreteness of photography. In my own work, I am often at a loss, because the subjects I'm attempting to convey are so opaque, complex, layered, or abstract. They can verge on the ineffable or, as Samuel Beckett called it, "the unnameable". These are qualities that photography struggles to convey. And particularly documentary photography, which is such a powerful vehicle for evidence, testimony, and specificity, but which is inherently limited to describing only what the lens sees.

My strategy is to try to identify what I call "aggravated media". By this, I simply mean a form of photography that carries some complicity or agency within the subject. I guess I could be called a reluctant documentarian because I'm suspicious of photography. Much of it emerged from military research, was developed as a tool for colonization, state surveillance, biopower, cadastral mapping to establish private property or delineate the frontiers of the modern nation state, or is involved in resource extraction or industry. The ways in which photography is implicated in the subjects that I attempt to examine are useful to unpack and think through the larger invisible systems involved in each story. Those can be encoded within the medium's materiality, adding another layer of meaning to the raw image.

These are often extremely unwieldy media to use in the field, which can take a considerable amount of patience and ingenuity to reverse engineer for use as a documentary storyteller. It makes me understand how the technology speaks and what it can reveal. That process becomes a way of meditating on the subject itself, as I build my own visual language to describe it. And of course, such media often carry incongruous or unfamiliar aesthetic qualities, which can disarm the viewer and resuscitate exhausted documentary imagery.



De gauche à droite *from left:* Madonna & Child, South Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. 2012. Série Infra *series*. Digital C-print. 152 x 122 cm. Un membre de l'armée nationale congolaise (FARDC) tient un enfant dans ses bras dans la province de Fizi. The Enclave. 2013. Vidéo à 6 canaux à partir d'un film infrarouge 16mm, son surround 10.1. 39 min 25. (Commande *commission* Pavillon national de l'Irlande, Biennale de Venise, 2013)

Could you give some examples of these "aggravated media"? *Incoming* (2017), my film (1) on the refugee crises, is an example. The camera itself is a medium wave infrared camera that can image radiant heat from an extreme distance. Under test conditions, it can detect the human body from 30km, day or night. The camera was designed for militaries and police forces for long range border enforcement, a manifestation of what Foucault called a 'technology of power'. I see the camera as an essential part of the European Union's dehumanizing immigration policies and our failure, on a mass scale, to live up to our legal responsibility to grant asylum to refugees, which each European nation ratified under the Geneva Conventions following World War II. The camera, and the materiality of how it was designed to see, encodes these invisible systems within the imagery I produced of the dangerous journeys and precarious living conditions of the millions of asylum seekers landing on European shores between 2014-18.

My earlier work, the *Infra* series and *The Enclave* film, made in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (2010-15), also speaks through aggravated media. The rare film stock that I loaded in my cameras, Kodak Aerochrome, depicts the infrared landscape in luminous pinks and reds. It was originally designed for camouflage detection and aerial battlefield reconnaissance and was also used in geology and mineralogy, to locate rare earth minerals, which are one of the root causes of eastern Congo's cycle of violent wars. So, the medium is very much the message, and in this case, it also carried some interesting effects in terms of perceptual psychology, as pink and red are proven to trigger apprehension and alarm—an expedient palette to ask people to pay attention to an ignored humanitarian disaster.

Using military technology isn't harmless. This can raise ethical questions, and even be problematic for some people. What's your response to that? These technologies are very revealing of the foundations of our society's ways of seeing, whether that's mapping the rainforest for resource extraction or revealing the bodies of asylum seekers in the scope of a weapons grade technology designed to keep them out. It's important that we don't look away from these realities.

Many of the things that I document are deliberately kept hidden from us, such as the refugee camps and staging sites that I documented for the *Heat Maps* (2016-18) series. Many of those camps are no longer there, they've been dismantled and cleared up as if they never existed or are hidden away in the margins of our first world infrastructure or exported to authoritarian nations such as Turkey or Libya. Out of sight, out of mind. That's a disavowal of history. To turn that system, that gaze on itself is pretty revealing to me. And if people get upset, that's fine. What do you want from art these days? In the U.S., where I currently live, they can't even hang a Philip Guston painting on the wall because it's deemed too upsetting. I suppose I come out a more European school, where the power of the avant-garde was always more transgressive than reassuring. I think it's important that we raise ethical questions around our complicity in these subjects, rather than celebrate ourselves. At the end of the day, though, what exactly is the artist's responsibility? Alongside making art, must we also fix society? Along with asking the questions, must we also provide the answers?



BEAUTY AS A TOOL

How do you choose your subjects and the processes you use? I like to start with the medium. Often there will be something specific about it that leads me to the subject, rather than the other way around. For example, in 2009, with the rise of digital technologies, Kodak halted production of one of their film stocks, Aerochrome, which sees near infrared. At that point, it was a finite medium, at the point of extinction. I had a feeling this medium would be a powerful tool for storytelling, but I just didn't know how. I had returned from working in Iraq and Gaza and again felt frustrated with the limitations of conventional reportage photography, which some part of me wanted to subvert or shatter and move beyond. I began reading about the conflict in eastern Congo. The scale of this humanitarian disaster was mindboggling—5.4 million people killed of war related causes between 1998 and 2008, according to a study by the International Rescue Committee. But the subject seemed to elude communication in the mass media because it was so kaleidoscopic. After the Rwandan genocide in 1994, a nation of Rwandan Hutus went into exile in Congo, not just the *genocidaires*. And because they were well armed, it destabilised the entire region, displacing huge numbers of Congolese. More than fifty armed groups and Mai Mai militias sprung up to defend certain communities and tribes from the notorious Rwandan Hutu FDLR 'Interahamwe' paramilitaries, each with its own competing goals and shifting alliances. Even the UN peacekeeping forces, in my opinion, became a part of the problem.

It was a huge complex mess that was hard to understand, difficult to verify the facts, let alone distil into a pithy soundbite or headline in the newspaper. As a result, there was a sort of failure of journalism that meant this brutal cycle of violent conflict went relatively unheard and unseen on an international level. That seemed consonant with my medium, as Aerochrome was able to literally reveal the invisible, seeing in infrared, a wavelength of light that we can't perceive. Not only that, but it registered all the chlorophyll of eastern Congo's verdant equatorial rainforest in an arresting colour palette of magenta, pink, red, cyan-green, teal blue. This cruel conflict had never been seen in such a light. It was a direct challenge to the conventions of classical photojournalism, such as that of the Robert Capa school, which is a very different way of describing war. But the project began to build momentum, going viral online and being published widely in newspapers and magazines, eventually raising awareness of the forgotten cycle of conflict in eastern Congo in its own unique way. I would never have imagined that would happen, but it did. In some ways, Aerochrome allowed me to become what I feared most: a photojournalist.

How do you position yourself in relation to beauty and the sublime, which seem almost absurd or senseless in the face of the violence of what you represent? Art isn't impotent in the face of real violence, as we've seen in history. It can and does change the world because it can move people, bring people together, and generate a critical mass around certain ideas. And I'm not saying that we should wait for an individual art-messiah like Ai Weiwei to lead us back to paradise. But I am saying that artists play a role, alongside writers like you, and each of us as citizens, that can change the world. Artists can't do a whole lot, but we are very good at communicating certain things, and we can make people feel something.

Plenty of art is insider jokes—a banana taped to the wall of the art fair booth or a urinal in a museum gallery. I'm a big fan of that sort of thing, but what if we want to speak about important subjects to a much wider audience rather than preaching to the choir? That's the reason why museums go to great lengths to install my immersive videos correctly, because they attract wide audiences and viewers do tend to spend time with the work. My work is advocacy in some ways, and it's very important to me that I reach a lot of people. I've never been shy of saying that beauty is the sharpest tool in the box when it comes to moving people. Without beauty and the sublime, we lose our humanity.

What ethics are you imposing on yourself? To be true to the subject and listen carefully to it. Documentary photography is an unusual skillset because it's 99% logistics, and a lot of that is intuitive, where you have to get the right camera into the right place at the right time. It can be very hard work, sometimes verging on masochistic, because you have to spend so much time in the field with boots on the ground, listening to the subject. That's one of the only skills I have. And I've used that skill as best as I can to communicate, to advocate, in a sense, but in a non-didactic way, as an artist. I don't really see myself as an activist. I'm hoping to keep my subject open-ended and remain true to the ambiguity of human experience, and let you decide, let you do a little bit of work as well, if you care to look at my work, which is your prerogative. As an artist, I'm not bound by the rules of the World Press Photo. I see a moral imperative in speaking and making images freely, bound only by my humanity — and I have intervened in my subject numerous times, as any human would.

ABOUT LIFE

After armed conflicts and their consequences, how did you come to deal with ecology in your last project, *Broken Spectre* (2018-2022)? While they might seem different, I see them as related. What's going on in the Amazon Basin is war, a kind of war against the non-human. Meanwhile, a lot of the refugees we see in *Incoming* are climate refugees, fleeing the fact that they can't farm the land anymore. That's the case in the Sahel, in the Horn of Africa, as well as in parts of Syria. Some of the refugees I met while making that work were coming from sub-Saharan Africa because of war over conflict minerals, rare earths, which of course was the subject of my earlier project made in Congo. Human displacement is a consistent thread.

But the reason I chose to zoom in on the Amazon specifically was because in 2018, after finishing about eight years of incredibly intense work in the field alongside opening scores of exhibitions and publishing a slew of books, I just wanted to rest and do something personal, put the superego aside and make photos for me, for my own pleasure. I was burned out and slightly traumatized, and I had always wanted to try to take photographs with ultraviolet light. Bees have evolved to see this wavelength of light, so flowers, which depend on bees to reproduce, have evolved very graphic markings, almost like landing strips, to attract bees to pollinate, which are only visible at UV wavelengths.

Excited by this, I travelled to Peru and Ecuador with UV lamps and began making portraits of orchids and other lifeforms fluorescing like iridescent jewels and tinted metallic foil, rainforest nocturnes. Making these photographs was healing, working through the night in a tiny universe of glowing epiphytes, mantises, katydids, and other fabulous beings.

But then Jair Bolsonaro was elected President of Brazil. After he took power in 2019, the forest began burning exponentially. At that stage, I felt it was time to work on a larger, more ambitious project, to try to understand this mass deforestation. As a case study of the numerous instances of environmental disaster and manmade climate change that we are seeing around the world, the Amazon is unique in that it is all so recent. In 1970 we had lost only 1% of the forest, while now we have lost between 18-20% of the entire forest. That's in only fifty years, so within living memory. We don't have long to save it.

It's your most complex project: multiple technologies, multiple levels of narrative, multiple scales. Why this complexity? It's a maximalist piece. To go back to this idea of the ineffable, I felt the subject was too big for language. The Amazon itself spans nine countries, but climate change is even bigger. They are both what Timothy Morton would call a "hyperobject". How do you find a lens wide enough? I wanted to break it down into scales to show this vast subject from different points of view: the macro, the micro and the human scale, each with its own medium. I shot the macro scenes from a helicopter using a custom-built multispectral video camera, emulating those found on remote sensing satellites in space, used by environmental scientists. This was important to show the massive systematic organization required to clear huge tracts of rainforest, carried out by mafia groups and paid for by multinational business investment on an international level. For the microscopic level, I used UV lamps to reveal the teeming biodiversity in only a few square centimetres on the forest floor. And for the human scale, I used analogue black & white infrared film, shot with anamorphic lenses, which carries a luscious cinematic tonality that is easier to relate to, as well as echoes of the fraught baggage of the Western film.

There were very distinct reasons to employ each medium in these ways, but the magic happens in the montage, when the film's edit jumps between and across the various media and scales, creating a jarring visual dissonance. A woman told me she had to exit the film because she couldn't stop crying during the scene with the old growth trees being cut down with chainsaws. I asked her why she found a scene of trees being cut down so disturbing and she told me she felt moved because the scene comes just after ultraviolet pictures of the forest floor. It was the process of montage. Those leaps between the scales and between the media are very uncomfortable for a lot of viewers. They're hard to detect, but they generate a lot of the power of the film.

Is there a growing presence of the living in your work (vegetation in *Infra* and *The Enclave*, then the human body in *Incoming* and the *Heat Maps*, and now the Amazon rainforest)? I hadn't thought about that, but it's true. There's a scholar from the University of Cambridge, Christine Jakobson, who wrote a PhD called 'Camera Mortis: Ethics and Aesthetics in Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Mosse'. I struggled with that because I never really set out to photograph death, although of course I have. I'm so glad that you see what James Joyce called "good warm life" in my work. Multispectral imaging reveals the health of the forest as well as its degradation, while thermal imaging shows the life-giving warmth of the human body, and Aerochrome shows us infrared light reflected off the chlorophyll. It's all about life, really. ■

1 Richard Mosse makes his films with Ben Frost, composer, and Trevor Tweeten, director of photography.

To coincide with the exhibition at Photo Élysée, Richard Mosse will be publishing his photographs from *Broken Spectre* alongside photograms: *Broken Spectre*, Loose Joints, in collaboration with 180 Studios and Converge 45, 440 p. 58 euros.

De gauche à droite *from left:* Kosovo/Kosova, Church of Saint Elijah, Podujevo. 2004. Digital C-print. 102 x 127 cm. Richard Mosse. 2018. Réalisation d'une Heat Map du camp de réfugiés d'Adasevci, Serbie, avec une caméra thermique militaire attachée à un bras robotisé de contrôle des mouvements. (Ph. Lazara Marinkovic)



The New York Times

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

The Terrible Beauty of Richard Mosse's Portrait of the Amazon

The artist wanted to photograph orchids but ended up making "Broken Spectre," a film about the destruction of the rainforest — his most powerful work yet.

Give this article

By Jonathan Griffin
Reporting from San Francisco

June 8, 2023 Updated 10:28 a.m. ET



Richard Mosse's four-channel video installation, "Broken Spectre," is an epic work 70 feet across. Shown in London in 2022, it is now playing at 1201 Minnesota Street, a new exhibition space in San Francisco. Jack Hems

In 2018, the artist Richard Mosse was understandably weary. He had spent most of the last decade in places torn by conflict and civil unrest.

In the early 2010s, the Irish-born New York-based artist had worked for five years in the Democratic Republic of Congo, photographing and filming the humanitarian disaster that has claimed millions of lives and displaced millions more. That project led to another video and photographic series focusing on the European refugee crisis unfolding around the Mediterranean. Before that, he had embedded with the U.S. Army in Iraq.

“I was exhausted,” Mosse said recently, as he recounted the events that led to his latest film installation, “Broken Spectre,” filmed in the Amazon rainforest from 2018 to 2021. “I thought I’d put the superego aside, and just enjoy the simple pleasures of photography. This project essentially began with portraits of orchids.”

Mosse booked himself into a remote ecolodge in the Ecuadorean cloud forest, and began photographing plants, lichens, mycelium and insects with a macro lens. He found that many organisms phosphoresce under ultraviolet light, so he created dramatic Technicolor images of the teeming biodiversity on the forest floor.

Then in the summer of 2019, images appeared in the news media about fires burning across the Amazon Basin. Mosse called up Trevor Tweeten, the cinematographer who has contributed to Mosse’s film projects since 2008, and they flew down, Tweeten said, “to see what it was about.”

“Broken Spectre,” an epic film made from four conjoined projections that total 70 feet across, testifies to the calamitous destruction of the Amazon rainforest: the deliberate burning, the tree-felling, the industrial-scale agriculture, the mineral extraction and the displacement of Indigenous peoples that climate scientists believe is fast approaching a tipping-point from which there may be no return.

Part photojournalism, part nature doc, part cinéma vérité, part Western, the film defies categorization. It includes closeups of plants and vast panoramas shot from helicopters. It features farmers and their families; abattoir workers; wealthy landowners; miners; Indigenous people.

With an immersive and often thunderous soundtrack by the experimental composer Ben Frost, the film is both visceral and abstract, beautiful and horrifying. “Broken Spectre” is Mosse’s most powerful and consequential work yet.



Richard Mosse at his concurrent exhibition, “Occidental,” at Altman Siegel Gallery in San Francisco. “The best we can do — the only thing we can do really — is what we’re good at, which is to communicate to as many people as we can.” Ian C. Bates for The New York Times

Mosse, 43, had flown to San Francisco for the film's U.S. premiere at a new exhibition space, 1201 Minnesota Street, following its presentation in London and in Victoria, Australia, in 2022. (In August it will be included in Converge45, the Portland Biennial.)

The invitation to exhibit "Broken Spectre" in San Francisco came from the philanthropists Andy and Deborah Rappaport, founders of the Minnesota Street Project Foundation in the city's Dogpatch neighborhood.

A short walk away, Mosse was opening a simultaneous exhibition at Altman Siegel, his San Francisco gallery: "Occidental," a group of works including "drone maps" made from tessellated aerial photographs during his time in the Amazon.

"Seventy-five percent of the entire Amazon is so degraded by processes of deforestation that we're now very close to the point where there's an automatic dieback, and the forest can't generate its own rain," Mosse explained. "So it stops being rainforest. Once that happens, it turns quite quickly to savanna."



Still from "Broken Spectre XIII, Rondônia," 2022, The multispectral cameras Mosse used can see environmental conditions invisible to the naked eye. Richard Mosse; via Altman Siegel, San Francisco; Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

The enormity of such a chain of events — and their consequences for our planet's future — challenges comprehension. As he relayed this information, Mosse, who has boyish dimples and an affable manner, did not try to dramatize it, or impress me with its gravity. He must have recited the same facts 100 times. He knows that statistics alone are not sufficient.

"We've got all the reports, we have the quantitative data, but we still don't have the adequate image, the qualitative storytelling," he said. That's where his art comes in.

Mosse has long been concerned with making the unseen visible. In Congo, he used Kodak Aerochrome infrared film to photograph paramilitary rebels against the lush tropical landscape, transforming green tones into alarming shades of hot pink. The culminating film installation, "Enclave," was presented by Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2013.

For "Incoming," his three-channel video about the migrant crisis, first shown in 2017, he used a military-grade thermal imaging camera to photograph Syrian battlefields and European refugee camps from many miles away.

Mosse is drawn to what he calls "aggravated media" — media whose technological or social histories are entwined, problematically, with what they represent. Aerochrome film, for example, was developed to discover camouflaged soldiers in World War II. Mosse's thermal imaging camera is internationally classified as a weapon.

The multispectral cameras that Mosse and Tweeten used for parts of "Broken Spectre" and for Mosse's "drone maps" are able to see environmental conditions invisible to the naked eye. Lurid colors correspond to wavelengths both above and below the range of human vision. This technology helps scientists assess the damage done to the Amazon, but it is also commonly used by Brazilian farmers to identify how best to exploit their land.



Mosse's "Oil Spill on Kichwa Territory I, Block 192, Rio Tigre, Loreto," 2023, C-print. Richard Mosse; via Altman Siegel, San Francisco; Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

The Amazon can be a dangerous place — and was especially so during the administration of the former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, when regulations safeguarding the environment were loosened, or not enforced. One recent study estimated that 99 percent of deforestation in the Amazon is illegal, much of it connected to organized crime. The remote settlements that have sprung up near gold mines are lawless, violent places, inhabited mainly by young miners who are paid in gold and supplied with drugs by cartels.

One day, in June 2021, Mosse read reports of a skirmish between Indigenous Yanomami villagers and garimperos, or illegal gold miners. The miners brought with them diseases, including malaria, which was sickening the villagers' children. Young Yanomami women were coerced into prostitution, bringing more disease. The gold mining process involves the use of mercury, traces of which get washed into the river, harming the wildlife and entering the villagers' food supply.

"They used to live in paradise," Mosse said. "All of a sudden they're living in hell."

Mosse read about how the villagers fastened a wire across the river, blocking a boat loaded with valuable diesel on its way to the garimpero settlement. They seized the diesel and burned it. The garimperos fired back, and several villagers were killed. That night and many nights later, garimperos (or the cartels protecting them) fired automatic weapons into the villagers' huts.

Mosse hurriedly booked flights to Boa Vista, in northern Brazil. From there, he chartered a Cessna aircraft to take him to the village. Traveling with him were his "fixer-translator" and the Yanomami's regional leader, Júnior Hekurari Yanomami.

In the most memorable and impactful scene of the film, one of the villagers, a woman named Adneia, directly addresses the camera. At first, her fury is aimed at the Brazilian president: "Bolsonaro, you parasite. You keep sending the gold miners to our land. It's sickening. It's disgusting, you foul man."



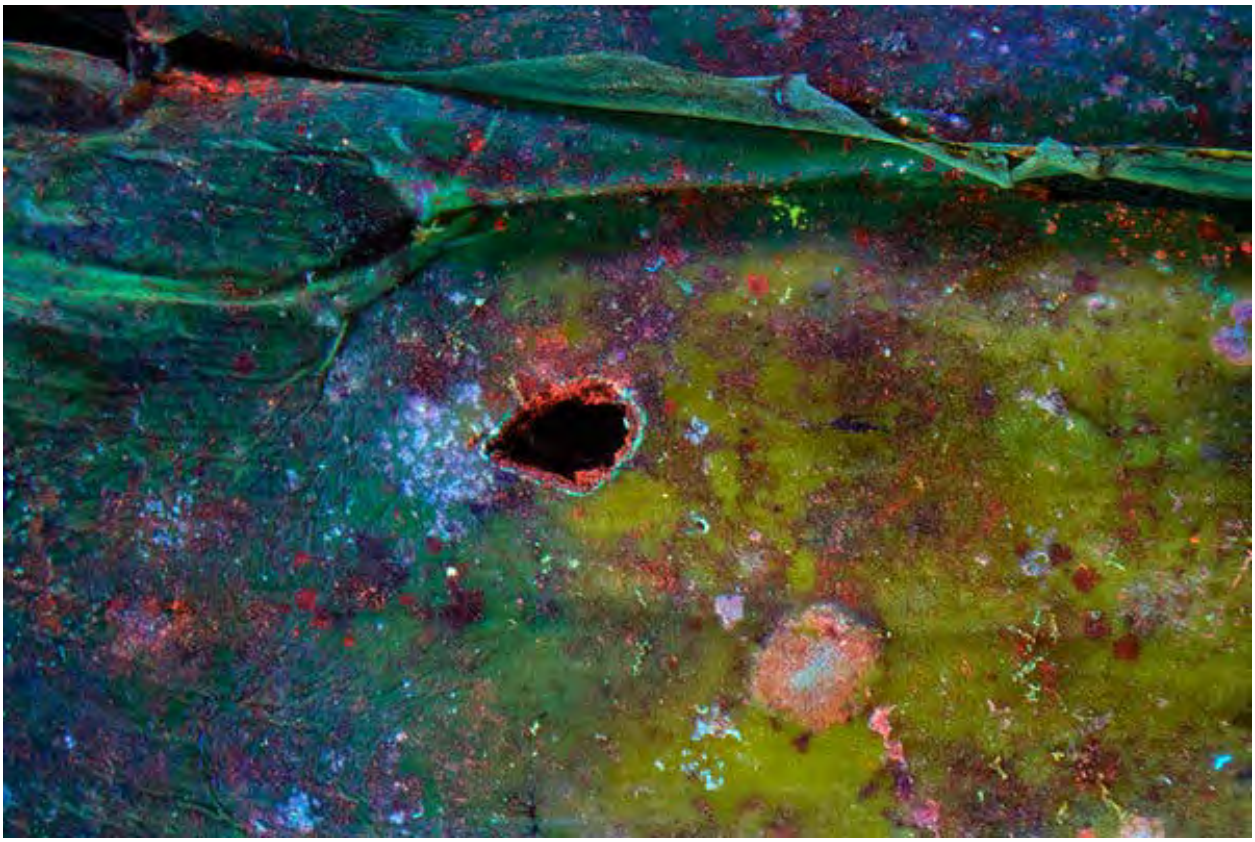
Adneia, a member of the Yanomami community, in a still from "Broken Spectre." via Richard Mosse, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Her subtitled diatribe continues for more than five minutes. (Tweeten's 35 mm film camera had to be reloaded twice, so the film intermittently cuts to black.) As her voice cracks with emotion, it becomes clear that Adneia's entreaties are no longer meant for Bolsonaro, but for the white filmmakers before her — and by extension, us, the viewers.

"You say you're here to support us," she chides. "Don't say that for nothing."

For a long time, Mosse said he struggled with Adneia's mandate. "We're just artists!" he said. "The best we can do — the only thing we can do really — is what we're good at, which is to communicate to as many people as we can."

Mosse now describes "Broken Spectre" as his first activist film.



"Broken Spectre" (still), 2018 - 2022. Mosse photographed this leaf, colonized by mold, by using probe lenses and ultraviolet lights. Richard Mosse; via Altman Siegel, San Francisco; Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

When "Broken Spectre" was shown in London, Mosse recalls, John Kerry, President Biden's climate envoy, saw the film, and soon after Mosse received an email from Kerry's office requesting an online screening link. The next day, Kerry was to meet with Brazil's new president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and the minister of environment and climate change, Marina Silva, and he wanted to share the film with them.

Mosse says he has no idea if "Broken Spectre" was in any way responsible, but soon after, the Brazilian military began stopping the garimperos mining in the area. "That's what Adneia was asking for!" Mosse says. "She was asking us to tell the senior level of U.S. government which we've somehow managed to do. For me, that's just the power of art."

Broken Spectre

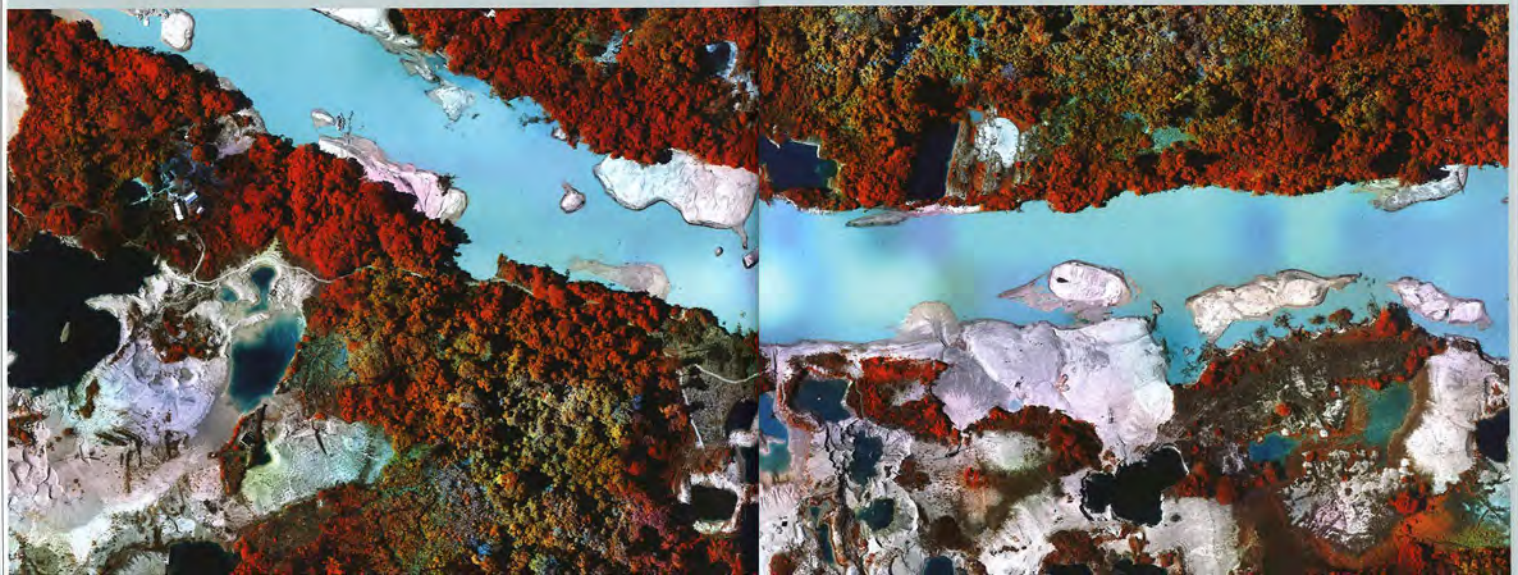
Through June 30 at 1201 Minnesota Street, San Francisco, minnesotastreetproject.org.

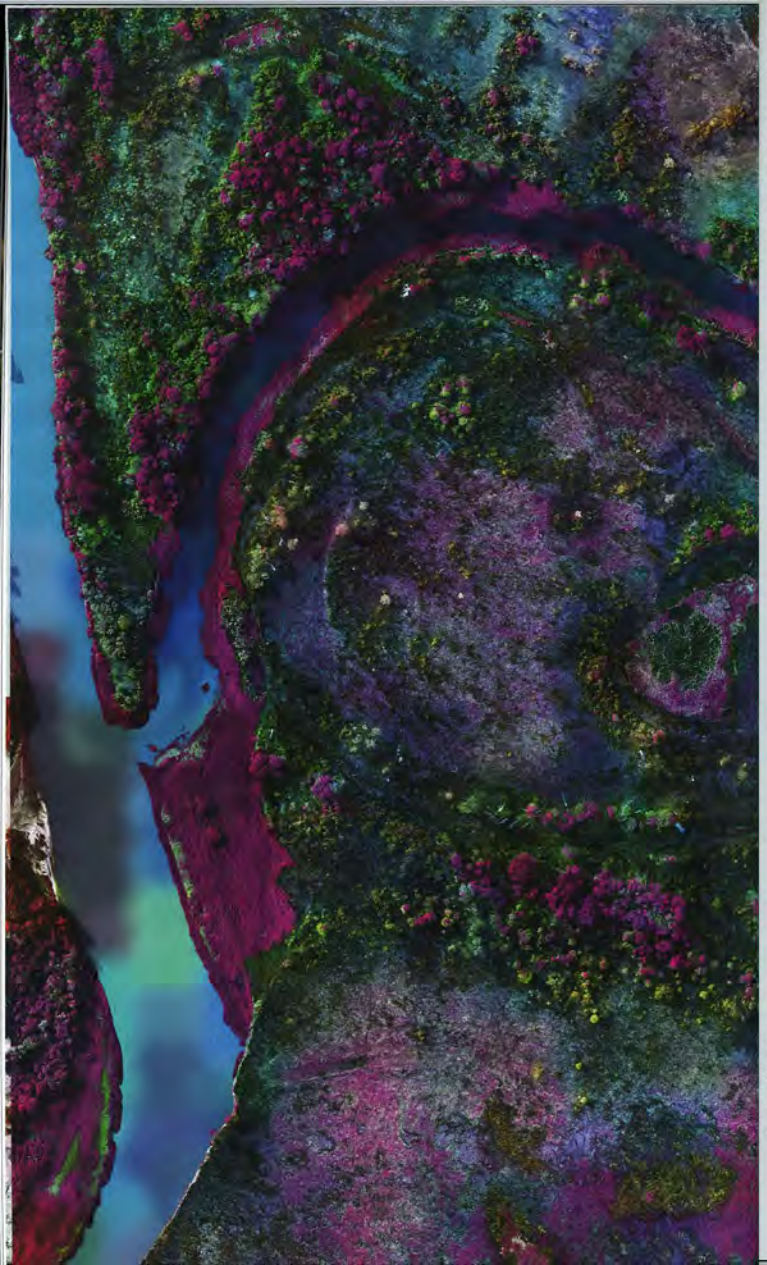
Richard Mosse: Occidental

Through June 30 at Altman Siegel, 1150 25th Street, San Francisco, altmansiegel.com.

RM

Bearing Witness: **Imaging the ineffable** **in Richard Mosse's** ***Broken Spectre***





by Jonathan Griffin

A camera can be many things to many different people. But nearly everyone on Earth has strong opinions about what it means to be photographed or filmed—even the Indigenous tribes that Richard Mosse encountered deep in the Amazon rainforest during the making of his film *Broken Spectre*.

The Yanonami people live largely without electricity or technology, and have been the subject of anthropological and journalistic interest for decades. They have also experienced the incursion into their pristine territory by illegal wildcat gold miners, and have suffered the dire consequences of environmental contamination, disease, and violent displacement as a result.

When Mosse traveled in 2021 to the remote Yanonami village of Palimiu, near the border between Brazil and Venezuela, he naturally took his camera. He wanted to document the ongoing conflict which he saw as an essential story in the broader narrative of environmental catastrophe currently unfolding across the region.

When the villagers assembled to address Mosse and his collaborators — cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and sound designer Ben Frost — one young woman, Adneia, stood forward and delivered a blistering tirade against Brazil's then-president Jair Bolsonaro. But subtly, her focus shifted to the filmmakers themselves. "If you're just here to film us for nothing, that's bad!" she said. "You white people, see our reality, open your minds."

Adneia understood what it can mean to be filmed or photographed. Mosse understands it too, and was impressed by Adneia's clear-eyed acknowledgment of the power imbalance between the camera and its subject. Her speech forms the crux of *Broken Spectre*.

Mosse has often been drawn in his work to what he calls "aggravated media." Infrared film, which he used to document the military conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was invented during the Second World War to expose camouflaged vehicles and encampments. In his film *Enclave* (2013), the lush greens of Congo's landscape and of paramilitaries' uniforms are transformed into a palette of lurid, disorienting pinks.

The thermal imaging camera Mosse used for a subsequent project about the European refugee crisis is officially classified as a weapon. Sometimes shooting (to use that loaded term) from miles away, Mosse used the camera to track the movements of people in refugee camps, or sheltering in battlefields. While his intention was to shed sympathetic light on the plight of his subjects, Mosse also drew attention to the privileged distance from which he and his audience witnessed it.

In the Amazon, Mosse used a multispectral drone camera to make composite maps of the landscape. Sensors in the camera detect wavelengths beyond what is ordinarily sensible by the human eye, thus transforming the endless greens of the forest into a palette of artificially-assigned hues. The technique has long been employed by scientists to chart the degradation of the rainforest. However, similar drone cameras are used by farmers to establish which parts of their land are most fertile (or least depleted). Drone operators advertise their services on billboards by the side of the Trans-Amazonian Highway — a busy commercial route through the forest.

"The camera is looking at the forest as an asset," Mosse says. "This is the corporate gaze of resource extraction."

A drone is also associated with surveillance. Since it is estimated that 99% of the deforestation in the Amazon is illegal, many of the people whose land Mosse was attempting to photograph were understandably suspicious of what he called "three gringos up to no good." Mosse described hiding in bushes to fly his drone over areas of illegal mining and deforestation, then running away when the drone descended for a battery recharge, revealing his position.

The Amazon can be a dangerous place for environmentalists, as proved by the murders in 2022 of journalist Dom Phillips and activist Bruno Pereira. The makeshift towns that have sprung up to service the needs and desires of wildcat

OPPOSITE:
Richard Mosse
Burnt Pantanal I, Mato Grosso 2020.

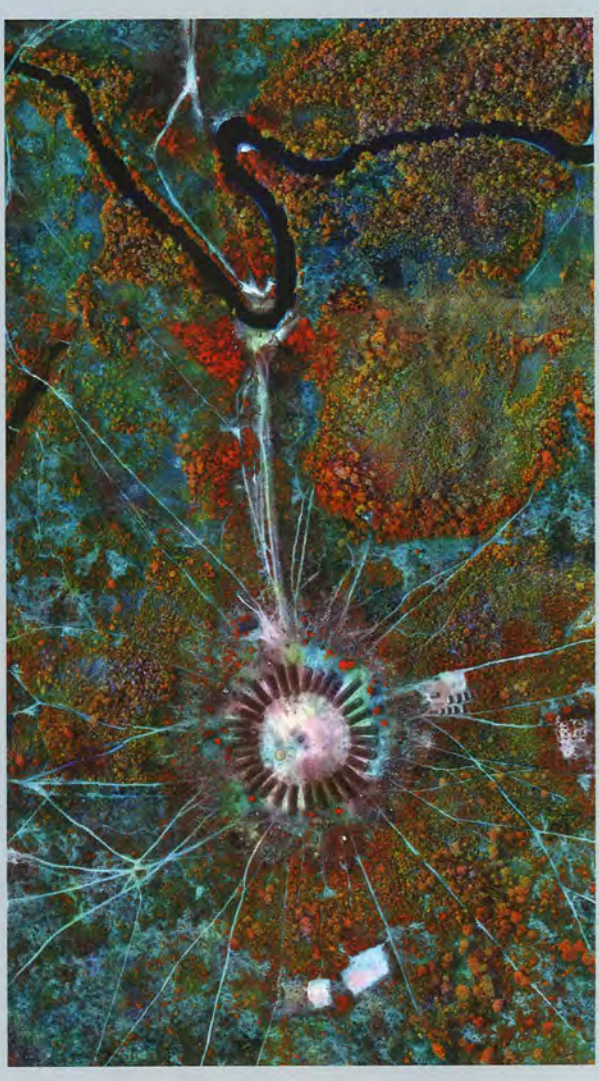
PREVIOUS SPREAD:
Richard Mosse
Crepori River, Pará, 2020.



"THE CAMERA IS LOOKING AT THE FOREST AS AN ASSET, THIS IS THE CORPORATE GAZE OF RESOURCE EXTRACTION"

OPPOSITE:
Richard Mosse, *Still from Broken Spectre XIV, Rondônia* 2022.

RIGHT:
Richard Mosse
Aldeia Enawene-nawe, Mata Grosso, 2020.







OPPOSITE PAGE:
Richard Mosse, *Mass Burn, Rondônia*, 2021.

LEFT:
Richard Mosse, *Munduruku Guardian, Pará*, 2021.

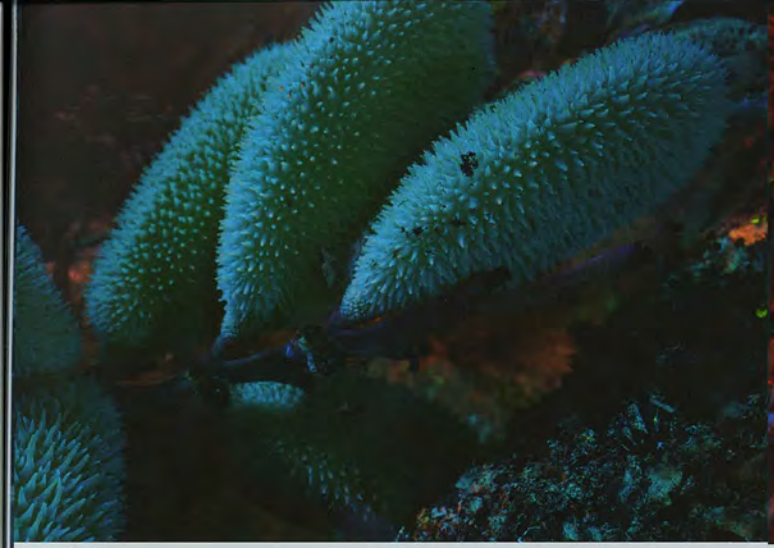
BELOW:
Richard Mosse, *José with Pan, Pará*, 2020.

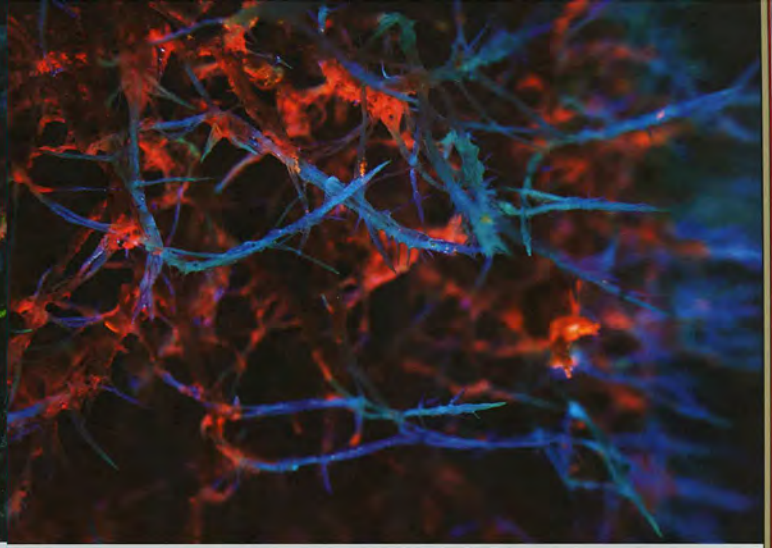


miners (known in Portuguese as garimpeiros) are lawless and unpoliced. In order to get the images and footage he needed for *Broken Spectre*, Mosse often had to win the trust of people doing questionable — if not outright illegal — things.

Instead of a digital SLR camera strapped to his chest, as preferred by most photojournalists, Mosse carried a cumbersome large-format wooden box camera. In rural parts of South America, before the advent of the smartphone, itinerant photographers would operate a similar camera to make commemorative portraits at special occasions. They are still known as "lambe lambe" cameras — a name which translates as "licky licky", probably referring to the need to lick the back of the film. Many people Mosse encountered had fond memories of the "lambe lambe" photographer, and his camera became a talking point. Tweeten's 35-millimeter film camera was also unlike the cameras used by television crews; Mosse says that people instantly understood that what they were shooting was not going to appear on the nightly news. He sometimes told people they were making a Western movie. "Ah, you're crazy artists!" people would conclude.

Except that Mosse, Tweeten and Frost are not crazy. The film they made, as well as the body of photographic work Mosse produced alongside *Broken Spectre*, is an astonishing, devastating feat, pressing at the very limits of representation. It is not so much concerned with indicting the people who appear in it as much as implicating all of its viewers in the mechanisms that enable the destruction of the Amazon to take place.





ABOVE:
Richard Mosse, *Still from Broken Spectre VI, Llanganates Sangay Ecological Corridor, Ecuador*, 2022.

OPPOSITE:
Richard Mosse, *Still from Broken Spectre V, Llanganates Sangay Ecological Corridor, Ecuador*, 2022.

Richard Mosse



Photos © Richard Mosse

"SOYONS RADICAUX, AYONS LE COURAGE DE BOUSCULER"

Sa série *Infra*, réalisée dans un Congo en guerre avec une pellicule infrarouge, lui a assuré une notoriété internationale en 2012. Depuis, l'Irlandais Richard Mosse ne cesse de mélanger les médiums et les genres, le documentaire et l'art. Ses projets abordent les grandes questions de notre temps : crise migratoire, guerre, changement climatique. Son dernier travail, *Broken Spectre*, sur la destruction de la forêt amazonienne, est présenté au festival Photoclimat à Paris en septembre. La photo comme arme politique.

interview **Dimitri Beck**

DE LA SÉRIE *INFRA*. NORD-KIVU, RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, 2011. Les jeunes rebelles de l'Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) posent dans la végétation du territoire de Masisi.

DE LA SÉRIE *BROKEN SPECTRE*. AMAZONIE, BRÉSIL, 2018. Un mantoptère, espèce à laquelle appartiennent notamment les mantes religieuses, sur une dionée attrape-mouche, une plante insectivore.



"J'AI RÉALISÉ *BROKEN SPECTRE* POUR ALERTER SUR CE POINT DE NON-RETOUR QUI GUETTE L'AMAZONIE"

***Broken Spectre* est un travail sur la dégradation de l'Amazonie et les crimes environnementaux dont la forêt est victime. Quel a été l'élément déclencheur de ce projet que vous avez réalisé entre 2018 et 2022 ?**

Richard Mosse Des études scientifiques effectuées ces dernières années ont établi que l'Amazonie va atteindre un point de basculement : bientôt elle ne sera plus capable de générer de la pluie, ce qui aura pour conséquence un dépérissement massif de la forêt, un rejet de carbone à des niveaux dévastateurs, avec un impact sur la vie sur Terre telle que nous la connaissons. Nous entrons dans une époque d'extinction de masse. Nous ne prendrons jamais conscience des nombreuses espèces disparues, cachées dans le biome extrêmement riche de l'Amazonie. J'ai réalisé *Broken Spectre* pour alerter sur ce point de non-retour qui nous guette.

Ce film de soixante-quatorze minutes mêle photographie, vidéo et création sonore. Qu'est-ce qui fait son originalité ?

Sa forme, justement. Cette œuvre intègre trois approches distinctes pour représenter la forêt tropicale dans son ensemble et dans sa complexité. La disparition progressive de l'Amazonie et l'impact que cela peut avoir sur le monde sont des phénomènes à la fois trop vastes, imperceptibles et omniprésents pour être vus et compris de tous. J'ai donc choisi de travailler à trois échelles différentes.

D'abord en macro, depuis les airs, avec un appareil fixé sur le nez d'un hélicoptère. Mon équipe et moi avons fabriqué une caméra similaire à celle utilisée par l'industrie agroalimentaire pour exploiter de manière plus rentable la forêt tropicale et par les minéralogistes pour rechercher des métaux précieux. Ces appareils sont connus sous le nom de caméras multi- et hyperspectrales. Souvent embarquées sur des drones, elles peuvent cartographier avec précision l'état de dégradation des cultures et de la flore grâce à une gamme de couleurs, qui est ensuite interprétée.



Il y a aussi l'échelle humaine. Vous avez filmé des bûcherons qui abattent illégalement des essences précieuses, des orpailleurs clandestins qui empoisonnent et détruisent les rivières, mais aussi les membres des communautés autochtones, comme les Yanomamis... Et il y a ces incroyables plans qui évoquent un film de genre bien connu, le western.

Le monde des cow-boys *vaqueiros* au Brésil est le milieu dans lequel se produit une grande partie de la destruction de l'Amazonie. En voyageant sur la route transamazonienne, on voit souvent du bétail conduit par des cow-boys à travers des étendues de forêt tropicale brûlée. Le directeur de la photographie avec qui je collabore depuis plusieurs années, Trevor Tweeten, s'est inspiré pour *Broken Spectre* des westerns spaghettis, qui étaient souvent réalisés en écran large.

Une grande partie du film a été tournée avec des pellicules infrarouges en noir et blanc. Le grain est dense et le rendu révèle tout le pouvoir de l'analogique. Comme c'était la saison des pluies, les plantes regorgeaient de chlorophylle, ce qui se traduit sur la pellicule par un blanc éclatant et des noirs profonds. Ces séquences sont accompagnées d'une création musicale orchestrée par le compositeur de musique électronique Ben Frost, l'autre artiste incontournable de notre trio. Il s'est plongé dans les musiques composées par Ennio Morricone. Un moyen d'impliquer plus le grand public, qui connaît bien ce cinéma de genre très populaire.

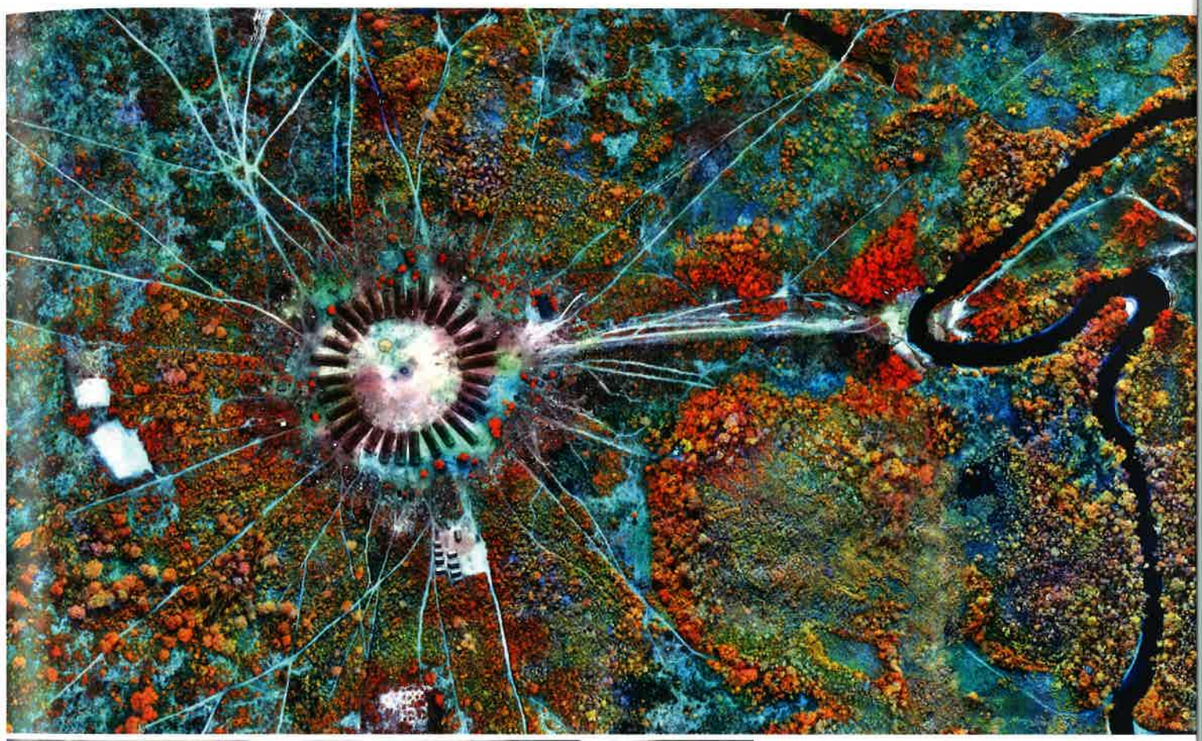
Et enfin, troisième échelle, l'infiniment petit...

Ces images sont un examen minutieux des plantes et des insectes, révélant la complexité du biome amazonien et leurs relations symbiotiques. Les formes vivantes non humaines prennent un aspect inhabituel grâce à la fluorescence de la lumière UV, les végétaux ont des allures de bijoux et des microplastiques, souvent collés au corps des insectes, brillent intensément, révélant leur présence au plus profond de la forêt tropicale.

Dans le film, une jeune femme de la communauté yanomami s'exclame face caméra : *"Vous, les Blancs, voyez notre réalité. Ouvrez vos esprits. Ne nous laissez pas parler avec bravoure sans rien faire. Blancs ! Parlez-en à vos pères et à vos mères. Expliquez-leur."* *Broken Spectre* est-il un plaidoyer politique ?

Je reconnais qu'il est sincèrement engagé. Il ne nous reste qu'une génération pour sauver la forêt amazonienne ! Nous avons tout fait pour que le film soit dévoilé avant l'élection présidentielle brésilienne.

La première a eu lieu le 30 septembre 2022, à la National Gallery of Victoria à Melbourne, peu avant le premier tour *le 30 octobre 2022, Jair Bolsonaro est battu au second tour de l'élection présidentielle. Son adversaire Luis*





DE LA SÉRIE *BROKEN SPECTRE*. ÉTAT DU MATO GROSSO, BRÉSIL, 2020.
Vue aérienne du village de Halataikwa, dans le centre du pays, où vivent les Enawenê-nawê. Cette communauté indigène déplace régulièrement ses habitations pour permettre à la forêt de se régénérer.

À gauche :

ÉTAT D'AMAZONAS, BRÉSIL, 2019.
Des recherches récentes révèlent que l'homme cultive la forêt amazonienne depuis la préhistoire en domestiquant certaines plantes comme les palmiers. Les méthodes anciennes, respectueuses de la biodiversité, contrastent fortement avec la monoculture de l'agro-industrie moderne.

ÉTAT DU RORAIMA, BRÉSIL, 2021.
Les Yanomamis se préparent à défendre le village de Palimiu, situé dans le nord du Brésil. Des confrontations violentes entre cette communauté indigène et des orpailleurs illégaux ont dégénéré en juin 2021 et auraient causé la mort de quatre personnes.

Inacio Lula da Silva est élu avec 50,9 % des suffrages!. C'était pour moi une tentative délibérée de sensibiliser l'opinion internationale à ces questions.

Même si ce projet est militant, je suis toujours réticent face au terme "activiste" parce que l'on peut vite tomber dans la propagande. Je crois avant tout en l'autonomie du travail artistique et en l'art pur. Je choisis mes sujets et trouve les moyens de les financer, en empruntant de l'argent moi-même ou avec le soutien d'institutions et de mécènes, ce qui me permet de conserver mon indépendance. Une fois embarqué sur un projet, j'avance avec des œillères. Jusqu'à *Broken Spectre*, mon intention était de poser des questions plutôt que d'apporter des réponses, pour susciter un dialogue. Cette fois-ci, je lance un cri d'alarme.

Dans vos projets, vous poussez toujours plus loin les limites de l'image en utilisant des procédés à usages militaires et scientifiques, par exemple. Comment en êtes-vous venu à ce mélange entre documentaire, art et technique ?

J'ai grandi à Londres dans une famille d'artisans et d'artistes. Mes parents étaient amis avec la photographe Lee Miller et son mari, Roland Penrose, peintre et poète britannique. Quand j'étais jeune, j'étais nul en sciences, mais j'étais un vrai geek, fan d'appareils photos. Je testais toutes les possibilités techniques pour m'amuser. Et très vite, j'ai tourné ces contraintes à mon avantage. A 21 ans, je me suis installé à Berlin et j'ai commencé à travailler sur l'après-guerre dans les Balkans. Mon intention était de représenter la tragédie des personnes mortes dans le conflit mais dont les corps n'ont jamais été identifiés. Très souvent, ils se trouvaient dans des fosses communes qui, à ce moment-là, étaient encore cachées sous les magnifiques paysages des Balkans. C'est cette tension que j'ai essayé d'explorer dans mon tout premier projet. J'ai trouvé que le photojournalisme traditionnel, c'est-à dire le langage de ce qui est visible, s'avérait inadapté. Cet échec m'a nourri. Il m'a encouragé à explorer d'autres approches.

Vos études supérieures ont également contribué à votre évolution.

A la faculté de Goldsmiths à Londres, où j'étais inscrit pour un master, mon approche se situait dans un espace hybride entre la photographie documentaire et la photographie d'art. Mais ce n'était pas acceptable pour mes professeurs. Je suis donc parti étudier à l'école d'art de Yale, aux Etats-Unis. C'était l'endroit idéal pour moi. Axée sur l'art contemporain, cette formation était issue de la photographie documentaire, avec un riche héritage d'anciens membres de la faculté, dont Walker Evans. J'ai eu la chance de suivre les cours de Tod Papageorge, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Paul Graham, Taryn Simon ou Gregory Crewdson.

A ma sortie, j'ai reçu une bourse de deux ans pour les arts du spectacle et les arts visuels, très bien dotée. Elle m'a donné une grande liberté pour continuer à expérimenter et à explorer.

"LE PHOTOJOURNALISME TRADITIONNEL EST PARFOIS INADAPTÉ"



C'est grâce à cette bourse Leonore Annenberg que vous êtes allé en Irak en 2009. Pourquoi là-bas ?

J'avais lu un article sur les palais de Saddam Hussein, paru dans le *New Yorker*, écrit par le journaliste d'investigation Jon Lee Anderson. Et j'ai eu la chance de le rencontrer lorsqu'il est venu donner une conférence dans ma ville natale de Kilkenny, en Irlande. Il m'a conseillé et c'est ce qui a déclenché l'idée de *Breach*, une série photographique qui documente l'architecture des résidences de Saddam Hussein pendant l'occupation militaire américaine. J'étais captivé par l'expression du pouvoir autoritaire qu'elles représentaient. Il y avait au moins 84 palais dans tout le pays, dont certains n'avaient même jamais été visités par le raïs. Ils étaient conçus pour inspirer la peur, pour rappeler à la population l'omniprésence du dictateur.

Lorsque l'armée américaine a occupé l'Irak, elle s'est servie de plusieurs de ces bâtiments, très bien fortifiés et souvent situés dans les centres urbains densément peuplés, comme bases militaires. Elle y a installé ses équipements provisoires : sacs de sable, barrières de défense, champs de tir, bureaux, unités de climatisation, salles de sport, etc. C'était surréaliste et oppressant. Et l'imagerie qui en résulte est une sorte de palimpseste du pouvoir et de l'occupation. Lorsque j'étais embarqué avec les troupes de GI, je ne pouvais m'empêcher d'avoir une certaine empathie pour eux. C'était un projet étrangement émouvant, mais aussi très déprimant.



DE LA SÉRIE *BREACH*. MONT MAKHOUL, IRAK, 2009.
Piscine de la résidence présidentielle appelée « Palais d'Oudai », du prénom du fils de Saddam Hussein, investie par des soldats américains.

BAGDAD, IRAK, 2009.
Equipements d'entraînement sportif installés par l'armée des Etats-Unis dans le « Palais d'Al Fao » de l'ancien dictateur irakien.



A gauche,
DE LA SÉRIE *BROKEN SPECTRE*. ÉTAT DU PARA, BRÉSIL, 2021.
José est un chercheur d'or, un « *garimpeiro* ». L'exploitation illégale des mines d'or, à l'aide de canon à eau et de mercure, dévaste l'Amazonie.



DE LA SÉRIE *INFRA*. NORD-KIVU, RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, 2012.
Le camp de déplacés de Kanyaruchinya a accueilli au moins 60 000 personnes ayant fui l'avancée des combattants rebelles du Mouvement du 23 mars, également appelé M23.

"AVEC LA PELLICULE AEROCHROME, ON COMPREND LA VIOLENCE"

En 2012, vous sortez votre premier livre, *Infra*. Un regard sur le conflit en cours en République démocratique du Congo. Les milices armées posent au milieu de paysages magnifiques aux teintes vives avec des couleurs allant de la lavande au fuchsia. D'un seul coup, la guerre est en rose !

J'étais en pleine remise en question et complètement fauché, la bourse étant arrivée à son terme. J'envisageais même d'arrêter. C'était aussi une période étrange pour la photographie documentaire et le photojournalisme, car le numérique était en train de supplanter la pellicule analogique. Kodak était en proie à des difficultés financières et arrêtait la production de certaines pellicules, dont une gamme infrarouge, l'Aerochrome. La marque l'avait développée pour l'armée américaine dans les années 1940 afin qu'elle puisse détecter les combattants dans la végétation malgré le camouflage. Plus tard même, pendant la guerre du Vietnam, elle a été utilisée pour localiser l'ennemi en vue de bombardements au napalm. Et le mouvement psychédélique de la fin des années 1960 se l'est appropriée. De nombreuses pochettes d'album ont été faites avec ce film. Il a été associé à la contre culture et au mouvement anti-guerre du Vietnam.

L'Aerochrome a le pouvoir de révéler un spectre de couleurs que l'œil humain ne peut pas voir. Il m'a permis de regarder sous *infra* en latin la surface des choses et de comprendre la violence inscrite dans ce paysage. C'était une démarche expérimentale pour briser les codes du photojournalisme. Quitte à ce que ce soit mon dernier tour de piste, je voulais le faire avec panache. J'ai senti qu'il y avait un potentiel avec ce procédé dans ce pays en proie à un infernal et interminable cycle de violence. La série *Infra* a été très remarquée et a bénéficié d'une grande visibilité dans les médias et auprès du public.

La photographie de guerre traditionnelle est dépassée, selon vous ?

Pour ce qui concerne le Congo, assurément. J'ai été confronté à la difficulté de photographier ce conflit, principalement en raison de l'absence de traces sur l'architecture et dans le paysage. En Irak, l'image d'un bâtiment en béton bombardé a une dimension symbolique et renvoie à la

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At The Momentary, An Art-Driven, Impassioned Plea for the "Enduring Amazon"

Art and science align for this powerful new exhibition in Bentonville, Arkansas

CH STUDIO—20 NOVEMBER 2023



Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

The artistic allure of Bentonville, Arkansas is often anchored in the architectural gravity of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, as well as its renowned permanent collection and temporary exhibitions (like the engrossing retrospective *Annie Leibovitz at Work*, or the wondrous outdoor *Listening Forest* by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer). While Crystal Bridges is reason enough to visit Bentonville, it's not the only pioneering art institution in town. In fact, its 63,000-square-foot sibling, The Momentary, reopened this past weekend after a design refresh following an initial launch in February 2020. Once a Kraft cheese factory, the sprawling multidisciplinary space has transformed into a warm, welcoming cultural hub for art, music, food and drink. Its centerpiece from now until April 2024 is the free, immersive exhibition *Enduring Amazon: Life and Afterlife in the Rainforest*, featuring attention grabbing contributions from five contemporary artists.

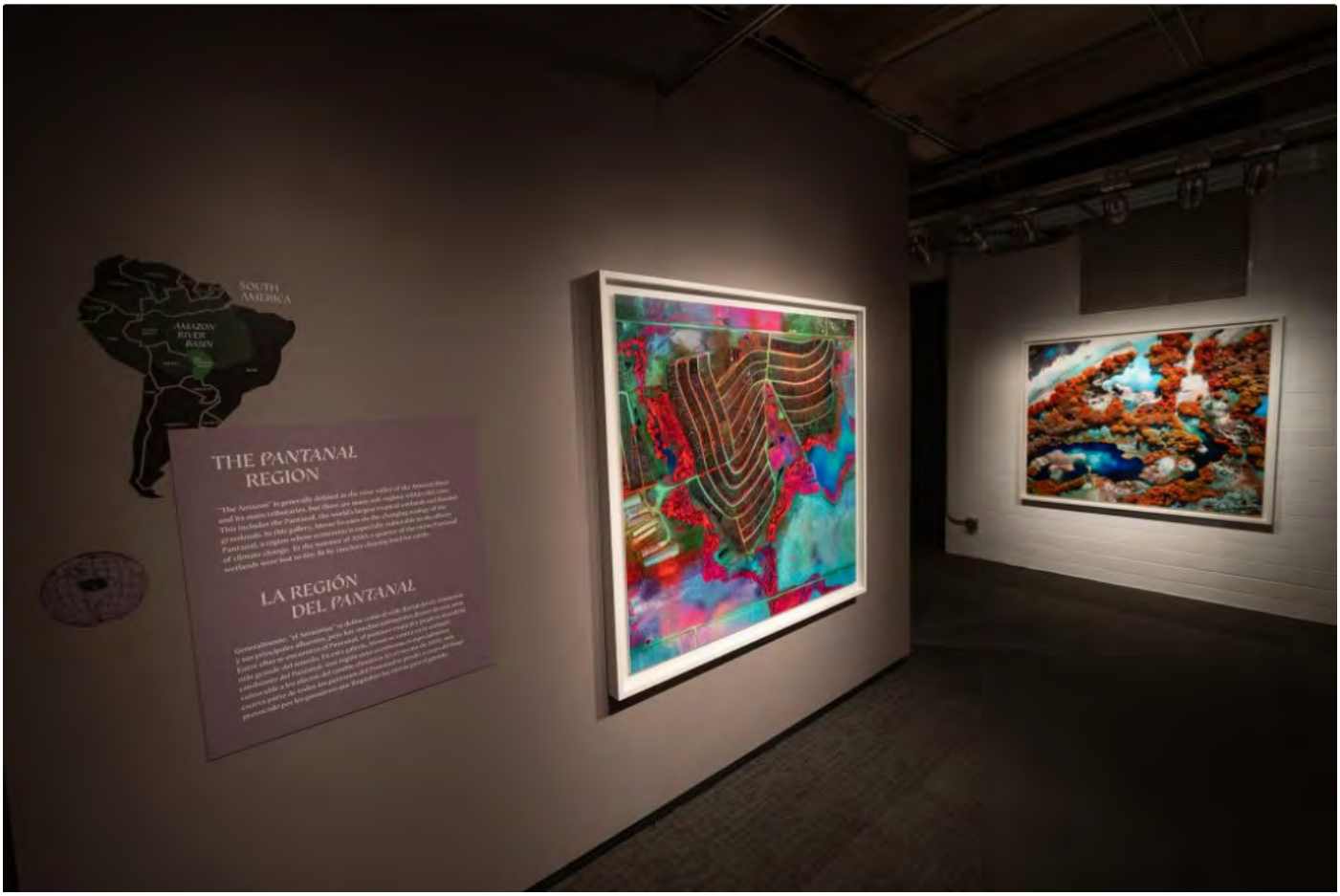


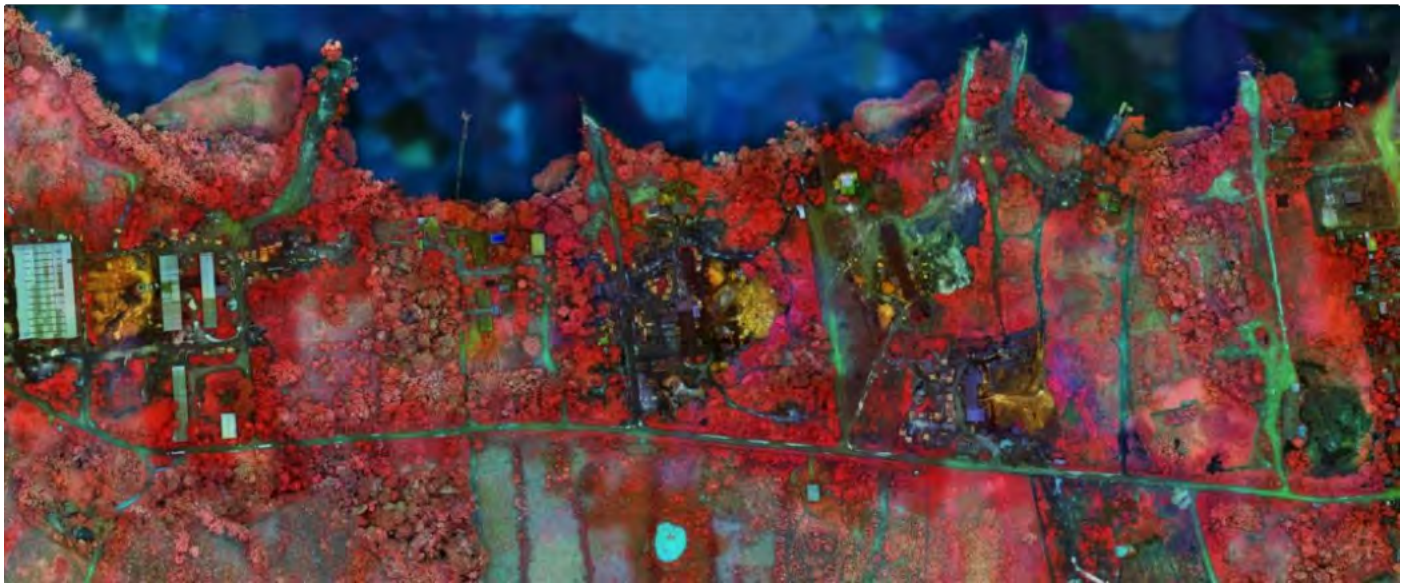
Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

Enduring Amazon utilizes art as a vehicle to direct attention toward one of our greatest environmental emergencies: the declining state of the Amazon rainforest. The informative, often emotional exhibit pairs wildly diverse, equally powerful pieces from David Brooks, Susannah Sayler and Edward Morris, Richard Mosse, and Ben Frost, to a resounding, sensorial effect. The overall impact is spectacular and sweeping—even though each artist delves into the subject matter in their own voice, through their own craft. This is thanks to impeccable curation by Joseph Thompson, The Momentary's curator at large, and Elise Raborg, the organizer of the exhibition and curatorial associate.



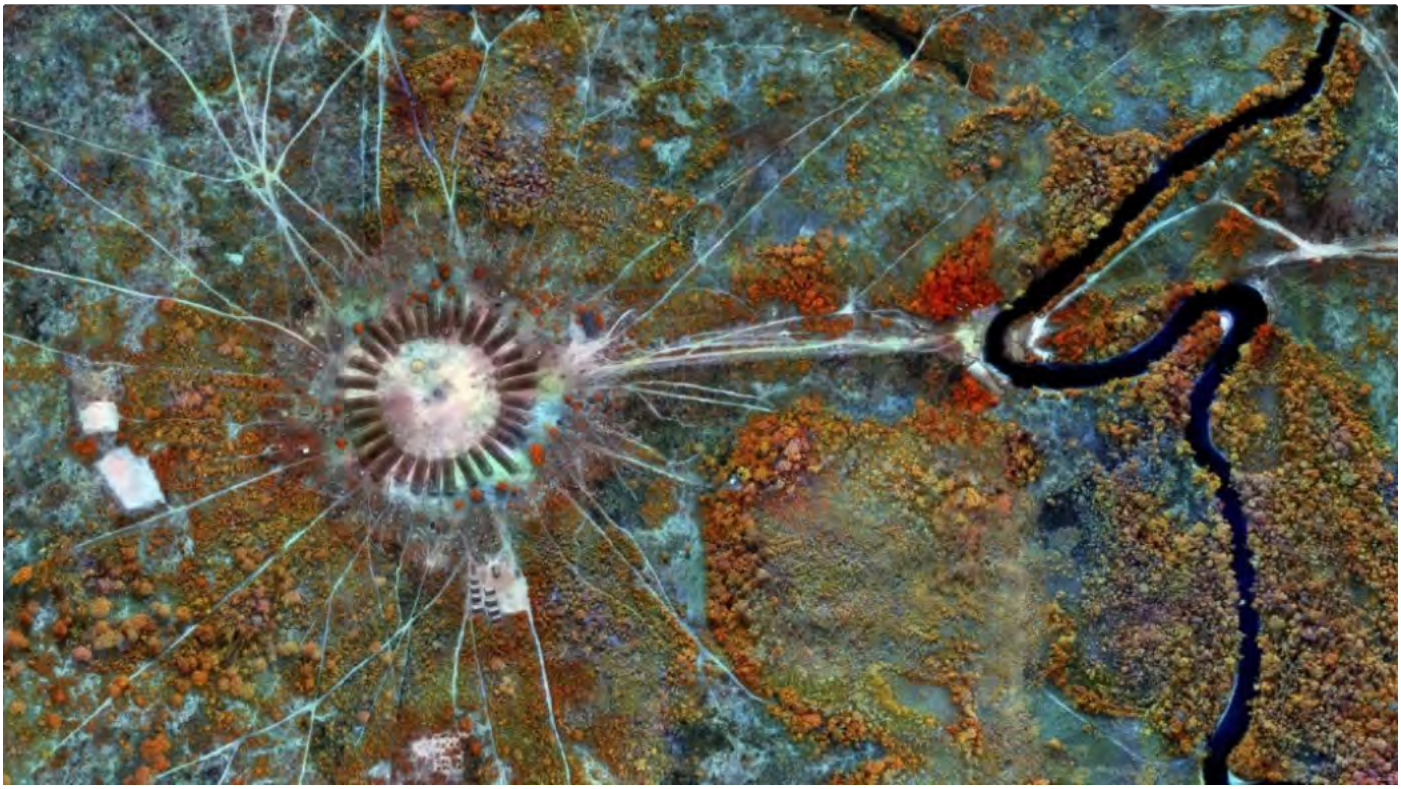
Environmental photographer Richard Mosse. Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

Though the exhibition features moments requiring careful contemplation, the beauty (or, in some cases, the eccentricity) of each work acts as a reprieve. “Even as you witness the tumult and the devastation,” Thompson says, “you see it through imagery that is unrelentingly beautiful and detailed and sharply observed. These installations ask us to look closely and listen closely.”



Richard Mosse, *Senador José Porfirio, Para*, 2021. Digital C-print. Courtesy of the artist, and Collection of Pamela and Richard Kramlich

The work of Mosse, a critically acclaimed environmental photographer and filmmaker, sets the introductory tone. Stylistically enhanced large-scale images depict beauty and tragedy. Mosse's enhancements are not only aesthetic in nature, but a code to unlocking information. "Richard toes the line of art and science as a documentary photographer," Raborg says. "These photographs were created by incessantly layering imagery from GSI, geographic information systems, and drone photography of ultra-wide wavelengths to reveal colors and conditions that are not visible to the human eye. "



Richard Mosse, *Aldeia Enawene-nawe, Mata Grosso*, 2020. Digital C-print. Courtesy of the artist, Altman Siegal, San Francisco, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Red represents forest degradation. Milky tones in a river denote pollution. “This is a false color palette,” Mosse says. “This is how scientists see the forest. The types of cameras are called multi-spectral cameras. They have numerous bands—18 or more—while our eyes only have three: red, green and blue. They are narrow bands of spectral reflectance of the environment. When you combine them using GSI technologies, and you apply red, green and blue, you start to see invisible things—aspects of deforestation, the release of gases, the amount of evaporation. A lot of these maps show us instances of various fronts of deforestation, illegal logging, industrialized mining, an aluminum refinery. There’s artisanal gold mining. Cattle farming accounts for 80% of deforestation. It’s for cheap beef in fast food. They are all interwoven, these environmental crimes.” Mosse spent years in the Amazon capturing the images himself and then imbuing them with coded data.



Environmental photographer Richard Mosse. Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

Mosse couples his photographic pieces with one utterly magnetizing 74-minute film, *Broken Spectre*, presented on a 70-foot-long, multi-screen panoramic display. Mosse shifts between tight shots that teem with and celebrate colorful life to black-and-white scenes of dire large-scale destruction. The film includes an impassioned plea from an Indigenous woman for help—for the violence enacted upon the Amazon to stop, for viewers with resource to do something. As the film ends, its resonance remains.

“We spent about four or five years in the field, trying to understand the processes that are unfolding across the Amazon,” Mosse says. “It’s world’s largest tropical rainforest; it spans nine countries. How do you find a lens wide enough to convey that? The processes themselves are so abstract—climate change, global warming—you can’t see it with the human eye. I asked myself ‘how do we take a picture of that?’ Photography is so concrete.” Mosse found a way to make something intangible burrow into human consciousness.



Fish caretaker Shannon Mahl with the David Brooks installation *Lonely Loricariidae*. Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

David Brooks' *Lonely Loricariidae* conceptual installation takes a very different approach. "It's composed of a set of stadium bleachers with fish tanks on them," he says. "In the fish tanks are living fish from a large family called *Loricariidae*, specifically from the Amazon." Brooks has been working since 2005 with conservation biologists throughout various river systems in the Amazon that are being threatened—areas where hydroelectric dams are being built, where there are artisanal gold mine operations or fossil fuel extraction.



Fish caretaker Shannon Mahl with the David Brooks installation *Lonely Loricariidae*. Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

“One of the ways conservationists can set aside or move NGO dollars is if they can taxonomically describe what is in the river. You cannot just say it is biodiverse. You have to describe each new species,” he says. “What you have in these fish tanks are fish that are unknown to science. They are not yet described because it is a family of fish that’s so incredibly biodiverse it really challenges science itself.” In the installation, Brooks provides a phylogenic tree of all the species that have been described by science so far, and a much longer list of what’s for sale in the aquarium market for undescribed species.”

“What we have done here is work with biologists to select fish from that aquarium trade, ones that are specifically unknown to science,” he says. “A minimum of two of these will be described in the next four months as part of the artwork. This is to instigate a crossflow of art and the actual taxonomic describing of the fish.”



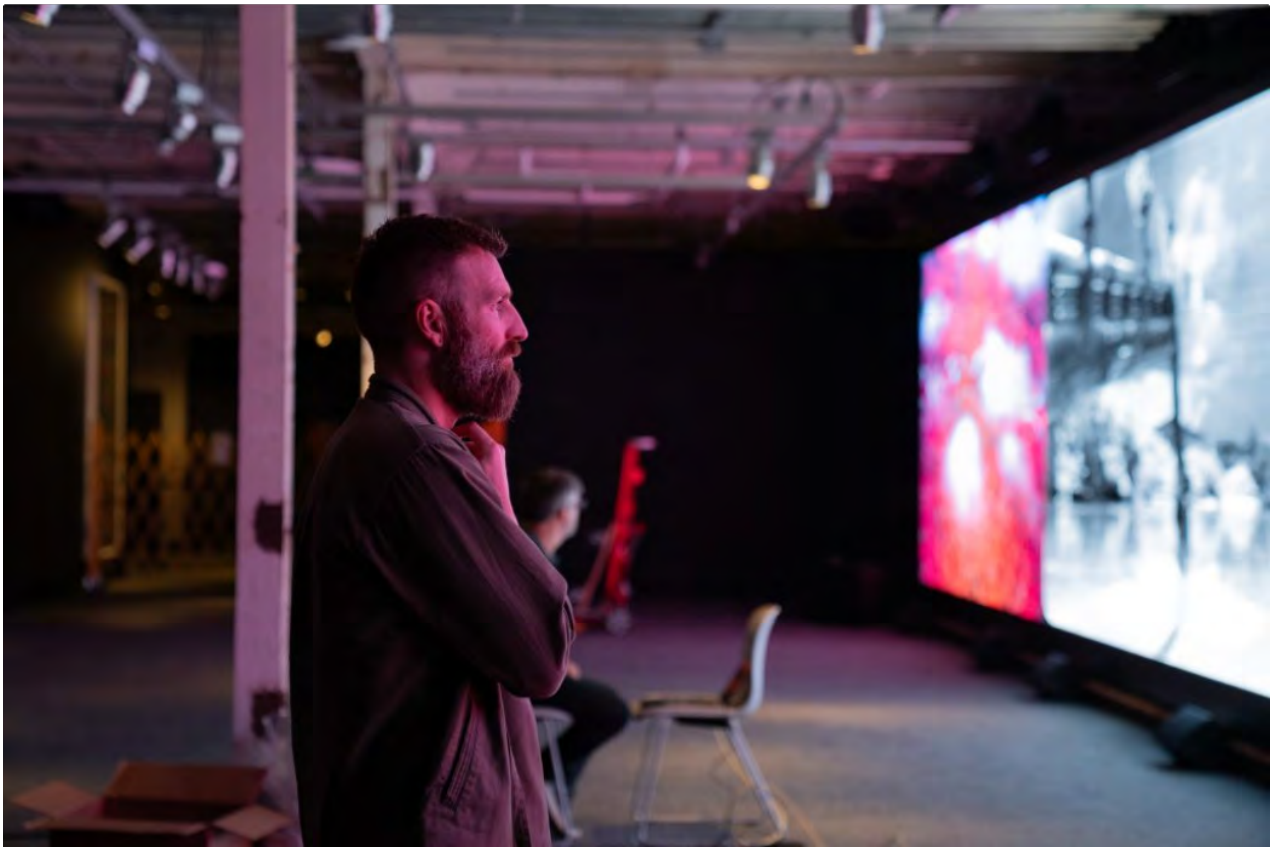
Composer and sound designer Ben Frost. Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

Composer and sound designer Ben Frost's artistic contributions to *Enduring Amazon* are both the subtlest and most bombastic. Twisting for 65 feet skyward, Frost's first-ever sculpture almost appears to be a sonic skeleton connected to The Momentary itself. "It's a reinterpreted line array of speakers," Frost says. "It's 22 channels of audio and it has a score. The soundtrack is entirely synthesized—from a range of influences which are inevitably drawn from nature, these elemental forces that we are meddling with that are looking for a way to exist, and still existing in spite of us. I want you to have this feeling that this new organism, this reimagined nature, is connected to the world around us. It does not exist in a vacuum."



Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

Invisibility was the impetus behind the piece. “I work with sound,” Frost says. “The puts me in close connect with a hidden ecosystem of sound technology. When you are looking at a stage, right in front of you there’s something called a line array, which is a string of speakers hung in a perfect row on either side. They are designed with an inherent invisibility. For me, this invisibility is something that I find interesting. These speakers themselves are inevitably constructed from a lot of the extracted materials that Richard speaks to in his work—paper, steel, copper. A lot of these elements are right in front of us and all around us. They’re strangely ignored. I am interested in reclaiming that invisibility but also trying to find a new way to interpret that and bring nature back into the raw material that’s at the heart of it.”



Composer and sound designer Ben Frost in front of *Broken Spectre*. Image by Tom McFetridge for Crystal Bridges

Frost is the connective tissue throughout the exhibition. In addition to his spiraling tower, he composed a score to accompany Brooks' installation, as well as the enchanting, hopeful and layered animation by Susannah Sayler and Edward Morris. "I also worked closely with Richard and cinematographer Trevor Tweeten on the creation of *Broken Spectre*, both as a composer and as a sound recordist in the field," Frost says. In the way that a musical composition influences the emotional aptitude of a movie, Frost's sonic ecosystem for *Enduring Amazon* is both comforting and antagonizing, provocative and inspiring. Oftentimes, sounds overlap from different spaces at The Momentary and create their own artistic dialogue—as one would imagine occurs in the natural soundscapes of the Amazon.

Enduring Amazon expresses the curatorial capabilities of The Momentary, but the institution is more than one expansive exhibition. Programming ranges from a year-round series of culinary events to outdoor concerts and activations, and enveloping spaces include an Onyx Coffee Bar lobby (complete with a new Beeple digital artwork) and Tower Bar, with vistas stretching beyond Bentonville. As with Crystal Bridges, The Momentary is conveniently located, easily accessible and well worth the visit.

LRB

Vol. 45 No. 16 · 10 August 2023

On Richard Mosse

Francis Gooding

THERE HAVE BEEN two recent opportunities to see Richard Mosse's remarkable work in London. *Broken Spectre* (2022), a film and series of photographs, was displayed earlier this year in an echoing, pseudo-industrial basement space at 180 the Strand; the Hayward Gallery's ecologically themed group show *Dear Earth*, which runs until 3 September, includes the related but more austere multiscreen *Grid (Palimi-ú)* and photographs taken on the Rio Tigre in the Peruvian Amazon. All these works involve stark confrontations with an Amazonian *terra atrocitatis*, in which extractive industries work with antinomian fury to create fields of toxicity and death amid the planet's most abundant concentrations of life. Together, they document what amounts to an act of negative creation, an anti-Genesis.



(https://lrb-website-production-assets.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/images/5/6/1/7/29727165-1-eng-GB/db9b58925ebc-e9776e33cbc41553dcf524830d82d56f.jpg)

'Safe from Harm' (2012)

Mosse seeks what can't be seen. He employs military or industrial camera technologies sensitive to light spectra invisible to the eye; his subjects are ignored or remote catastrophes. His photographs of the war in Congo for *The Enclave* (2013) were created with Kodak's discontinued Aerochrome film stock, a 'false-colour' infrared film that reproduced the deep greens of the Congolese jungle as hot pinks and purples. Aerochrome originally had military applications: it was used to detect enemy emplacements camouflaged with foliage. Repurposed by Mosse, the film produced an aestheticised theatre of war, with child soldiers, bullet-riddled corpses and squalid refugee camps set in a candyfloss landscape, as flamboyantly neo-chromatic as a Kinshasa *sapeur*.

The drone-borne multispectral cameras used for the aerial photography of both *Grid* and *Broken Spectre* were designed by Mosse and his team. Like Aerochrome, they produce false-colour representations of wavelengths invisible to the naked eye, so foliage shows up in lipstick scarlets, saturated orange, pinks and purples. Versions of the same technology are used in military reconnaissance and on satellites that measure solar radiation from the Earth's surface, producing data that can be used by scientists to study, for instance, damage to forest cover. Similar drone-mounted cameras are used by farmers to check crop health from the air, and one of the first photos in *Broken Spectre* is of a billboard advertising agricultural drones for use on the vast monocultural farms of soya and palm that are eating into Amazonia. 'Our Technology Makes Your Profit Sprout,' the legend reads, a formulation that confuses the financial and the organic, while hi-tech industrial agriculture – or 'precision farming', as the drone industry styles it – advances through the rainforest.

The images were all made in remote parts of the Amazon: the Mato Grosso, Rondônia, Cuiabá – the same places whose lost isolation Claude Lévi-Strauss lamented in *Tristes Tropiques*. In *Broken Spectre*, they are of three varieties: close-up images of jungle life; composite multispectral images of the jungle from the air; and black and white infrared images of the human beings who live and work in the jungle – both the frontiersmen who work the ranches, gold mines and logging stations and the Indigenous Yanomami. The humans and their baleful work are shown at intermediate size (what we might think of as a 'normal' size for photographic reproduction); around their monochrome industry and misery Mosse veers between very small things made enormous and enormous things made very small. The images of life include a leaf-like katydid squatting among some scrotal miniature pitcher plants, and a mantis elegantly goal-hanging on a bundle of Venus flytraps. Shot at night with an ultraviolet lens, these photographs are saturated with hallucinatory colours; the impression is of burgeoning and utterly alien life, on a scale so small and so abundant as to disorient the human viewer.

This is part of the point: Mosse is trying to show complex ecological and historical processes taking place beyond perception and representation. The aerial photographs lift us away from the miniature universe on the jungle floor to take in a drone's-eye view of huge swathes of forest, where the camera's novel colour range distinguishes distressed vegetation from healthy forest. The violent attacks that the Amazon has sustained start to become clear. Fires rage, both through the jungle and, hellishly, below the earth: in the Pantanal, the world's biggest wetland, dry seasons are now so extreme that fires break out underground, coursing through desiccated root systems. They are nearly impossible to fight. Gold mining is conducted in the Amazon by hosing sediment into waterways under extreme pressure. The mud appears white in Mosse's camera lens, the spoil-clogged rivers chalk-blue. This is river and forest transformed into a filthy toothpaste moonscape. Oil palm plantations spread into the jungle like a pink fungus; the regimented rows of trees are a million asterisks, a continuous stream of obscenities.

Scattered throughout are images of the people at the centre of it all: the *garimpeiros* or illegal gold miners, fixing the tiny amounts of flushed-out gold with mercury, and poisoning themselves and the river as they do so; the Yanomami, trying to protect the forest and their people from the incursions of loggers and miners; and 'burners', posing in front of the primary forest they are about to incinerate. These are Mosse's perpetrators and victims, the mediators of life and death in the jungle. We are looking at the blazing, contaminated, violent frontier of a planetary-scale disaster.

The photographs are too beautiful, however, to convey the horror fully: they show disasters, but they also lift us out of them. Their prettiness speaks as much to desktop wallpaper aesthetics as to the military-scientific origin of the technology. Perhaps Mosse intends this: the destruction his pictures document doesn't sit easily with their probable destinations – the art gallery, the collector's house. Planetary doom through a pink filter is a great commodity.

But this knowing art-world ambivalence is abandoned in the films, which are terrifying, direct and refuse to sustain such games. *Grid* comprises aerial drone shots of palm plantations, cattle ranches and mining sites, presented as a shifting, sixteen-screen patchwork. It is offset by a widescreen film of Yanomami men in the village of Palimi-ú. Blackened with charcoal and dressed in ceremonial finery, they declaim their desperate condition to the camera, and plead for help against the violence of the miners. Meanwhile the multiple screens flicker like a CCTV surveillance array, capturing crimes about which nothing is being done. 'We don't want to be filmed for nothing, as usual,' one of the men says. 'You must come quickly and help us … or did you just come here to see and film for no reason?'

Broken Spectre makes for harder viewing still. Playing on a continuous loop across a split screen, and accompanied by Ben Frost's fear-inducing soundtrack, the world pictured is one that has been plunged into the abyss. Two burners, faces wrapped in cloth against the smoke, race between piles of freshly felled vegetation, spraying petrol onto the leaves and lighting them with burning brands. The flames rise, engulfing the forest in smoke. Three cowboys ride through lush forest, before their path opens onto the carbonised wasteland they have created, desolate as far as the eye can see. Hundreds of dewlapped, doe-eyed cattle are herded through the burns, grazing where they can; later we see them lined up in panic for the bolt-gun. Slaughtermen swiftly set about working the warm carcasses with knives, dragging flayed hides across the gore-stained floor, chainsawing bodies in two. Loggers fell forest giants for the camera; each lands with a sound like a bomb going off. A gigantic, gnarled rotary drill is slowly lowered into a pristine waterway; a pair of black-necked Jabiru storks on the river bank are shaded by darkening clouds; the skeletal trunks of the dam-submerged forest shimmer in the swollen water. A tide of murders covers the landscape, and aerial footage shows us the devastation left in its wake. There is not a scrap of green in the film; in the multispectral eyes of Mosse's camera, the trees that still stand are fiery red.



(https://lrb-website-production-assets.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/images/2/6/6/8/29728662-1-eng-GB/9eb8343d0993-still-from-broken-spectre-5.jpg)

Still from 'Broken Spectre' (2022)

If this sounds apocalyptic, that's because it is. Ecocide and genocide come together in Amazonia: colonisation is an unfinished project in the world's last great inhabited wilderness, and the film's occasional drift into the cinematic register of the Western is deliberate. Mosse includes sequences showing the abject poverty of the burners and cowboys, and the pitiful nuggets of bullion dross scummed by the *garimpeiros*; they may seem like gleeful devils, but responsibility for their actions lies far higher up the chain. It extends into the darkness of the gallery: London's smooth and level pavement was raised by the same infernal principles.

At the centre of the maelstrom is a speech by Adneia, a young Yanomami woman. In one of those dramatic accidents that so often attend filmmaking, Mosse's reel runs out in the middle of her declamation, leaving the screen in darkness for several minutes as she castigates Bolsonaro, who unleashed frontier capitalism on her people with renewed ferocity. Like the men in *Grid*, she tells Mosse not to film her if he's not going to do anything. 'You white people, see our reality,' she says. 'Open your minds. Don't let us talk so gallantly and do nothing.'

artist in residence

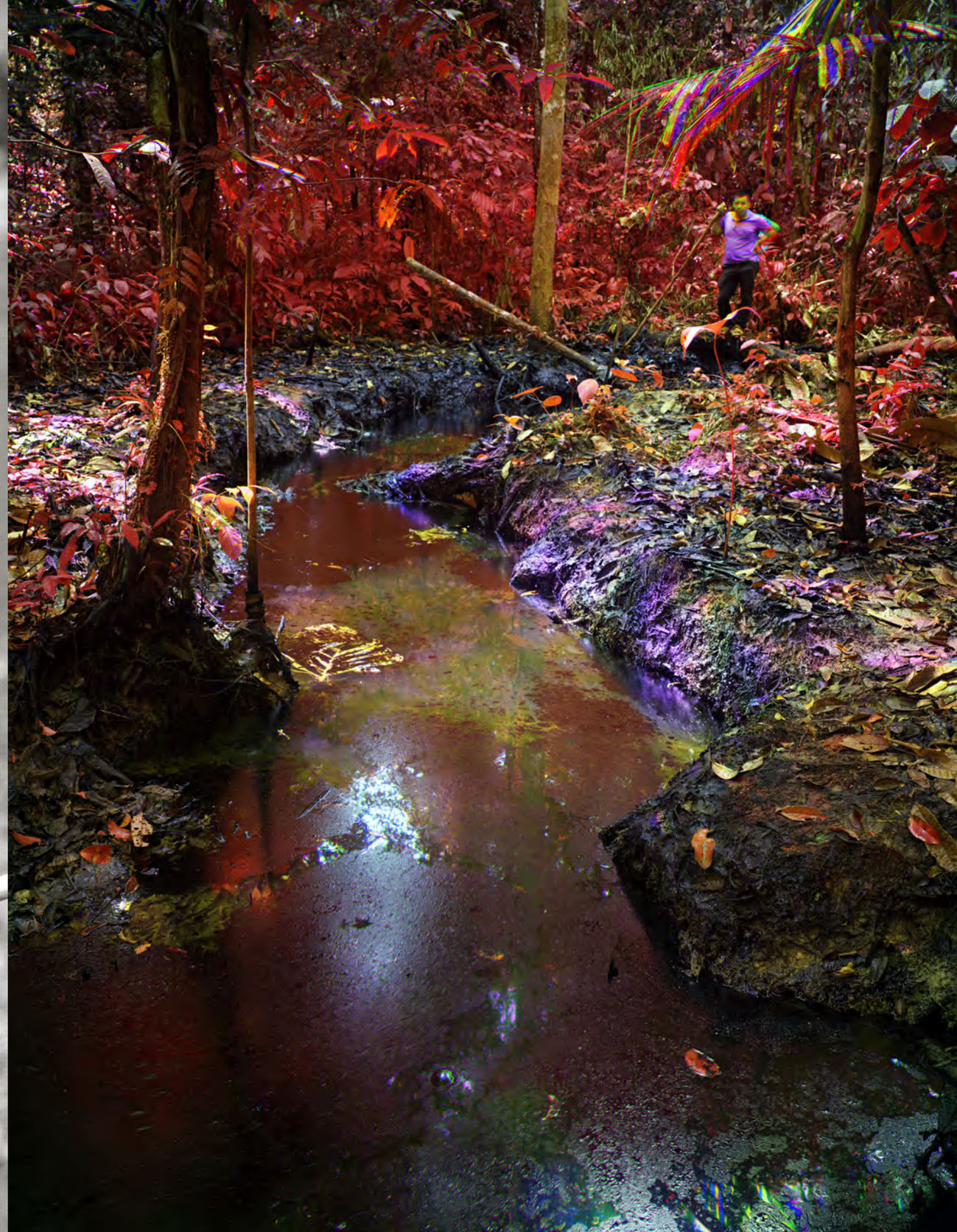
earthrise

Richard Mosse

Broken Spectre

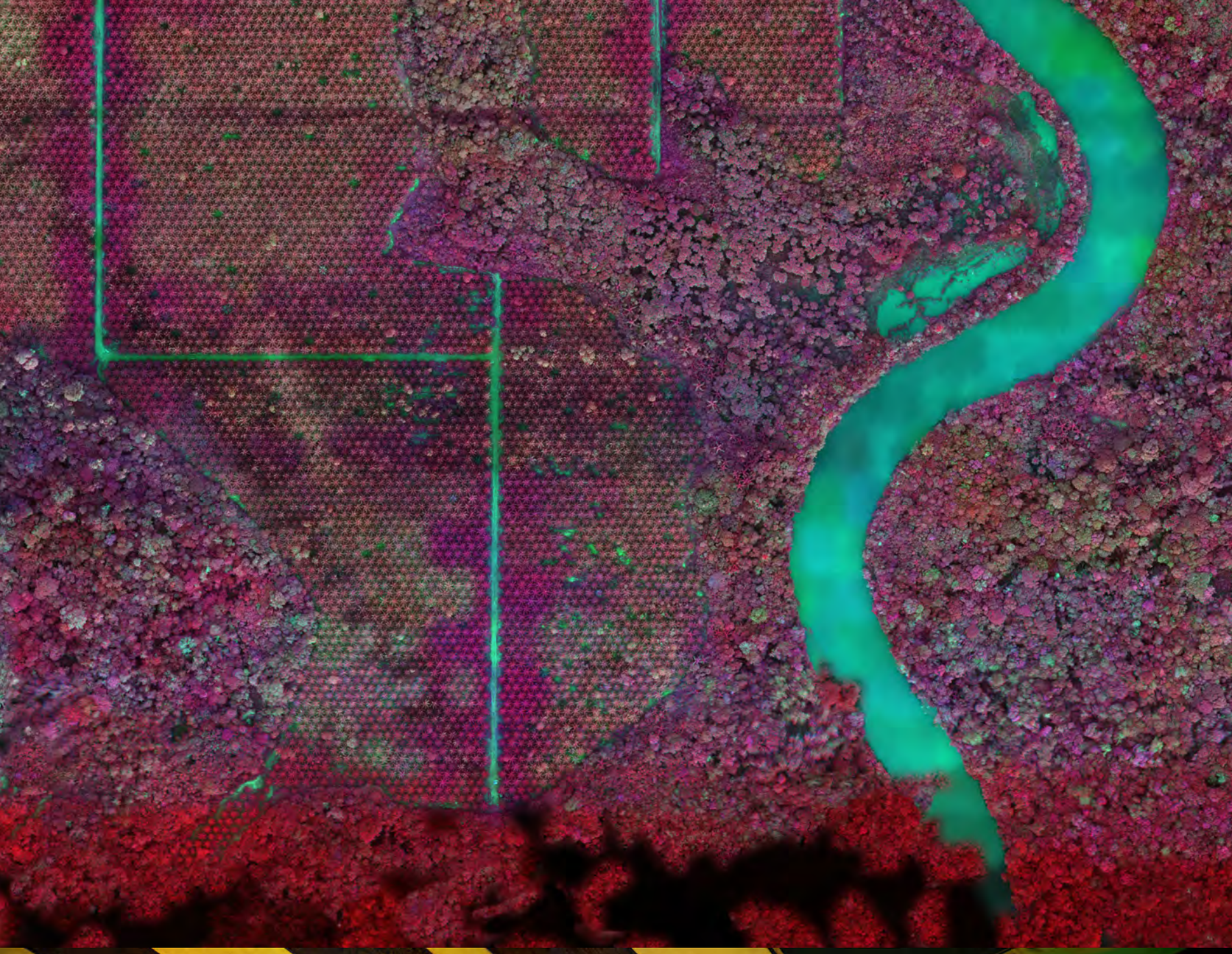
“The notion that the Amazon was untouched, pristine and primordial, in need of civilising and subjugating, belies the nature-culture fallacy upon which our way of life in the West has been structured.”














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Broken Spectre

Starting in 2019 and through the pandemic, I worked in the Brazilian Amazon on an immersive video artwork, *Broken Spectre*, with longstanding friends and collaborators, composer Ben Frost and cinematographer Trevor Tweeten. Shifting in scale and medium, the film takes a careful look at the processes involved in the destruction of the world's largest tropical rainforest by agribusiness, logging and mining interests – almost 99% of which, according to a recent report, are illegal. These fronts of deforestation document man's rapacious incursion into one of Earth's most biodiverse ecosystems.

As a case study of climate change, what's particularly shocking about the Amazon is that only 1% of the original forest was lost to deforestation before 1970. Brazil's military dictatorship, influenced by neo-liberal ideas from the United States, began construction of the Trans-Amazonian Highway in the early 1970s with the stated objective of opening up the Amazon for "development". To facilitate this, the dictatorship established a government agency named INCRA – the National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform – which was tasked with resettling impoverished and landless workers along the route of the highway, to colonise the forest and work the land. INCRA was also established to support large scale landowners to develop the forest, including wealthy ranchers – *fazendeiros* – from São Paulo, who received tax incentives to purchase vast tracts of land that had been zoned as extractivist rubber plantations.

The effects can be clearly seen today. We have lost 17% of the Amazon to crop and pastureland just in the last 50 years. This is all within living memory. Many of the older people that we met along the Trans-Amazonian can remember when they started building the Highway, and had their own stories of resettlement, whether as part of INCRA's colonisation schemes or through voluntary migration.

The sense of time is very acute in the Amazon. I've always felt that the problem we have as a species is that we don't live long enough. If we all lived for 400 years rather than just 80, I think we'd be much more careful about how we live and how we engage with nature and the world around us.

The notion that the Amazon was untouched, pristine and primordial, in need of civilising and subjugating, belies the nature-culture fallacy upon which our way of life, in the West, has been structured.

The separation of nature and culture, the idea that we are somehow above or different from nature, goes all the way back to the *Book of Genesis* – "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move upon the earth". An idea partly responsible for climate change and the origin of many centuries of environmental mismanagement, extractive violence, colonialism, subjugation of Indigenous populations, ideas of dominion over the natural world, monoculture, etc.

All of these can be seen playing out in real time along the Trans-Amazonian Highway, where scenes that had unfolded in our own countries (Europe, the United States, Australia) in the past are now transpiring in real life. And, in so many ways, it looks exactly like a Western, replete with notions of the frontier, cowboys, pioneers, and Manifest Destiny.

text
Richard Mosse

Richard: Trevor, to shoot *Broken Spectr*e, you hot-rodded a Super 35mm camera and put x2 anamorphic lenses on the front. The result was an extremely wide-angle aspect ratio. It dominates the whole film, obviously, and paired with the black-and-white infrared film, it's quite specific, right?

Trevor: It's super specific, and the process was a complete pain in the ass. In fact, every medium that we use is difficult to work with, unwieldy and annoying: the wide-angle with the wide perspective, I guess it was just a hunch. It's something we'd talked about for a little while and it seemed like it would be interesting to try. Then, when we got to the Amazon I realised it was perfect for the landscape because it's so flat there. To try to take in that space and create images that feel as if you could just walk into them, it was perfect. With the infrared, there's something interesting about it in that it feels historical but it also has this strange sci-fi feeling. It takes it out of the present. I think that really works. Infrared is incredible in the way it describes fire and water. Water is there in so much of the process of mining in the Amazon.

The film's black and white footage is the human scale — it's the process, it's the Western, and it's all these things that we're familiar with in a lot of ways. The aerial footage opens this up, so you're able to see the scale of the destruction that you wouldn't otherwise. Then, at certain moments, those shots are smashed against micro-landscapes, and you can't really tell the difference between shots of the vast forest and the camera travelling across the surface of a leaf, looking at little fungi or a tiny spider. These shifts in scale are related to what we were talking about in terms of time.

Richard: Definitely. They're different temporalities, after all, something that Timothy Morton talks about. If you think of the life of a mosquito, a mosquito lives a very short life, but they live it much quicker than us.

Ben: That's something I thought about a lot with the ultrasonic recordings. When I'm recording ultra-high frequencies that we can't hear with the naked ear, I have to pitch the audio down afterwards, which also slows it down. To bring a ten second phrase from a bat down a pitch where it starts to sound human, those couple of seconds can turn into minutes. It often occurred to me, are they saying everything they need to say in that time? And would I need three or four minutes to communicate that same idea?

Richard: I think the black and white film's artisanal, organic, analogue quality is super important. The grain really speaks to people. Ben, were you trying to channel that with your use of the Nagra, recording audio on ¼" magnetic tape?

Ben: On some level, but also my desire to use the Nagra was born out of a want to synchronise with you guys on a temporal level as opposed to a textural one. Nagra is tape, but it's incredibly high resolution. It doesn't feel like an old medium. What's interesting about working with a tape machine is that it has many of the same issues as working with analogue film: the finite quality of the medium, that it runs out, and that you can't just shoot everything. The performance of making these shots is something I've often really been inspired by. There is this physicality to them and there's a certain amount of strain and a kind of sacrifice within it. Working with a digital handheld recorder often feels like it carries inherent meaninglessness with it because there's no risk in it. There's nothing at stake. As evidenced by the fact that we've sacrificed several of those things over the years to the gods of useless technology. Let them die in rivers or bushes or under falling trees or whatever. I just wouldn't do that with the tape machine because there's something to the medium. It asks more of me as an artist in that moment.

Trevor: In the challenge of use there's tension, and out of that tension often comes good solutions and choices in the process of making, as opposed to delaying those choices to the editing process, where so much ends up going in the garbage because there's too much and it's overwhelming. Whereas when you're making choices as you're shooting or recording, there's intentionality. We would watch back some of the footage and often it was like it was already edited, the image and sound would accidentally sync up in these incredible ways.

Richard: It's like some grace occurs through the combination of media.

Ben: There is a performance in listening. Trevor of all people knows about the performance of shooting and what that often demands and requires. This is what John Cage was talking about. When he made *4:33*, the idea is that the performance is in the tension of listening in that moment, and the composition is what occurs inside of that space. I think I understood that better after Brazil.

Richard: Trevor, how do you feel about the idea of performance when you shoot? Is that something you relate to?

Trevor: There's this idea of 'the zone' – a place you reach when you're performing or making something, and you lose yourself in it. When you're not just rolling and rolling, and you're having to constantly make choices and really understand what you're doing because you know that you have only a minute of footage left… I think that is a performance somehow. Then obviously there's also the physicality of it, with a bigger camera, just navigating the environment, getting yourself into a position to get the shot.

Ben: Maybe the strongest element of this piece is that it feels like direct capture in a way. 75% of the sound for *Broken Spectre* is unedited field recordings. They've been EQ-ed and mastered, but that's it. It's about as direct and raw as it could possibly be.

Richard: It's ironic because I regard myself as a reluctant documentarian insofar as I really resent and hesitate about my chosen genre, about myself, my instincts, my intuitions. The language that I've chosen to speak in, I don't want it, I don't like it, I don't respect it. I hate it, I hate myself (laughs). Therefore I have a really hard time making photojournalism, I think it's a dirty word. This mediated form of storytelling that we've come up with by working with surveillance technologies or scientific imaging technologies or whatever, this prismatic way of thinking through the subject using insufferably difficult technologies has liberated me to become the thing that I fear most. In your case, Ben, it is almost the diametrical opposite. Because I think you've struggled a bit with criticism of the way you manipulate sound, but that's what you do, you're a musician. For some reason, particularly with the work we've done together, I feel like you've held yourself back and you've tried to make something that's not manipulated. I do wonder whether there is a hierarchy there, whether something that's unmanipulated has any more worth or value than something that is manipulated. Why is that in your mind, at least?

Ben: What it comes down to is that it's more challenging. Abstraction is a shortcut, in a way. There's something harder, and therefore more alluring, about the idea of finding the thing that's already there and bringing it to light. The

search, the challenge of the hunt. It's harder and therefore, it's more interesting to me. I don't know why.

Richard: But that's very personal because a lot of people listening to the sounds that you produce – they are transparent but they aren't naturalistic, they're not manipulated – wouldn't know the difference.

Ben: I don't know, maybe you don't need to know the difference. Maybe you just feel it. Trevor, when you're shooting, there are so many moments where you're shooting on Steadicam, and you could be shooting much more easily on a tripod. I think you could make the argument in the same way that people don't understand, generally, the difference between those two forms of recording, where one is a kind of documentarian gesture versus something that is constructed. I don't think a lot of people would know specifically that what they're looking at is a human being carrying around 80 kilos of camera equipment versus a camera that's sitting on the flatbed of a truck…

Trevor: But the perception is totally different.

Ben: That's what I'm getting at. You feel it. It feels like that when I watch all the Trevor Tweeten classics from the past ten years, the single shot, moving through a space, navigating an environment. It has this floating quality to it, where it's more than reality.

Richard: People are sometimes disturbed by it. I think that's very interesting, because it's simply an optic floating through space, slightly more smoothly than the human eye. Why do you think that is?

Trevor: There's a first-person quality to it that has a short-circuiting effect. You end up feeling like you're directly in that space. As the camera moves through space, you get caught up in a different way – especially when it's sound and picture working together, it can take you over. I've always been interested in connecting space. I think there's a time and place for editing and I think there's people that make amazing things through edits…

Ben: I find it really interesting that you now have this relationship with dance in your current work.

Trevor: That's the same thing – dance can look bad when it's on film. But when it's continuous, when there's a single take and there's movement, the camera becomes a dance, too, and you create a totally different kind of experience. I find a huge amount of pleasure in making that happen. In documentary, there's something I find interesting about seeing a space and thinking about how one could move through it and connect all these dots in a way that the viewer is constantly gaining information. Sometimes it can be surprising, there's the grand reveal, or you start at the end and work your way back to the beginning, so that the viewer has to put two and two together. Then you add multi-screen to that, and you're having to add two and two and then four over here. Then you put mediums together on top of that, and all of a sudden, you've got something where you're asking a lot of the viewer. But I think more and more viewers are quite capable of doing that. People are very visually literate now. They aren't just watching TV, they're watching TV and looking at their phones, they're watching all these things and then smashing them all together. People are very capable of keeping up visually. I think it's very exciting.
Ben: Richard, you've just been back to Brazil shooting these images of the domestic lives of middle class people in Brazil, in their homes, where some of these plants, which are being willfully exterminated in the forest, are now being purchased in Ikea and put in terracotta pots and sat on windowsills. It's really fascinating to me. I guess my question is, are you done with this chapter now? Is that it for you or do you feel that there is more to mine?

Richard: Yes, I think I might go back again to finish these eccentric portraits of Amazonian pot plants. It's been fascinating, being invited into people's homes and studios to photograph their plants, seeing how they live with them, how proud they are of them, how much they mean to each person, and in such different ways. It was just an impulse, this sister project, but it's right on the pressure point of the nature-culture fallacy, revealing how humans project desire and belief onto the natural world and incorporate it into their everyday lives. But I do wonder if I've explored infrared quite enough at this point.

Trevor: Richard, I'm curious – do you think that these mediums are a shortcut? Getting back to what Ben was saying, about how he relates to the different processes, analogue and digital, how do you see how these work for you? Manipulation versus the raw object and how manipulation is almost a shortcut. How do you feel about your chosen medium, infrared and all?

Richard: As you said yourself, it's extremely difficult to achieve some of the results that we've produced over the years. The last twelve or fifteen years have been logistically and technically very frustrating and full of challenges on every level in terms of getting an image at all a lot of the time. There's a certain alchemy there. For me, that's very liberating. I've deliberately chosen imaging technologies that hold some agency in the subject we're attempting to represent, so each media we employ helps foreground and unpack hidden aspects of the stories that we tell, not just for ourselves but also for the viewer. That has the extraordinary effect of activating, for me, the scenes that we capture. There's no way in hell that I would have taken a lot of these pictures if I was using a conventional medium. But for some reason, because they're ecstatic – to use Werner Herzog's term – I allow myself to take them, by going on this infrared herring. The lengths we've gone to are almost masochistic. I was talking to Felix Davey, another Irish artist, about this, and he's convinced that Irish artists generally have a tendency towards masochism in terms of Christ dragging the cross through the streets of Jerusalem before he was crucified. That sounds a bit like us with our beer coolers full of infrared film in the middle of the Congolese war zone. So it's not at all a short cut, but maybe it's a short circuit. An aggravated documentary form.

Ben: I wonder if that's maybe the common thread actually.

Richard: The masochism? (laughter)

Ben: Yes.

Richard: We're setting ourselves up for games, in a way. I think Brian Eno realised that you sometimes need rules to make better art. What Trevor was talking about earlier – how having a finite amount of film helps you speak more carefully – that's just another rule in the end. All those things stack up to help you be a better artist, at least in your mind. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what other people think. Ultimately, you have a conversation with yourself in order to make the work, and to get out of bed in the morning. Whatever motivates you to do that is worth exploring because otherwise it wouldn't get made, simply. (laughs)

Ben: For sure.

Trevor: What I've always found exciting about the processes that we've put ourselves through with each new medium, is that there's a new language. Not only a new visual language, but also just working with the camera itself and what it wants to do and listening to that. I think that was always the most rewarding part of all these things: learning that new code and then really diving into it and finding it, and then being able to see that in the world and how it would work with the subject.

Richard: It's about creating new symbolic orders each time, suitable not only to the medium, but to the subject, finding that neat dovetail between them and then creating a whole new language around it. It's very particular.

Trevor: Maybe that's also why we're able to listen in a way that perhaps we normally wouldn't have. I think if we weren't learning about the technologies at the same time as being in the space, maybe we wouldn't have listened to the material, to the subject, as much. Maybe, because we're learning as we're making, we were listening better?

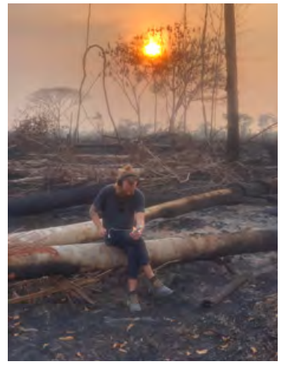
Image descriptions:

01. Yanomami Guardian I, Yanomami Territory, Roraima, 2021.
02. Oil spill on Kichwa Territory IV, Block 192, Rio Tigre, Loreto, 2022.
03. Yanomami Guardian II, Yanomami Territory, Roraima, 2021.
04. Yanomami Guardians, Yanomami Territory, Roraima, 2021.
05. Plant in the home of Elaine Arruda, artist, Belem, Pará, 2023.
06. Palm Plantation, Tomé Açu, Pará, 2021.
07. Wounded Jaguar, paws burned in fires in the Pantanal, NEX No Extinction, Goiás, 2020.
08. Fire, Amazonas, 2020.
09. Domesticated Palms, Amazonas, 2019.
10. Tree in the home of Elaine Arruda, artist, Belem, Pará, 2023.
11. Oil spill on Kichwa Territory I, Block 192, Rio Tigre, Loreto, 2022.
12. Mothers, Yanomami Territory, Roraima, 2021.
13. Kleiton, Amazonas, 2021.
14. Abandoned Oil Plant Infrastructure, Block 192, Kichwa Territory, Loreto, 2022.
15. Aldeia Enawenê-nawê, Halataikwa, Mato Grosso, 2020.
16. José with Pan, Creporizao, Pará, 2020.
17. Enawenê-Nawê, Halataikwa, Mato Grosso, 2020.
18. Oil spill on Kichwa Territory II, Block 192, Rio Tigre, Loreto, 2022.
19. Creeper, Belem, Pará, 2023.
20. Mini-split condenser, Associaçao Fotoativa, Belem, Pará, 2023.
21. Still frames from *Broken Spectre*, four channel video with 12.1 surround sound, 74 mins and 12 seconds.

Broken Spectre was co-commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, VIA Art Fund, the Westridge Foundation, and the Serpentine Galleries. Additional support was provided by Collection SVPL and Jack Shainman Gallery. *Broken Spectre* by Richard Mosse is published by Loose Joints in collaboration with 180 Studios and Converge 45.

Donate to Hutukara Yanomami Association and help the Indigenous people to hold up the sky.







(top to bottom)
Trevor Tweeten with Arri 235 mounted on Steadicam.
Ben Frost working with ultrasonic recorder.
Richard Mosse carrying camera, burning rainforest, Candeias do Jamari, Rondônia, Brazil, 2019.

HYPERALLERGIC

Art

Former Popcorn Factory Becomes Video Exhibition Space in San Francisco

The inaugural exhibition at Minnesota Street Project Foundation's new space features Richard Mosse's video installation on Amazon deforestation.



Emily Wilson 20 hours ago



Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre* (still) (2018–2022) (courtesy the artist, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York © Richard Mosse)

San Francisco's **Minnesota Street Project** (MSP) opened in March 2016 on the grounds of three warehouses — two spaces for galleries located at 1275 Minnesota Street and 1150 25th Street and one hosting the Studio Program at 1240 Minnesota Street with 50 artists' studios. Then when the neighboring Thatcher's Gourmet Popcorn factory pulled up stakes in December 2022, the MSP Foundation, established in October 2019, acquired the massive space and turned it into a video screening gallery.

The inaugural exhibit at the new space, co-presented with Altman Siegel Gallery, opened May 11 and will be on view through June 30. The show features Richard Mosse's multi-channel large-screen video installation, ***Broken Spectre*** (2022) from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts (SFMOMA) collection.

Previously on view in London and Melbourne, *Broken Spectre* focuses on the ecological devastation caused by deforestation in the Amazon, encouraged by former Brazilian President Jair Bolsanaro.

The 74-minute video installation presents black-and-white scenes of slaughterhouses, men burning and cutting down trees, illegal gold mining, and the activism of Indigenous communities affected by these realities. Aerial shots show the vast swaths of the forest that have been cleared.



Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre* (still) (2018–2022) (courtesy the artist, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York © Richard Mosse)

At the opening, the Minnesota Street Project Foundation's director, Rachel Sample, discussed hopes for the organization's future, calling for more collaborative projects like Mosse's and emphasizing how a space that offers flexibility is critical for artists to thrive.

“We can do things that seemingly don’t fit other places, but are interesting, exciting, and relevant for the community to see,” Sample said, adding that “being able to offer museum quality experiences for free for the community is unheard of.”



Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre* (2018–2022) four-channel video installation with 12.2 surround sound, 74 minutes and 11 seconds. Installation view, NGV International, Melbourne, 2022–2023 (photo by Tom Ross)

“This is a new space for San Francisco and the arts community,” Mosse said at the opening. “For all of us who make ambitious videos, it’s hard to find spaces where we can screen features as loud and as big as we want.”



Installation view of Richard Mosse, *Broken Spectre* (2018–2022) at Minnesota Street Project Foundation (courtesy Minnesota Street Project Foundation)

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Aesthetica

Witness to Deforestation



Spectre comes from the early 17th century Latin word for *spectrum*, which further traces to *specere*, or, *to look*. The etymology denotes definitions from "colours, an extreme between two points" to "a ghostly, yet ever-present vision." Now, the word appears in the title of Richard Mosse's (b. 1980) urgent new film, *Broken Spectre*, which depicts the destruction and devastation of the Amazon – an area which spans 6.7 million km2 and is often referred to as the "lungs of the earth." The 20-metre panorama makes its world premiere at a poignant moment: the rainforest is rapidly approaching a point of no return. In the film, now on view at the National Gallery of Victoria, the artist, along with Australian composer Ben Frost and American cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, asks us to look anew at the environmental and social disaster. It pairs stark footage with accounts from Indigenous communities – imploring global viewers to see the impending fate of the biome, whilst highlighting the impact of inaction in the face of crisis.



A: You began documenting human rights atrocities associated with the land with *Infra* (2010-2015), before turning your lens to the ecological crisis with *Ultra* (2019-2020). What inspired this shift in focus?
RM: I have spent the past ten years working with scientific imaging technologies to defamiliarise subjects and mediate complex human narratives. *Ultra* was my first attempt to describe the non-human. Eccentric nocturnal portraits of plants and insects demonstrate the connections between lifeforms in the rainforest – a topography that is simultaneously over and under-represented. Although this change in subject might seem like a clean break, all of my work is united in an examination of the lived environment. This has since evolved into the more ambitious, immersive film, *Broken Spectre*.



A: Your new moving image work, *Broken Spectre*, presents desolate landscapes in vivid colour, offering a renewed depiction of the Amazon with scientific imagery technologies. Why is this approach effective in presenting the effect of deforestation?
RM: I've used a range of media, so it shifts gears in quite violent ways. A custom-made multispectral video camera mounted to a helicopter captures the systematic clearing of land for agriculture. Satellite cameras reveal dieback with unsettling clarity. It was entirely homemade and processed by hand in my studio; you can see the fingerprints of the climate emergency pressed into the film's heat sensitive emulsion.

The false tonal palette, created from wavelengths between visible and infrared light, differentiates between healthy and dying plants. Tropical skies turn black and the forest glows white like embers. As an artist, I am engaging with both the visual's aesthetic and scientific qualities. I feel the imagery is successful if it can echo ubiquitous photographs of burning trees that we've already seen and become inured to. Viewers can still appreciate the power of the image without interpreting the conclusions of the data.



A: The rainforest is mapped on a macro and micro level: featuring satellite imagery, portraits of the indigenous Yanomami community and zoomed in depictions of plants. How does it differ from other representations?

RM: *Broken Spectre* incorporates elements of global cinematic styles, from the tonality of Italian neo-Realism to the Cinéma vérité of French filmmaker Jean Rouch (1917-2004). It also pays homage to specific movies, including Mikhail Kalatozov's (1903-1973) anthology drama *Soy Cuba* or Werner Herzog's (b. 1942) documentary *Lessons of Darkness*. These stylistic leaps are not always easy on the viewer. What emerges is a kind of chimera rather than a single narrative. Yet every frame is testimonial footage of the Amazon's destruction, including processes of ecological catastrophe and environmental crimes. I guess it is that ambiguity – the tension between art and documentary, science and the imagination, beauty and tragedy – that might make it feel new.



A: In 2021, The Guardian hosted a masterclass on reframing eco-anxiety – reflecting widespread feelings of hopelessness towards the climate emergency. How does *Broken Spectre* aid accessibility to the climate conversation?

RM: The Amazon seems so far from home. Yet, we are very complicit in its destruction. On a day-to-day basis, we enjoy the "fruits" of deforestation, from eating cheap burgers or sitting on leather seats in luxury cars. It was very challenging to highlight the impact of these actions.

To do so, we used the iconography of Westerns, from the widescreen aesthetic to black and white stock footage and direct references to Ennio Morricone's (1928-2020) Spaghetti Western soundtracks. In some scenes, Cowboys (*vaqueiros*) on horseback herd cattle through the burnt jungle. These weirdly incongruous, almost Ballardian depictions are at the very heart of *Broken Spectre*. The genre felt like a strong nexus to foreground some of these ideas, helping the viewer relate and leaving them hanging in an uncanny space. The familiarity perhaps also forces us to dwell upon the fact that we have already burned and cut down many forests across Europe and America. History repeats itself.



Elsewhere, the film's main character is a young woman who lives in Yanomami Territory on the Brazilian border with Venezuela. Adneia makes a searing seven-minute-long speech to the camera. She confronts me, the photographer, and by extension, the viewer. Once you've heard her words, you can't unhear them. She is searching for help for her community, sharing her family's experience at the mercy of illegal goldminers armed with automatic weapons. The next scene cuts to the ATL (*Acampamento Terra Livre* or Free Land Camp), a protest rally of Indigenous communities in the country's capital, Brasilia. Her questions are answered, in a way. We can make change through activism, solidarity and resistance.

I don't think many people fully understand the vast scale and systematic organisation of the situation on the ground. I do not want the piece to tell you what to think or what to do. I want the viewer to sit with that eco-anxiety, to feel the ambiguity of the situation, but more importantly, to understand what is unfolding.



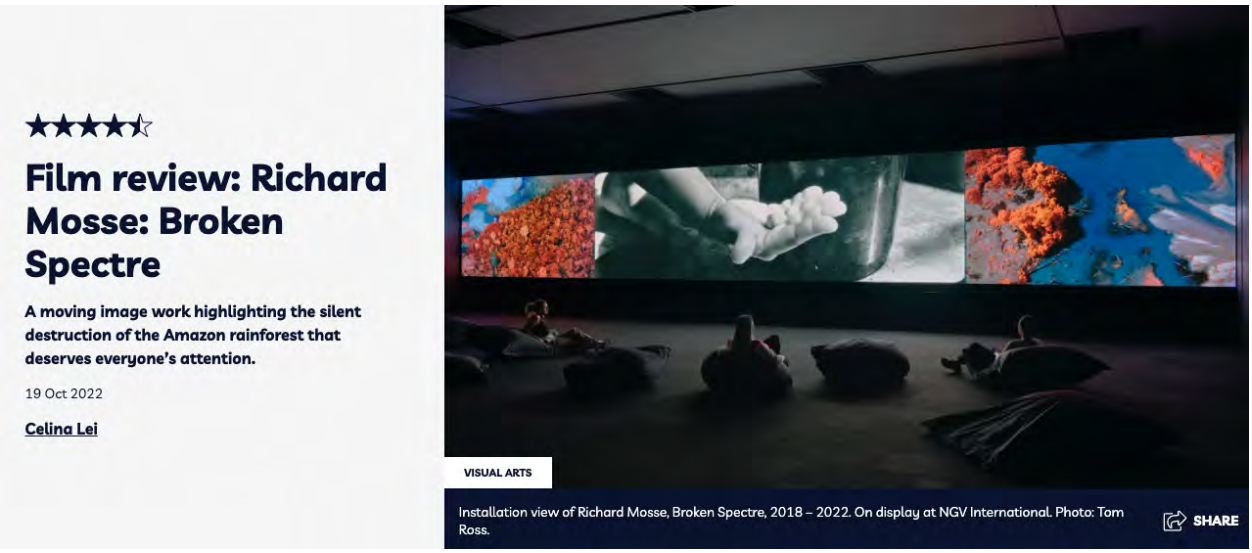
A: The world premiere of *Broken Spectre* is at the National Gallery of Victoria, a site with deep ties to Indigenous communities. In 2019-2020, Australia also experienced unprecedented wildfires, partly due to prolonged droughts. Does the location of the premiere add another layer of meaning to the work?
RM: I'm interested to see how an Australian audience will receive this work, given their proximity to extremely dangerous bushfires that move with alarming speed. Many visitors will have experienced these first-hand or will know people who have. Yet, those fires are very different to the ones in the Amazon. Even during the dry season, the rainforest is inherently damp and therefore requires plenty of manpower to burn and clear. The very real harassment and terrorising of Indigenous communities in the Brazilian Amazon, endorsed by President Jair Bolsonaro's (b. 1955) government, may also feel close to the bone.

Richard Mosse: Broken Spectre | **National Gallery of Victoria** until 23 April 2023

Interviewer: Saffron Ward

Image Credits:
1. Richard Mosse, Broken Spectre, 2022 (still) Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
2. Richard Mosse, Broken Spectre, 2022 (still) Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
3. Richard Mosse, Domesticated Palms, Amazonas, 2020 Courtesy of the artist and Jack

Shainman Gallery, New York
4. Richard Mosse, Broken Spectre, 2022 (still) Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
5. Richard Mosse, Broken Spectre, 2022 (still) Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
6. Richard Mosse, Mass Burn, Rondônia, 2021 Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
7. Richard Mosse Broken Spectre 2022 (still)Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.



To describe Mosse's film as beautiful slightly misses the mark. Instead, it leaves you somewhat twisted, alternating between haunting scenes of environmental destruction that are simultaneously eerie and sublime, and over-saturated footage that go between the familiar and the alien.

Presented in a black box space next to NGV International's Level 3 gallery, not many will see the film in its full one hour and 15 minute glory and the experience can vary greatly depending on where you enter and exit the loop.

At some points it is highly-saturated aerial footage of the Amazon rainforest in ultra-high definition. At others it shows immigrants hired by industries solemnly at work, herding, burning, grinding or killing – black blood on ghostly flesh.

Have you ever heard the sound of a tree when it falls, and the silence that follows? Here it's presented in the raw, alongside the sound of the chainsaw that grinds restlessly at its ancient trunk.

Coupled with the fact that deforestation of the Amazon rainforest has hit a six-year high (that's 3,988 square kilometres in the first half of 2022), Mosse's immersive documentation brings to light the fact that destruction can be silent and invisible.

It's a broken spectre because we are at once the threat and the threatened.

The only segment of the film which presents dialogue – a break from the carefully composed soundtrack – is a speech given by a women tribe leader with subtitles translated for the audience. Seeming to be addressing a figure off camera (at one point mentioning Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro), she lets out her frustration and fear for her people.

'You make us suffer, why do you disturb our children's sleep?', 'This is not your land, we will never give up what's ours' … 'You said you're here to help us. Don't tell us gallantly and do nothing. Don't film us for nothing,' she said with restrained tears as her tribe cheers on.



Richard Mosse, Broken Spectre, 2018-2022. Installation view at NGV Internationa. Photo: Tom Ross.

Further along the film there is a sound reminiscent of a coin drop as the lens shifts to the city, documenting Brazil's largest Indigenous protest against the destruction of the Amazon in 2021.

Black and white footage highlight the historic event as people gather outside the Supreme Court, headresses and banners against suits and armour. It's the N95 masks that pull viewers back into the present, reminding us that these events are indeed occurring in our current reality.

The film utilises the NGV's 20 metre screen to full effect (though the gallery struggled a little at first to harness the tech). It switches seamlessly through single to multiple channels, presenting parallels as well as contradictions but never lacking in the power of image or sound.

Due to the diversity of images and stories that Mosse has captured in *Broken Spectre*, it's a bit of a shame that there isn't at least a screening timetable so those who would want to catch the full screening can do so.

Rather than stay as long as you want, this reviewer advises to stay as long as you can.

Broken Spectre **is co-commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, VIA Art Fund, the Westridge Foundation, and by the Serpentine Galleries.**
Additional support provided by Collection SVPL and Jack Shainman Gallery.

On view until 23 April 2023; free.

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Crisis in the Amazon: Richard Mosse on his monumental video tracking the destruction of the rainforest

The Irish artist's latest work, on show in London and Melbourne, is the culmination of a three-year project



Richard Mosse (left) is showing the video work *Broken Spectre* (2022) at 180 The Strand in London
Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier gebauer, Berlin/Madrid; © Richard Mosse; co-commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, VIA Art Fund, the Westridge Foundation and Serpentine Galleries

The Irish-born, New York-based artist Richard Mosse makes unorthodox use of military-grade imaging technology to confront some of the most significant humanitarian crises of our time. Mosse represented Ireland at the 2013 Venice Biennale with a six-channel video installation capturing war zones in the Democratic Republic of Congo using discontinued Kodak infrared surveillance film that rendered the landscape in lurid shades of pink. In 2017, he won the Prix Pictet photography award for his disquieting panoramas of refugee camps, made with a thermal camera designed to detect body heat from 30km away and classified as a weapon under international law. Now, Mosse has turned his attention to the

climate crisis in *Broken Spectre*, an immersive widescreen video installation on view at 180 The Strand in London and at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia. The film marks the culmination of three years spent documenting the catastrophic destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

The Art Newspaper: What are you aiming to express in *Broken Spectre*?

Richard Mosse: It's trying to represent something that's ineffable, which is climate change. We could have chosen the Gulf Stream, or the polar ice caps melting, but whereas these crises are a result of our ancestors acting, the Amazon is distinct in that its deforestation only began in earnest in the 1970s when the Brazilian military regime started to build the Trans-Amazonian Highway. It's a wilful, systematic catastrophe on a sociological level: every dry season, millions of people are going out to burn the forest across nine countries. It's a vast intergenerational problem that's only been around for a few decades and, according to climate scientists, we only have ten years left. This is something that we have to turn around now.

There is conventional black-and-white footage in the new film but, as in your past work, you've also used advanced surveillance and photographic techniques that result in vividly coloured psychedelic images. Why are you drawn to these technologies?

The points of failure of documentary photography are what interests me: where the camera fails to tell the story adequately. I'm interested in trying to find new ways of storytelling. We need to work together to help people really understand what's at stake here with climate change. We've got all the data and the information, and yet it's still not penetrating our collective brains. It's something that's beyond human perception, something that you can't just put in front of the lens and get people to understand and relate to.

THE ART NEWSPAPER



Richard Mosse's video work, *Broken Spectre* (2022), includes images shot from a helicopter using imaging technologies that capture the extent of environmental destruction across the Amazon
Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier; gebauer, Berlin/Madrid

How have you risen to this challenge?

I've chosen to break it down in scale, from the macro to the micro to the human, to try and examine it from the ground up and from the sky down, but also to work on a cultural level, in terms of inter-human relations. The multi-spectral footage that we shot from a helicopter is intended to show not just the widespread scale of the [environmental] crimes we're seeing, but also the mass organisation. There are mafia rings across the Amazon who are working for the large farmers all the way up to international economic levels. In places, I've tried to make a Western film; there are people on horseback herding cattle and wearing ten-gallon hats because 85% of the rainforest is being destroyed for the international trade in cheap beef and also leather for our fancy car seats. There's also unfamiliar non-human imagery shot with UV film in the middle of the night, showing a six-inch square of the rainforest floor teeming with species, many of which we haven't even discovered and which we now stand to lose. What we have to do is make people feel an uneasy sense of complicity, to make them feel that their own hands are dirty. And that's particularly challenging because the Amazon is so far away from most of us.

THE ART NEWSPAPER



Broken Spectre (2022 documents the impact of deforestation on the communities who live across the region
© Richard Mosse

In one powerful sequence, Adneia, a woman from the Indigenous Yanomami people, challenges you with an impassioned request for support. This direct human encounter is a new departure from your previous films.

Yes, I think this is my first activist artwork. A lot of people will be very moved by Adneia's words because she's confronting me, and thereby confronting the viewer. It's very uncomfortable to watch.

Broken Spectre **premiered in Melbourne just before the Brazilian elections. What do you hope it will achieve?**

I don’t think one video artwork will keep Bolsonaro out and, in the case of the Amazon, I’m not particularly optimistic. But I do believe in the importance of making art that addresses what’s at stake in our world, on a politically engaged level. There’s a whole spectrum of people who can work together: not just artists alone, but artists working alongside writers, scientists and politicians. I don’t believe in art that tells you what to think. I want the viewer to make up their own mind and to feel disorientated and slightly violated by the work.

You occupy a fluid territory between photo reportage and fine art. Would you describe yourself as having a foot in each camp?

I’m stuck in a no-man’s land between the two, and it’s a very lonely place. They won’t let me enter either side: I’m a sort of shadow lurking without a passport and just getting on with it. I seem to be able to somehow navigate the space between and I think that’s a space I’ve built for myself, for better or worse.

• Richard Mosse: Broken Spectre, *180 The Strand, London, until 4 December; NGV International, Melbourne, until 23 April 2023*

The Sydney Morning Herald

This beautiful, horrifying film shows how close we've come to the edge



John McDonald

October 12, 2022 — 5.30am

It may seem remarkable that anyone would view their short-term profits as more important than the survival of humankind, but this is the simple reason we're losing the battle against global warming. The complex reason is slightly trickier. In the words of British philosopher Timothy Morton, the warming of the planet is a "hyperobject" – so massive and diffuse that it defeats our understanding of space and time. We find it conceptually difficult to connect so many diverse events in different corners of the world – wildfires in Europe, floods in Pakistan – and see them as one thing.

Morton may be stating the obvious in an elaborate manner, but it's useful to have a term that helps define our complacency in the face of apocalypse.



Artist Richard Mosse at the NGV. EDDIE JIM

The Irish photographer Richard Mosse has talked about "hyperobjects" in relation to a body of work so politically and aesthetically ambitious it defies comparisons. It's commonplace for artists to claim a cheap profundity for a piece that signals their concern with issues of politics or identity, but Mosse spends much of his time in the field, usually in the most inhospitable locations. His new film, *Broken Spectre*, which debuted at the National Gallery of Victoria last week, is the result of three years' toil in the Amazon basin, tracking the destruction of the rainforest.

The statistics are well-known but bear repeating: the Amazon produces more than six per cent of the world's oxygen, it contains 40 per cent of the world's remaining rainforest and 25 per cent of its biodiversity. At present, an area of forest larger than a football field is being cleared every minute. By 2030, more than a quarter of the jungle will be gone, and by 2050, with the escalating effects of global warming, it could be entirely lost. Under the administration of Jair Bolsonaro, elected in 2018, and currently angling for a second term, exploitation of the Amazon has increased by more than 90 per cent.

Along with his chief collaborators, US cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and Australian sound artist Ben Frost, Mosse made repeated visits to areas where the worst environmental crimes were being carried out. In these places ancient forests were being obliterated, Indigenous people terrorised, and activists murdered.

The technical challenges Mosse set himself were almost as daunting as his choice of locations. The artist and his crew travelled with a special, custom-built device that he says is the world's first and only multi-spectral motion picture camera, developed in collaboration with a tech expert. The camera,

allegedly as large as a refrigerator, was strapped to the front of a helicopter to capture hours of multi-coloured, bird's eye surveys of the forest.



Broken Spectre 2022 (still). RICHARD MOSSE

On the ground, Mosse used infra-red film to shoot sequences in black-and-white, thereby accentuating contrasts. He is, perhaps, the first director to employ this medium since Mikhail Kalatozov in the Soviet-era classic *I Am Cuba* (1964). To develop the film, Mosse had to track down an antiquated piece of technology, then convince his studio manager to spend months patiently working through the footage.

Out of this set of difficult, dangerous, painstaking processes, an original and powerful work of political art has emerged. It unfolds on a 20-metre screen, often divided into three separate segments, but occasionally unified into a single panoramic shot.

We see the Amazon from the air as a mass of saturated colour, a pale blue river snaking its way through a bright red forest. Back on earth we follow the Brazilian cowboys, the *vaqueiros*, who are burning the forests, clearing pasture and running cattle. We see the small gold miners, eking out an illegal living, while poisoning the rivers with mercury. We see wildlife on the banks of the river, and scenes of teeming undergrowth in which plants and insects inhabit a kind of alternative cosmos. We see thousands of head of cattle penned up, awaiting slaughter, and the grisly business of the abattoirs. Towards the end, we visit a village near the Venezuelan border, where we meet native people driven to desperation. Suddenly, we are in Brasilia, with tens of thousands of Indigenous protesters rallying outside the Supreme Court to oppose the destructive – or as they say, genocidal – policies of the Bolsonaro government.



Broken Spectre 2022 (still).

The film begins with a bucolic scene of a family working at a small ranch. A little boy plays with toy animals while a calf is fed with a bottle. The background music is borrowed from Ennio Morricone, suggesting we are about to watch a spaghetti western. It was only on a second viewing that I became conscious of the landscape, which was stark and bare, filled with blackened tree trunks lying on the ground.

There are many scenes of ordinary people going about their daily work. Gradually we realise that each of these jobs is contributing to the degradation of the Amazon, the loss of habitat and biodiversity, the dispossession of tribes. For an entire generation of people, the destruction has become normalised, a part of daily life and family patrimony. Most of this is actually illegal, but authorities under Bolsonaro have learned to turn a blind eye.

From scenes in which we watch men burning the forest or chainsawing trees that took 800 years to grow, we switch to images of storks, or otters, or a jaguar prowling by the riverside. Then we're back to the jungle, laid out in psychedelic colours, listening to a surging electronic soundscape by Ben Frost.

Mosse became known for his distinctive approach to colour when he represented Ireland at the 2013 Venice Biennale with a film called *The Enclave*. There wasn't anything Irish about this multiscreen projection, which captured confronting scenes of civil war in the Congo on 16 mm colour infrared film. The film stock, which had been developed by the United States as a reconnaissance tool during the Second World War, had the bizarre effect of turning every trace of green into a lurid pink. Black soldiers traipsed through a crimson jungle, carrying AK-47s. All the death and destruction, the miseries and privations of war were on display, but in shades that turned the setting into a science fiction landscape.



Richard Mosse's The Enclave. RICHARD MOSSE

Mosse followed *The Enclave* with *Incoming* (2017), a devastating film about the global refugee crisis, but *Broken Spectre*, is his most ambitious project to date. It takes its title partly from the optical illusion called the Brocken Spectre, whereby a human shadow is cast on a giant scale across the landscape. Today, the entire planet stands in that shadow, as we become aware of the damage wrought by the so-called Anthropocene era.

The standard criticism of Mosse's work is that he aestheticises scenes of injustice and suffering. Against this, one must put all those worthy, gritty documentaries that are universally applauded but rarely watched. Mosse's unusual approach adds a poetic dimension to his treatment of urgent political issues. Viewers will remember this film, as they do *The Enclave*, long after they've forgotten a more conventional documentary.



Artist Richard Mosse sits in front of the 20 metre-long screen which is playing his new work, Broken Spectre. EDDIE JIM

They will also remember a long address to the camera by a young native woman named Adneia, who speaks passionately about the ravages of "Bolsonaro's children" against the environment and the local people. "You say you're here to support us," she says to the filmmaker and to us, "don't say that for nothing."

Nothing is what will be left if the "Brazilian Trump" is returned to power in the October elections, as the constant burning of jungle is rapidly transforming the world's greatest carbon sink into a major carbon emitter. It's been said many times that when the Amazon goes, we are all gone. This beautiful, horrifying film shows how close we've come to the edge.

***Richard Mosse: Broken Spectre* is at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, until April 23.**

John McDonald was a guest of the National Gallery of Victoria.

To read more from *Spectrum*, visit our page here.

The Booklist is a weekly newsletter for book lovers from books editor Jason Steger. Get it delivered every Friday.



John McDonald is an art critic for The Sydney Morning Herald.

Richard Mosse returns to National Gallery of Victoria with Broken Spectre, filmed in the Amazon rainforest

ABC Arts / By arts editor Dee Jefferson



Broken Spectre is the third major work by Mosse to show at the NGV, following The Enclave (in 2015) and Incoming (in the 2017 Triennial). *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

In 2018, after seven intensive years of working in the conflict zones of the Congo and at the frontline of the refugee crisis in Europe, Irish documentary photographer Richard Mosse "hit a wall of burn out" — and retreated to the 'cloud forest' of Ecuador, a beautiful part of the Amazon rainforest where high rainfall results in constant clouds, and enormous biodiversity.

"I went there to do this personal project, taking pictures in the middle of the night with ultraviolet lights of little insects and orchids and all kinds of teeming life forms on the forest floor," he explains.

"It was really a very personal, restorative gesture, at a point where I was experiencing fatigue. [In Ecuador] I was working alone, [staying] in an eco lodge with really nice people who owned it, and they had nice dogs. It was really *nice*," he says somewhat wistfully.



Mosse studied English literature and cultural studies, followed by fine art (at London's Goldsmiths) and then photography (at Yale). *(Supplied: NGV/Eugene Hyland)*

And then, in October 2018, Jair Bolsonaro won Brazil's presidential election — and the Amazon rainforest began to burn.

Mosse found himself drawn inexorably back to familiar territory: finding ways to document the un-documentable and tell complex stories about urgent issues.

The resulting work, which was co-commissioned and made its world premiere at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) this weekend ahead of showings in New York and London, is monumental: a 74-minute video work projected onto a three-panelled, 20-metre-wide screen, with immersive 14-channel sound design.



Broken Spectre is co-commissioned by the NGV, the Westridge Foundation and VIA Art Fund, and London's Serpentine Galleries. *(Supplied: NGV/Tom Ross)*

Titled Broken Spectre, the groundbreaking film attempts not only to demonstrate the devastation of the Amazon rainforest and its underlying causes, but to make audiences recognise their complicity.

It is shockingly beautiful.



The film's stunning close-up images of plant life were achieved using reflected and fluorescent UV photography. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

Beautifying disaster

Over the last decade, Mosse, now 42, has garnered an international reputation with artworks that upend photojournalistic norms, showing familiar subjects in new and startling ways.

He has turned the jungle conflict zones of the Democratic Republic of Congo pink, and presented Europe's refugee crisis via 'heat maps' — in both cases, co-opting imaging technologies developed by the military.



In Incoming, Mosse used thermographic imaging, originally developed by the military, to document the refugee crisis. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

In documenting the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, he harnessed technology used by Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE): 'multispectral' sensors, which capture a vast amount of data about different 'unseen' aspects of the terrain, via satellite. (INPE has been so successful in documenting deforestation using multispectral imaging that Bolsonaro fired its chief early in his Presidency).

In 2019, as Bolsonaro gutted environmental protection agencies and greased the wheels for agribusiness and mining, deforestation surged; at the same time, man-made burn-offs coincided with an abnormal dry spell, resulting in catastrophic fires.

Mosse recorded the devastation via multispectral cameras mounted on drones.



Mosse ascribed colours to the data layers in his images, choosing tones for their effects on the brain. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

The resulting imagery, shown in Broken Spectre's sweeping aerial shots, renders the landscape in an unearthly colour palette; purple rivers snake through blood-red rainforest, while burnt and cleared landscapes are rendered in ghostly hues of cyan and grey.

These otherworldly sequences are interspersed with lush black-and-white footage of the landscape as seen from the ground, and ultraviolet timelapse photography of insects and plants in psychedelic hues — all filmed by Mosse's long-time collaborator, cinematographer Trevor Tweeten.

ABC NEWS



Mosse has made other photographic works in the Amazon over the last three years, including the 2021 series Tristes Tropiques. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

The soundtrack, by Iceland-based Australian composer and sound designer Ben Frost, is equally strange and ravishing, pivoting from field recordings of nature to electronic compositions that call to mind Pink Floyd or Vangelis — and hybrid soundscapes that conjure alien planets.

(Much of the soundtrack, Frost says, consists of plant and insect activity that humans cannot usually hear, recorded by means of a specially designed ultrasonic rig).

ABC NEWS



Ben Frost first saw Mosse's work in New York; he emailed the artist and the two ended up collaborating on the The Enclave. *(Supplied: NGV/Eugene Hyland)*

The combination of sound and vision, in the gallery space, veers from the sublime into the stressful: an ancient tree felled by an eardrum-lacerating chainsaw lands with a crash that reverberates through your body; aerial landscape shots of decimated rainforest are overlaid with gnawing electronic pulses and a repetitive, siren-like bird call.

Tweeten and Frost spent months at a time on the ground with Mosse, recording on the frontlines of the ecological disaster — from the cattle-farming communities for whom burning the rainforest is a family activity, to the illegal mining industry, and the Indigenous Amazonians whose way of life and actual lives are directly under threat.

Images of farm life, shot on super-35mm film using luxe Zeiss Master Anamorphic lenses (usually the purview of major productions such as The Lord of the Rings), have the look of Italian neorealism; basic conditions are inevitably romanticised by the aesthetic — and sequences in which farmers set fire to the terrain around them have almost heroic overtones.



Vaqueiro Son, Amazonas, 2021 by Richard Mosse. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

Similarly, scenes depicting the cowboy culture of cattle-farming communities, captured in black-and-white wide-screen, call to mind early American Westerns — an impression compounded by Frost's soundtrack, which deliberately echoes the Spaghetti Western scores of Ennio Morricone.



Still from Broken Spectre. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

Mosse has often been questioned (and occasionally criticised) over the way he deploys 'beautifying' aesthetics to depict tragedy.

Far from ducking the charge, he cops to it:

"There is a terrible beauty in war, or in environmental catastrophe — in the end of the world. And I think, as a storyteller, we can use that — to disarm the viewer; to make the viewer look and feel something. It's about communicating," Mosse says.

"Beauty is the sharpest tool in the box."

Speaking to ABC RN in 2014 about his video work The Enclave, which was shot amongst the soldiers of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mosse elaborated on his strategy:

> "When you strike the viewer, through beauty, and you get them to feel aesthetic pleasure regarding a place where there's lots of people dying, and where there's a lot of sexual violence — suddenly, they're put into this very problematic place, morally speaking. And initially they feel angry with the photographer — but then the next step, which is really the most important part, is they feel angry with themselves. And that's great, because they've stepped out of themselves, in the act of perception.
>
> [This means] A) they can begin to understand how the imagery is manipulating them; and B) they can also get smart and ... construct meaning for themselves rather than have it spoon fed [to them]. And a lot of war photography, and documentary photography, is about spoon feeding and about [being] didactic to people and telling them what to think."



The Enclave was shot using 16-millimetre colour infrared film developed by Kodak in the 40s for US military use. *(Supplied: NGV/Richard Mosse)*

Implicating the audience

In perhaps the most breathtaking sequence of Broken Spectre, a young woman from the Indigenous Yanomami people confronts the camera:

> "I'm going to speak.
> My name is Adneia. I am a woman.
> Bolsonaro, I'm not here to talk to you for nothing.
> Why do you allow these people into our lands?
> This is not your land.
> So why do you keep coming here?
> You make us angry.
> Why are you always disturbing our children's sleep?
> This is awful.
> Unacceptable.
> This land doesn't belong to you.
> These rivers are not yours."

Adneia proceeds, in an unbroken rhetorical tour de force, to take the government to task — for opening up Indigenous territory to miners, who not only displace the Yanomami and ruin their ancestral lands, but bring disease and violence.

She then rounds on the people filming her ("If you're just here to film us for nothing, that's bad," she says) and, finally, the (imagined) viewer:

> "You white people, see our reality.
> Open your minds.
> Don't let us talk so gallantly
> and do nothing.
> White people!
> Tell your fathers and mothers.
> Explain to them. Support us."

She exhorts the viewer to "use your money to put up a barrier against the miners, like a wire across the river".

For the person sitting on a beanbag, in the darkened gallery of NGV's air-conditioned art palace, it makes for appropriately uncomfortable viewing.



"She had had to flee in the middle of the night — grab her little children and run," Mosse says of Adneia (pictured). *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

Mosse flew into Adneia's aldeia (village) after hearing about her community's plight, which they had shared via videos on Instagram, and meeting with one of their leaders. When he arrived, the villagers lined up and made speeches to the camera — speeches that Mosse and his cameraman couldn't understand at the time (it took six to eight months to find a translator).

"I had an idea [what they were saying] because they were really angry," Mosse recalls.

Just days before he arrived, tensions between the Yanomami and miners had erupted in violence, with gunmen strafing village huts with bullets in the middle of the night.

As a result, the village's two health workers — sorely needed to treat outbreaks of malaria and diarrhoea — had fled. (The Brazilian police didn't arrive until two weeks later.)

"That's the sort of reality that Adneia had experienced only days prior. And that's the kind of reality that we would never hear about. But I think it's really very important to

communicate — to help them to communicate. And that's why they [the villagers] did those speeches," says Mosse.

He hopes Adneia's message to the audience also hits home.

"A really important part of what's happened in the Amazon is our complicity … in the international investment that is creating this extraordinary amount of destruction," Mosse says.

"Something like 80 per cent of the rainforest is [destroyed] for the cattle industry, who produce cheap beef … [and] the infrastructure being built right through the heart of Indigenous territories is directly funded by the same banks and wealth funds where many of us have squirrelled away our savings for pensions."



Still from Broken Spectre 2022 by Richard Mosse. *(Supplied: Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery)*

In presenting the cowboy culture of Brazil's farmers in the format of the Western, Mosse not only provides a familiar cultural reference point for a scenario that might otherwise seem foreign or remote, but he shifts the blame to the larger forces at work in the destruction of the Amazon.

"[The Western] glorifies a kind of colonial spirit of 'manifest destiny' in which Indigenous peoples are murdered en masse, and this [idea] is at the very heart of the United States' national identity," Mosse explains.

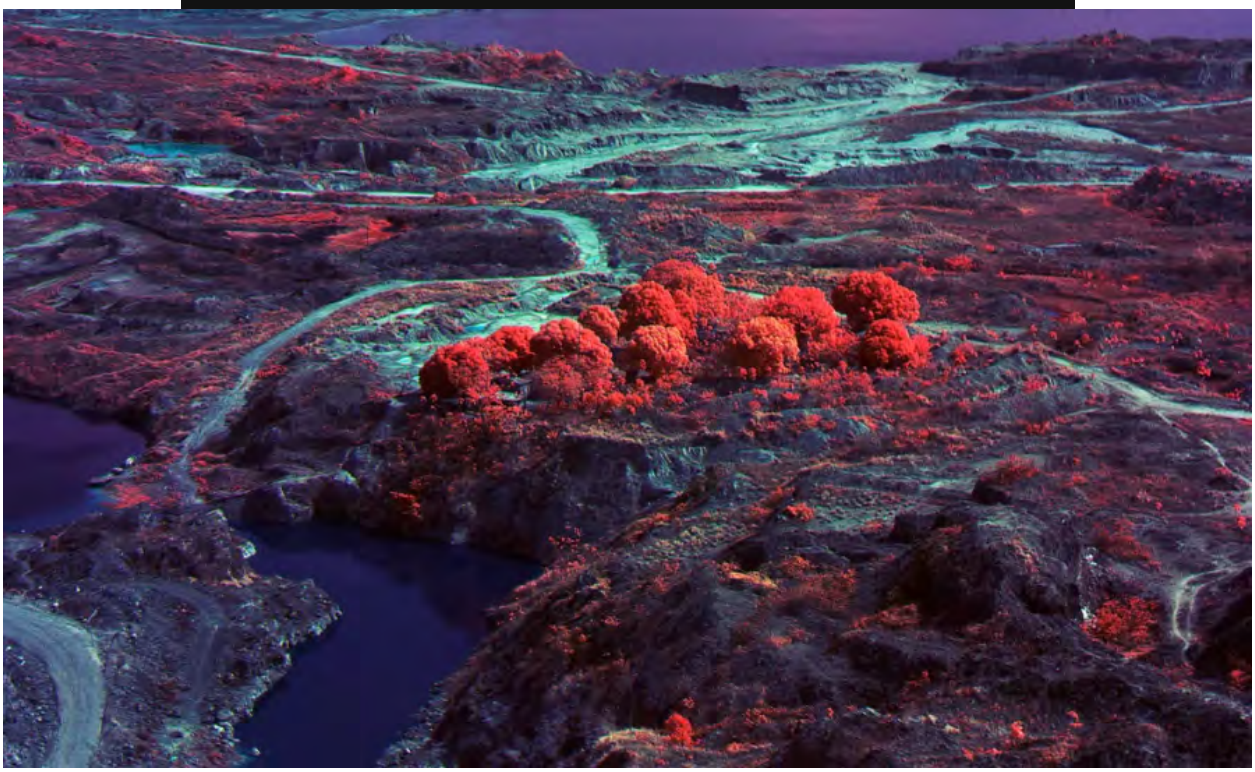
"And you know, a lot of the processes that built up a nation like America are currently unfolding across Brazil: this same spirit of manifest destiny, the same cowboy culture, the same pioneer pilgrims, who are very religious people … And [ultimately] this is a spirit that began in Europe — these are European ideas.

"Hopefully they [viewers] start to think, 'Well, actually, we did this 250 years ago in my country — and it's some of the same principles that are behind it. And if [the artwork] is really successful, that creates a kind of discomforting effect; an uneasy sense of our own complicity in this process."

Broken Spectre runs until April 23, 2023 at the National Gallery of Victoria.

The Guardian

‘You can’t unsee this’: Richard Mosse’s all-consuming plea to save the Amazon



Across a 20-metre panoramic screen in ultra-high resolution, visitors bear witness to environmental degradation – in a piece that overwhelms the senses

- Broken Spectre is showing at the NGV in Melbourne until April 2023
- Get our weekend culture and lifestyle email

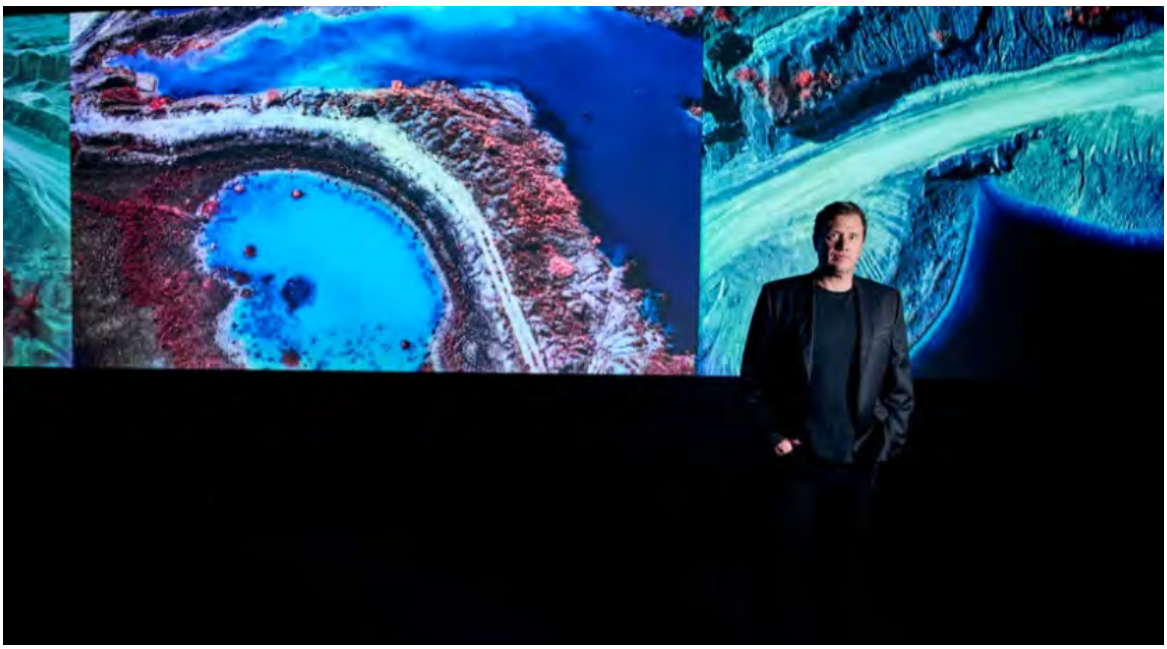
by Brigid Delaney

The Guardian

You don’t just watch Broken Spectre – you also feel it. The sound travels along the floor and up into your body. Your brain stretches to breaking point trying to take in the images stretched across the 20-metre screen. In a pitch-black room, it’s like being suspended in a black hole, devoid of any distraction.

The immersive new work from photographic artist Richard Mosse at the National Gallery of Victoria is unlike anything I’ve experienced. One comparison could be the work of James Turrell, which can also plunge you into altered states, playing with your perception and consciousness.

But Broken Spectre is also deeply political and distressing; a layer cake depiction of humanity’s destruction of ecosystems that will stay with the viewer a long time. Stumbling into the interview with Mosse and sound artist Ben Frost moments after watching it, my first question to them was a stunned one: “What the actual fuck?”



Recorded in remote parts of the Brazilian Amazon – the focus of Mosse’s recent work Tristes Tropiques – the footage, directed by American cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, runs across three screens which sometimes merge.

The Guardian

One shows overhead shots of the destruction of the forest; on another – in black-and-white widescreen reminiscent of an old western – we watch humans, felling trees, riding on horseback, working in an abattoir; and we visit the villages of the Yanomami people. The third screen offers deep close-ups of the forest floor, shot in brilliant colour – it almost looks like cells through a microscope.

The work, which runs for 74 minutes, is shown in enormous panorama in a dark room at the NGV, with a resolution that the gallery says has never been shown before at an artistic institution.



There is no dialogue – no story as such – but sound is as much a part of the work. Iceland-based Australian sound artist Ben Frost recorded the roar of flames lashing at the forest; of chainsaws and dying animals. He strapped a sound recorder to trees that were being felled, and used ultra-sonic microphones to capture the sound of insects.

The Guardian

Amplified, it sounds like screaming.

Commissioned by the NGV and co-funded by philanthropists, Broken Spectre took three years to make, using a range of scientific imaging technologies – including multi-spectral sensors that measure infrared – to show the scale of degradation caused by deforestation.

“Environmental scientists use this technology to understand what’s going on in the environment and to understand tipping points, how much time we have left,” Mosse says. “It’s also used by agribusiness to exploit the environment. So it is double-edged technology.” The artist couldn’t buy a camera like this on the open market, so had to make his own.

Mosse, who lives in New York, came to Melbourne to launch the piece – a return to the gallery which exhibited his work, Incoming, at the 2017 Triennial.

Incoming used military grade technology to capture stunning thermal images of refugee journeys, reflecting the professional collapse that defines his practice: on the one hand, a foreign correspondent; and on the other, an artist creating beautiful, surprising images with highly sophisticated gear.

When he began working on Broken Spectre, Brazil was at a democratic and environmental tipping point. “[Brazilian president] Bolsonaro came to power in 2018, and encouraged deforestation on a large scale. When the dry season of 2019 occurred, there was a huge amount of burn – and we decided it was perhaps our next project, and we decided to go down to Brazil,” says Mosse.

“The moral imperative to speak about the environment was very strong,” Mosse says. “If you are a storyteller, I feel that this is your duty now.”

The Guardian



Mosse began shooting in 2019, spending six to eight weeks at a time in the Amazon. Many of the places they shot in were only accessible via light plane.

“That was incredible. The forest – it looks so beautiful from the air,” says Mosse. “But we made it hard for ourselves. The logistics were brutal, gruelling, and the weather was hardcore – even in the dry season there was intense flooding.

Images in the film showcase the incredible access his team were granted inside slaughterhouses and First Nations villages. We watch burn-offs in forests up close, and the felling of ancient trees.

The Guardian



There are villains as well as heroes in the piece, but Mosse says his work is about “communicating, not condemning”.

“A lot of these environmental crimes are carried out by regular people, and some of them are rather nice. We wanted to carry through that ambiguity in the work – as well as respect our subjects,” he says. “We built relationships and established friendships in the course of making the work.”

Frost adds: “That’s an overlooked aspect of Richard’s work. A huge part of what he is doing is building relationships – there’s a huge amount of trust required to get [that] level of intimacy … You can’t just drop in.”

The Guardian



Mass burn in Rondonia, a still from Broken Spectre. Photograph: Richard Mosse

NGV curator Ewan McEoin commissioned the work and is the largest collector of Mosse's work in the world. This one, he says, is "an important work".

"Richard is contending with the scale of the problem – and the vastness of it. He's putting himself into risky situations," he says, referring to the murder of Guardian contributor Dom Phillips and Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira, who were killed in June while covering the degradation of the Amazon. "The self-sacrifice to produce this is immense.

"I found it a very emotionally confronting work – it's very intense," McEoin says. "You can't unsee this thing."

THE AGE
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

Machetes and threats: the dangerous journey to tell the truth about the Amazon



Elizabeth Flux
September 30, 2022 – 12.01am

Save Share A A A

It started because Richard Mosse wanted to take photographs of flowers at night, and ended up as a three-year odyssey into the environmental crimes happening in the Amazon Rainforest.



Artist Richard Mosse sits in front of the 20 metre-long screen which is playing his new work, Broken Spectre. EDDIE JIM

The Irish artist, known for his visually striking and political works, had recently finished *Incoming*, a project about the refugee crisis. It had involved a lot of time, travel and emotional investment. ”I was a bit burned out, especially because some of the things you witness are quite harrowing,” says Mosse. So, he took a step back and went to Ecuador’s cloud forest to photograph flowers and lichen and rotting leaves under ultraviolet light. The results were “rather eccentric,” he says with a laugh. It was while he

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was there that Jair Bolsonaro was elected to office in Brazil, “and that opened the floodgates in the Brazilian Amazon for environmental crimes”.

Creating *Broken Spectre* was the natural next step. Working with his long-term collaborators Australian composer Ben Frost and American cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, Mosse spent years travelling through the Amazon to create a portrait of an ongoing crisis. The result is an immersive, surreal and haunting film, which has its world premiere on Saturday.

Playing across a 20-metre-long screen in a darkened room in the National Gallery of Victoria, *Broken Spectre* opens on warm family scene – children playing outdoors, dishes being washed, a lot of smiles. Slowly, however, the mood shifts. The rainforest itself starts to come into view, and the crimes being visited upon it are gradually shown, one by one.

Visually it shifts between three different modes. Aerial shots show the forest in bright, unnatural colours, leaves glowing red, barren stretches of land in light purple. In between, there is occasional close up ultraviolet footage of flora and fauna, cracks and pops in the soundtrack lending the scenes an almost horror-movie edge. Tying all this together, however, are the people. Shot in black and white infrared, “it’s incredibly hard to work with,” reflects Mosse. “But it makes the forest glow this sort of violent white.“



Broken Spectre 2022 (still). Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. RICHARD MOSSE

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In the past, Mosse has attracted criticism for what has been perceived as prioritising aesthetics over subject matter. In *Broken Spectre* it is clear that this is not the case. The overhead views of the rainforest are eye-catching and beautiful, but there's another layer, a story underneath the uneasy colouring. "Multispectral satellites are able to reveal quite a lot of information about environmental degradation, and many other things to do with the health of the rainforest," explains Mosse. "It's used widely, not just by scientists, but also by multinational business [and by] mining companies to understand where rare earth minerals are for extraction."

Using this technology cuts to the crux of the film – looking at the push and pull between destruction and conservation. "The rainforest is a very resilient thing. But it's at this point it's so degraded and can't heal itself. We're on the tipping point of forest dieback where the forest can't generate its own rain, and thereby stops being rainforest."

The film is designed for a gallery, so you can step in at any point and stay however long you want, whether that be for a few moments or for the full 74 minutes. There is a narrative if you watch from beginning to end, but the individual scenes are each imbued with meaning, and even the experience of watching it nods to the immensity of the climate emergency. It's impossible to take in the whole screen at once – sometimes there are two complementary but different scenes playing at once. What stands out most, however, are the people who have entrusted Mosse with their stories.

It takes a while to realise, but almost everyone who appears is an environmental criminal in some way, whether they're illegally burning the rainforest, logging, or mining – violent streams of water breaking down the land around them.

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Installation view of Richard Mosse's Broken Spectre2018-2022 on display from 1 October 2022–23 April 2023 at NGV International, Melbourne. TOM ROSS

Asked why people allowed him to film them doing these things, Mosse puts it down to building trust and relationships. "That can take months, you know, before we finally get the camera out." Each approach was tailored to the individual. Pointing to the miners in particular, Mosse paints a picture of the towns that would spring up around mining sites. "They're very strange places but full of criminality – the whole town was just criminal and so very unwelcoming to gringos with cameras. So that took a lot of work to try to build trust [and] relationships with particular miners."

THE AGE
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Mass Burn, Rondônia, 2021 Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. RICHARD MOSSE

The question of how dangerous this project was to make comes up a few times across our conversation. In June this year, British journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira were murdered in Brazil while looking into environmental crimes and trafficking in the Amazon and how Indigenous communities have been impacted by the intrusions into their land.

“That happened right at the end of my filmmaking process,” Mosse says quietly. “It made me think quite deeply about how lucky we were because there were a couple of moments, particularly in the illegal burning scene. Right after that our fixers [people who help with translation and offer local advice and assistance] left in a moment of confusion and we were threatened by some guys with machetes. That was the confrontation which could have gotten really bad.” When asked how they got out of this situation, Mosse replies immediately and frankly. “We were lucky. And also we were three and they were two. If they were four and we were three, we just don’t know what would have happened.”

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One of the most powerful scenes in *Broken Spectre* comes about halfway through. In it, a young Indigenous woman named Adneia calls through the camera to the world to do something, to stop the crimes happening to her land, to act now before it is too late. “Don’t film me for nothing,” she implores.



Broken Spectre 2022 (still) Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. RICHARD MOSSE

“That’s the hard part for me as an artist – to try and make you feel your complicity,” says Mosse. He points to banks and corporations that invest in projects that cut into Indigenous land and contribute to destruction; the fact that many of us will have unknowingly eaten Brazilian beef; that leather from the cattle that the rainforest has been cut down to make room for is everywhere. “All of us have blood on our hands. I certainly do.”

There’s still time to save the Amazon says Mosse. He points to Indigenous activists as a huge source of optimism. With the destruction happening so incrementally, so difficult to see from up close, however, he hopes that the film will help shine a light on the fact that things need to change, drastically and soon.

Broken Spectre *is screening at NGV from October 1 until April 2023. No tickets are required.*

WIDEWALLS

New Richard Mosse Film Work to Be Unveiled at NGV International

Exhibition Announcements



September 24, 2022
Eli Anapur

Irish artist Richard Mosse creates images of striking and unsettling beauty by combining reportage and contemporary art photography. He often pushes the boundaries of his craft and uses military-grade imaging technology and the combination of film, sound, and camera in unconventional ways to show the tragedy and scale of complex and obscure events.

For his latest work, *Broken Spectre*, his camera turned to **the Amazon** to capture the scale of deforestation happening there.

"My film examines an intergenerational destruction; a legacy passed on from grandparents to grandchildren. We have only one generation left to save the Amazon rainforest," he says.

Broken Spectre is on view at NGV International.



Richard Mosse - Still from Broken Spectre, 2022, five channel 4K video with 20.4 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier | gebauer, Berlin/Madrid © Richard Mosse

Capturing the Unfolding Crisis

Broken Spectre, a collaboration between Mosse, American filmmaker **Trevor Tweeten** and Australian musician **Ben Frost**, blends and advances Mosse's contemporary art and documentary methods. The piece is presented as a 20-meter widescreen panorama that uses various visually striking techniques to show how the crisis is unfolding.

The piece was filmed in remote parts of the Brazilian Amazon over the course of three years, using a range of **scientific imaging technologies**. It is Mosse's most ambitious work to date that overcomes the challenges of representing climate change and environmental emergencies and is a powerful response to the devastating effects of deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest.

"Broken Spectre is an uncompromising and moving examination of one of the most pressing environmental concerns and prompts viewers to reflect upon the impact and scale of this complex global issue," said T**ony Ellwood** AM, Director, NGV.



Richard Mosse - Still from Broken Spectre, 2022, five channel 4K video with 20.4 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier | gebauer, Berlin/Madrid © Richard Mosse

White People! Tell your Fathers and Mothers

To capture the scale of destruction, Mosse used images from **satellite cameras** interspersed with images of the vibrant rainforest ecosystem in the Western film genre iconography that transports viewers to tropical rainforest. The work moves between different temporalities of seeing and ecological narratives that articulate different forms of violence at play in the Amazon: environmental, anthropocentric, and nonhuman.

Mosse explains the scale of destruction as an evolving process that started in the 1970s with the **Trans-Amazonian Highway** (Rodovia Transamazônica). *"Only a few generations later, this development has destroyed one fifth of the Amazon rainforest to make way for the cattle, soybean, and mining industries."*

The data gathered by satellites show that we are only a few years away from the tipping point, after which it would no longer be possible to save the Amazon.

One of the most poignant and powerful moments in the video work comes when a young **Indigenous woman from the Yanomami community** exclaims, *"You white people, see our reality. Open your minds. Don't let us talk so gallantly and do nothing. White people! Tell your fathers and mothers. Explain to them."*

As deforestation continues, the Amazon will *"no longer be able to generate its own rain,"* Mosse explains, which will lead to forest dying and a devastating level of carbon release. *"This is a world emergency that is entirely man-made."*



Richard Mosse - Still from Broken Spectre, 2022, five channel 4K video with 20.4 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier | gebauer, Berlin/Madrid © Richard Mosse

Broken Spectre at NGV International

Richard Mosse: Broken Spectre will be on view at NGV International in Melbourne **from September 30th, 2022, until April 23rd, 2023.**

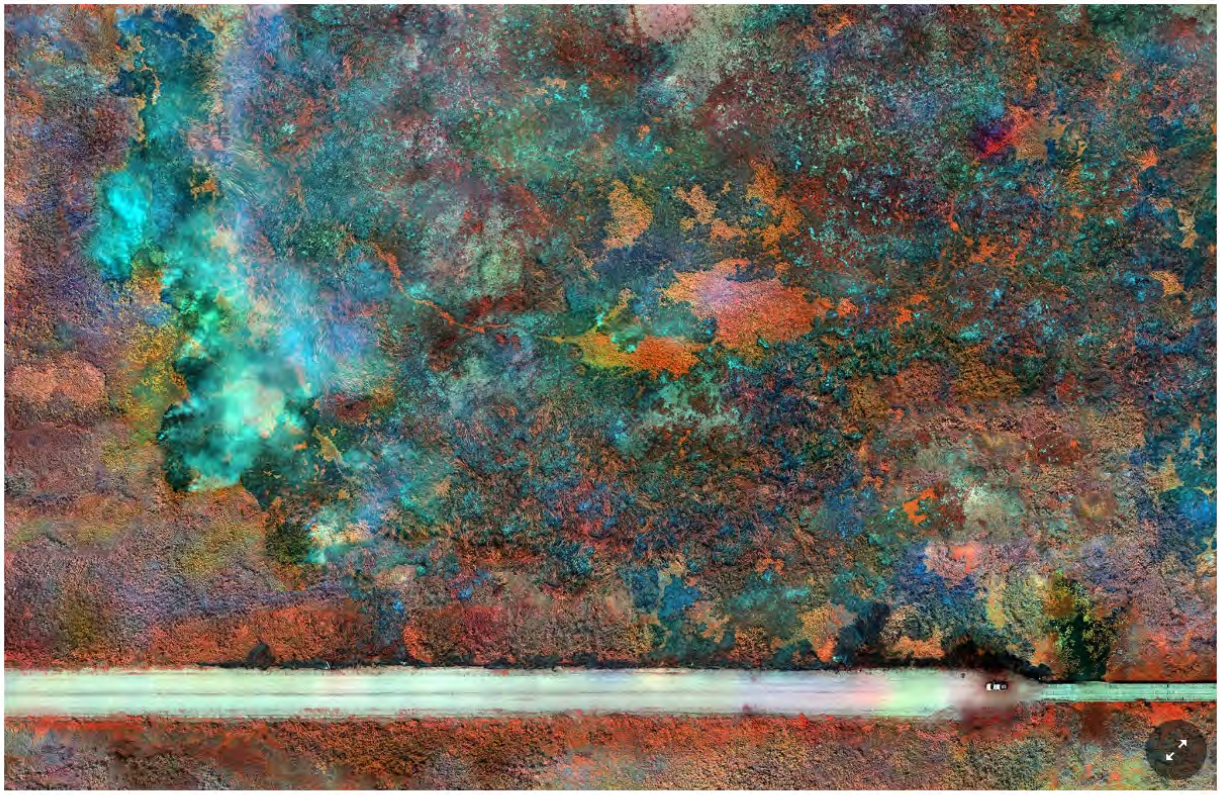
The video work is co-commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), VIA Art Fund, the Westridge Foundation, and Serpentine Galleries in London. Additional support was provided by Collection SVPL and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Featured image: Richard Mosse - Still from Broken Spectre, 2022, five channel 4K video with 20.4 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier | gebauer, Berlin/Madrid © Richard Mosse

The New York Times Style Magazine

SEE THIS

Richard Mosse's View of the Amazon



Richard Mosse's "Subterranean Fire, Pantanal, Mato Grosso" (2020). © Richard Mosse 2022/courtesy of Loose Joints

The New York Times Style Magazine

By Anna Furman

In "Broken Spectre," a book of more than 300 images taken over the last four years, Irish photographer Richard Mosse documents the unfathomable scale of degradation and deforestation in the Amazon. Scientists have warned that we are nearing a tipping point, after which the rainforest will not be able to recover. This project, like others by Mosse on the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the global refugee crisis, blurs the lines between photojournalism, documentary photography and contemporary art.

Mosse also takes readers inside the Pantanal, the world's biggest tropical wetland, where a fire spreads underfoot. (Cattle farmers often burn swathes of land for agriculture, logging and ranching, and the region has recently experienced severe wildfires.) The fire is invisible to the human eye, but Mosse's military-grade thermal camera reveals a heat map of rust-orange and brown that appears like a supernova or intricately patinated bronze. It's a mesmerizing pattern that belies the horror of its subject. To create aerial shots, Mosse deploys drones and makes use of geographic information system (G.I.S.) technology. Illuminated by this imaging, the rainforest transforms into an apocalyptic and otherworldly landscape: The canopy layer is magenta, the river system is electric green and milky blue, and fires blaze incandescent. Mosse saves black-and-white film for images documenting the climate crisis up close: a wounded jaguar in recovery; gold miners at work; and Yanomami and Munduruku Indigenous communities speaking out against Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro, who is up for re-election in October. $57, *loosejoints.biz*.

Art

10 Artists Set to Have a Major Moment This Fall

Charlotte Jansen

Aug 18, 2022 5:08PM

Richard Mosse

B. 1980, Kilkenny, Ireland. Lives and works in New York.



Richard Mosse
Quiet Storm (Infra series), 2022
New Art Editions
€4,400

Conceptual documentary filmmaker and photographer Richard Mosse is perhaps best known for the prismatic series “Infra” (2012) and “The Enclave” (2013), shot in the war-ravaged rainforests of the Congo using Kodak Aerochrome—an infrared analog film originally developed by the camera manufacturer for the U.S. Army for reconnaissance in World War II. Mosse hasn’t had a major solo exhibition since 2017, when his touring three-channel installation Incoming opened at the Barbican’s Curve gallery.

Mosse returns this fall with his biggest project to date: His experiential cinematic work Broken Spectre will premiere on September 30th at the National Gallery of Victoria before traveling to 180 The Strand to open during London’s Frieze Week in October. Continuing Mosse’s exploration of Earth’s devastation and destruction, the 72-minute, newly commissioned film focuses on the Amazon basin where Mosse and his team spent three years.

“The scale of this catastrophe frequently unfolds in ways that are too vast to comprehend, too minute to perceive, and too normalized to see,” Mosse said in an artist statement. Employing a dazzling array of photographic techniques and perspectives, from satellite imagery to bug’s-eye views, Broken Spectre envisages environmental destruction unambiguously, and the specific impact on the region and the urgency of the situation is made clear. “My film examines an intergenerational destruction; a legacy passed on from grandparents to grandchildren,” Mosse explained. “We have only one generation left to save the Amazon rainforest.”

Richard Mosse: Broken Spectre

Art | 180 The Strand, Strand | 12 Oct-18 Dec 2022



Still from Broken Spectre, 2022, five channel 4K video with 20.4 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier | gebauer, Berlin/Madrid © Richard Mosse

Time Out says

Richard Mosse has quietly become one of the most important photographers working today. Whether it's using unusual, pink-hued infrared film to photograph soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or thermal imaging cameras to document migrant camps, he's developed a unique and instantly recognisable, politically engaged aesthetic. Now he's back, this time in the immersive environs of 180 The Strand, with a new film and series of photographs using scientific imaging techniques to document the climate crisis.

Wednesday 27 July 2022

ARTS

Photographer Richard Mosse: Global crises through an atypical lens

He uses a weapon to portray mass migration, and renders the destruction of the Amazon rainforest in vibrant colors: Photographer Richard Mosse combines reportage and art to examine the world's crises.



'Lost Fun Zone' from the series 'Infra' by Mosse: The Kanyaruchinya internally displaced persons camp, North Kivu

Pinkish red trees and a violet sky is not the typical aesthetic you would expect in a photo of a refugee camp. But that's what you get through Richard Mosse's lens.

The Irish photographer, born in 1980, has dedicated the past 20 years of his life to reassessing conventional photojournalism. By experimenting with contemporary conceptual art, he aims to make the complexity of humanitarian and ecological catastrophes around the world more tangible.

More than 70 of his photographs and a video installation are now on display at the Kunsthalle Bremen.

Going beyond the limits of conventional reportage photography

At the age of 21, Mosse traveled to Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war had ended seven years prior to his trip, but the wounds of the conflict were still fresh. Thousands of soldiers remained missing, which meant that many families were left without closure.

The photographer wanted to capture the missing persons crisis and the scientific efforts to identify soldiers in mass graves.

At first he proceeded like a classic photojournalist and took pictures of grieving relatives. But over time, he grew more and more critical of that method. Conventional reportage photography seemed reductive to him. So he turned to art.

He traded in his classic Nikon camera — a popular choice among photojournalists at the time — for an old-fashioned German camera called Linhof. His new gadget was bulky and required him to use a tripod and a cape or dark cloth. Basically, it forced him to work very differently, adopting a much slower and more meditated approach.

"I started to think about how I can express the absence of the missing soldiers metaphorically, through the built environment," Mosse told DW. He is not sure whether his first photographic project was successful. But in any case, he regards it as a turning point in his career: "I was coming to a new set of questions, which still serve as a basis for most of my work today."



'Madonna and Child': A FARDC soldier carries a baby on the road between Fizi and the Haut Plateau region of South Kivu

He has since used various unconventional photographic technologies to depict other international crises. The civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the European refugee crisis, as well as the ecocide in the tropical rainforests of the Amazon are some of the topics he has dealt with in his work.

Technology inspires his stories

When asked how he decides on a subject, Richard Mosse explains that he is "first and foremost a photographer. The medium itself fascinates me. I am almost obsessed with the various forms of documentation."

This means that it is often the discovery of a new technology that inspires him first. After spending some time studying it, he looks into the topics that could be covered effectively using the selected medium.



Richard Mosse experiments with different unconventional documentation methods, including old cameras

For example, he mentions discovering thanks to documentary filmmaker Sophie Darlington, who works at BBC Planet Earth, a special camera that kickstarted one of his most important projects.

At the opening of one of his exhibitions, she talked to him about infrared thermal imaging cameras, which were developed for military purposes. They are registered as part of a weapon system and are typically used by governments for border surveillance and defense.

Darlington put Mosse in contact with a weapons company that provided him with one of those cameras. Despite receiving a technical introduction and license, the photographer could not get started right away. First, he had to hire an export attorney to obtain all the necessary paperwork to legally travel across borders carrying the camera. "It was a long, complicated process," Mosse said, one that allowed him to experience first-hand the burdens of European bureaucracy, well aware that the bureaucratic hurdles faced by refugees are even more consequential.



Richard Mosse setting up his thermal camera on a scissor lift to make the Adasevci heat map in Serbia

From 2014 onwards, the artist spent several years intensively examining the consequences of migrants' movements in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. For his "Heat Maps" series, he used the thermal imaging camera to document the architecture of refugee camps, displaying their inhumane conditions.

The images produced by the heat camera are rather strange. People's features are reduced to patches of black and white. Through the uncanny aesthetic of these photos, Mosse aims to highlight and criticize the de-humanizing attitude of the EU governments: "I want to hold the camera up as a mirror to the failing EU migration policy," he says.

According to the photographer, the mere existence of that camera is part of the problem, as one of its main intended uses is to keep refugees out of Europe. Mosse criticizes the costly technology, pointing out that the funds used to produce it could have rather been invested in building better refugee camps or in improving the asylum system, for instance.



A still from Mosse's immersive video 'Incoming,' which deals with the issue of mass migration

Environmental crimes in electric colors

Richard Mosse's current project, "Tristes Tropiques," is one that particularly moves him.

It focuses on the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, a man-made crisis that is accelerating climate change. Illegal deforestation and other environmental crimes are causing a total ecocide.

To do this, he is working with multispectral imaging. The technology is actually used by scientists to locate ecological damage and determine its rate. But the agricultural and mining industries also use it to exploit the land in a way that maximizes profit.

Mosse decided to use that same multipurpose technology to depict the many faces of this complex issue.

From a distance, the large colorful images produced by the satellite cameras remind of abstract field paintings. At the same time, the "Tristes Tropiques" photographs can be read as scientific maps that reveal a wealth of information and details when viewed up close.



'Alumina Refinery' from 'Tristes Tropiques': The contrasting colors reveal which plants are healthy, diseased or dead

The first retrospective of award-winning artist Richard Mosse in Germany is on show at the Kunsthalle Bremen until July 31, 2021.

domus

he intense and surprising photography of Richard Mosse

The first retrospective devoted to the Irish photographer, one of the most uni ue voices on the contemporary scene, is on stage at M T in ologna.



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H T GR H : Richard Mosse

LI HED: 1 ugust 2021

Richard Mosse's work is one of the most daring, innovative and complex reflections within the great cauldron that goes by the name of

contemporary documentary photography. In fact, his work has always been a challenge not only to the relationship between reality and representation controintuitively congenital to the entire genre since its origins but to photography itself, which ever since it discovered its elective affinity with conceptual art has experienced a continuous and only apparently irresolvable conflict between content and container, between ethics and aesthetics.

ll the mature works of this photographer, born in , are in fact an attempt to demonstrate how the two paths, the one based on the need to document in a morally irreproachable manner and the other on the desire to create sublime works, can actually coincide or at least converge.

Today M T in ologna takes stock with Displaced, the first anthological exhibition dedicated to the Irishman, with which it makes a highly experimental work accessible as usual, involving the public in a far reaching intellectual work.

eventy seven large format photographic works are on show, ranging from the early works in war ones and border areas, such as reach ( ), to the most recent research in the ra ilian ma on (Tristes Tropi ues,) (https: www.domusweb.it en art gallery tristes tropi ues a photographic series to map bra ils environmental exploitation.html). In this ourney through Mosse's art, it is immediately clear that his conceptual evolution is accompanied by a continuous and ongoing technological development. In Infra, for example, Mosse adopts a military tracking techni ue that uses the infrared field (hence the name of the series), invisible to the naked eye but capable of revealing human presence through the visual recording of heat. nd if in this case he uses the now unobtainable odak erochrome film, also featured in the immersive The Enclave, for the Heat Maps series and the audiovisual installation Incoming (made with the collaboration of cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and set to music by en rost) Mosse relies directly on a thermal camera, another military derived instrument capable of recording so called heat maps, again with the aim of seeing further afield.



Richard Mosse, till from ncoming 2 , Mediterranean ea, 201 , ri ate Collection L

Thus, since Infra and The Enclave tell the terrible story of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been through decades of bloody conflicts, while Heat Maps and Incoming deal with the tangled news of mass migration by focusing on various refugee camps around the world (Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Germany among the others), the theoretical dichotomy between what we see and what, on a deeper level, we feel, leads with subtle determination to another and more important revelation: the beauty of the works lies precisely in their state of tension, in their violently paranoid suggestion, where the tools of localisation and, ultimately, of control are precisely those that make possible the 'style' that so fascinates us. Thus, the vertigo experienced in realising the contrast between the luxuriance of nature and the drama of the events it conceals is compounded by the disturbing sensation of being able to have the privilege of this experience precisely by means of the same instruments that, in different hands, pursue those aims of tracking and annihilation that we can only condemn.



Richard Mosse, Dionaea muscipula with Mantodea, Ecuadorean cloud forest, 2019, dalla serie Ultra, Courtesy of the artist and carlier | gebauer, Berlin/Madrid

ne might therefore be inclined to think that the last part of the exhibition corresponds to Mosse's need to move away, not only figuratively, from his main themes, an escape towards the uncontaminated landscape, towards the regenerative force of a wise and resilient nature. ut on the contrary, even his most recent works, such as ltra and especially Tristes Tropi ues, contribute decisively to tracing a clear and uncompromising arc of research. In the first series, produced between and , Mosse uses the expedient of ultraviolet fluorescence to ensure that no aspect of nature, including the most violent, is overlooked. In the second series, in which the line of action is dictated by satellite vision, he uses the ra ilian antanal, the scene of the now infamous fires, to record even the most imperceptible climatic changes.

ith the help of the explanatory video uick, it becomes clear once and for all that for Mosse, reality, however violent, cannot always be shown with the simple weapons of photographic documentation. In short, it is not necessarily something sensitive, and therefore it is by no means certain that, in order to recount its essence and clarify its meaning, those who work with images today are re uired to be witnesses to a news story: since, in the words of ittgenstein, the world is all that happens, it is up to the sensitivity of the artist to find the right way and even the right moment to demonstrate its complexity.

Exhibition title: Displaced **Opening dates:** rom May th to eptember th, **Curated by:** rs tahel **Location:** onda ione M T **Where:** ia peran a , ologna

Wallpaper*

ART | 3 DAYS AGO | BY SOPHIE GLADSTONE | PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD MOSSE

Richard Mosse: when a weapon becomes a tool for storytelling

Documentary photographer Richard Mosse's first retrospective charts a career of subverting conventional narratives of war, immigration and climate change



Vintage Violence, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY

There is great power in repurposing a tool associated with destruction for creation, something that Irish artist Richard Mosse is well versed in. Often working with technologies originally classified as weapons, he covers challenging topics of conflict, immigration and climate change.

Now on show at Italy's Fondazione Mast, 'Displaced' is Mosse's first anthological exhibition, consisting of more than 70 large-format photographs and two large-scale video installations.

‘Richard Mosse firmly believes in the inherent power of the image, but as a rule, he renounces shooting the classic, iconic images related to an event. He prefers to account for the circumstances, the context, to put what precedes and what follows at the centre of his reflection,’ says exhibition curator Urs Stahel.

‘His photographs do not show the conflict, the battle, the crossing of the border, in other words, the climax, but the world that follows the birth and the catastrophe. The artist is determined to revive documentary photography, bringing it out of the blind alley in which it has been confined. He wants to subvert conventional media narratives through new technologies – often of military-type – precisely to unhinge the representative criteria of war photography.’





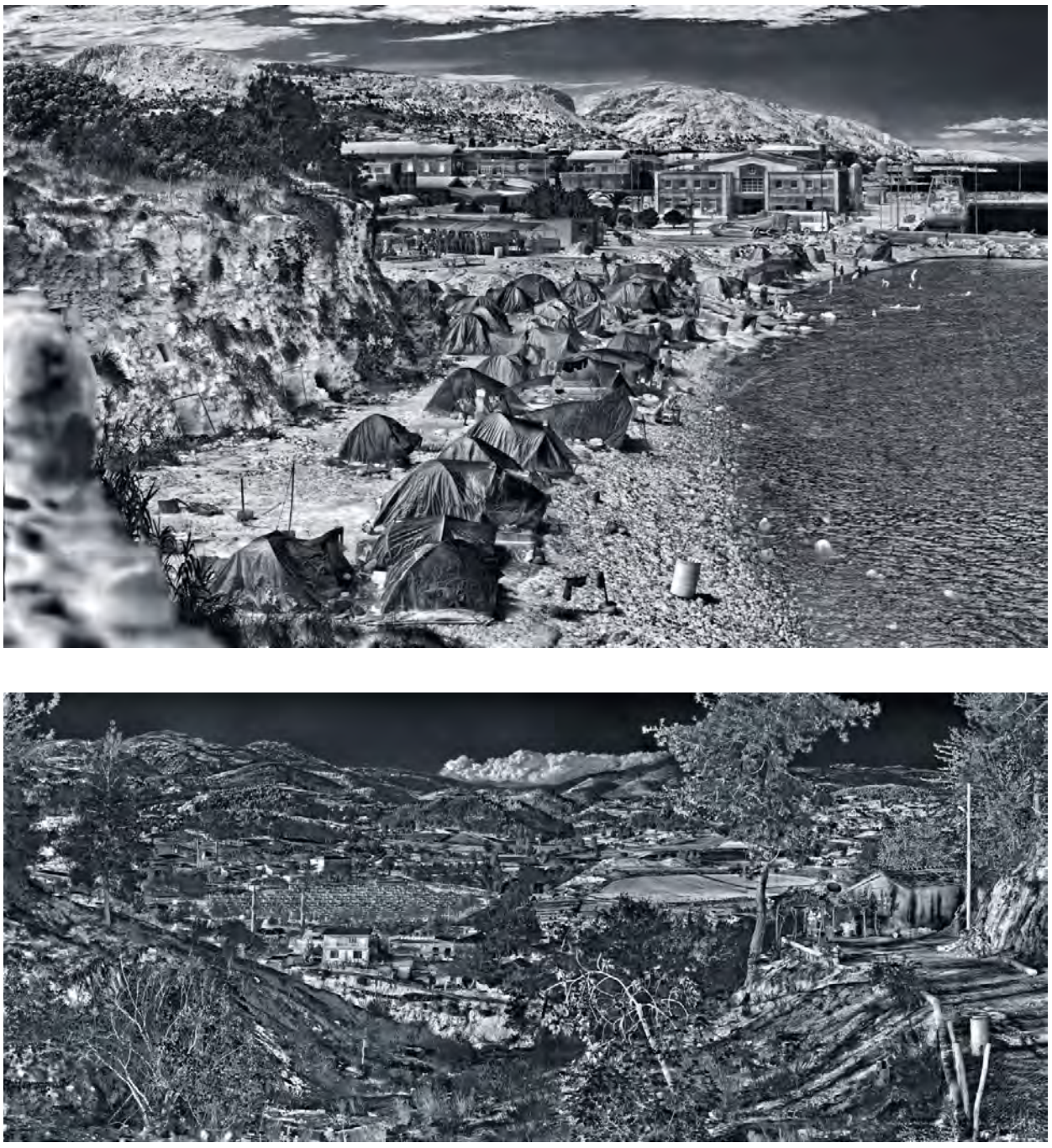


Top: *Of Lilies and Remains, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, DZ Bank Art Collection.* Above: *Thousands are Sailing I, II Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, private collection*

It is these technologies that Mosse breaks out of documentary photography’s contentious mould. For *Infra*, he uses discontinued reconnaissance infrared film to register chlorophyll in live vegetation, depicting the verdant Congolese landscape as a rainforest of pinks and reds. It could be a surreal idyll if it weren’t for the human skull, or a young, wide-eyed man holding a gun.

In *Heat Maps*, Mosse documents mass migration with thermal imaging. What is warm appears light, while cold is dark. With over 1,500 images stitched together to create these thermal panoramas, the formal framing of documentary is bent further due to time lags between exposures; a person often appears several times in a single

composition. This same thermal technology is used for the audiovisual installations *Incoming* and *Grid (Moria)*, which depict scenes surrounding the migrant experience.



Top: *Souda Camp, Chios Island, Greece, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, MOCAK Collection.*
Above: *Yayladagi refugee camp, Hatay Province, Turkey, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, Private Collection*

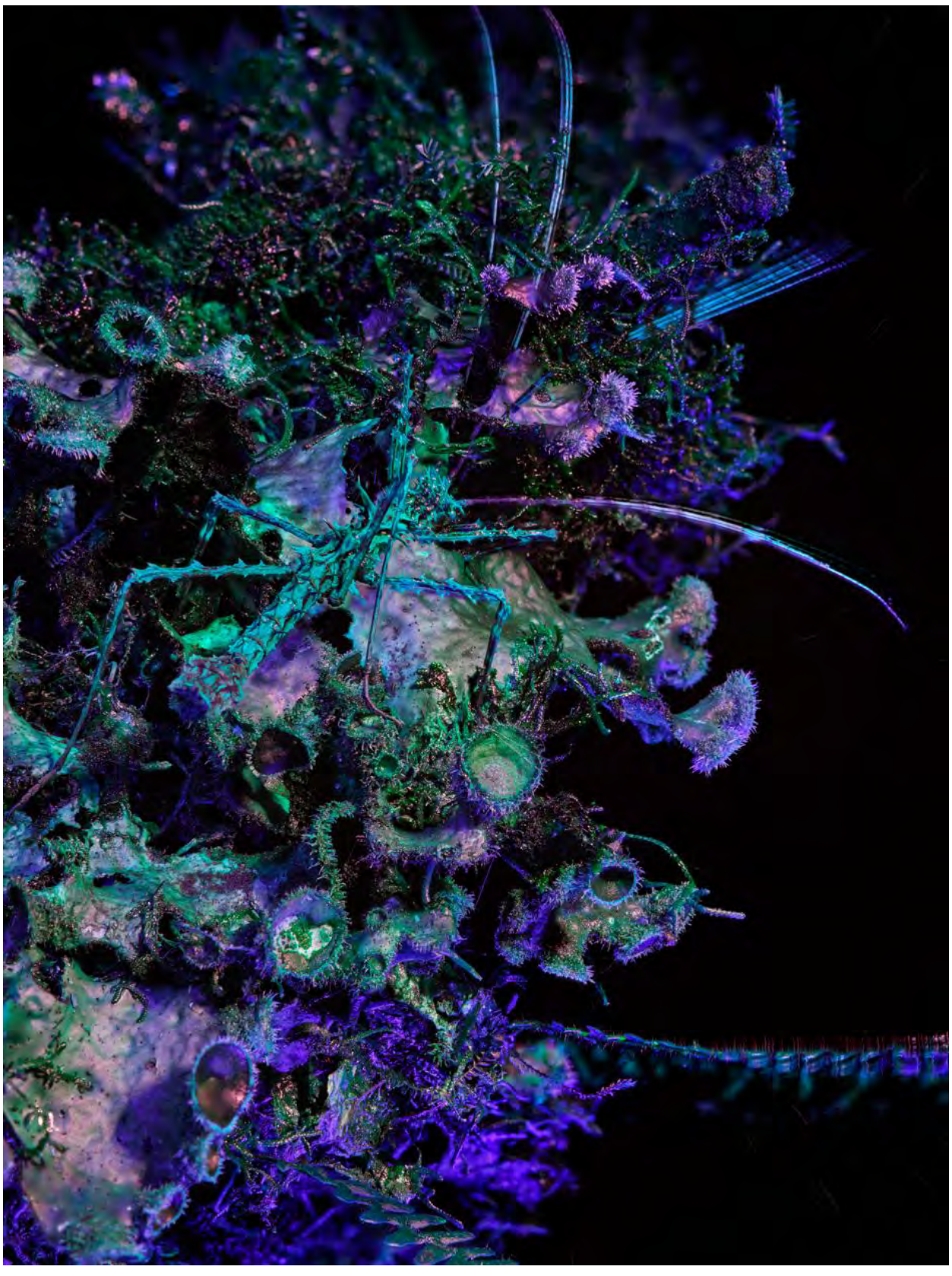
In *Ultra*, Mosse focuses on another battle for survival, photographing the Amazon rainforest with a UV-fluorescence technique that creates a luminescent colour spectrum. The endangered biodiverse environment becomes a glittering fantasy, a showpiece that overrides nature's camouflage.

Tristes Tropiques zooms out to depict environmental criminality from the perspective of a drone. Working with multispectral film used in advanced satellite technology (and for military reconnaissance), Mosse creates an alarming survey of the destruction of vast expanses of the Brazilian rainforest.

In 'Displaced', viewers gaze into the eye of each social, political, economical storm Mosse is documenting. With the use of these technologies, he brings pause and clarity. For all of documentary photography's complexities, Mosse's shifted perspective is valuable for reflecting on our world's crises. ✱



Still from Incoming #27, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, Private Collection



Male Parobimus with Fungus, 2019, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier | gebauer



Dionaea muscipula with Mantodea, Ecuador Cloud Forest © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier | gebauer



Sawmill, Jaci Parana, State of Rondonia, Brazil, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery and carlier | gebauer

INFORMATION
Richard Mosse, 'Displaced' until 19 September 2021, Fondazion Mast,

HYPERALLERGIC

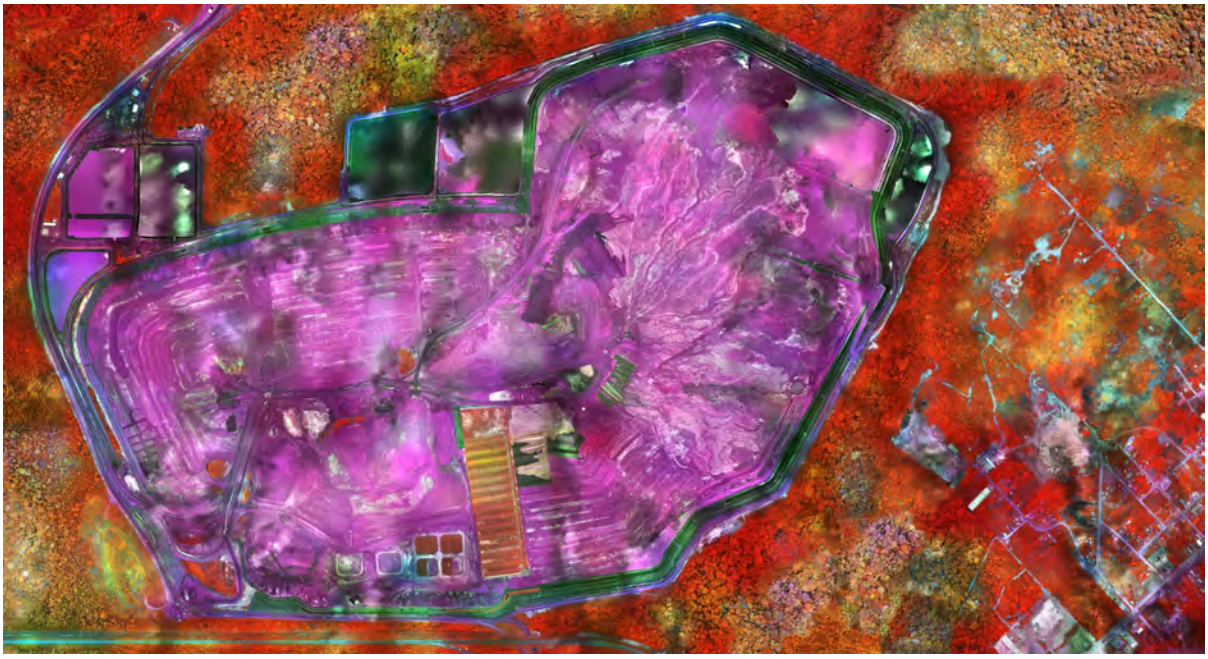
Art Reviews Weekend

Richard Mosse's Photos Exoticize Disaster

Employing drones, Mosse creates psychedelic aerial maps of ecological degradation.



by Louis Bury
May 8, 2021

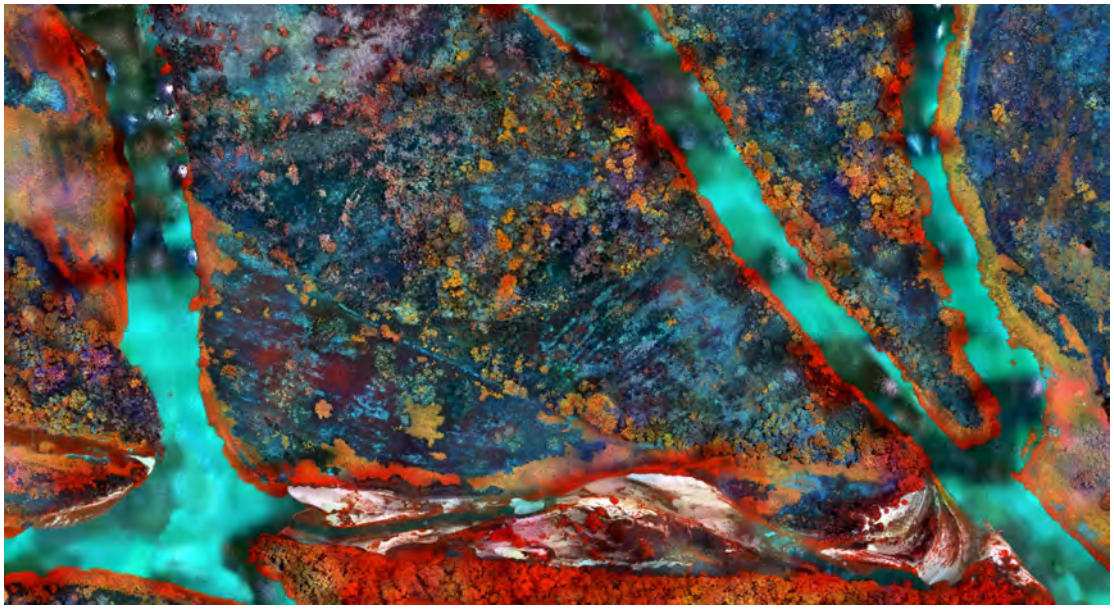


Richard Mosse, "Alumina Refinery, Para" (2020), archival pigment print diptych: 64 x 59 inches (print) and 59 x 109 1/2 inches (print) (all images © Richard Mosse; courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York)

Acclaimed photographer Richard Mosse repurposes specialized photographic processes to document humanitarian and environmental crises with aesthetic pizzazz. For his 2012 *Infra* series, in which he depicts the ongoing armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the discontinued 16mm infrared film he used, originally designed for military reconnaissance, resulted in incongruous background swathes of cotton candy pink flora. His series *Incoming* (2017) won the Prix Pictet, which awards photography that addresses social and environmental concerns, for its use of a body-heat detecting military surveillance camera that rendered North African and Middle Eastern refugees as glowing grayscale phantasms. Mosse's

surreal color schemes, devised to go beyond photojournalistic commonplace, walk the line between defamiliarizing and exoticizing their subjects.

His latest series, *Tristes Tropiques*, on view at both Chelsea locations of Jack Shainman Gallery, captures traces of Brazilian environmental crimes, particularly recent deforestation of the Amazon, with the same forensic élan. Using multispectral images taken by drones, Mosse has created vivid, borderline psychedelic, large-scale aerial maps of ecological degradation. Multispectral imaging is a technique used by scientists, militaries, and even agribusinesses to detect wavelength ranges that are invisible to the human eye; it can provide information about the presence of things such as pollution, landmines, and as-yet-unexploited natural resources. Mosse uses this technology in a spirit similar to that of eco-minded contemporaries, such as Mary Mattingly and Alice Miceli, whose recondite, self-reflexive photographic procedures are meant to highlight the medium's ontological and environmentalist tensions.



Richard Mosse, "Burnt Pantanal II" (2020), archival pigment print, 59 x 108 1/2 inches (print)

But *Tristes Tropiques*'s strongest aesthetic affinities are with renowned contemporary photographer Edward Burtynsky's dramatic aerial views of industrial landscapes. With both artists, the camera's supra-human perspective renders the terrain a formalist jigsaw of textures, shapes, and colors. Both, too, incorporate hues — from milky waterways to neon pools of runoff — not typically considered natural. The

difference is that Burtynsky's colors are, to my knowledge, mimetic, whereas Mosse's are assigned during post-production according to what the multispectral images have detected. Both Burtynsky's and Mosse's aerial landscapes elicit wonder, but in the former it derives in part from the realization that this seemingly alien terrain actually exists on earth, while in the latter, from seeing the earth as a bouquet of delirious color.

The Burtynsky comparison illustrates how *Tristes Tropiques*'s fantastical colors embellish a photographic perspective already prone to aestheticization. The bottom half of the diptych "Alumina Refinery, Pará" (2020), for example, depicts an industrial compound as a venous, kidney-shaped, neon pink glob, surrounded by forestland streaked with synthetic reds and yellows. The nigh-Pointillist composition of "Burnt Eucalyptus Plantation, Rondônia" (2020) translates the titular field's parched remains into textured twinkles of turquoise and teal. Mosse's color choices, as over the top as my use of alliteration in the previous sentence, call attention to themselves. The question is to what end.

One answer is that *Tristes Tropiques*'s flashy colors expose otherwise invisible traces of environmental damage, from subterranean fires to contaminated waters. This rationale has an important pedigree in ecological thought, dating back at least to Rachel Carson's seminal 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, and informing more recent ideas, such as philosopher Timothy Morton's concept of "hyperobjects" and literary critic Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence." But *Tristes Tropiques*'s invisible referents remain largely unspecified and the colors that represent those referents are arbitrary, both of which decisions emphasize the work's hallucinatory surface level appearance over its underlying content.



Richard Mosse, "Submerged Forest, Rondônia" (2020), archival pigment print, 59 x 106 inches (print)

Another answer is that chromatic dislocations are part of the artist's signature style. Mosse takes scenes that possess intrinsic humanitarian drama — an armed soldier cradling an infant; a group of refugees huddled together on a raft; an aerial view of a scorched rainforest — and torques their coloration to make the scenes even starker. In interviews, he explains that his methods are intended to sidestep cliché and provide viewers something other than stale documentary images of crisis. But that rationale undersells the impact of much straightforward documentation, such as Burtynsky's landscapes, and also assumes — similar to how high information voters often mistakenly assume that other voters have comparably high levels of political motivation and knowledge — that viewers are as steeped in such images as the documentarians producing them.

A more complex answer is that Mosse's efforts to avoid cliché, while thoughtful in intent and suggestive in appearance, often exoticize their subjects. At their best, *Tristes Tropiques*'s landscapes possess a beauty that's sinister in its deliberate artifice, such as the fuchsia tree line that snakes around a labyrinthine feedlot in "Intensive Cattle Feedlot, Rondônia" (2020). Other times, however, an abstract, frictionless beauty predominates, as in the pleasing peninsular forms and complementary oranges and blues of "Submerged Forest, Rondônia" (2020). Even when the mood is more wary, such as the splotchy purples and pinks of "Juvencio's

Mine, Pará" (2020), the snazzy visuals tend to amplify the foreignness of atrocities Western audiences may already be inclined to understand as remote. *Tristes Tropiques*'s aerial perspectives only accentuate this sense of alienation.

The exhibition's title, an allusion to anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's eponymous 1955 memoir, feels telling. The book has been a staple of college surveys for generations, typically taught as an important link between structuralist and poststructuralist sensibilities. When you read *Tristes Tropiques* beyond just anthology excerpts, the book is wildly heterogeneous, in terms of both its contents (from gritty travelogue to high academic theory) and the politics of its methodologies (rejecting certain colonialist assumptions of previous anthropologists while at the same time holding onto its own colonialist stereotypes). Just as Levi-Strauss's book is an uneven, self-reflexive meditation on how and why our species studies itself, Mosse's exhibition is an uneven, self-reflexive investigation of how and why our species visually documents its destructiveness. The effort helps move the conversation forward, even when it doesn't entirely hit the mark.

Richard Mosse: Tristes Tropiques *continues at Jack Shainman Gallery until May 15*.

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DAMN° 78

RICHARD MOSSE DISPLACED

FONDAZIONE MAST



RICHARD MOSSE DISPLACED, Fondazione MAST. Hombo, Walikale, Congo

From May 7, 2021 until September 19, 2021

I've seen this, and I want you to see it.

"A camera is a sublimation of the gun," Susan Sontag wrote in her seminal collection of essays On Photography,

first published in 1977. However, in some of Richard Mosse's works, for example *Incoming* and *Heat Maps*, the camera is no sublimation: it's an actual weapon.

From 2014 to 2018 Mosse focused on mass migration. He traveled to refugee camps in Greece, in Lebanon, in Turkey, to the camp in the area of the former Tempelhof airport in Berlin, and to many others. For the photo series *Heat Maps*, he used a thermal imaging camera to record heat differences in the infrared range: instead of capturing light reflections, this camera records so-called 'heat maps'. It is a military technique known since the Korean War that sees human figures up to a distance of thirty kilometres, day or night. At first glance, the images are sharp, precise and rich in contrast. On closer inspection, however, no details can be discerned: people and objects are only recognisable in their movements or outlines, but not in their individuality.

In an interview on *Incoming* (2017) with *The British Journal of Photography* Mosse said: "The camera I've used dehumanises people, their skin glows so they look alien, or monstrous and zombie-like. You can see their blood circulation, their sweat, their breath. You can't see the pupils of their eyes, but a black jelly instead. But, in fact, it allows you to capture portraiture of extraordinary tenderness."

I'm afraid to say I do not have much to report on the viewing of *Incoming* specifically because, after barely minutes, I left the room. The deafening sound of the sea together with the images of exhausted immigrants waiting to be rescued or awaiting post-mortem recognition, was more than I could handle. I am one of those privileged people who can look the other way when something is too disturbing, either leaving the room, like I did, or having other countries deal with immigration routes at an early stage, disposing of people before they reach territorial waters, like Europe does.

Between 2010 and 2015, before focusing on immigration, Mosse travelled to the eastern region of North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, rebel groups residing in the Congo continue to engage in bouts of violence, accounting to more than 5 million victims according to the International Rescue Committee. Mosse photographed landscapes, lush vegetation, scenes with rebels, and the mobile dwellings of a population that is forever fleeing, in a region devastated by crisis and war.

For the photo series *Infra,* and for the video installation *The Enclave*, Mosse chose yet another military tool, the Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued infrared-sensitive military reconnaissance film developed to locate camouflaged subjects. The result is the transformation of blood-drenched Congo in a surreal ballad of pink, red and bluish hues. Mosse's early works in former Yugoslavia, Kosovo and Palestine were devoid of humans, but this body of work also features portraits which, like Mosse said *are both art and indictment:* "They are criminals, with blood on their hands. And they are also people. There's a lot of tension is these images – they want to swagger, they want to pose for the camera and at the same time they don't want to be photographed."

Last week in Italy museums opened their doors after the year of Covid-19 lockdowns. Fondazione Mast in Bologna celebrates the reopening by hosting Displaced, Richard Mosse's first ever retrospective featuring 77 framed works and two immersive video installations (*Incoming* and *The Enclave*). Just back from Brazil, where he has been working on his more recent projects, *Ultra and Triste Tropiques (*also on show) Mosse welcomed journalists to the press preview through a video conference: "I'm fascinated by the limits of documentary photography but also by its power. Documentary photography is about saying I've seen this, and I want you to see it, and when it's done well it can change the course of history. On the other hand, contemporary art, which is the other aspect of my practice, has a different power: it can point to what exists beyond the limits of human perception." ÀAt the end of the conference, Mosse and curator Urs Stahel broke into a – virtual – pas de deux, ideally dancing away the tension of a technically and politically very complex exhibition, and also, perhaps, celebrating better times ahead.

Words by Sara Kaufman

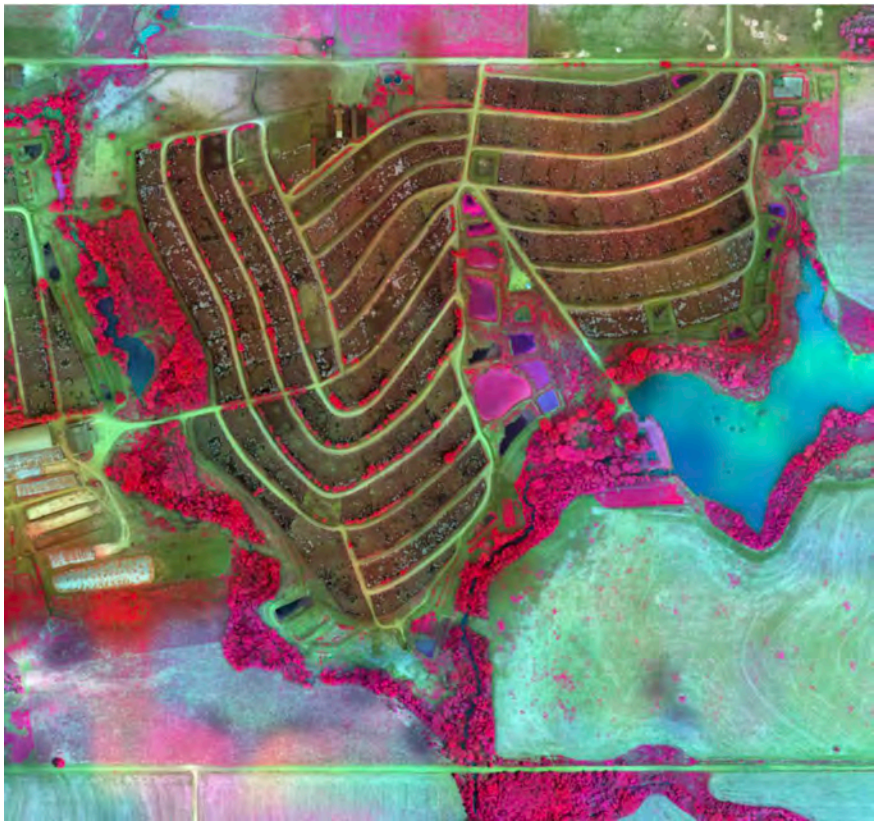
mast.or (https://www.mast.org/richard-mosse-displaced)g

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Richard Mosse Explores Environmental Crimes Through Living Maps

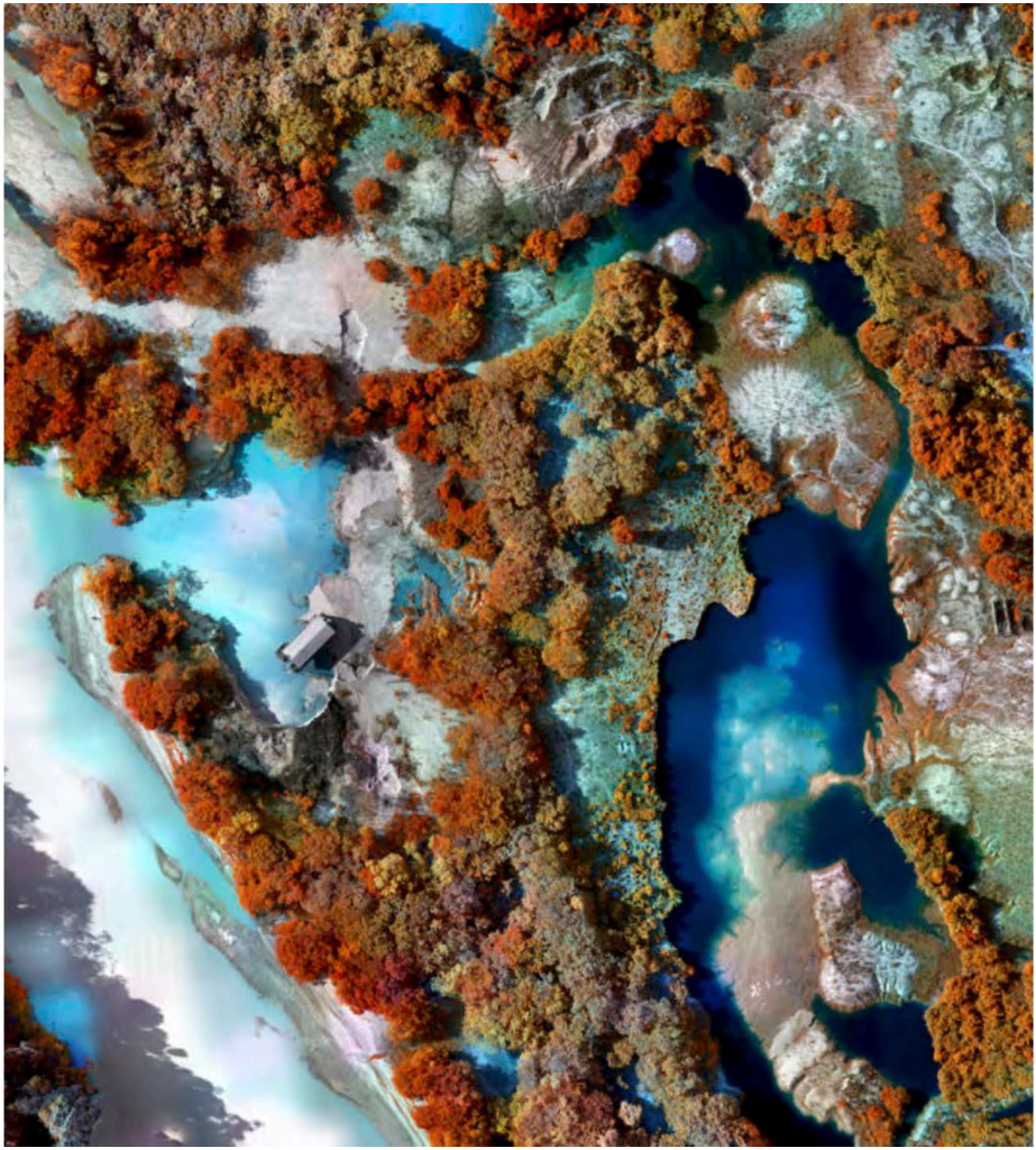
By Melissa Mui
May 12, 2021

Richard Mosse's current exhibition, "Tristes Tropiques", explores sites of persistent environmental crimes across Brazil's Amazon, also known as the "'arc of fire'." The photography exhibition is on view at the Jack Shainman Gallery across both galleries, through May 15, 2021.



Richard Mosse, "Intensive Cattle Feedlot, Rondônia," 2020, archival pigment print, 63 x 59 inches, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

'Tristes Tropiques' uses a form of resistance mapmaking, where Mosse intended this medium to reveal endangered landscapes to expose human activities that threaten the entire Amazon and our global climate. These images can be seen as living maps since they show signs of life, but also encapsulating forest die-back, tipping points and ecocide.



Richard Mosse, "Mineral Ship, Para," 2020, archival pigment print, 65 1/2 x 59 inches, © Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

The series of large-scale, vibrant photographic maps depict frangible organic matter in a state of deforestation and ecological damage. The Ireland-born artist chose to use geographic information system (GIS) technology to create thousands of multispectral images captured at each site by drone. This technique preserves and maintains the geopolitical, multinational, local, and cultural aspects of these active spaces. Mosse's narrative is further told through searing maps that highlight areas of environmental attrition.

In this work, Mosse continues his investigation of borders between documentary photography and contemporary art through a variety of mediums.

The New York Times

April 30, 2021

RICHARD MOSSE

Through May 15. Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th St and 524 West 24th Street, Manhattan, 212-645-1701, jackshainman.com.

The land is iridescent pink, purple and teal in Richard Mosse's bravura aerial images of the Brazilian Amazon. Elsewhere it recedes into familiar-seeming greens and browns, but with tonal effects that show both the advanced technology used to capture these pictures and the artist's considerable compositional role in their manipulation.

The sites are mainly points on the "arc of fire," from Rondônia in the southwest to Pará in the north, where in dry season fires are set to clear rainforest for cropland. In 2019, these fires reached a decade peak, generating global consternation. Mosse, who is Irish and lives in New York, traveled to Brazil soon after, equipped with a drone-mounted multispectral camera that detects nuances in soil, vegetal condition, and much else beyond the human eye.

Now at Jack Shainman Gallery, his finished images are big — a triptych of the Crepori River, in the Amazon basin, stretches almost 15 feet — and the effect is magnetic. The eye works to decode the landscapes: dull nubs of felled trees; a pond in red, full of lines that are actually caimans; a sudden well-ordered zone — a cattle feedlot. In the pervasive sense of seepage and fragility, Mosse achieves, quite elegantly, a central aim in his work, which is to convey world-changing phenomena beyond the limits of documentary photography.

The technology here is used both by scientists working for conservation and agro-industrial conglomerates that undermine it. In past projects, Mosse has used heat-sensing surveillance tools to photograph migrants and refugee camps, and old military infrared film to document war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The methodology can be a bit sinister, but also illuminating. Up close, depicting human subjects, his work has sometimes verged on the lurid. Here, however — despite the earnest title "Tristes Tropiques," referring to the dated Claude Lévi-Strauss anthropology classic — the work gains from altitude and becomes a welcome project in critical cartography.

SIDDHARTHA MITTER



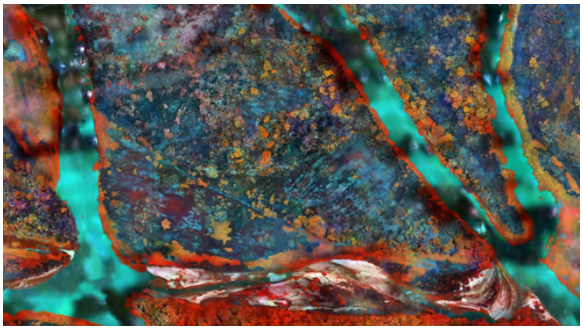
RICHARD MOSSE AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Above, Richard Mosse's "Intensive Cattle Feedlot, Rondônia" from 2020, which is part of his show at Jack Shainman Gallery.

December 16, 2020
By Gavin Butler

Infrared Images Capture the Mass Destruction of the Amazon Rainforest

Using multispectral cameras high above the jungle, photographer Richard Mosse documents humanity's suicidal "war on nature."



ALL IMAGES BY RICHARD MOSSE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

It's hard to articulate the scale of destruction being wrought upon the Amazon, but here are some topline figures to give an idea.

Between 2000 and 2018, deforestation in the Amazon wiped out eight percent of the rainforest, destroying an area larger than Spain. Since the turn of the millennium, more than 198,000 square miles have been lost—more than 4,200 square miles of which were razed between August 2019 and July 2020 alone, the highest level of deforestation since 2008. And last December, Carlos Nobre, a climate researcher at the University of São Paulo, warned that "if the tree mortality we see continues for another 10 to 15 years, then the southern Amazon will turn into a savannah."

The reasons for such rampant destruction are manifold, but leading contributions are global warming and large-scale burning—the latter of which can mostly be attributed to the anti-environmentalist agenda of Brazil's far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro's policies are informed by a thirst for development: he encourages deforestation to clear space for agriculture and mining, and blocks the work of environmental groups who might otherwise intervene to protect the rainforest.



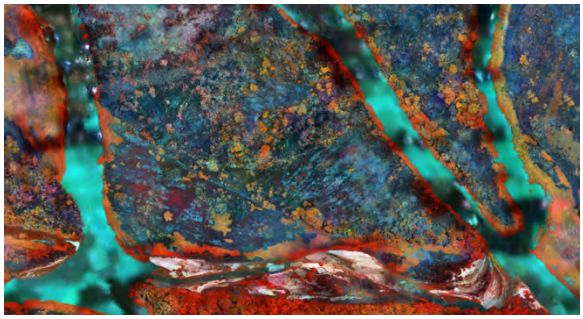
SILVER GELATIN PHOTOGRAPH FROM INFRARED FILM DEPICTING A BUSH FIRE IN THE AMAZON RAINFOREST, PARA STATE, BRAZIL.

This is a problem, for far more than just the obvious reasons. The Amazon is home to about three million species of plants and animals and one million indigenous people. But within its trees it also stores as much as 76 billion tonnes of carbon—making it a valuable carbon "sink" that traps CO2, emits oxygen and slows the pace of global warming.

The so-called "lungs of the world" are shrinking, and the implications could be disastrous.

Meanwhile, more fires are tearing through Brazil's neighbouring Pantanal, the world's biggest wetland, than during any other year since records began. The UNESCO heritage site has seen a 220 percent jump in blazes from 2019, while illegal deforestation in the biome more than doubled in the first six months of this year. Experts have noted that the degradation of both the Amazon's and the Pantanal's biomes are closely interconnected.

Photographer Richard Mosse travelled to the imperilled Amazon and Pantanal in direct response to Bolsanaro's wanton disregard for the region, following media reports he'd seen in 2019. Armed with a custom-built multispectral camera that captures bandwidths of light otherwise invisible to the naked eye, he set out to tell the story of this ecological disaster in a new and never-before-seen way: going beyond the data to visually articulate the extent of the environment's ongoing devastation. VICE World News spoke to him about the project.



MULTISPECTRAL MAP INDICATING EXTENT OF RECENT BURNING TO FOLIAGE AND WETLANDS ALONG RIO SÃO LOURENÇO, IN PANTANAL.

VICE: Hey Mosse, can you tell me what inspired this project?

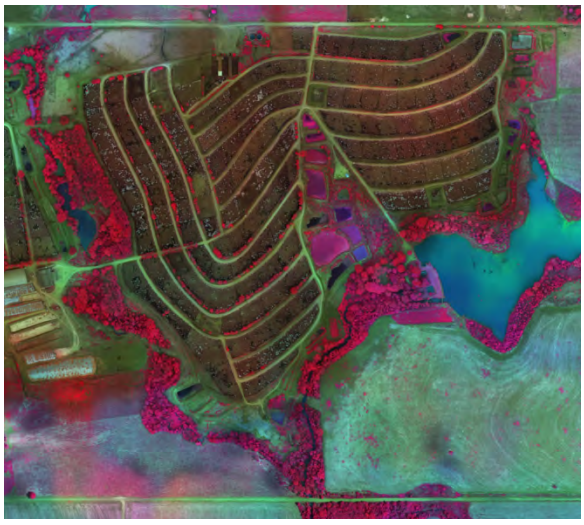
Mosse: I was very moved and saddened last summer by reports in the media about widespread burning of the Amazon rainforest. At that stage, I had been working in the cloud forests of Ecuador on a separate but related project called “Ultra”, taking highly detailed photographs of a microscopic universe of fluorescent biomass, so I had already spent quite some time looking very closely at what we stand to lose.

A natural progression from there, I felt, was to move from the micro to the macro, to widen the lens, and begin documenting sites of environmental crimes and destruction.

What are some of the most memorable things you saw while working on this?

Words fail me. The scale of the burning is unimaginable. The “arc of fire”, as it’s known, spans from Bolivia, through the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso, across Rondônia, into Amazonas all the way to Para, which is about the distance from the northern US border with Canada to its southern border with Mexico.

The arc of fire is not a new phenomenon; it has encroached ever further into the primary forests of the Amazon for decades. But the rate of burning has become exponential, spurred on by a perfect storm of economic and political factors.



A CATTLE FEEDLOT IN RONDÔNIA THAT IS HOME TO SOME 40,000 COWS: ALL OF THEM BEING FATTENED UP FOR SLAUGHTER, THEN PROCESSED AND EXPORTED AS BEEF PRODUCTS.

The scale of it, like so many aspects of global heating and climate change, is in many ways beyond human perception and imagination. It can be more easily described with quantitative statistics and scientific modelling but very challenging to infer qualitatively, as a storyteller or artist.

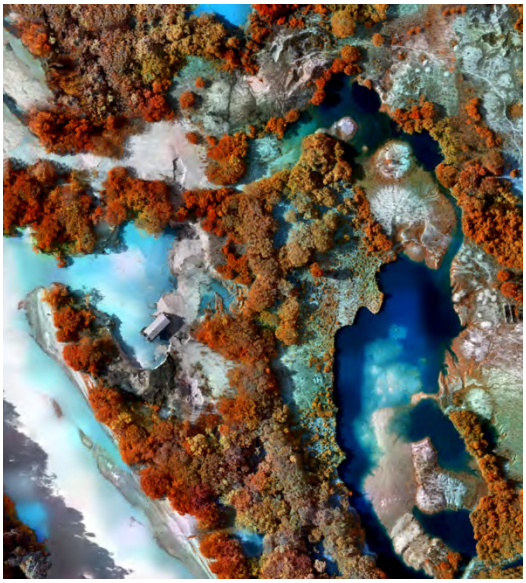
I can tell you that these are some of the most tragic landscapes I have ever seen—and I’ve seen more than my fair share. These areas are warzones. As UN Secretary General António Guterres recently declared, “Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal.”

Agricultural and mining practices have turned some of the most biodiverse paradise landscapes on Earth into something resembling nuclear winter. The rainforest’s intense colours and sounds have been rendered into a dead silent monochrome landscape of ash and charred boughs with the crisped, asphyxiated bodies of primates, sloths and other animals frozen in their attempts to escape. I cannot find the words to do it justice.

What can you tell me about the imaging equipment you used? How did that allow you to capture something that hasn't been seen before?

In my search to find a lens wide enough to take this vast subject in, I realized that environmental scientists use very specific kinds of remote sensing camera technologies that capture numerous spectral bandwidths of reflected light. These cameras, carried in satellites orbiting the Earth's surface, capture large amounts of data that can be interpreted using geographic information systems (GIS) software in order to create maps containing environmental information.

This data is then used by scientists to understand the scale and velocity of deforestation, chart aspects of shifting climate, predict tipping points, etc. And the satellite camera technology that generates the data is called multispectral photography.



MULTI-SPECTRAL MAP SHOWING A GOLD MINING BOAT AT WORK IN THE CREPORI RIVER IN NORTHERN BRAZIL. THE MINERAL EXTRACTION PROCESS IS EXTREMELY INVASIVE ON THE RIVERBED AND RIVERBANK AND INVOLVES MERCURY POLLUTION.

Interestingly, airborne multispectral cameras are also used widely in agribusiness and mineralogy, to reveal the health of crops and drainage patterns, or to pinpoint rare earth minerals in the land. These two industries are responsible for almost all of the Amazon's deforestation. So the medium is simultaneously used to help us perceive the scale of ecological destruction in the Amazon, while being exploited by those invasive industries most responsible for this damage.

I wished to try to harness multispectral photography to reveal traces of the Amazon's destruction that a conventional camera may not be able to register. To do this, I have been working with a drone mounted multispectral camera to create orthographic photos that map sites of environmental crimes, or image topographies of ecological degradation. The resulting prints offer a visually expressive way of describing Man's impact on the environment.

Talk to me about the idea of providing black-and-white portraits of the perpetrators and victims of environmental degradation next to the photos of the degradation itself. Why do you think it's important to add that human element, and to hold individual people accountable for mass environmental destruction?

Maps feel inherently impersonal, of course. The human figure, if it can even be seen in the landscape, is captured from far above, becoming little dots. But man's trace upon the land is made clear. To balance this, I wished to create a kind of parallel series which is very personal.



SILVER GELATIN PHOTOGRAPH FROM INFRARED FILM SHOWING GARIMPEIROS SPRAYING SILT WITHIN A GOLD MINING PIT ALONG THE CREPORI RIVER.

This monochrome series was captured using a near-extinct kind of black and white infrared film stock named Kodak HIE that is incredibly vulnerable to heat degradation. It felt like an interesting way to try to express visually the phenomenon of global heating. Bringing this film into the extremely hot and humid environment of the Amazon basin to photograph the burning rainforest, sometimes from quite near the flames, was an invitation to allow its highly sensitive photographic emulsion to become materially degraded by these environmental conditions.

The resulting patina of environmental damage—the scratches and tears; the weeping emulsion; the accidental fingerprints; the fogging—is all immensely subjective compared with the more objective scientific elements created by the ten-band multispectral camera.

It's part of my attempt to show the viewer the difficulties, on the one hand, of photographing the vast and abstract narrative of ecocide, while on the other hand showing photography's power to reveal and understand the scale of Man's exploitation of the environment.

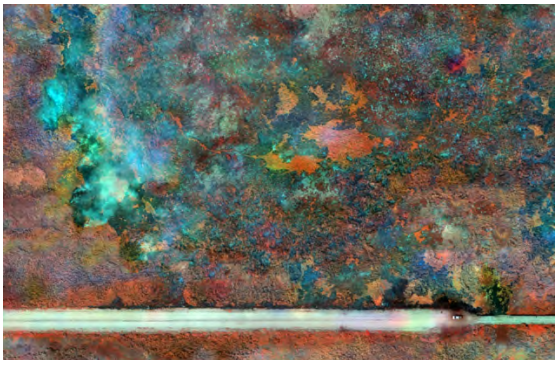


SILVER GELATIN PHOTOGRAPH FROM HEAT-DEGRADED INFRARED FILM SHOWING THE AFTERMATH OF SLASH-AND-BURN AGRICULTURAL ENCROACHMENT INTO PRIMARY RAINFOREST, SOUTHERN AMAZONAS.

When talking about things like environmental devastation and climate change, what is the impact of art and photography as opposed to hard science? Or to put it another way: how important is it to show, rather than tell?

The stories we tell are absolutely crucial to creating meaningful change. We need only look at how dramatically the narratives of climate denial—stories with little basis in truth—have obstructed our society's rational response to this exponential catastrophe for decades.

As Naomi Klein points out in her book *This Changes Everything*, as recently as the mid-1980s both Republicans and Democrats could agree that climate change was real and something must be done about it. But the spin of think tanks and lobbyists funded by gas and oil industry billionaires has fostered an insidious culture of denialism that has split society and obstructed rational emissions regulations.



MULTISPECTRAL GIS MAP REVEALING SUBTERRANEAN FIRE SPREADING THROUGH THE DESICCATED ROOT SYSTEM OF THE PANTANAL WETLANDS. PREFOGO FIREFIGHTERS STRUGGLE TO CONTAIN THE BLAZE.

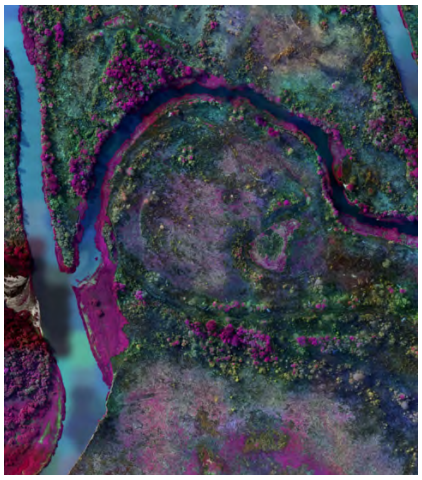
Decades later, these narratives are widespread in the United States and have, in the interests of a wealthy few, wasted the most precious years we had to turn this around. That's a result of storytelling.

We must begin to convey these narratives more powerfully—to challenge climate denialism, apathy and inaction in more compelling, urgent and impactful ways—to make people feel something. Because that's our power, as artists and as storytellers: we have the ability to make people feel things in new and original ways.

The data is in; the reports have been written; the writing is on the wall. This ship has almost sailed.

More photos below. Interview by Gavin Butler. Follow him on Twitter

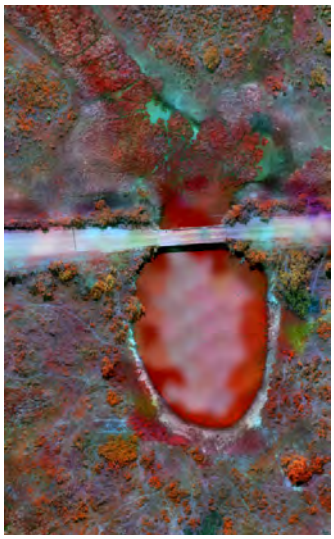
These works will be the subject of Richard's solo exhibition at Jack Shainman gallery, New York City, from April 8-May 15, 2021



MULTISPECTRAL MAP INDICATING THE EXTENT OF RECENT BURNING TO FOLIAGE ALONG RIO SÃO LOURENÇO.



MORE GARIMPEIROS BLASTING SILT IN THE SEARCH FOR GOLD ALONG THE CREPORI RIVER.



MULTISPECTRAL MAP OF A WATER REFUGE AT THE END OF AN UNSEASONABLY LONG DRY SEASON. THE PANTANAL'S EXTREMELY DIVERSE BIOME, INCLUDING HUNDREDS OF CAIMAN, CONGREGATES NEAR THESE BODIES OF WATER FOR SURVIVAL.

Eight Photographers' Pictures From Isolation

Joel Meyerowitz, Renée Cox, Asako Narahashi and more share visual diaries of the present moment.



In the recent weeks and months, the photographers whose work is shown here have captured moments of connection and self-reflection, as well as evidence of the enduring power of nature. Clockwise from top left: Renée Cox; Richard Mosse; Wayne Lawrence; © Asako Narahashi; Domingo Milella; © Hitoshi Fugo, courtesy of Miyako Yoshinaga Gallery; © Joel Meyerowitz, courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery; Alec Soth

By Meara Sharma

April 29, 2020

"Like a high-strung racehorse who needs extra weight in her saddle pad, I like a handicap and relish the aesthetic challenge posed by the limitations of the ordinary," writes the photographer Sally Mann in her memoir, "Hold Still" (2015). In our stilled, stalled time, her words ring especially true. Here we all are, burdened by

untold fears, forced to make do, to essentialize, to improvise. And also, within all of this, to open our eyes and attend to new possibilities.

Of course, attention is the linchpin of image-making, and so T asked a number of photographers, many of whom typically derive inspiration from the wider world, how they are approaching this newfound intimacy with the ordinary, and to share what they have invented within it. Some relayed mystical encounters with nature and the animal world: Domingo Milella discovered ancient symbols on the rugged outskirts of Bari, Italy; Richard Mosse communed with the craggy topography of the Burren landscape in Ireland; Asako Narahashi, in Japan, found solace alongside a rescued cat. On the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, Wayne Lawrence embraced proximity to family and the lush surroundings, while in wintry Minnesota, Alec Soth gave in to distance by chronicling his neighborhood through a pair of binoculars, capturing the feeling of being at once near and far, sheltered and susceptible.

THE T LIST | *Sign up here for T's newsletter, a weekly roundup of what our editors are noticing and coveting now.*

Others have found ongoing projects imbued with fresh relevance. For his series "Chance and Necessity," Hitoshi Fugo captured the drama and beauty of everyday mishaps in his Tokyo kitchen. On the beaches of Long Island, Renée Cox considered the multiplicity of the self in this moment of collective inwardness. So, too, did Joel Meyerowitz, who began a daily ritual of self-portraiture at the start of the year, and for whom the act of facing oneself honestly is a kind of celebration.

Indeed, the wide-ranging images here acknowledge but don't limit themselves to melancholy; rather, they hold intrigue, affirmation and even delight, reminding us that, as Meyerowitz says, photography is a hopeful art form, an act of "saying yes," of staying awake to the world — which, as the pandemic continues to push us into retreat, is as vital a task as ever.

Quotes have been edited and condensed.

Richard Mosse
Pictures taken in the Burren National Park, Ireland



"Mullaghmore I." Richard Mosse

I have always thought that wandering through the hills and the fractured limestone strata of the Burren landscape feels something like mapping the striations of one's own mind. This is a land of texture, and it often takes some concentration on the ground in front of you not to trip up or fall into any of the "clints" or "grikes," the furrowed delineations created by millions of years of rain erosion. One must remain focused on each step and absorbed in the present moment. This helps distill the mind. As a photographer and as a walker, I see this landscape inwardly, as an expression of layers of thought that become especially evident after prolonged periods of isolation. I tried to capture that in this mini-series, as it has been important to me. Isolation, I've found, can be centering.



"Mullaghmore II." Richard Mosse

One of the photos shows a rag tree, which is an ancient practice in Ireland that descends from pagan times. It is a kind of shamanic site where people come to be healed. Those with illness and ailments will make a pilgrimage to the site, bringing some old rag or memento that represents their sickness and tie it to the rag tree. Doing so is said to heal the malady, if not physically then in some spiritual way. When Christianity arrived in Ireland in the Dark Ages, the church appropriated this practice, and so these sites have survived and are still popular. The spring bubbling from the rocks beneath this tree is considered a source of holy water — it's known locally as a holy well — and there are some glass mugs hanging from nails for believers to use to drink from the purifying stream. I have visited this rag tree for many years but have never seen it so heavily strewn with rags and other tokens.



"Mullaghmore III." Richard Mosse

I think this moment may be the death of analog photography. And of course, the art world was always very interpersonal, relational. It was about showing up to talks, openings, visiting museums, experiencing the work in person. All that seems like a memory now, replaced by the digital. This truly has locked us, at least for now, into viewing photography on social media and online. It will take a lot to return to the emphasis there was, until recently, on showing up in person, on giving the work the space to breathe. One could argue that this has the potential to democratize photography, but remember that each time you upload an image to social media, you're giving away the rights to a massive corporation. It's incredibly important for us, as humans, to show up and be present in order to create society. That's dangerous to do now, and also currently illegal for many people, so I feel nervous about what we stand to lose, particularly in regard to human rights and liberal democracy.



"Mullaghmore IV." Richard Mosse



"Rag Tree." Richard Mosse

WIRED

March 3, 2017

MILITARY-GRADE CAMERA PRODUCES EERIE PHOTOS OF REFUGEES



YOU CAN'T HELP but feel profound sadness seeing Nilufer Demir's photograph of Alan Kurdi, the little boy who drowned as his family fled Syria, or desperation looking at Darko Bandic's photo of thousands of migrants crossing Slovenia on foot. That's the point. Most photographers want you to empathize with their subjects. Richard Mosse wants to unsettle you.

Mosse uses a military thermal radiation camera to create remarkably detailed panoramas of refugee camps in his ongoing series *Heat Maps*. By employing technology more typically used in surveillance and warfare, Mosse offers a critique of how refugees are too often treated—as a threat to be mitigated or a logistical problem to be solved. "It's my attempt to use that technology against itself, to create an abiding image of very provisional, temporary spaces that we'd rather overlook in our society," says Mosse.

The Irish photographer has worked with infrared before, shooting with Kodak Aerochrome, a Cold War-era infrared satellite film, to document the war in Congo. He found the inspiration for *Heat Maps* in 2014 when wildlife cinematographer Sophie Darlington told of him about a military camera, designed to identify and track insurgents, capable of detecting bodies up to 18 miles away. Mosse placed an order for one, and received it nine months later. He won't say much about it, but the 50-pound rig requires two computers and a 110-pound automated tripod to operate. "There's a lot of moving parts to the system, which means a lot more can go wrong," says Mosse. "It's been a bit of a nightmare."



Mosse says the camera is classified as a weapon under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations. Before traveling beyond the European Union with it, he often works with a lawyer to obtain an export license from Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs. He's visited some 50 refugee camps in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Upon arrival, he spends a few days scouting locations a mile or two away from the camp before setting everything up.

Although the final image is a still photograph, Mosse is using a video camera to make it. The camera pans slowly across the scene for as long as 80 minutes, pausing at two-second intervals to create a series of smaller images. As many as 900 of those photos are compiled into a final image using Photoshop, a process that can take more than 100 hours.

The final photo feels a bit like you're looking through night vision goggles or the scope of a rifle. Unsettled confusion gives way to recognition as you begin discerning small details—people sitting on the grass, sleeping in tents, chatting with neighbors. Then you realize the image teems with life. "That feeling of the unethical, this invasiveness and anonymizing, stripping of the individual—that's what the camera was designed to do," Mosse says. "But there's also a re-humanization of people, as the camera reveals them as fellow humans."

Heat Maps *appears at the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York until March 11 and the Barbican Centre in London until April 17.*

HYPERALLERGIC

FILM

The Refugee Crisis Seen Through a Heat-Detecting Camera

Richard Mosse's video installation *Incoming* gives migrants anonymity while emphasizing their humanity.

Tanner Tafelski May 14, 2019



© Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Since October 31, 2018, the nonprofit arts organization No Longer Empty has been hosting one-day-only events throughout New York City as part of their yearlong project InResponse: (Im)migration. InResponse develops "a series of panel discussions, workshops, community-based gatherings and an online website that brings into one forum the creative work being done by artists, activists and organizations at the intersection of arts and immigration." In the fall of 2019, the project will launch a site-specific exhibition.

As part of the initiative, No Longer Empty's most recent program was held in multiple parts. Ridgewood hosted the launch of Strange Edition, a spacious artist-run studio and center three years in the making. Electronic composer Ben Frost performed an in-the-round concert entitled "Widening Gyre." Trevor Tweeten's five-projector 16mm installation *Exquisite Corpse, Movement in Five Parts* (2018) screened throughout the evening. But the main event was a panel discussion and screening of Richard Mosse's three-channel video *Incoming* (2014–17).



© Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Incoming, which Frost and Tweeten worked on as Mosse's close collaborators, garnered great acclaim when it screened at the National Gallery of Victoria and the Barbican Art Gallery in 2017. These are two relatively large spaces which visitors can walk in and out of to view the looped film. At Strange Edition, a packed house watched *Incoming* projected floor-to-ceiling on one wall. Coupled with large speakers, this made for an immersive experience, discombobulating yet meditative. It leaves a viewer feeling unmoored, which is the intent.

Mosse, with Tweeten's cinematography, captured footage of the ongoing refugee crisis — brought on by war and climate change — with an unwieldy military-grade heat-detecting camera which rendered the recorded images in textured, ghostly monochromatic gradations. They photographed refugees traveling perilously along

two major routes into the European Union: huddled in rafts wracked by the Aegean Sea, attempting to land on Greek islands, and temporarily safe at Berlin Tempelhof Airport, functioning as an emergency camp.



© Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

As Tweeten noted in the discussion afterwards, *Incoming* is a film of ambivalence. The fridge-shaped camera, able to see up to 18 miles away, transforms people into spectral figures. In one way it dehumanizes them, stripping them of their individual features. But in another way, this is an asset for the people being filmed; they don't have to fear the repercussions of being represented because of the cloak of anonymity. And by using slow motion and concentrating on moments, Mosse injects humanity into the images. A little girl holds a smart phone, full of curiosity. A man prays, radiant while looking toward the camera. Another person carries a painting of Christ out of some ruins. The film forces you to pay attention to details and gestures.

Judging by the brief, uncomfortable pause immediately after the screening, as well as the high-quality discussion that ensued, *Incoming* did its job. With its aural and visual onslaught (an "aesthetic violence," as Mosse put it), *Incoming* is a shock to the system, jarring loose one's sense of ethics. What's the viewer's relationship to these images? Where do their sympathies and support lie? The questions and questioning is endless. Although Mosse is strictly focusing on Europe, *Incoming*'s call for empathy and reflection certainly relates to the state of immigration in the US two and a half years into the Trump presidency. As Mosse is ready to point out, all are complicit in the ongoing humanitarian crisis.



© Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

InResponse: (Im)migration continues at various venues through November 1, 2019.

The New York Times Magazine

When the Camera Was a Weapon of Imperialism. (And When It Still Is.)

By Teju Cole

Feb. 6, 2019

I first saw the photograph some years ago, online. Later, I tracked it down to its original source: "In Afric's Forest and Jungle: Or Six Years Among the Yorubans," a memoir published in 1899 by the Rev. R.H. Stone. It shows a crowd in what is now Nigeria, but what was then Yorubaland under British colonial influence. The caption below the photograph reads: "A king of Ejayboo. Governor of Lagos on right. For years the rulers of this fierce tribe made the profession of Christianity a capital crime." This description is familiar in tone from anthropological literature of the period, though the photograph is hard to date precisely. "Ejayboo" is what we would nowadays spell as "Ijebu," a subgroup of Yoruba. That catches my attention: I am Yoruba and also Ijebu. This picture is a time capsule from a world to which I am connected but had not seen before, a world by colonial encounter.

By the middle of the 19th century, through treaties and threats of force, the British had wrested control of the coastal city Lagos from its king. They then turned their efforts to improving access to the goods and services in the Yoruba hinterland. The Yoruba were already by that time a populous and diverse ethnic group, full of rivalrous kingdoms large and small, some friendly to the British, others less so.

Stone, a Virginian sent by the Southern Baptist Convention, lived among them — lived among us — for two spells, in 1859-63 and 1867-69, before, during and after the American Civil War. He had this to say about Yoruba people: "They are reasonable, brave and patriotic, and are capable of a very high degree of intellectual culture." It is praise, but must be understood in the context of a statement he makes earlier in his book about living "among the barbarous people" of that part of the world. In any case, the Ijebu in the mid-19th century were largely wealthy traders and farmers who did not want to give the British right of way to the interior of the country; only through diplomacy, subterfuge and violence were they finally overcome.

This photograph was made in the aftermath. The white governor of Lagos — based on the plausible dates, it is probably John Hawley Glover — sits under an enormous umbrella. On one side of him is another high-ranking colonial officer. On the other side is the Ijebu king, or oba, probably the Awujale of the Ijebu kingdom, Oba Ademuyewo Fidipote.

The oba wears a beaded crown, but the beads have been parted and his face is visible. This is unusual, for the oba is like a god and must be concealed when in public. The beads over his face, with their interplay of light and shadow, are meant to give him a divine aspect. Why is his face visible in this photograph? Some contravention of customary practice has taken place. The dozens of men seated on the ground in front of him are visibly alarmed. Many have turned their bodies away from the oba, and several are positioned toward the camera, not in order to look at the camera but in order to avoid looking at the exposed radiance of their king.

The invention of the daguerreotype was announced in 1839. By the 1840s, photography had spread like wildfire and become a vital aspect of European colonialism. It played a role in administrative, missionary, scientific and commercial activities. As the Zimbabwean novelist Yvonne Vera put it: "The camera has often been a dire instrument. In Africa, as in most parts of the dispossessed, the camera arrives as part of the colonial paraphernalia, together with the gun and the bible. ..."

Photography in colonialized societies was not only a dire instrument. Subject peoples often adopted photography for their own uses. There were, for instance, a number of studios in Lagos by the 1880s, where elites could go to pose for portraits. But such positive side effects aside, photography during colonial rule imaged the world in order to study, profit from and own it. The colonial gaze might describe as barbarous both the oba's beaded crown and his regal right to conceal himself. This was one of the repeated interactions between imperial powers and the populations that they sought to control: The dominant power decided that everything had to be seen and cataloged, a task for which photography was perfectly suited. Under the giant umbrella of colonialism, nothing would be allowed to remain hidden from the imperial authorities.

Imperialism and colonial photographic practices both flourished in the 19th century, and both extended themselves, with cosmetic adaptations, into the 20th. In 1960, during the horrific French war on Algeria, the French military assigned a young soldier, Marc Garanger, to photograph people in an internment camp in the Kabylia region of Northern Algeria. Thousands of people had been confined in the region under armed guard, and the French military commander had decreed that ID cards were mandatory. A picture of each prisoner was required. Many of the women were forced to remove their veils. These were women who did not wish to be seen, made to sit for photographs that were not for them. (Photography played a different military role in the numerous aerial reconnaissance missions by the French, which resulted in thousands of negatives mapping the region.)

Garanger's photographs both record an injustice and occasion it. His alternative, not an easy one, would have been to refuse the order and go to prison. His pictures show us what we ought not to see: Young and old women, their hair free flowing or plaited, one face after the other, in the hundreds. They collectively emanate refusal. The women of Kabylia look through the photographer, certainly not considering him an ally. Their gazes rise from the surface of the photograph, palpably furious.

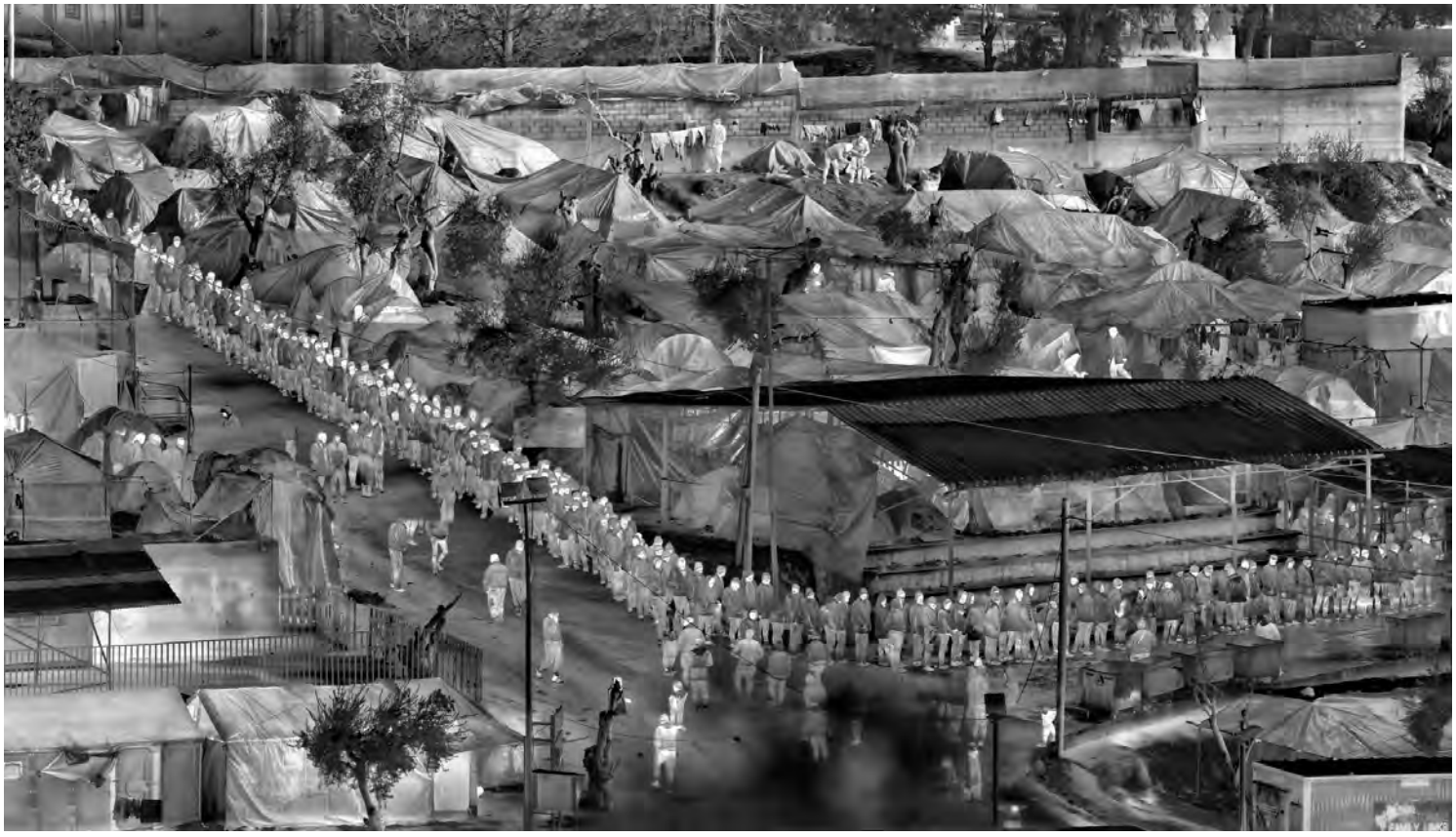
When we speak of "shooting" with a camera, we are acknowledging the kinship of photography and violence. The anthropological photographs made in the 19th century under the aegis of colonial powers are related to the images created by contemporary photojournalists, including those who embed with military forces. Embedding is sometimes the only way to get a direct record, no matter how limited, of what is happening in an armed conflict. On occasion such an arrangement leads to images whose directness displeases the authorities, but a more common outcome has been that proximity to an army helps bolster the narrative preferred by the army.

Still, photographic reportage has the power to quicken the conscience and motivate political commitments. Examples abound of photographs acting as catalysts in the public's understanding of vital issues, from the images of Bergen-Belsen in 1945 to the photograph of the Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi in 2015. And yet, perhaps even more insistently, on a day-by-day, week-by-week basis, photography implicitly serves the powers that be. To insist that contemporary photographic practice — and I mean to include a majority of the international news coverage in newspapers like this one — is generally made (and published) for the greater good is to misconstrue history, because it leaves out the question of "Good for whom?" Such pictures aren't for their subjects any more than the photograph in Stone's book was for the Ijebus and their king.

Certain images underscore an unbridgeable gap and a never-to-be-toppled hierarchy. When a group of people is judged to be "foreign," it becomes far more likely that news organizations will run, for the consumption of their audiences, explicit, disturbing photographs of members of that group: starving children or bullet-riddled bodies. Meanwhile, the injury and degradation of those with whom readers perceive a kinship — a judgment often based on racial sympathy and class loyalties — is routinely treated in more circumspect fashion. This has hardly changed since Susan Sontag made the same observation in "Regarding the Pain of Others" (2003), and it has hardly changed because the underlying political relationships between dominant and subject societies have hardly changed.

Without confronting this inequality, this misconstrual of history, photography will continue to describe itself as one thing (a force for liberation) while obdurately remaining another (an obedient appendage of state power). It will continue to be like the organs of the state that "spread democracy" and change regimes. Even when it appears to go against the state, it will only do so selectively, quaintly, beautifully, piteously, in terms that do not question the right of the state to assert power.

For how long will these radically unequal societal realities endure? Many affecting photographs have been made during the huge waves of international migration of the past few years. These pictures issue, as usual, from the presumed rights of photographers to depict the suffering of people "out there" for the viewing of those "back home." But in looking at these images — images of war, of starvation, of capsized boats and exhausted caravans — we must go beyond the usual frames of pity and abjection. Every picture of suffering should elicit a question stronger than "Why is this happening?" The question should be "Why have I allowed this to happen?"



Detail from Richard Mosse's ''Moria in Snow, Lesbos, Greece,'' 2017. From Jack Shainman Gallery

This is what the scholar Ariella Azoulay calls the "citizenship" of photography, its ability, when practiced thoughtfully, to remind us of our mutual responsibilities. When I look at the bewildering photographs of refugee camps in Richard Mosse's recent book, "The Castle," I feel indicted. The imperial underpinnings of Mosse's project are inescapable: Using military-grade thermal cameras, he makes extremely complex panoramic images (stitched together from hundreds of shots) of landscapes in the Middle East and Europe in which refugees have gathered or have been confined. His pictures echo the surveillance to which these bodies are already subjected. But the thermal imaging renders the images very dark, with the humans showing up as white shapes (almost like a negative). The picture conceals what it reveals. We see people, but they remain hidden.

This technique makes for uncanny images in which distressed people move about like the figures you see in dreams, indistinct but full of ghostly presence. At the Moria camp in Greece, it is snowing. We see a long snaking line of people, waiting. What are they waiting for? For some material handout, probably, for food or blankets or documents. But their waiting represents the deeper waiting of all those who have been confined in the antechamber of humanity. They are waiting to be allowed to be human.

Mosse's images, formally striking as they are, are unquestionably part of the language of visual domination. With his political freedom of movement and his expensive technical equipment, he makes meticulous pictures of suffering that end up in exquisite books and in art galleries. He is not the first photographer to aestheticize suffering, nor will he be the last. And yet, by suppressing color, by overwhelming the viewer with detail, by evoking racial horror rather than prettily

displaying it and by including in his work philosophical considerations of the scenes he shows — “The Castle” contains essays by Judith Butler, Paul K. Saint-Amour and Mosse himself and a poem by Behrouz Boochani — he does something quite different from most photojournalists. He unsettles the viewer.

Photography’s future will be much like its past. It will largely continue to illustrate, without condemning, how the powerful dominate the less powerful. It will bring the “news” and continue to support the idea that doing so — collecting the lives of others for the consumption of “us” — is a natural right. But with a project like “The Castle,” I have a little bit of hope that an ethic of self-determination can be restored. I have hope that the refugees of Moria, Athens, Berlin and Belgrade will gain a measure of privacy. The women of Kabylia will cover their faces and return to themselves as they wish to be. The oba’s beaded crown will fall back into place, shadowing his face. Photography writes with light, but not everything wants to be seen. Among the human rights is the right to remain obscure, unseen and dark.

Teju Cole is a novelist, a photographer and the magazine’s photography critic. He teaches at Harvard. This is Teju Cole’s final On Photography column and the last “On” column in our weekly rotation.

A version of this article appears in print on Feb. 10, 2019, on Page 14 of the Sunday Magazine with the headline: Photography has the power to record and reveal the world; but not all things can be recorded or should be revealed.

CREATIVE REVIEW



The Photography Annual

EXHIBITION OF THE YEAR: RICHARD MOSSE'S INCOMING

By *Eliza Williams*

Richard Mosse's Incoming, shown at the Barbican Curve from February to April this year, was a thought-provoking look at the refugee crisis happening around the world. It is Creative Review's standout photographic exhibition of the year.

Part-reportage, part conceptual art, Incoming challenged viewers to examine their understanding of the refugee crisis, and of how the media can affect our opinion of events. At the exhibition's centre was a 52-minute-long triple-screen film work, created by Mosse in collaboration with cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and set to a specially composed soundtrack by electronic musician Ben Frost. The footage showed the plight of refugees in different settings across the world, including Syria, Lesvos and the 'Jungle' camp in Calais.



Richard Mosse's Incoming at The Curve, Barbican Centre. Photo: Tristan Fewings

Everything featured in the film was shot from a distance, with Mosse using advanced thermographic weapon systems and border surveillance imaging technology to create the work, which can detect the heat of a human body up to 30.3km away. The effect of the tech is to give the people featured in the film a bizarre, unique tonality. They remain distinctly human, yet are also 'other': difficult to distinguish as individuals and presented as uncanny. This use of unusual technology is in keeping with a previous series by Mosse. Titled Enclave, it was presented at the Venice Biennale in 2013 and won the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2014. Enclave showed soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo photographed using discontinued military surveillance film that registers chlorophyll in live vegetation, giving the fighters a stunning and surreal psychedelic backdrop. Like Incoming, this is reportage with a difference, raising questions of how successfully photography can present the reality of complex and violent situations.



Richard Mosse's Incoming at The Curve, Barbican Centre. Photo: Tristan Fewings

Incoming garnered rave reviews from critics. "To enter Mosse's vast, triple-screen installation ... is to be transported to a world both alien and familiar; a spectral place where all that we have seen of the refugee crisis in the media – overcrowded boats, rescue teams, refugee camps, lifeless bodies washed up on tourist beaches, discarded lifejackets – is rendered more visceral but more unreal," wrote Sean O'Hagan in the Guardian.

"Richard Mosse has made a certain terrible beauty his trademark," wrote Ben Luke in the Evening Standard, while Chris Waywell in Time Out said simply: "It will make you rethink the European refugee crisis."

Weaving narratives

It is worth noting that while Incoming did feature a series of still images, it is dominated by the film installation, and our choice of this as a 'photography' exhibition of the year might ruffle the feathers of those who see the medium primarily in stills form. Yet, at the centre of Mosse's work is an examination of the genre of reportage. Incoming is a recording of events as witnessed through a camera, yet also an investigation of 'documentary' itself. It asks us to consider how the way a situation is presented to us changes our understanding of it.



Richard Mosse's Incoming at The Curve, Barbican Centre. Photo: Tristan Fewings

In 2015, Mosse was nominated for membership of Magnum Photos, the prestigious and world-renowned photo agency. Yet he never continued to become a full member of Magnum, in part because of his wariness around the perceived notion that documentary photography was somehow portraying the 'truth'. Significantly though, he still identifies as a photographer. "I do," he said in an interview with Tom Seymour for BJP magazine. "But I have a very ambivalent relationship to it. It's almost like self-loathing, because there's something predatory about the camera lens. I can't escape photography but, whichever way you look at, documentary photography is as constructed a way of b seeing the world as anything else."

He aims to highlight this constructed element in his work. In using the thermographic camera, which has a primary use of identifying body heat from afar and is therefore classified as a weapon, he hopes to confound viewers' expectations of documentary work.



Richard Mosse's Incoming at The Curve, Barbican Centre. Photo: Tristan Fewings

"You have to remember it's a military tool, it's not designed for telling stories," he explained to CR at the launch of Incoming at the Barbican. "It's designed for detecting the enemy. So the fact that it has an extraordinary tonality ... [it's] an alienation effect almost, to push the viewer into an unfamiliar place, where they can see what happens to be quite a familiar subject in a new and perhaps refreshed way."

Extraordinary equipment

In practical terms, the camera was far from straightforward. It was large and unwieldy, plus, classified as a weapon, it required government permission to use. Mosse was also limited in where he could take it. One scene in the film, which shows a battle unfolding in Northern Syria, was in fact shot from Turkey. "There's a lot of mortar fire and rockets, a lot of tracers," he says. "That's all totally visible on the camera, and once we were filming that you really realised that this is what the camera is designed for, for battlefield awareness. You could see artillery positions that were hidden, you could see the glow of people behind them.

"We were on a hill just on the Turkish border. Because we really didn't want to risk our necks. Also, Syria's one of the sanctioned countries that we couldn't travel with the camera to. The camera is regarded as a weapon under the International Traffic in arms Regulations. In other words, if you don't get the proper export documentation, you could be locked away for weapons smuggling. It's one more annoying thing about the camera."

Richard Mosse's Incoming at The Curve, Barbican Centre. Photo: Tristan Fewings

The distance the camera had to be used from presented ethical dilemmas too. It is able to record scenes intimately without the subjects having any awareness that they are being filmed. The film contains scenes of people socially interacting in refugee camps but also of doctors performing an autopsy.

"The almost invasive gaze of the very powerful long range capabilities allowed us to create a very honest portrait of people who were completely unaware, they were unselfconscious," says Mosse. "I would argue that's not an invasion of privacy because the camera also anonymises the individual, you can't identify anyone who is imaged by the camera because it doesn't reveal how their face looks. It reveals how their face 'glows'.



"There's a lot of things going on here that we found, the longer we worked with the technology, started to really resonate and create all this tension within the work," he continues. "That's what I'm hoping the work will do – it will push the viewer into an uncomfortable space in which they're not told what to think.... They don't know what to feel and actually the score is constantly misleading the viewer and changing gears along with the edit."

A political artwork

Even more uncomfortably, the unique visual effect can be dehumanising. "That's the thing about the camera, it's designed to detect the enemy," explains Mosse. "It objectifies the human body in a way that almost strips the individual from the human figure. It turns them into a biological trace or 'creature'. This is a form of dehumanisation. So there's something deeply problematic about that.

"But in a way I felt that revealed something about how our governments represent and therefore regard the figure of the refugee," he continues. "So potentially it could allow a space to think about that somehow."



Richard Mosse's Incoming at The Curve, Barbican Centre. Photo: Tristan Fewings

There are obvious political questions raised by the work, but Mosse does not shy away from this, and in fact is keen that these ideas will reach the viewer and even potentially galvanise them, in a way a more traditional documentary film might not.

"The constant disorientation [forces] the viewer to become the author of the work on some level and to own their interpretation," he says. "Rather than to be like, 'oh I saw this great doc about the refugees and isn't it horrible?'

"But what I really hope people will take away, if nothing else, is this sense of uneasy complicity as Westerners," he concludes. "This is a technology that is designed for our governments, that is used against the refugees. And we are part of that problem, we are complicit. The whole system that is designed to deal with the crisis is completely inadequate.

"We're increasingly seeing the slide of liberal democracy into totalitarianism in the West due to the refugee crisis. It's being used as a trigger by people like Trump and by the Brexit politicians as a way to stoke and create fear amongst us when there was none and there is no need for any. So I think immigration and the figure of the refugee is somehow this figure that creates a crisis in our societies. It's a very worrying thing because I think with climate change we're only having the first taste of this crisis."

TORONTO LIFE

CULTURE

Nine eye-popping exhibits to see at this year's Contact festival

This month, photographers from across the globe take over Toronto's billboards and gallery walls for Contact, the city's annual photography bonanza. This year's highlights include daring fashion portraits, forgotten histories and local heroes. Here's a preview of the best shots on view.

BY TORONTO LIFE | MAY 1, 2018



Richard Mosse transforms photojournalistic subject matter—a refugee camp in Greece—into an otherworldly scene with this shot. He took it with a midwave infrared camera, which maps heat instead of light, using the technology for aesthetic purposes rather than surveillance. *To June 9, Arsenal Contemporary.*

Sulcas, Roslyn. "An Irish Photographer's Images of Refugee Camps Win the Prix Pictet." *The New York Times*. 04 May 2017. Online.

The New York Times | https://nyti.ms/2pLOOM6

ART & DESIGN

An Irish Photographer's Images of Refugee Camps Win the Prix Pictet

By ROSLYN SULCAS MAY 4, 2017

LONDON — The Irish photographer Richard Mosse has won this year's Prix Pictet for photography, for "Heat Maps 2016-17," a series of panoramic images of refugee camps across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, created using a military-grade thermal camera that can detect body heat from a distance of 18 miles.

The award was announced on Thursday by Kofi Annan, the former secretary general of the United Nations and the honorary president of the prize, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where an exhibition of work by the 12 finalists runs through May 28. (It will then go on tour to Zurich, Tokyo, Moscow, Brussels, San Diego and Rome.)

The Prix Pictet was started in 2008 by the Pictet Group, an asset management company in Geneva. It has a focus on sustainability, and offers an annual prize of 100,000 Swiss francs (about $100,000). This year, photographers were asked to submit work on the theme of space.

Among the other submissions on the shortlist were Mandy Barker's images of plastic particles suspended in water drops; Sergey Ponomarev's photographs of migrants at sea; Benny Lam's pictures of Hong Kong residents crammed into tiny living spaces; and Michael Wolf's images of Tokyo commuters packed into subway carriages. Saskia Groneberg, Beate Gütschow, Rinko Kawauchi, Sohei Nishino, Thomas Ruff, Munem Wasif and Pavel Wolberg were the other finalists.

Mr. Mosse was chosen by an international jury of nine that included last year's winner, the French photographer Valérie Belin. Mr. Annan said that the images on the shortlist displayed "visions of people carrying on against what are frequently dreadful odds," but added that the works perhaps offered hope that "it is not too late for us to reverse the damage we have done."

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Little, Harriet Fitch. "Richard Mosse talks about winning the Prix Pictet." *Financial Times.* 05 May 2017. Online.

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

Visual Arts

Richard Mosse talks about winning the Prix Pictet

The Irish photographer's images of refugees sit between documentary and contemporary art



Detail of 'Idomeni' (2016), from the series Heat Maps by Richard Mosse © Richard Mosse/Prix Pictet 2017

MAY 5, 2017 by: **Harriet Fitch Little**

Prix Pictet, the international photography prize that highlights issues of sustainability, assigned entrants the theme of "Space" for its most recent edition. It is a topic that could well expand to fit all of photography, but the work of Richard Mosse has a stronger case than most.

The Irish photographer, announced last night as the winner of the seventh edition of the prize, has used cutting-edge military technology to visualise space in a way few will have seen it: he has created huge, detailed heat maps of refugee camps around the world.

The monochrome panoramas are striking and very strange — the contouring technique produces shapes similar to etchings, while the scale recalls medieval cityscapes. Mosse says it was a revelation for him as much as anyone: "You're really pissing in the wind," he says, then laughs, apologises and rephrases: "My eyes are not thermographic . . . So you don't know what the camera will actually see and not see."



'Hellinikon Olympic Arena' (2016), from the series Heat Maps by Richard Mosse © Richard Mosse/Prix Pictet 2017

We are meeting at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where the Prix Pictet Space shortlist exhibition has just opened. Mosse has two works from his "Heat Maps" series in the show, one from Moria refugee camp on Lesbos and one from Idomeni on the Greek-Macedonian border. In both images the harsh geography of the camps has been consigned to gossamer outlines, but the people shine bright — each body is a sliver of silvery white.

The human detail captured by the thermal imaging was one of many things that surprised Mosse once he started stitching together the 900-odd slides that make up a single panorama: "You can see kids snowball fighting, or huddled around fires," he says. "When you see a tent you can almost see the people inside."

Now 36, Mosse has worked in the Palestinian territories, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and extensively along the US-Mexico border, always with a focus on the geography of conflict. He is best known for his work in war-torn eastern Congo, for which he won the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2014. Then, as now, he adapted military technology to create surreal landscapes: using infrared film designed to reveal camouflaged combatants, he turned the jungle a kitschy pink.

In "Heat Maps", even more than in his work from Congo, Mosse treats the technology itself as integral to each image. "I'm using it against itself," he explains. "This camera was designed to sit on a sentry pole in the middle of the desert. I don't think it was ever designed for storytelling."



Richard Mosse at the Victoria and Albert Museum © Leo Goddard

This tension — commandeering a tool of mass surveillance to reveal refugees' humanity — is one of the many thought-provoking puzzles that distinguish Mosse's work from "straight" photojournalism.

"It's between documentary and contemporary art," he says when I ask for a definition of what he does. "I want to refresh the language of documentary photography. This is my attempt to."

Mosse has identified two problems with traditional photojournalism. One is its predictability: "In certain ways documentary photography is so conservative as a medium," he says. "Quite understandably, because you're representing human suffering so people don't want to take risks aesthetically, but it all becomes quite clichéd after a while."

He also thinks there's a law of diminishing returns when covering a crisis: "There are too many images. You start to get inured."

The strategy that "Heat Maps" uses to engage viewers is simple: by removing the colours, shadows and details that would normally help them process a picture, audiences are pushed to find new ways to engage. When I look at the panorama from Idomeni, where Mosse has foregrounded a group of men gathered outside their tents, I am overwhelmed by a sense of

exhaustion — of the sheer effort that it takes humans to keep fighting off the cold. Mosse feels it too: “One of the most important aspects of this work is about heat, hypothermia and the vulnerability of the human body,” he says. “The refugees are struggling for survival.”

The question of what counts as “faking it” in photography is one that has dogged many of Mosse’s contemporaries. He takes an artist’s approach to authenticity — “You can step into fiction” — but has neatly sidestepped the recent scandals surrounding digital retouching and composite imagery.

Perhaps it’s because he broadcasts his artifice. When stitching together the heat maps, he has intentionally left body parts dangling where people got cut off moving from one slide to the next. He says he likes the disorienting, not-quite-right composition of the panoramas. “Each cell has its own discrete vanishing point,” he explains. “When you cobble them together — even if you blend them together seamlessly — you still have this awkward sense of perspective, which is a bit like how they used to paint back in the Renaissance.”



'Grid (Moria)' (2017), from the series Heat Maps by Richard Mosse © Richard Mosse/Prix Pictet 2017

And indeed, like a Bosch or a Bruegel, these tapestries are made for standing nose-close and squinting: “You can pick out little human narratives here and there.”

Post-Pictet, Mosse has plans to continue the series. His next trip is to Lebanon, where he’ll be documenting some of the country’s one million Syrian refugees.

And after that? He is conscious of not letting unusual cameras become a gimmick. “I don’t know if I’ll keep looking at photographic technologies,” he says. “I’ve kind of run out of interesting ones

at this stage.”

More likely, the next project will be a film. Earlier this year Mosse screened the multi-channel video installation *Incoming* at the Barbican in London — a companion piece to “Heat Maps” that used the same cameras to film refugees leaving Syria.

He has since had offers from producers to work on a feature film and has “the glimmer of a thought” as to what it might be. “But who knows if that will happen?” he says. “It’s a whole different world and a whole different world of pain.”

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O'Hagan, Sean. "Prix Pictet 2017: Richard Mosse wins prize with heat-map shots of refugees." *The Guardian*. 04 May 2017. Online.



Prix Pictet 2017: Richard Mosse wins prize with heat-map shots of refugees

The Irishman takes the prestigious award with his spectral images of migrants, taken with a camera deemed a weapon under international law

Sean O'Hagan

Thursday 4 May 2017 14.45 EDT

The Irish photographer Richard Mosse has been awarded the 2017 Prix Pictet for his series Heat Maps, made using a military camera that is classified as a weapon under international law. The hi-tech surveillance device, designed to detect body heat from a distance of over 30km, was used by Mosse to track the journeys of refugees from the Middle East and north Africa.

The result is a series of large-scale prints - and an acclaimed film, Incoming - that reconfigures the refugee crisis as a spectral, almost sci-fi drama of human endurance and survival.

Given that the Pictet judges have tended to canonise work that is grandstanding in ambition and large-scale in presentation - Nadav Kander, Mitch Epstein and Luc Delahaye have all won in recent years - Mosse is an unsurprising winner. His application of state-of-the-art technology to

the most urgent and contested issue of our turbulent times makes him very much the photographic artist of the moment.

He is both politically engaged and art-world savvy: the two large prints on display at the Pictet shortlist exhibition at the V&A in London are in the tradition of concerned photojournalism yet as far from its cliches as it is possible to go without crossing into pure conceptualism.

His panoramic view of the Idomeni refugee camp in Greece is a vast tableau of small human dramas: almost cartoonlike figures gathered outside of a tent; a man walking purposefully through the dismal, debris-strewn landscape; the knots of people, shadowy buildings and figures all reflected in the still water in the foreground. Without foreknowledge, one might think images like this are stills from a Ballardian sci-fi movie, which has prompted some critics to accuse Mosse of turning suffering into spectacle and, in the process, dehumanising the "other".



Forces us to see the refugee crisis anew ... a still from Incoming by Richard Mosse. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier|gebauer, Berlin

Yet there is a haunting undertow to these vast prints which, though less overwhelming than the moving images of Incoming, force us to see the refugee crisis anew - something that even the most powerful reportage struggles to achieve. Under the heat-mapping gaze of his extraordinary camera, Mosse's subjects are, he insists, made both more anonymous and more human - "all that's left to them is the biological fact of their birth - a thing foregrounded by the camera, which depicts the human body as a radiant glow of biochemical processes such as respiration, energy production, hypothermia and warmth".

The theme of this year's Prix Pictet is Space which, as the rest of the exhibition shows, has so many meanings as to be almost meaningless. The work of the 12 shortlisted artists ranges from the almost humble (Saski Groneberg's Büropflanz, a series of black and white still lifes of plants that decorate otherwise glumly functional offices) to the cosmic (Thomas Ruff's series, ma.r.s, which comprises digitally compressed and colourised riffs on images transmitted from Mars by Nasa's Reconnaissance Orbiter spacecraft).

Quite how the latter fulfils the Pictet's overall theme of sustainability is anyone's guess, but Ruff remains a mysteriously engaging artist. Likewise, Rinko Kawauchi, who has forgone the fragile poetic intimacy of her earlier work for big prints that portray the Japanese tradition of yakihata (controlled agricultural field burning), which takes place annually in Aso in southern Japan.

Her image of a hill, divided in two by a wall of flame, one side scorched black, the other untouched, seems oddly dreamlike in its painterly beauty. Kawauchi's work is imbued with a mysteriousness that is all her own, a sense that you are catching a glimpse of her imagination at work on her surroundings. As such, she seems almost out of place here.



Oddly dreamlike in its painterly beauty … Rinko Kawauchi's Ametsuchi, 2012. Photograph: © Rinko Kawauchi, Prix Pictet 2017

Elsewhere, Michael Wolf captures the singular hell of the Tokyo rush hour in his closeup portraits of faces pressed against the glass of morning subway trains on the Odakyu commuter line, while Benny Lam evokes the claustrophobia of impossibly small - and cluttered - single-room living spaces in Hong Kong, shooting from above to accentuate the sense of enclosure.

Like Mosse, Sohei Nishino works large-scale, but his city dioramas, comprising thousands of prints taken over three months on daily walks, are an obsessive exercise in old-fashioned handmade craft rather than technology. He meticulously collages the prints into cityscapes that are both recognisably real and wonderfully befuddling.

I was also struck by Pavel Wolberg's series Barricades which - like Sergey Ponomarev's work - is the closest this year's Prix Pictet comes to on-the-ground photojournalism. His image of two Ukrainian female protesters wearing angel wings as they approach a line of riot police is an altogether different take on the theme.

In this image, space is a contested zone as well as a theatre of conflict between the state and its citizens. It's a long way from the surface of Mars, office plants, the Tokyo rush hour or burning mountains. As is often the case with photography awards, it is difficult to see how one could possibly judge the merits of this kind of traditionalism against, say, the conceptual strategies of Ruff. It seems almost absurd that they are sharing the same exhibition space on the same theme, given that the space between them is so vast.

The Prix Pictet: Space exhibition is at the V&A, London, 6-28 May.

Kastner, Jeffrey. "Reviews: Richard Mosse, Jack Shainman Gallery," *Artforum.* March 2017: pp. 208-209, illustrated.

Richard Mosse

JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Susan Sontag wrote that "photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from *not* accepting the world as it looks." Richard Mosse's unorthodox approach to recording the world—beginning especially with his photo series "Infra," 2010–15, and its related six-channel video, *The Enclave*, 2012–13, and continuing with his new body of work, "Heat Maps," 2016–, recently on view at Jack Shainman's Twentieth Street space—engages with some of the central notions underlying Sontag's well-known dictum, complicating expectations about how photography might be understood to represent and/or misrepresent, and working to mobilize both tendencies to promote the sort of ethical engagement she invokes.

For the earlier two projects, which document the human and physical landscape of the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an area where decades of war have claimed more than five million lives, Mosse used a discontinued type of film, developed by Kodak in collaboration with the US military in the 1940s, that registers conventionally imperceptible infrared-light emissions in grasses and foliage, rendering the landscape uncanny shades of pink. For "Heat Maps," Mosse has once again repurposed a type of military surveillance technology, namely a thermographic camera with extreme telephoto properties, this time training it on refugee camps and staging areas in Greece, Italy, and Germany. Classified as a defense article under international arms-trafficking regulations, the instrument has been able to detect the presence of a human at a distance of more than thirty kilometers and to identify a specific individual from more than six.



Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece*, 2016, digital C-print on metallic paper, 40¼ × 120". From the series "Heat Maps," 2016.

The work on view here—eight large-format photographs of these sites, as well as a handful of smaller stills from *Incoming*, 2014–17, a new video work that uses the same technology to tell more intimate stories about the refugee crisis unfolding across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East—intentionally walked a fine line between the clinical and the beautiful. The technology reads heat, so the images, assembled from hundreds of smaller frames into seamless panoramas, have the look of exceptionally fine-grained negatives, with bodies and light sources glowing white amid a world of grisaille landscape and infrastructure. Whether depicting faraway views of encampments set beneath a cliff face in Larissa, in central Greece, or tucked under a highway in Ventimiglia, a Ligurian town on the French border, or capturing more personal details—as in *Idomeni Camp, Greece*, 2016, showing people congregating around tents on muddy ground, the thermographic technology making their faces resemble eerie monochrome cartoons, or *Moria in Snow*, 2017, portraying hundreds waiting in a line that weaves through makeshift buildings in a bivouac on the island of Lesbos—Mosse's images have a cold, austere beauty to them, but one that never tips over into romanticism. Though what he is making is indisputably art, his eye remains always that of a documentarian, one committed to finding new ways of revealing what is hidden by walls and fences, by distance and disinterest.

Questions around the pitfalls of aestheticization obviously shadow images such as these, as they should. But Mosse's brand of aestheticization operates in the strict sense of the word: a technique that heightens rather than dampens (anesthetizes) perception, that instead of softening or euphemizing the situation instead serves to sharpen its contours precisely by estranging it from the familiar, vision-correspondent image world that most documentary photography, even at its very best, often seems to occupy. Just as Mosse's photographic deformation of the physical character of the Congo arguably worked to help viewers better "understand" the situation there, so, too, do these new works manage the remarkable trick of intensifying the viewer's connection to the artist's subject matter by, in some sense, distorting it. If the images ask us to accept Mosse's world as his cameras record it, they also refuse the normative photographic gaze. His technical intervention might seem to be, at least in a conventional sense, one founded in depersonalization, but the depictions it produces are in fact deeply humanizing, emphasizing what we all share instead of what separates us—all of us pools of heat, huddling together wherever we find ourselves.

—*Jeffrey Kastner*

Lange, Christy. "One Take: Richard Mosse's *Incoming*: A new video installation investigates the refugee crisis." *Frieze*. No. 185. March 2017: pp. 139-141, illustrated.

ONE TAKE: Richard Mosse's *Incoming*

A new video installation investigates the refugee crisis

BY CHRISTY LANGE



All images:
Incoming, 2014–17, video stills. Courtesy: the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and carlier | gebauer, Berlin; co-commissioned: Barbican Art Gallery, London, and National Gallery Victoria, Melbourne.

THERE ARE A FEW SCENES in Richard Mosse's new video installation, *Incoming* (2017), where you can see photojournalists or news camerapeople chasing down the unfolding action or holding their lenses steady to catch the decisive moment. Mosse, on the other hand, spent two years filming the same events with a camera that was too large to hold, had no aperture to see through and was difficult to focus. Designed by a weapons manufacturer, the thermal camera Mosse used to document the migrant crisis for *Incoming* is built to capture heat signatures – in black, white and shades of grey. It weighs 23 kilogrammes, and is meant to be operated remotely by a laptop. As Mosse puts it: 'The camera is designed to stand on a sentry pole in the middle of the desert,' detecting a human body's heat from up to 30 kilometres away for surveillance or targeting. Together with his cameraman, Trevor Tweeten, and the camera's original designer, Mosse adapted an Xbox controller to operate it and an old Steadicam mechanism as support. As an apparatus designed for surveillance, the thermal camera represents part of the spectrum the human eye cannot see and, as such, is an apt metaphor for the vast and ungraspable refugee crisis – the lives that 'register' but are not 'seen'.

The 52 minutes of footage that comprise *Incoming*, slowed down from the camera's 60 frames per second to 24 frames per second, is by turns lyrical and vivid, harrowing and violent. The action unfolds across three large screens – from one screen at a time to two, then all three simul-taneously. Much like his previous endeavour, *The Enclave* (2013), which Mosse filmed in the eastern Congo with outdated infrared film, originally designed for military use, the photographic technology presents inherent challenges and unintentional aesthetic call backs. In *The Enclave*, the infrared film responded to chlorophyll in plants to make the jungle's green foliage look bright pink. In *Incoming*, the thermal camera also works an extra-sensory tool to perceive thermal radiation, rendering it black on white or white on black. It allowed Mosse and his team to detect missiles landing in Aleppo from the other side of the Turkish border, ships sinking in the Aegean Sea miles offshore, and gunmen and refugees being smuggled at night. The otherworldly footage evokes the sense that we are watching the action covertly, as if through night-vision goggles; it's a rare glimpse through the mechanized tools of surveillance used by states and militaries to view us. When we do see close-ups of faces, noses appear like indistinct white blobs and eyes are dark pits. Humans become fleshy targets susceptible to the camera's weaponized gaze. It's a representational device that draws powerful parallels between the act of documentation and surveillance.

Since the camera can't render details in colour or overviews of landscape, the footage in *Incoming* doesn't fully reveal the range of geographic locations in which Mosse filmed. The artist, along with Tweeten and the film's soundtrack composer, Ben Frost, tracked two major flows of human migration. The first – in which refugees flee from the war-torn regions of Syria and the Middle East, through Turkey, across the Aegean Sea to Greece and, from there, into the rest of Europe – ends at an emergency shelter in the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. The second follows African migrants escaping wars and the effects of climate change, crossing the Sahara Desert under threat of Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb to Libya, then on to Sicily and, eventually, to the infamous Jungle camp in Calais, France. Frost's soundtrack goes a long way towards grounding



> *In one harrowing scene, Mosse filmed rescue workers attempting to resuscitate drowned refugees: the camera renders their warm handprints on the victims' cold flesh.*

some of those locations, capturing the voices of doctors trying to resuscitate drowning victims on the coast of Lesbos, the echoes of children's screams, the bouncing of ping-pong balls in temporary shelters, the deafening jet engines on the deck of the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* aircraft carrier and the rotor blades of rescue helicopters.

The deliberately attenuated pace of the footage and the camera's constant, eerily slow scanning of its subject, lend sequences of both peace and turmoil an equivalent sense of dramatic tension. Drifting airborne kites or reflections on the sea are as vivid as two boys wrestling or water being wrung from a soaked garment. It's like watching a slowly moving black and white photograph, bringing to mind photojournalist James Nachtwey's wrought, high-contrast photographs of war and famine, which extract an unexpected beauty from horror. In *Incoming*, scenes that might be too intensely visceral to confront in full colour become unfamiliar. In one long sequence, we see close-ups of body bags being shoved into cold steel lockers at a morgue, where pathologists on the island of Rhodes perform DNA testing to help identify those who have drowned at sea. Wearing respirators and protective plastic eye shields, they unzip a body bag and expose the skull of an 11-year-old girl. Using sharp metallic tools, they cut through a white substance that can barely be recognized as flesh: the blood that escapes is not red but black. With a small saw, the pathologist removes a segment of bone, which looks like a glowing plastic rod, making the sight newly horrific. For another harrowing scene, Mosse filmed the attempts of rescue workers to resuscitate the drowned when a boat overloaded with refugees sank five kilometres off the coast of Lesbos. The camera rendersthe warm handprints on the



victims' cold flesh. 'It was like a scene from hell,' Mosse told me. 'You could literally read the hypothermia through the camera: they weren't glowing black; they were white.'

One of the unexpected threads that runs through *Incoming*, more than the difference between cool and warm or black and white, is the way the thermal camera highlights the high-tech filters and protective gear that separate those who are shielded from the elements versus those exposed to them – those 'helping' from those 'in need of help'. Rescue workers billow in papery white hazmat suits as they lift bare-skinned refugees from the water; the Navy crew of the *USS Roosevelt* don goggles and breathing apparatuses to protect them from the white-hot engines of departing jets; coroners wear respirators and latex gloves to mask the smell of rotting bodies; firefighters on the scene of the Jungle refugee camp, as it is razed by flames, have reflective masks and fireproof uniforms. When compared to the inadequately covered bodies of refugees in life rafts, or the wispy fabric that migrants in a truck convoy struggle to use to protect their faces from dusty roads, or their few garments hung out to dry at shelters, it's a reminder of the physical barriers between those with shelter and those without it. *Incoming* documents a contemporary Odyssey of humans displaced from their homes. Mosse effectively repurposes thermal technology, ordinarily reserved for states and the military, to expose the susceptibility and vulnerability of the human body, and the rights we take for granted as inalienably assigned to it, when those bodies become stateless B

CHRISTY LANGE *is a writer based in Berlin, Germany, and a contributing editor of* frieze.

RICHARD MOSSE *is an Irish artist based in New York, USA.* Incoming *is on view at The Curve, Barbican Centre, London, UK, until 15 April. Later this year, it will travel to National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. The accompanying artist's book is published by MACK, with a catalogue published by Barbican Ridinghouse. A complementary photographic series, 'Heat Maps', is currently on view at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and will be shown as part of the Prix Pictet exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, from 6 to 28 May.*

Lynch, Donal. “Migrant images that sear the soul.” *Independent*. 26 February 2017. Illustrated. Online.

Independent.ie

Donal Lynch
February 26 2017

Migrant images that sear the soul



MOVING PICTURE: Images from ‘Incoming’, an installation created by Irish photographer Richard Mosse, who used a thermal-imaging camera designed for the military to document Europe’s refugee crisis. Photo: Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

The writer Susan Sontag said that if we truly looked closely and empathetically at war photography, war itself would cease. It was the simple, stark images, shot through the barbed wire at Auschwitz, that woke Europe to the real horror of the Holocaust and it was photography, she pointed out, that really turned the US public against the Vietnam War.

Now a Kilkenny-born photographer has added to the canon of era-defining war images, creating horrific, dream-like pictures that burn themselves on the conscience.

Eighteen months ago, Richard Mosse and his collaborators - cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, writer John Holten and composer Ben Frost - used an unlikely instrument to film a harrowing scene.

Deploying a thermal-imaging camera developed for the US military, they captured a human trafficker's boat carrying 300 refugees as it sank off the coast of Turkey.



MOVING PICTURES: Images from 'Incoming', an installation created by Irish photographer Richard Mosse, who used a thermal-imaging camera designed for the military to document Europe's refugee crisis. Photo: Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

As the boat broke apart, they watched helplessly while human beings battled against the waves before slipping silently into the sea. Too far away to lend a hand, they carried on filming from the Greek island of Lesbos, about six miles away.

At a time when the world is facing the largest human migration since World War II, with more than a million people fleeing to Europe in 2015 by sea - escaping the war in Syria, political persecution in Africa and the Middle East - Mosse resolved to document this terrifying ordeal through a set of dramatic still and moving images. Fittingly, he did so using a camera that is sanctioned as a weapon by international law. The images speak for themselves.

Incoming is on display at the Barbican in London until April 23. Eight more images are on show at Jack Shainman gallery in New York (until March 11).

British Journal of Photography

Published on 15 February 2017

Richard Mosse – Incoming

Written by Tom Seymour



Installation shot of Incoming by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Trevor Tweeten and Ben Frost at The Curve, Barbican. Image © Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for Barbican Art Gallery

The former Deutsche Börse winner, now shortlisted for this year's Prix Pictet prize, is back with a major new installation at The Barbican showing migrants through the sights of a military-grade camera. BJP finds out more in an article originally published in our February print issue

"A camera is a sublimation of the gun," Susan Sontag wrote in her seminal collection of essays *On Photography*, first published in 1977. "To photograph someone is a subliminal murder – a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time." But for Richard Mosse's latest work, *Incoming*, his camera wasn't a sublimation – it was the weapon itself.

The Irishman's rise has been vertiginous. Graduating from an MRes in cultural studies in 2003, a decade later he was representing his home country at the Venice Biennale, by way of a postgraduate course in fine art at Goldsmiths, an MFA in photography at Yale University and dozens of solo and group exhibitions in between.



Platon, 2012 © Richard Mosse

In 2015, the Irish photographer was nominated for membership of Magnum Photos – he was to be one of the youngest members of the prestigious agency, invited on the back of one extraordinary photography series, his Congo-based *Infra* work, which had won the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize a year earlier.

But, even as he was welcomed in by Magnum, Mosse privately harboured an increasing sense of disillusionment with documentary photography. He had become frustrated with what he saw as its repetitiveness and its conservatism, the way it makes claims to the truth and to eternal relevance, yet is as authored and considered as any other medium.

Infra continued to be exhibited in galleries all over the world but Mosse himself was rarely heard from. Just as his stock grew, he seemed to mysteriously disappear from the photography community. The 36-year-old never pursued full membership of Magnum, and instead pursued the path he'd begun with his multichannel video installation for Venice.

The result of that two-year hiatus is *Incoming*, a look at the much-documented migration crisis that is more recognisable as a film than a photography series. Stills from the new work have been shortlisted for the prestigious Prix Pictet and will be the focus of a vast, complex multimedia exhibition now opening at the Barbican's remarkable Curve gallery, a 2000 sq metre semi-circular space that is given over to installation art on a grand scale.



Installation shot of Incoming by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Trevor Tweeten and Ben Frost at The Curve, Barbican. Image © Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for Barbican Art Gallery

So does he still regard himself as a photographer? “I do,” he says. “But I have a very ambivalent relationship to it. It’s almost like self-loathing, because there’s something predatory about the camera lens. I can’t escape photography but, whichever way you look at it, documentary photography is as constructed a way of seeing the world as anything else.”

In *Incoming*, Mosse’s ‘camera’ is classified as an advanced weapons system and controlled under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations. He first came across it through a friend working on the BBC’s *Planet Earth* television series. Using thermographic technology, the device can ‘see’ more than 50km, registering a heat signature as a relative temperature difference.

Patented by the US military, it is normally used in battlefield surveillance, reconnaissance and ballistics targeting, but Mosse has used the weapon against its intended purpose. He has taken something designed to help hunt and kill an enemy and manipulating it to capture and comment on the most pressing subject of our times – the great migration of so many people.



Installation shot of Incoming by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Trevor Tweeten and Ben Frost at The Curve, Barbican. Image © Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for Barbican Art Gallery

"Using a part of a weapon to figure the refugee crisis is a deeply ambivalent and political task," Mosse says. "And building a new language around that weapon – one of compassion and disorientation, one that allows the viewer to see these events through an unfamiliar and alienating technology – is a deeply political gesture."

Reading heat signatures of people who are completely unaware they're being caught on camera, Mosse shows us bodies only recognisable through an intense white glow. And so we only recognise them through the context of their landscape – the great stretches of land and sea that surround them, the tent cities, the teeming boats.

Unlike the migrants that have populated our newsfeeds for the past two years, they're shorn of facial expressions or cultural demarcations – gender, race, age or sex. "The camera I've used dehumanises people," Mosse says. "Their skin glows so they look alien, or monstrous and zombie-like.

"You can see their blood circulation, their sweat, their breath. You can't see the pupils of their eyes, but a black jelly instead. But, in fact, it allows you to capture portraiture of extraordinary

tenderness. We often shot at night, from miles and miles away, so we were shooting people who were not aware of being filmed.

“So we captured some extremely authentic gestures – people asleep, people embracing each other, people at prayer. There’s a stolen intimacy to it. There’s no awareness, there’s no self consciousness. It’s a two-step process – dehumanising them and then making them human again.”



Still frame from Incoming, 2015-2016 © Richard Mosse

Mosse began gaining attention around a decade ago, with images of air-disaster simulators and former palaces of Saddam Hussein commandeered by occupying US forces. Then came what he refers to as his “Congo work”.

The central African region has been the subject of European fascination since long before Joseph Conrad’s fictional voyage up river in *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1899. Mosse began his own journey in 2012, travelling to the Democratic Republic of Congo on and off over a period of two years during which he documented the “Hobbesian state” of ongoing conflict that has drawn in eight other nations and left millions dead.

Funding the trip from his own meagre resources, he slept in Catholic missions and got a handle on the place by talking to the few correspondents left in Kinshasa. But the more

embedded he became in the region, and the more people he spoke to, the less he felt he understood. There are around 30 armed groups in Congo, many of whom form uneasy bonds, truces or mercenary alliances, either with each other or the government forces.

“Many of them used to have an ideology but they’ve long since forgotten it,” Mosse said in an interview with *The Telegraph*. “They fall into alliances with each other, then renounce them.”



Richard Mosse’s installation The Enclave, 2013 at the Venice Biennale. Image © Tom Powel Imaging inc

In 2008, the International Rescue Committee estimated the death toll in Congo at 5.4 million people since the country gained independence in June 1960. But reporting of these mortalities can take days or weeks to emerge from the jungle – or remain forever hidden within it. “We don’t hear about it because they’re dying from a lack of sovereignty and constant displacement, shitty diseases,” Mosse says.
“By the time photographers arrive there is nothing left to see. It was this lack of trace that interested me, and ultimately the failure of documentary photography. Conflict is complicated and unresolvable and it’s not always easy to find the concrete subject, the issue, and put it in front of the lens.”

Mosse gained access to some of the warring factions that fight nominal government forces but he did so with a custom-built large format camera loaded with Kodak Aerochrome film – an infrared colour camera stock which registers, and then filters out chlorophyll in live vegetation. The stock was developed by Kodak for the US military during the Second World War as a way of identifying camouflaged targets in lush landscapes.

TIME



Helliniko, 2016.
Richard Mosse

REFUGEE CRISIS

A Dystopian Vision of the Refugee Crisis

Alexandra Genova
Feb 15, 2017

The refugee crisis is becoming increasingly politicized; less about the safe guarding of human rights and more about the safe guarding of national borders. Though forced migration is nothing new, the numbers are unprecedented; 65.3 million people around the world are currently displaced by war or persecution, according to the UNHCR. It's a modern problem of biblical proportions and as the figures rise, the individual refugee is increasingly regarded as little more than a troubling statistic.

Photographer Richard Mosse's latest project, Heat Maps, offers an unconventional take on a much-dissected subject. The work charts the refugee crisis unfolding across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East using a powerful military grade telephoto camera attached to a robotic arm which detects thermal radiation by scanning landscapes and interiors. The result is unsettling; human flesh is turned a translucent grey, eye sockets are blackened, bodies appear like avatars existing in a virtual dystopia.

The paradox is, life in these refugee camps can be just as hellish and dehumanizing as the photographs imply. "It's a camera that strips people of their identity. It turns them into a creature or a biological trace," Mosse tells TIME. "I hope that the camera will reveal the way we in the West and our governments represent and therefore regard the refugee." Deliberately disconcerting, Mosse wants the

viewer to feel an uneasy sense of their own complicity. “The horrific conditions in those camps are created by our governments. And we vote those people in,” he adds.

Heat Maps isn’t easily classified, perching as it does between factual surveillance, aesthetic ambiguity and the fantasy-world of a Ray Bradbury novel. But it’s supposed to be polyvalent, ambivalent, open-ended. “It’s meant to force the viewer into a place where they have to decide what it is,” says Mosse. “Because with the refugee crisis, everyone has already made up their mind.” Though the photos are revealing of the refugees’ situation, the individual characters technically remain indistinguishable. While Ai Weiwei was refused access photographing the interior of Berlin’s Tempelhof Airport – now Germany’s largest refugee camp – Mosse was admitted, because he could show how the camera left the subjects identities in tact. But taken at long range - as far away as 50 kilometers – there is still a degree of violation. “You’re not quite committing an invasion of privacy, yet you are,” he says.

The photographs are impressive online but humbling in person; the large-scale panoramas take up most of a gallery wall. They evoke the detail of a Bruegel painting but the flatness of a Medieval tapestry; an array of miniature scenes impossibly arranged into one prevailing landscape. The large-scale pieces are technically ‘photo-illustration’ and are constructed from a grid of almost a thousand smaller frames – each with their own vanishing point – painstakingly sewn together.

The work is a surveillance of the grim squalor of the camps but cannot be read as an exact reality. Amid the complex scenes, an occasional figure will stand dismembered – the result of a glitch in the camera’s heat scanning that Mosse decided to leave in. “Being a refugee strips you of the inalienable rights of man, which are subsumed into the idea of a citizen,” Mosse says. “Once you’ve left your nation state due to persecution, conflict, climate change, you lose your human rights.”



Richard Mosse stands in front of the work [object Object] 2016, at the Jack Shainman Gallery, West 20, NYC.

The violent aesthetic of the images is not without context. Primarily designed for surveillance, the camera can also be connected to a weapons system to target the enemy. The misuse of its intended purpose is another deliberate attempt to subvert the common perception of the refugee. “I’m trying to use these sinister technologies against their original intended purpose,” he says. This is ironic considering the call made by German far-right leader Frauke Petry to use firearms on illegal refugees "if necessary." Quoting the work of Allan Sekula, Mosse believes his role as an artist is to try to “brush photography against the grain”. It’s a method he’s adopted before with his Infra series; a psychedelic vision of the Democratic Republic of Congo conflict taken with a discontinued surveillance film originally used by the military. Both projects employ the Brechtian 'Verfremdungseffekt' – or distancing effect – which serves to make the familiar strange. “I put the viewer in a space where they have no cues, they don’t understand the grammar of the language,” he says. “So they have to actually engage with this on an unfamiliar level and as a result, it’s fresh.”

Unlike the hyper-local Infra, Mosse worked across many, dislocated landscapes. “These people are dispossessed, they’re displaced,” he says. “You can’t really predict where the story will flash up next. You have to keep your ears to the ground. ” Complex logistics plagued the three-year project. Mosse built up a network of volunteers and fixers but access was often difficult, particularly in the Calais Jungle, which they eventually infiltrated right before it was dismantled. Outside Europe, attempting to cross borders was mired in deadlock. When Mosse and his team were trying to reach Timbuktu through Mali, they spent a month – without success – trying to permeate a Swedish battalion, hoping to make use of their convoys. But these stumbling blocks were part of the process and the constant challenges forced Mosse into a space of hyperawareness.

Navigating sticky border control ran parallel to navigating tricky equipment. Attached to the already complex telephoto camera was a tangle of wires and cables that connected to an X-Box controller, media recorder and several laptops. “You really need to earn your chops with [the camera],” he says. “And you constantly feel slightly compromised by what you’re doing. But I think that’s always a good space to be in as an artist: feeling uncomfortable.” Mosse witnessed some horrific scenes, impossible to express through the prism of art. But, he says, once you’re looking through the ground glass of the camera you become a machine with a job to do. “I cling to the idea that although ‘art is useless’, it can be iconic,” he says. “It can be culturally resonant without being politically committed."

Richard Mosse is an Irish conceptual documentary photographer. More of his work can be viewed here. Heat Maps is on display at the Jack Shainman Gallery on West 20th Street, NYC until March 11.

Alexandra Genova is a writer and contributor for TIME LightBox. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram

WIRED

The refugee crisis captured in haunting detail using infrared cameras

By ANNA SANSOM
Wednesday 15 February 2017

Photographer Richard Mosse's new exhibit at the Barbican includes a series shot with military thermal imaging camera typically used for enemy location and targeting



Credit Richard Mosse

Military thermal imaging cameras are typically used for enemy location and targeting. Photographer Richard Mosse uses it to observe the migrant crisis.

The Irish artist spent two years capturing the journeys of migrants into Europe using the camera, which can detect a human body from 30km and identify an individual from 6.3km. As the equipment is subject to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations, Mosse hired lawyers to obtain an export document for each trip. “The camera was designed to control borders and target the enemy,” says Mosse, 36, who lives in New York and County Clare, Ireland. “By using it to tell the refugee crisis, I'm putting viewers in a state of discomfort to disorient them.”

Mosse – who won critical acclaim for his Infra project, shot on discontinued Kodak Aerochrome infrared surveillance film in the Democratic Republic Of Congo – and collaborator Trevor Tweeten photographed migratory routes from Turkey to the Aegean islands, and from Niger through to refugee camps in Sicily and Monaco. “Volunteers would come to us [for assistance] because the camera could spot a boat in advance of the human eye,” says Mosse.

The resulting work, titled Incoming, will be exhibited at the Barbican from today. It’s remarkably intimate, even if using military equipment has its challenges: “It's operated through a laptop, so when you're switching tabs, you suddenly realise the Henri Cartier-Bresson 'decisive moment' was 10 minutes ago.”

Incoming is on display at the Barbican in London until 23 April.

AnOther

Art & Photography / Culture Talks

The Photographer Finding Beauty in Political Devastation

– February 16, 2017 –

"I always say beauty is the sharpest tool in the box if you want to make people feel something." We speak to documentary photographer Richard Mosse as his new film installation, about the refugee crisis, opens at Barbican's Curve



Text Georgia Illingworth

"We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled," writes Joseph Conrad in his vital 1899 novella, *Heart of Darkness*. In the current political climate Conrad's words cut close to the bone, ominously capturing the dissociation and dismemberment from reality that has come to characterise much of the Western world's perception of war and suffering. It is this rupture that Irish photographer **Richard Mosse** seeks to highlight in his art. In his early 20s, while a struggling grad student living in New York, Mosse began to feel frustrated by the limitations of his medium, wishing to eradicate the confining notions of documentary photography.

His most famous body of work, produced in the Congo from 2010 to 2015, documents a landscape consumed by insidious, systemic violence that has taken the lives of over five million people since 1998. The series of photographs, entitled *Infra,* are shot on discontinued Kodak Infrared film, originally used by the U.S. military for camouflage detection in the second world war. The film is able to register chlorophyll in live vegetation, thus rendering the lush landscapes of eastern Congo in saturated and saccharine pinks. Lurid and visceral, his photographs create surreal dreamscapes out of war zones; spawning subtle and sinister oscillations between the seen and the unseen, the beautiful and the tragic.








For his new exhibition, entitled *Incoming* and held at the Barbican, Mosse has been working with a new, powerful telephoto military camera to create an artwork about the migration crisis unfolding across the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. The camera detects human bodies from great distances using thermal technology, transforming them into glowing avatars, cut loose from any defining identity. Stripped of colour and detail, the films become bizarre dreamlike iterations of reality, lulling the viewer into a subliminal awareness of their complicit voyeurism. Mosse's work forcefully debunks the notion of 'art for art's sake', reminding us of art's potential not only to open our eyes, but to advocate new ways of looking.



Richard Mosse, Still frame from Incoming, 2015–2016
Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier|gebauer, Berlin

On why he employs the use of military-grade camera technology...
"They are very cold and brutal tools, designed for the battlefield, and so to use them aesthetically is really working against them. I used a military-grade camera in an attempt to see refugees the way our governments see them. I wanted to use the technology to create an immersive and humanist art form so as to upend mass media narratives and approach the migrant crisis in a much more emotive and visceral format."

"I used a military-grade camera in an attempt to see refugees the way our governments see them" Richard Mosse

On the thermal camera's portrayal of its subject...
"The camera is designed for border control, for tracking and identifying. So it's in no way about the individual, the camera strips the individual of its identity and turns it into a biological trace, this thermal radiance of a human body, this corporeality. What I also found, was that the camera also had this potential to re-humanise due to the ability of the lens to telescope in on people, which is maybe slightly invasive, but allowed us to capture these honest moments because people just aren't aware that you're filming."



Richard Mosse, Pool at Uday's Palace, Iraq, 2009
© Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier|gebauer, Berlin

On the relationship between photojournalism and contemporary art...
"Combining documentary photography with a more artistic practice opens up a whole field of possibility. Contemporary art is unburdened by the instrumentality of photojournalism, so you have the freedom to create your own symbolic order. With my work I am able to record and document as a photojournalist would, with the freedom of an artist."



Richard Mosse, Still frame from Incoming, 2015–2016
Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier|gebauer, Berlin

On the politics of aesthetics...
"I always say that beauty is the sharpest tool in the box if you want to make people feel something. It raises an ethical problem when you have a beautiful photograph that tries to communicate human suffering, so photojournalists are often scared to go too far into that register, towards the beautiful. Aestheticising human suffering is always perceived as tasteless or crass or morally wrong but my take on it is that the power of aesthetics to communicate should be taken advantage of rather than suppressed."

"I always say that beauty is the sharpest tool in the box if you want to make people feel something" Richard Mosse

On the impossible image...

"The idea of the impossible image is one that I'm always chasing in my practice: a narrative that is beyond the reach of language. I try to find a means of expression for those that the philosopher Giorgio Agamben would refer to as 'stateless people'."



Richard Mosse, Still frame from Incoming, 2015–2016
Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and carlier|gebauer, Berlin

Richard Mosse: Incoming is open now at The Curve, Barbican Centre, until April 23, 2017.

Richard Mosse Is sing a eapons-Grade Camera to Take Chilling hotos of the Migrant Crisis

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY CASEY LESSER
FEB 13TH, 2017 11:55 PM



ortrait of Richard Mosse. ©2012. Mark McNulty. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

ne month ago, the renowned Irish, New York-based photographer Richard Mosse booked a last-minute flight to Lesbos. The Greek island, home to the notorious Moria refugee camp, had been hit by a snowstorm. Mosse had witnessed the squalid, overcrowded conditions at Moria a year prior, and the thought of Moria's inhabitants braving snow and freezing temperatures compelled him to return and document the refugee crisis there again.

Non-refugees and ournalists are rarely, if ever, allowed access to the Moria camp, says Mosse. "The authorities in Greece are ashamed; the conditions are so squalid." So he climbed a hill nearby to take a huge panorama of the camp, using a special weapons-grade camera, which captures images by detecting thermal radiation.

"The camera reveals a lot of the squalor," says Mosse, pointing to one of those photographs, now hanging in his new show at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. The crisp, incredibly detailed image reveals countless people standing outdoors in queues and huddles amid snow drifts. "It's freezing cold, people are really struggling to survive; there's no way for them to warm up."

Mosse's last-minute trip to Moria was the latest segment of a pro ect that has stretched over the past two years and has seen the artist accompanied by filmmaker Trevor Tweeten and composer en rost shoot some of the most overcrowded refugee camps in Europe. These include Idomeni, Thessaloniki, Larissa, Elliniko, and Moria in Greece, entimiglia in Italy, and the former Tempelhof Airport in erlin. Mosse has created images as aesthetically stunning as they are technically unprecedented, the photos' mesmerizing detail and visceral intimacy shifting into a darkly emotional space with prolonged looking.

Mosse became a household name in art circles following the release of his "Infra" series of photographs and accompanying film *e nc a e* at the enice iennale in 201 The works, immediately recognizable for their fuchsia hue, employed infrared film, typically used for reconnaissance, to capture soldiers and war zones in emocratic Republic of the Congo.



Richard Mosse, *ari a Camp, Greece*, 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New Yorl

His new series, titled "Heat Maps," and film, *Incoming* (2016), similarly tap into an ongoing conflict and harness uncommon technology in order to communicate attacks on humanity. The photographs and film stills debuted on ebruary 2nd in New York; and the film makes its premiere at the arbican in London on ebruary 15th.

Mosse began working on the series three years ago, spurred by the growing urgency of the situation for refugees fleeing the Middle East and Northern Africa. "This has become one of the big sub ects of our time," Mosse says. ut he has by no means been alone in the effort.

As the refugee crisis reached a fever pitch in 2015 with over a million individuals entering Europe increasing numbers of photographers traveled to document the struggle. The resulting images have been instrumental in bringing transparency to the the often-squalid living conditions, violence, death, and human rights violations that individuals and families are experiencing within the camps and raising awareness around the dire need for action on the part of governments across the world.

"It's over-photographed," Mosse admits, "so over-photographed that people stop seeing it on some level." He recalls being in a swarm of some 60 photographers during his latest trip to Lesbos, including the likes of famed war photographer James Nachtwey. ut despite this, Mosse has been able to add to the narrative, in a way people haven't yet seen. Through technology, he has also gained access that others have been denied.

Mosse's camera was developed by a multinational weapons and security contractor and has the capability to shoot sharp images from as far as 0. kilometers (1 . miles) away. "It's pretty insane," says the artist, adding that by comparison, the human eye can

see a maximum of around five kilometers at sea level. Importantly, when configured to Mosse's specifications, the camera isn't able to render distinguishing facial features that could detect a person's identity, something that has proven useful in gaining permission to photograph camps like the former Tempelhof Airport in erlin where authorities are intent on maintaining refugees' privacy.



Richard Mosse, *o e i ed* (film still from Incoming), 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.



Richard Mosse, *o e i ed* (film still from Incoming), 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

"I'm entering into the space of estern governments here this is the technology used by militaries, police forces, border security forces," says Mosse of the technique. "I'm trying to appropriate their technology and use it against itself." He shot some portions of *Incoming* off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean and in the ersian Gulf, near the Iraq-Iran border from aboard the SS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier.

Mosse first learned of the camera through fellow photographer Sophie arlington, who help him gain access to the . . facility that developed it. "You walk in the door and there's a cruise missile on the left, and a virtual war simulator on the right," he recalls.

He went to the roof for a demonstration of the camera and was able to see two men who had been invisible to the naked eye welding far away. "You could see the light of the welding flame reflected on one man's beer belly," Mosse recalls, "It was ust such an extraordinary new image that I'd never seen before. It was so crisp." In addition to the incredible optical zoom, the camera uses medium-wave infrared, so it's able to cut through heat haze. "It diffuses light; it shoots nice straight lines that's how it can see people from very far," he explains.

Mosse quickly took steps to acquire a camera of his own, something that came with its own challenges. “It’s regarded as a weapon,” Mosse explains. The camera falls under the International Traffic of Arms Regulations (ITAR) due to its inclusion in advanced weapons targeting systems. In its military configuration, the camera can be used to track people and vehicles and launch precision guided missiles.

A dual citizen, Mosse purchased the camera with his Irish citizenship. He keeps it in Ireland because transporting the camera within Europe falls under a single agreement, whereas bringing it elsewhere requires significant permissions. “Every time I leave Europe with the camera I have to apply with an Irish export lawyer; he has to apply with the department of foreign affairs, and they have to talk to the appropriate consulate service,” he explains, adding that some sanctioned countries like Libya and Syria would never allow for the camera to enter. “If you do this without permission, it’s regarded as weapons smuggling.”



Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece*, 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Mosse next worked with the camera’s designer to develop a way to use it to shoot large panoramic images. He explains that the camera shoots in a kind of tunnel vision, “so it’s not as good at telling the story as a conventional video camera. It’s like trying to shoot a feature film through a telescope.” (He essentially did that for *Incoming*.)

To shoot the “Heat Map” photographs, they developed a robotic arm on which the camera is mounted and programmed to move precisely on a gridded-out plane. All together, the equipment weighs some 175 pounds. Each landscape comprises nearly

1000 images taken over the course of 40 minutes, which Mosse later stitches together digitally.

"You can see people have been chopped off," he says gesturing to a man's head and torso, centimeters away from his legs. "I left them like that; I could've taken them out and faked it, but I really like the way it points to the image's construction and reveals its unraveling." The final photographs are printed on a shimmering metallic digital c-paper.

Mosse likens the images to the classical paintings of ruegel and osch. "You see all these little figures living their narratives," he explains. "Also the way perspective is there's something bizarre happening where there's no horizon, it's flattened space also evokes those painters." The effect is purposeful, resulting from his preference to shoot the camps from above.

Incoming, the three-channel 52-minute film, has a very different effect. " oth are very expressive, but *Incoming* is much more visceral, it makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck a little bit," Mosse says. Some shots are fairly abstract, due to the narrow angle captured by the camera at any one moment.



Richard Mosse, *e ini o*, 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

The film also unleashes the full power of the camera's infrared technology to dehumanize its sub ects. It renders their skin scrawled by blood vessels and zombie-like and captures the retention and transfer of heat. "The camera sees a sort of patina of activity," says Mosse, pointing to handprints left onto the rail of a lifeboat careening in high waves as it prepares to make landfall in Lesbos.

Countless small details like these handprints, or a young woman making a heart shape with her hands at Tempelhof, stand out among the huge panoramas. They allow viewers to grasp the individuals and humanity often lost in the immense scale of the camps and refugee crisis as a whole.

"That's part of the strategy really, to refresh the visual language," Mosse says, "to arrest the viewers' attention, and to make them think about how we represent, and also therefore regard the refugee."

Casey Lesser

artnet®

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Richard Mosse's New Film Portrays the Refugee Crisis in Thermal Detail

It is set to premiere at ondon's Barbican Centre.

hristian iveros- aun February 1 , 2017



From right to left Photographer Richard Mosse, Composer Ben Frost, Writer John Holten and Cinematographer Trevor Tweeten in esbos, Greece

n ctober 2 , 201 award-winning Irish photographer Richard Mosse and his collaborators cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, writer John Holten and composer Ben Frost used an unlikely instrument to film a harrowing scene. Deploying a thermal imaging camera developed for the S military, they captured a human trafficker's boat carrying 00 refugees as it sank into the waters off the coast of Turkey.

As the boat broke apart, they watched helplessly while human beings struggled against the waves before slipping silently into the sea. Too far away to lend a hand, they carried on filming from the Greek island of esbos, about si miles away.

"We literally watched as people got swept out in the tide," Mosse recalled inside his cavernous studio in Ridgewood, ueens, where he screened his new three-channel, 2-minute film *Incomin* , set to premiere on February 1 at ondon's Barbican Centre.

"A Fronte E border and coast guard agency boat with tons of shiny new gear got close, but they couldn't save a sinner it wasn't designed for rescue. About 70 people drowned that day."



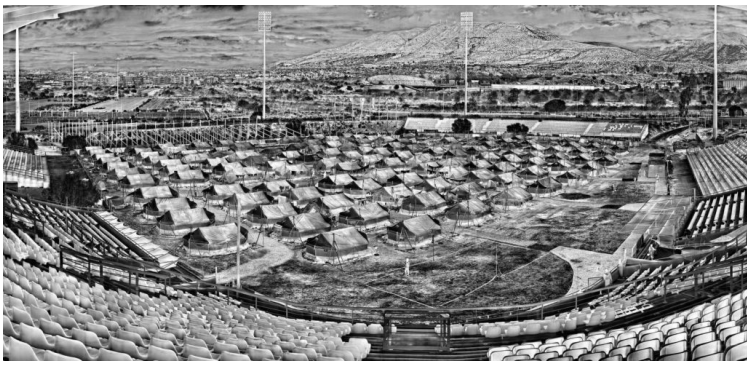
Still from Incoming, 201 -2017, by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Ben Frost and Trevor Tweeten, co-commissioned by the National Gallery of ictoria, Melbourne, and Barbican Art Gallery, ondon. Courtesy of Richard Mosse and Jack Shainman Gallery.

At a time when the world is e periencing the largest human migration since World War II, with more than a million people fleeing to Europe in 201 by sea escaping the war in Syria, political persecution in Africa and the Middle East, and climate change and poverty nearly everywhere else Mosse resolved to document this terrifying human ordeal through a set of dramatic still and moving images. Fittingly, he did so using a camera that is sanctioned as a weapon by international law because of its uni ue ability to see at distances of 1 -plus miles.

“What better way to certify the human costs of war than with a weapon designed for targeting and border control ,” Mosse said as we watched his film unfold across three 12-foot screens.

Besides debuting his new film in ondon this month, Mosse unveiled eight new photographs at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York last week. A hefty new book of images featuring essays by Mosse and the philosopher Giorgio Agamben is due out soon courtesy of the renowned publishing house MAC .

A third venue to currently host Mosse’s work is the Bowery’s International Center of Photography. Their aptly titled group show, “Perpetual revolution the Image and Social Change,” features a single still image among do ens of chattering A Is and MPEGs Mosse portrays a group of refugees radiantly haloed in alabaster light inside the charcoal darkness of the Indomeni refugee camp in Greece.



ellini on l mpic rena, then , , till from Incomin , 201 -2017, by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Ben Frost and Trevor Tweeten, co-commissioned by the National Gallery of ictoria, Melbourne, and Barbican Art Gallery, ondon. Courtesy of Richard Mosse and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Shot with a thermographic camera Mosse sourced from a European weapons manufacturer that also makes drones and missiles, the artist’s moving and still images reveal the awkward deal the artist has struck between himself and his chosen technology. “The camera is color blind,” Mosse e plained as we considered the real-life choreography of his computer-generated images. Among other arring footage, the film features monochrome silhouettes of S navy personnel servicing fighter ets on the carrier *Theodore oo e elt*, shots of actual human rescues taking place on the choppy Aegean Sea and repeated captures of groups of colorless, ambling, wraith-like refugees.

“The camera basically dehumani es its sub ects and makes them look like ombies by reducing them to their basic biological essence, their heat signature. Among other things, it reads people’s eyes as orbs of viscous black elly, which makes a mockery of the idea of the eyes being a window to the soul. It really is a deeply sinister technology.”

Besides dealing with the ethical components of his particular medium, Mosse reali ed soon after launching his pro ect that his large and unwieldy camera re uired the development of a set of new artistic routines. For starters, the camera’s heft demanded that it be mounted onto a steadycam rig, 1 0 pounds of which Tweeten harnessed and bodied for days on end. Also, since the machine was originally designed for use with a keyboard, Mosse adapted an Bo controller to hand-tune functions that would normally be conducted digitally.



Still frame from Incoming', three-channel video installation with 7.1 surround sound, 2 mins 10 secs, by Richard Mosse, 2016-17. Co-commissioned by the Barbican Art Gallery, ondon, and National Gallery of ictoria, Melbourne. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and carlier gebauer, Berlin.

The result was an awkward dance between the two collaborators, with Tweeten leading and Mosse following close behind in search of the perfect moment. Here's a mental image that comes to mind in considering the collaborators' gawky *pa de de* eonardo and his longtime associate Sala running a three-legged race while trying to draw the Mona isa with an etch-a-sketch.

Another aspect of the hair-raising nature of Mosse's two-year pro ect is captured by a McGuyver-like story Tweeten relayed inside the studio. During one of the many instances when the camera broke down and endangered the pro ect's multi-person, multi-trip mission, he enlisted a Greek car mechanic to open, repair and solder the machine together. The tale doesn't sound so remarkable, until one considers that the camera in uestion costs around 160,000.

Accompanied by Frost's loudly dissonant soundtrack, *Incomin* is a fully immersive e perience that tracks the different stages of the refugee crisis like a modern-day Biblical E odus. It follows refugees migrating from the Middle East and North Africa into Europe through two different routes by boat from Turkey to Greece and overland through the Sahara to ibya and then to Italy.

The film documents people living in several refugee camps, including the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin and the recently shuttered "Jungle" in Calais. Mosse's footage also includes images of an actual cannon battle in Syria, in which S aircraft strafe Isis positions as well as a scene featuring do ens of refugees piled up Mad Ma -style atop a vehicle as it barrels along a stretch of highway in the Al aeda-controlled area of the Maghreb.



Still frame from Incoming', three-channel video installation with 7.1 surround sound, 2 mins 10 secs, by Richard Mosse, 2016-17. Co-commissioned by the Barbican Art Gallery, ondon, and National Gallery of ictoria, Melbourne. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and carlier gebauer, Berlin.

The entire pro ect makes for remarkably poetic and often shocking viewing one scene depicts an autopsy conducted to identify the corpse of an anonymous refugee of the sort that marries naturally occurring Busby Berkeley productions, like disasters and mass migrations, with the fearsome idea of military surveillance. No wonder Mosse, in his essay in the forthcoming MAC book, compares the refugees' trials to those in Homer's *d e* .

As Mosse writes, "migration is as old as humanity," by which he means that it's enduring, ancient, mythic and woven into the very fabric of human history. His film and photographs bear witness to man's abiding flight impulse turned into the great humanitarian crisis of our time in spectacular, haunting, and glowing black and white.

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American PHOTO

February 9, 2017

RICHARD MOSSE ON USING A MILITARY GRADE CAMERA TO FIND SIGNS OF LIFE IN REFUGEE CAMPS

The photographer on repurposing a camera made for long-range battle surveillance



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Helliniko, 2016
"This is Helliniko in Athens. In 2004, they had the Olympics. It was very hard to get access because the authorities are so ashamed that they had this brilliant Olympic arena, which is now a refugee camp in very squalid conditions."

The refugee crisis is one of the most photographed events in recent memory. From boats on the Mediterranean to the shores of Greece and all through Europe, photographers have been there every step of the way taking images that we have all become very familiar with. The photographer Richard Mosse, however, wasn't interested in conventional reportage.

On a tip from a friend, Mosse bought a military-grade camera meant for long-range battle surveillance that doesn't see visible light. Instead, this camera sees heat and produces crisp black-and-white images that are exposed based on the relative warmth of everything in the frame. Mosse then used this camera, intended to track and target, as a way to document displacement and the daily fight for survival by the refugees living in camps across Europe for a new project called *Heat Maps*.

The sprawling black-and-white panoramic images, stitched together from nearly 1,000 smaller frames, are currently on view at Jack Shainman Gallery through March 1. Mosse spoke with *American Photo* about what makes a good documentary project, the importance of seeing with fresh eyes and the inherent difficulties of using a military-grade thermal camera.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Idomeni Camp, Greece, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 40 x 120 inches

How far away were you while shooting these scenes?
This one of Idomeni (above) is the nearest. Idomeni is one of the flatter refugee camps. I tried as best I could to take a high eye-level perspective in order to create a much more detailed, almost like a Breugel effect. But with this, I couldn't because there was no elevation. This would've been only a couple hundred feet. And these guys down here, they didn't want to be pictured, so they came over and were like, "Are you taking our picture?" And I said, "Oh, no, no. I'm monitoring the pollution levels of the swamp." Because the camera doesn't look like a camera

What was the planning process for each image?
In this case, I went in without the camera because the camera's super heavy and conspicuous. It's a drag. I would wander around, and I would scope out a vantage point that I liked. When I worked out where I thought would make an effective heat map, I went and got the camera. I had a buddy working with me, Waseem, who is himself a Syrian refugee. He's an artist based in Berlin. He drove down with me. He helped me carry all the crap. It involves the camera, all the peripherals, another suitcase full of cables and media recorders, laptops and then another suitcase with the robotic motion control tripod system. What I'm doing is I'm compositing many, many still frames. This would've taken 40 minutes to capture, and in that 40 minutes, the robotic arm would rotate the camera on an X-Y axis.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Film still from *Incoming*, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 11 1/2 x 20 inches

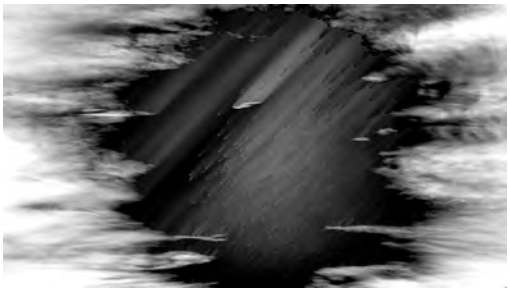
Does the camera follow a program, like a code?
Yeah, I just used the software, and I'd tell it to start here and do 30 individual discrete cells and maybe 15 this way. The camera would track and it would rest on each cell—

you want to get rid of the vibration. You see little errors in the focus that I quite like sometimes. Then because people are moving sometimes their legs get chopped off; he's missing a torso and he's a floating head on his own. I left all that in because I like the way it reveals how things are constructed. It unravels itself like a puzzle. This would have been 900 separate frames we blended in Photoshop. So it's 900 layers.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Film still from *Incoming*, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 11 1/2 x 20 inches

How long did the blending process take?
This one of Idomeni would have taken 150 hours. We do that in a normal retouching studio. That's about $30,000. It requires real patience and puzzle solving ability.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Film still from *Incoming*, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 11 1/2 x 20 inches

Where did this idea come from? How did this all coalesce for you?
I had a show in London in 2014, and art openings, they're like mad affairs. Everyone's buzzing around. This woman came up with her boyfriend, and she's like, "Richard, I've really been meaning to talk to you about something." Her name's Sophie Darlington, and we've since become good friends. She is one of the leading wildlife cinematographers in the world and she shoots for BBC Planet Earth. She heard about this camera made by a weapons company that makes drones and cruise missiles and things. She had an introduction with them. She said, "Look, I've been trying to get Planet Earth to work with this for me." It turns out that her producers didn't want to commit to this particular technology because it's so tunnel vision, it doesn't set the scene. It doesn't give you the establishing shot, which in conventional television storytelling, you really need that wide angle, otherwise viewers are completely decontextualized and confused. I thought, "Great! Give me the confusion."

We went to the place where they build these weapons, and on the left hand side there's a cruise missile and on the right there's the virtual war simulator. And all these guys in white lab coats come out with clipboards. They took us up onto the roof, and demonstrated the camera for us there. They showed us there were these two builders at a far distance—I couldn't even see them with the human eye and they were welding something. It was a nice summer's day in England, so they had their tops off and you could see the flame from the welding gun reflected on the solar plexus, the beer belly of one of the welders. I had never seen an image like that in my life. Just the way it was articulating an invisible spectrum of light. I immediately fell in love with the technology. Of course to acquire it was another process because that was just a prototype, and they hadn't really put this camera into production at that stage.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Tempelhof Interior, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 50 x 92 inches

It was designed for battlefield awareness and for long-range battle surveillance. It's designed to detect, track and target the enemy. It took them about eight or nine months to produce because they have to grow the optical elements. You can't use glass to focus this type of spectrum. It's medium-wave infrared. It doesn't transmit through glass. So they have to grow these optics from germanium, which is a rare earth mineral. And it takes quite a long time to actually grow the crystal and they polish it into the optical elements. The sensor itself is made from cadmium telluride, and it's quite interesting from a photographer's point of view.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Film still from *Incoming*, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 11 1/2 x 20 inches

The normal consumer digital cameras all register red-green-blue, in other words visible colors through the Bayer color filter array. This creates pixels of red-green-blue, and we didn't need that on this camera because it's seeing contours of heat. So they don't add

that to the sensor. As a result, the sensor produces a very crisp image. It's not being blurred by the sensor array. It is a very oddly sharp way of seeing the world because medium-wave infrared travels very directly. The camera's been proven to detect the human body up to 30.3 kilometers, which is gobsmacking, you know, considering with the curvature of the earth at sea level, you can only see about three or four kilometers. That's why I'm trying to incorporate elevation into this.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Moria Camp in Snow, Lesbos, 2017, digital c-print on metallic paper, 50 x 180 inches

Which camp was the above photo taken in?

This is Moria, on the island of Lesbos. This is Turkey in the distance, and this is Lesbos. All the refugees would've crossed from Turkey with an inflatable dinghy that you've seen the pictures of. We could sometimes see the groups of refugees sort of corralling in the hills in the middle of the night and they would come down and the human traffickers would launch them. Sometimes in very dangerous conditions, they really risked their lives, these poor refugees and they would each pay like 500 Euros to go.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Film still from *Incoming*, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 11 1/2 x 20 inches

How much time did you spend in any given camp before setting to make the picture?

A fair amount—Moria is the camp I returned to several times. This is Moria in snow. It's very rare to get snow on Lesbos. I made that two weeks ago actually, and I made this [the photo below] a year before. This is on a hotter day obviously. It describes things differently. Everything's much warmer temperature. You could see these people, they're literally sleeping in the gutters here. Shockingly squalid conditions. For most of 2016, people couldn't go in and out, so it became a prison, and it's built like a prison. As a

result, the refugees start to protest, and on two occasions, they burnt the camp down. So this is pre-burn, and the other one is post-burn.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Moria Camp, Lesbos, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 50 x 180 inches

Did your understanding or thoughts about the crisis change over the course of working on this series?

To make a really good, deep documentary project, you need to be immersed. It takes a lot of scratching at the surface and there's some narratives that you can't really begin to get your head around until you've been on the scene for at least a year. Some people get under the surface faster. The thing about the refugee crisis particularly is it's so schizophrenic, dislocated and intercontinental.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Skaramaghas, 2016

"This is Skaramaga a refugee camp in a port in Athens that happens to be right beside a fully functioning container port. The irony is that they're mostly living in containers themselves, so it's like this extension of globalized capitalism. The way the camera's describing the landscape, you really get to see all these narratives playing out: kids playing football, little groups of girls hanging out. It starts to describe the anthropology of the place in a similar way, in my opinion, to, say, the painting of Pieter Breugel or like Hieronymous Bosch who also took this high eye-level perspective."

What was it like for you using this kind of camera for the opposite of its intended purpose?

It was a nightmare technically. It's a house of cards constantly threatening to break down. The camera itself has no buttons, knobs, levers, anything. It's just a camera. You have to plug it into a laptop. So imagine, you have this really hokey user interface and the decisive moment was ten minutes ago. We've evolved the technology with the help of the people who made the camera. We realized instead of going around with the laptop, we could work with a Panasonic Toughpad and Velcro it to the back of the camera. Even then it's super glitchy because when you plug the camera in, it sounds like a freezer because the way they get the image is by cooling the sensor to -50 Kelvin (-550 Fahrenheit), which is something bananas. It's working really hard to get that

sensor cooled, and it's taking about three minutes to get cold enough to image. You have so many moving parts. There's invariably problems along the way.



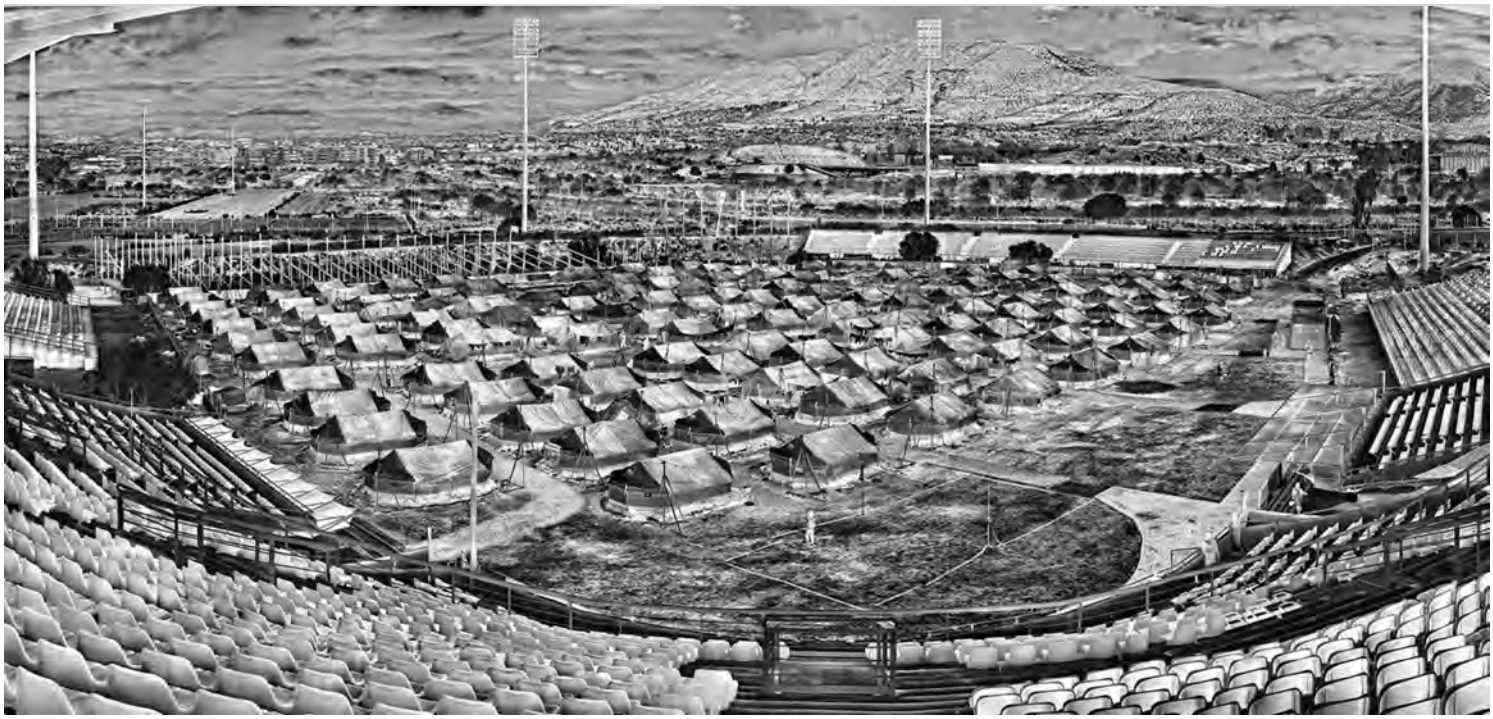
© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Larissa Camp, Greece, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 50 x 174 inches

What was the feeling when you first started working on Heat Maps and you saw this body of work coming together?
It was pretty exciting, but it was a struggle to really understand. It takes a long time. You've got to keep knocking your head against the wall before you really learn how to do it correctly and see it's potential. I feel I have a little ways to go before I finish these Heat Maps.
Brecht had this idea of alienation effect, Verfremdungseffekt, and that's what I'm trying to play with here. I want to put the viewer into an unfamiliar space so that they can see fresh, to see again without all the baggage of the mainstream media.



© Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Ventimiglia, 2016, digital c-print on metallic paper, 50 x 120 inches

Bloomberg



Helliniko, 2016

Richard Mosse/Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

A New View of the Refugee Crisis

Photographer Richard Mosse uses a thermographic camera to create images without visible light or film.

by **Eugene Reznik**

February 10, 2017, 4:00 AM EST

This is not a photograph.

The image of a refugee camp in Greece, shown above, was created by Irish photographer Richard Mosse using a military-grade thermographic camera, a piece of equipment typically deployed by border patrol agents. The process involves no light, no photographic negative, no color sensors—it's a picture created by the body heat emanating from refugees.

Still, these visual renderings of refugees have been turned into gallery artwork. A series of mural-sized prints by Mosse, in a show called Heat Maps, is now on view at Jack Shainman Gallery in Manhattan, with prints selling for up to $65,000. Mosse has also used the thermographic camera to make a three-screen video installation called *Incoming*.

At a distance, the stark monochrome images look much like the classical documentary photography shot by, say, Sebastiao Salgado, but a closer examination reveals a scene thoroughly alien. Bloomberg.com photo editor Eugene Reznik asked Mosse about his project, which took him to refugee camps in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, as well as the need for a new way to look at the news.

The refugee crisis is one of the most widely documented humanitarian disasters of our time. What do you see in your images that you can't find in news pictures?

There's something odd that happens, the way this camera images the human body. It's very ambivalent. Initially, it seems to dehumanize the figure. It strips the individual from the body, it turns the body into a creature, or a biological trace. The body becomes a sort of glowing radiation, and if you get close you can see blood circulation, saliva, irises. It turns people into zombie form almost—unfamiliar, ultimately.

The camera also has this amazing potential to telescope in on people, and you can create very honest moments. There's no self-consciousness at all. As a result, we're able to achieve a certain tenderness of imagery, a kind of intimacy that I've never seen before in portraiture. You could say that's invasive, but I would argue that the camera at the same time anonymizes its subject. You can't identify people, you only see their heat signature.

All of whats going on in these images leads to a total kind of unfamiliarity for the viewer, a sort of alienation effect. The viewer doesn't come at the subject with all the usual baggage of normal press photography. The images dazzle in a way that press photography is maybe no longer able to, and the viewer is startled into taking a closer look and consider this problem.

The deluge of news imagery, social media posts, and even virtual reality experiences of refugees seems intended to help viewers identify with them, to put the viewer in the scene and in their shoes. After several years, this resulted, arguably, in empathy fatigue. Your work, on the other hand, seems to align the viewer more closely with law enforcement and the state actors that fostered the conditions of the camps. There's a detachment from the refugees.

The camera itself is designed for battlefield awareness, for extreme range border surveillance. It's designed to target and to detect an enemy, so it isn't interested in naturalism or realism. You find it at weapons fairs, and it's regarded as a weapon in terms of export, so it's sanctioned under the International Treaty of Arms Regulation. So for you to travel out of the country with it, if you don't have the correct paperwork, you could be arrested for weapons smuggling. They usually don't sell it to individuals, they sell to governments. It's not a weapon, obviously, but it's used as part of advanced weapons systems.

There was the right-wing politician in Germany called Franke Petry who recently suggested German police should just shoot refugees who are entering at the border illegally. That's what the gesture of my project is attempting to engage in. Obviously, it's not endorsing anyone to shoot people, but it's trying to engage with the logic of xenophobia that's currently so prevalent and widespread and has been used by politicians, including Donald Trump, to change the system.

I'm trying to spark an uneasy feeling of complicity in the viewer, in relation to xenophobia and fear of the other and to globalization as an updated modern form of colonialism. How we in the West — and our governments in particular — represent refugees is therefore how we regard them, so this is really about investigating the technology we use to protect our borders.

Editioned artwork, exhibited in art galleries, can function as a number of things. It can be an investment asset, a decorative object. Do you believe it can be a vehicle for change?

My aspiration as an artist is to make work somewhere along the lines of Picasso's *Guernica*. OK, yes, it probably is worth a lot of money — it's an asset, on some level — but it's also a powerful work of art. It doesn't particularly tell the viewer what to think, it's not didactic, but it is very moving and it's moved many, many people. I think that's what art should do. We wouldn't be asking questions quite so much if we experienced the world through bullet points. The refugee crisis is complicated and very deeply layered and there are endless reports on it, on the logistics, and no one is really reading them. People need to feel something, and my work is not full of facts that I encountered on the ground — although I could bore someone senseless.

Although some collectors do treat art as a commodity object and don't care if they like it or not, a lot of others love to live with an object that makes them feel something. There is endless pleasure in a good painting, and I think that's fine. It's the market that sustains artists to continue to make work. The world of photojournalism now is not what it used to be back in the 1980s and '90s, when you could make a good living, you could survive as a photojournalist. It's taken a hit, as has journalism itself, so I think it's great that the art world now can become hybridized.

Richard Mosse is an Irish conceptual documentary photographer. Heat Maps *is on view at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York through March 11, 2017.* Incoming *premiers at London's Barbican Centre on February 15, with an accompanying artist's book published by MACK.*

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

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Lifestyle

FEB 9, 2017 @ 04:48 PM

Syrian Refugees As 'Mere Humans' In Richard Mosse's Thermal Photographs



David Alm, CONTRIBUTOR

I write about film, the arts, and design.

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.



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According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, there are currently 4.8 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and an additional 6.6 million internally displaced within Syria. With numbers so unfathomably large, the crisis can be easy to abstract, even with a near-constant stream of headlines and protests over Donald Trump's attempt to ban Syrian refugees from entering the United States.

The photographer Richard Mosse's latest project, a hauntingly beautiful series of photographs titled *Heat Maps* and a companion film, *Incoming*, offers a counterpoint to that abstraction: ironically, further abstraction. Paired with another immigration-themed exhibition by the Cuban artist Yoan Capote at the Jack Shainman Gallery in Chelsea, the photographs comprising *Heat Maps* offer panoramic views of refugee camps in Turkey, Italy, the Greek island of Lesbos and other locales to depict the enormity of the crisis while, in a sense, humanizing it at the same time.



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Mosse photographed the camps using a military-grade camera designed for border and combat surveillance that can detect thermal radiation, including body heat, from a distance of more than 30 kilometers. Produced by a multinational defense and security corporation that also manufactures cruise missiles and drones, the camera strips people of their identities and reduces them to mere humans, no different than you or me.

"Human skin is rendered as a mottled patina disclosing an intimate system of blood circulation, sweat, saliva and body heat," Mosse writes in "Transmigration of the Souls," an essay for a book about the project, *Incoming*. At the same time, he continues, "the camera carries a certain aesthetic violence, dehumanizing the subject, portraying people in zombie form as monstrous, stripping the individual from the body and portraying a human as mere biological trace." The effect is a result of the camera itself, which is color blind and can only register the contours of relative heat difference within a given scene.

And yet, in presenting his subjects as humans "stripped" of their individuality, he approaches a fundamental truth about people regardless of color, nationality or creed. While in Lesbos, one refugee, with his wife and two children, told Mosse that "Syria

thing foregrounded by the camera, which depicts the human body as a radiant glow of biochemical processes such as respiration, energy production, hypothermia, and warmth."



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Because of its military capabilities, the thermal camera Mosse uses is classified as a weapon, and controlled by international authorities as such. He was granted a special license to transport and use the apparatus, which Mosse describes as "nearly impossible to use," having no buttons, no focus rings, no dials, no knobs. It weighs 23 kilograms and is meant to be mounted on an observation point and controlled remotely. Mosse, meanwhile, carries it, with the help of his collaborator, Trevor Tweeten. In this sense, the medium is very much the message.

He writes that in working on Heat Maps, he "began to learn how complex, ambivalent and powerful a tool this could be," and started to "listen carefully to the camera," to let it show him what "it wanted to do." Previously inclined to release his work as quickly as possible, Mosse soon realized that he was "being led on a long journey by the camera itself, an unrepeatable passage, and it would take as long as it took."

The same can be said for the crisis itself, and for the seemingly interminable state of suspended life in which the refugees find themselves. And for all the efforts of certain world leaders and ideologues to deny the refugees' humanity and need, Mosse's work reminds us that, absent legal or political rights, each of us is, in the end, just a quintessence of dust, not long for this world. Even those who, whether by virtue of birthright or arrogance or fear, like to believe they are something more.

THE NEW YORKER

February 5, 2017

RICHARD MOSSE'S "HEAT MAPS": A MILITARY-GRADE CAMERA REPURPOSED ON THE MIGRANT TRAIL



Detail of "Tempelhof Interior," 2016.
COPYRIGHT RICHARD MOSSE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY.

Rather than capturing light and shadow, midwave infrared cameras record contours in heat. Thermal detection allows these devices to photograph through smog and smoke, and certain models are capable of registering the presence of a body from miles away. The technology is used for military surveillance or, if attached to a weapons system, for identifying and tracking targets.

For his series of panoramic images, titled "Heat Maps," the photographer Richard Mosse co-opted these capabilities for a different purpose. In 2016, Mosse visited routes commonly travelled by refugees—from the Persian Gulf to Berlin, and from northern Niger to the now-cleared Jungle camp in Calais, France—and used a military-grade infrared camera to document scenes along the way. (The series will be shown this month at the Jack Shainman Gallery, in New York, in conjunction with an immersive video installation, titled "Incoming," at London's Barbican Center,

which Mosse created with the cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and the composer Ben Frost.)

This is not Mosse's first time photographing what we cannot see. He is known for the work he made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo using Kodak Aerochrome infrared film, which records light from parts of the spectrum imperceptible to the human eye. Like the unwieldy rig used to create "Heat Maps," the Kodak film was developed for military use; it can identify camouflaged subjects by registering the chlorophyll in grass and leaves in luscious pink tones. Mosse used the film to document the violent conflict between the Congolese Army and rebel groups, shooting intimate portraits of young militants among candy-colored hills and rivers.



*A still from "Incoming," 2016.*COPYRIGHT RICHARD MOSSE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

This time, using a new "weapon of war," as he describes it, Mosse captured encampment structures, servicemen, border police, boats at full capacity, and migrants of all ages. Mosse would spend time in the refugee camps before photographing, and some of the migrants sheltered there helped him to arrange his shots. But in the images his subjects are always seen at a distance, photographed from an above-eye-level perspective. Each "Heat Map" was constructed from hundreds of frames shot using a telephoto lens; a robotic system was used to scan the landscapes and interiors and meticulously capture every corner. In one image, a mass of tents, arranged in a grid, occupies a field at the Hellinikon Olympic Complex. In another, a group of men stands out against the dark blotches of tents and brush at a camp in Idomeni, Greece.



*"Tempelhof Interior," 2016.*COPYRIGHT RICHARD MOSSE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

By adopting a tool of surveillance, Mosse's photographs consciously play into narratives that count families as statistics and stigmatize refugees as potential threats. He recognizes that operating the infrared camera entails brushing up against the violent intentions with which the device has been put to use. "We weren't attempting to rescue this apparatus from its sinister purpose," he said. Instead, his project acts as a challenge. The people in his images appear as inverted silhouettes, sometimes disjointed, torn by the time passing between individual frames. The thermal readouts rub features out of faces and render flesh in washy, anonymous tones. Someone lays back on a cot, looking at a cell phone. Someone else hangs laundry. We can imagine what these people might look like in person, guess at the expressions on their faces or the color of their skin. Yet seeing them in Mosse's shadowy renderings erases the lines that have been drawn between refugees, immigrants, natives, citizens, and the rest. His camera makes little distinction between the heat that each body emits.



*"Helliniko," 2016.*COPYRIGHT RICHARD MOSSE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

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Exhibitions

David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows This Winter

Here's what to see before spring.

David Ebony

February 7, 2017



Richard Mosse, *Tempelhof Interior*, 2016. Photo Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

3. Richard Mosse at Jack Shainman Gallery (http://www.artnet.com/galleries/jack-shainman-gallery/), through March 11.

In his previous shows of large-scale photos, Irish artist/photographer Richard Mosse used infrared film to document the atrocities of the war in the Eastern Congo. The film, once used by military surveillance crews, transposes the color of foliage, uniforms, and all things green, to pink, fuchsia or lavender in the pictures. The visual splendor of the photos belies their horrific content. Mosse's new series of works, "Heat Maps," is similarly visually sumptuous and thematically disconcerting. The large-scale black-and-white panoramic images show European refugee camps, taken with a military grade, telephoto camera that can detect thermal radiation, including body heat, from great distances, sometimes as far as a mile away or more.

In *Idomeni Camp Greece,* soldiers guard a long line of refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern countries entering the darkened confines of the military compound. This is the same camp that inspired recent works by Ai Weiwei, who collected the discarded clothing and other items the refugees left behind, reusing them for several powerful installations. In his work, Mosse presents an image of hushed serenity and almost classical dignity, despite the ominous and heart-wrenching nature of the scene. *Tempelhof Interior* shows the Berlin airport holding areas where refugees are detained and processed. Though offering the hope of shelter, or some relief from desperation, it is a forbidding place, prison-like in its cold and calculating purpose.

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Incoming

Words by Tom Seymour

Despite his success – joining Magnum, winning the Deutsche Börse Prize and representing Ireland at the Venice Biennale – Richard Mosse couldn't ignore his doubts about what he called the 'predatory' lens, setting off in a new direction that debuts this month at the Barbican Centre

"A camera is a sublimation of the gun," Susan Sontag wrote in her seminal collection of essays *On Photography*, first published in 1977. "To photograph someone is a subliminal murder – a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time." But for Richard Mosse's latest work, *Incoming*, his camera wasn't a sublimation – it was the weapon itself.

In 2015, the Irish photographer was nominated for membership of Magnum Photos. He was to be one of the youngest members of the prestigious agency, invited on the back of one extraordinary photography series, his Congo-based *Infra* work, which won him the Deutsche Börse Prize a year earlier. But, even as he was welcomed in by Magnum, Mosse privately harboured an increasing sense of disillusionment with documentary photography.

A few months after the nomination, he quietly walked away from the agency, shut himself away in New York and started to work on an entirely new and groundbreaking work of art. The result of that two-year hiatus is a work more recognisable as a film than a photography series, and it is about to be exhibited for the first time at the Barbican Centre this month.

The Irishman's rise has been vertiginous. Graduating from an MRes in cultural studies in 2003, a decade later he was representing his home country at the Venice Biennale, by way of a postgraduate course in fine art at Goldsmiths, an MFA in photography at Yale University and dozens of solo and group exhibitions in between. The Deutsche Börse Prize and Magnum followed in 2014 and 2015. *Infra* continued to be exhibited in galleries all over the world but Mosse himself was rarely heard from. Just as his stock grew, he seemed to mysteriously disappear from the photography community.

The 36-year-old never pursued full membership of Magnum. He had become frustrated with the faciliness of documentary photography: its repetitiveness and its conservatism, the way it makes great claims to the truth and considers itself eternally relevant, yet is, in fact, as authored and considered as any other medium. So does he still regard himself as a photographer? "I do," he says. "But I have a very ambivalent relationship to photography. It's almost like self-loathing, because there's something predatory about the camera lens. I can't escape photography but, whichever way you look at it, documentary photography is as constructed a way of seeing the world as anything else."

Instead, he pursued the path he'd begun with his multichannel video installation for Venice. For the past two years, Mosse has been working on his next major project, a look at the much-documented migration crisis, but shot through the sights of a certified weapon. Stills from the new work have been shortlisted for the Prix Pictet but, perhaps more significantly, it will be the focus of a vast, complex multimedia exhibition at the Barbican's remarkable Curve gallery (from 15 February to 23 April), a 2000 sq metre semi-circular space that is given over to installation art on a grand scale.

Mosse's 'camera' is classified as an advanced weapons system and controlled under the International Traffic in Arms

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Regulations. He first came across it through a photographer friend working on the BBC's *Planet Earth* television series. Using thermographic technology, the device can 'see' more than 50km, registering a heat signature as a relative temperature difference. Patented by the US military, it is normally used in battlefield surveillance, reconnaissance and ballistics targeting, but Mosse has used the weapon against its intended purpose. He has taken something designed to help hunt and kill an enemy and inverted its usage, manipulating it to capture and comment on the most pressing subject of our times: the great crossing of so many nameless people to lands far from their own.

"Using a part of a weapon to figure the refugee crisis is a deeply ambivalent and political task," Mosse says. "And building a new language around that weapon – one of compassion and disorientation, one that allows the viewer to see these events through an unfamiliar and alienating technology – is a deeply political gesture." Reading heat signatures of people who are completely unaware they're being caught on camera, Mosse shows us bodies only recognisable through an intense white glow. And so we only recognise them through the context of their landscape – the great stretches of land and sea that surround them, the tent cities, the teeming boats. But, unlike the migrants that have populated our newsfeeds for the past two years, they're shorn of facial expressions or the cultural demarcations – gender, race, age or sex – that documentary photography so habitually focuses upon.

"The camera I've used dehumanises people," Mosse says. "Their skin glows so they look alien, or monstrous and zombie-like. You can see their blood circulation, their sweat, their breath. You can't see the pupils of their eyes, but a black jelly instead. But, in fact, it allows you to capture portraiture of extraordinary tenderness. We often shot at night, from miles and miles away, so we were shooting people who were not aware of being filmed. So we captured some extremely authentic gestures – people asleep, people embracing each other, people at prayer. There's a stolen intimacy to it. There's no awareness, there's no self-consciousness. It's a two-step process – dehumanising them and then making them human again."

Around a decade ago Mosse began gaining attention for his work, exhibited in group and solo shows, on air-disaster simulators and former palaces of Saddam Hussein that had been taken over by occupying US forces. Then came what he refers to as his "Congo work". The region of central Africa has been the subject of

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European fascination since long before Joseph Conrad's fictional voyage up river in *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1899. Mosse began his own journey in 2012, travelling to the Democratic Republic of Congo on and off over a period of two years during which he documented the "Hobbesian state" of ongoing conflict that has drawn in eight other nations and left millions dead.

Funding the trip from his own meagre resources, he slept in Catholic missions and got a handle on the place by talking to the few correspondents left in the hotels of Kinshasa. But the more embedded he became in the country, and the more people he spoke to, the less he felt he understood the place. There are around 30 armed groups in Congo, many of whom form uneasy bonds, truces or mercenary alliances, either with each other or the government forces. "Many of them used to have an ideology but they've long since forgotten it. They fall into alliances with each other, then renounce them," Mosse said in an interview with *The Telegraph*.

In 2008, the International Rescue Committee estimated the death toll in Congo at 5.4 million people since the country gained independence in June 1960. But any reporting of such widespread mortality can take days or weeks to emerge from the jungle – or remain forever hidden within it. "We don't hear about it because they're dying from a lack of sovereignty and constant displacement, shitty diseases," Mosse says. "By the time photographers arrive there is nothing left to see. It was this lack of trace that interested me and ultimately the failure of documentary photography. Conflict is complicated and unresolvable and it's not always easy to find the concrete subject, the issue, and put it in front of the lens."

Mosse gained access to some of the warring factions that fight nominal government forces in the country. But he did so with a custom-built large format camera loaded with Kodak Aerochrome film, an infrared colour camera stock which registers, and then filters out chlorophyll in live vegetation. The stock was developed by Kodak for the US military during the Second World War as a way of identifying camouflaged targets in lush landscapes. Using it in the modern Congo, Mosse felt he had "crossed a threshold into fiction", blending traditional reportage, creating documentary images that seemed surreally heightened and metaphysical.

"I wanted to use a highly unstable infrared film technology as a way of thinking through the conflict," he told *Aperture* magazine. "My concept was very raw and underdeveloped. Embarking upon the journey, I found myself challenged in many ways, not least because I had no knowledge of moving through this difficult land, and no experience of using this type of film. I was dealing with the unknown, negotiating my own ignorance. Since infrared light is invisible to the human eye, you could say that I was literally photographing blind."

In an interview with *BJP* a year earlier, Mosse explained how the idea unfolded. "I wanted to export this technology to a harder situation, to up-end the generic conventions of calcified mass-media narratives and challenge the way we're allowed to represent this forgotten conflict. I wanted to confront this military reconnaissance technology, to use it reflexively in order to question the ways in which war photography is constructed."

But *Infra* was not just a photography series. Indivisible from the work was *The Enclave*, an immersive, multichannel video installation Mosse created to represent Ireland at the 2013 Venice Biennale (and which is still touring, most recently at Hafnarhús, Reykjavík Art Museum in Iceland). The work, comprising six films screened simultaneously, is eerily scored by composer Ben Frost and features long tracking shots filmed with a Steadicam by cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, with whom Mosse worked in Congo.

The Enclave is a haunting watch. It allows us to float through the bucolic front lines of the conflict. We follow fighters deep into the

"The thermal camera doesn't discern skin colour, it doesn't discern ethnicity; it animalises the subject, treating the subject like a biological trace rather than an individual"

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1 *Idomeni, Greece*, digital Chromogenic metallic print, 2016, from the series *Heat Maps*. © Richard Mosse, courtesy Prix Pictet Space.

2 *Larissa, Greece*, digital Chromogenic metallic print, 2016, from the series *Heat Maps*. © Richard Mosse, courtesy Prix Pictet Space.

3 *The Enclave* in exhibition at the 2013 Venice Biennale. © Richard Mosse & Trevor Tweeten, courtesy the Barbican Centre.

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undergrowth as they blend seamlessly into the bush. We seem to happen across, and then explore, an abandoned army outpost, passing over corpses of soldiers who could not have been more than teenagers. We're thrown into the midst of a propaganda rally and swoon over a hilltop, mountains rolling away into the distance, water glinting in the valleys. Then we're sent down, in a continuous shot, into an 'internally displaced persons' camp – a place that could have been drawn straight from Marlow's recollections in *Heart of Darkness*.

He has collaborated with the same composer and cinematographer for the latest work and orientated the new show, *Incoming*, around a similar format as *The Enclave* – a work that is more experiential than objective. *Incoming* is, he says now, "the culmination of my struggle to tear up all the instincts and methodologies that drove me through the Congo work, to start again in a wholly new, different way". Yet he now says that, in retrospect, there is a sense of continuity between the two series.

"The Congo work was about looking back, using an anachronistic and antiquated technology against its original purpose," he says. "It was a way of thinking through photojournalism at a particular moment in the history of documentary photography. It was an attempt to confront some of the questions created for documentarians when we took the step from analogue to digital photography. *Incoming* is working through similar ideas, but in a different direction. This work is about looking forwards, not backwards."

Working with the new camera was painstaking, for there was no user interface and no handbook. Mosse developed a robotic motion-control tripod, which married itself to the sensors on the camera, allowing it to scan heat maps for refugee camps. He'd then blend them in Photoshop. "The final images are multi-perspective photographs," he says. "Some would have 900 cells, each with its own distinct perspective. It's a technically tricky way of working. The camera pushed us in a certain way – a kind of portraiture that focuses on the refugee's body. It doesn't discern skin colour, it doesn't discern ethnicity; it animalises the subject, treating the subject like a biological trace rather than an individual.

"I feel a lot of the imagery of the refugee crisis is so saturated. I wanted to try and make this imagery of refugees as unfamiliar as possible. When you see the same image again and again, you develop a certain response. I wanted to create work in which we have no automatic response. I tried to take my own crutches away, to give myself nothing to fall back on. I hope that's the case for the audience too." **BJP**

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Moser, Gabrielle. “Chromophobia: Race Colour and Visual Pleasure” Prefix Photo. Toronto: Prefix Pub, Number 32, November 2015: pp. 16-33

CHROMOPHOBIA

Race, Colour and Visual Pleasure in Richard Mosse’s *The Enclave*

by Gabrielle Moser

Dedicated to
Pearl (Strachan) Moser

Previous spread
Richard Mosse
"Nowhere to Run, South Kivu, Eastern Congo" from *Infra*
2010
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LET'S GET IT out of the way right from the start: it's pink.

Since its first public exhibition in the Irish Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, Richard Mosse's six-channel video installation, *The Enclave* (2013), has been described as seductive, alluring, vivid, surreal, stylized, theatrical, psychedelic, outlandish and troubling. Nearly every critical review of the work—a work that documents the ongoing conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in rich, vibrant hues of pink, magenta and red—opens with a testimonial: a play-by-play account of the author's experience of the film that invariably includes a feeling of being swept away, entranced or engrossed by Mosse's imagery.[1] Hours are sometimes lost to *The Enclave* (which runs thirty-nine minutes), often with disquieting results. Writers wrestle with the ethical implications of the spectator's immersion in this "candy-coloured," "romantic" viewing experience, and whether the visual pleasures of *The Enclave* might distract from the violent reality represented in the film. As no reviewer fails to mention, more than 5.4 million people have died of war-related causes in the eastern Congo since 1998 in what is "a notoriously complex conflict … that operates beneath ready vision and easy representation, and is fought not only through armed conflict, but starvation, sexual violence, [and] land and mineral claims."[2] The complexity and scale of this ongoing conflict has led Mosse (and others) to describe *The Enclave*, and the series of still photographs that accompanies it, *Infra* (2011, ongoing), as an attempt to depict an otherwise invisible violence.[3]

While reviewers have heralded *The Enclave* as a radically new way to represent war with the camera—one that employs scale, stylization and sound to fix our attention on a political situation the world press has largely ignored[4]—Mosse's images draw on a long history of documentary photography that did not shy away from, but readily embraced, the affective and immersive powers of the medium. From stereoscopic views of the American Civil War taken by Timothy O'Sullivan and Mathew Brady in the 1860s, to Alice Seeley Harris's photographic lantern slides that exposed Belgian abuses in Congo between 1902 and 1908, through to Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man* (1955), a touring exhibition of 503 photographs that depicted daily life around the world, documentary photographers have long appealed to viewers' senses, engaging their hearts and bodies as well as their minds in an effort to bring atrocity and suffering to public attention. As Mosse himself points out, "Photographic realism has become so inscribed upon twentieth-century depictions of war that we often forget that there were other forms before it."[5]

What *is* different about Mosse's work in the DRC is his use of colour. If *The Enclave* does anything to change how we represent war, it is by bringing it to us in technicolour. Through his use of Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued brand of surveillance film that registers infrared light as it is reflected off the chlorophyll in plants, Mosse transforms the landscape of the DRC, turning foliage that would normally appear green into shocking shades of pink. Yet, while every review, interview and essay about *The Enclave* describes this radical transposition of colour—often in vivid prose—there is little analysis of just what his use of colour *does* to the viewer's experience of the work. The colour, these commentators announce, is unexpected, even unsettling. It makes a real-life scenario seem artificial, lurid, other-worldly. But this fixation on the appearance of pink in the film and photographs obscures a more complicated set of representational issues. The critical response to Mosse's work has been overwhelmingly positive, but it has also been remarkably one-dimensional, seemingly stuck on the novel way in which Aerochrome depicts the Congolese landscape, so much so that it is nearly impossible to find a review that provides even a cursory account of what the film and photographs actually show, never mind a consideration of how Mosse draws on, and diverges from, historical precedents for picturing racialized bodies and colonial violence.[6] My aim here is to unpack the critical and affective function of colour in *The Enclave*, and to consider how Mosse's use of Aerochrome might complicate our understanding of the relationship between photography, race and visual pleasure. Extending David Batchelor's diagnosis that Western culture is plagued by chromophobia—a fear and devaluation of colour as "surface-oriented, impure, and deceptive," associated with the feminine, the primitive, the queer and the vulgar—I want to ask what it is that seems dangerous about the deployment of colour in *The Enclave*, and whether this danger might lie in Mosse's use of visual (and auditory) pleasure in depicting both race and violence.[7] How does Mosse's manipulation of colour draw attention to the ways in which photography has made race into a visible category of difference? What kinds of racialized bodies are made strange and beautiful in *The Enclave*? And which other bodies remain invisible despite the film's highly stylized mode of visual storytelling?

Entering *The Enclave*

Like many, I first encountered *The Enclave* when it debuted at the Venice Biennale in 2013, tucked away in an enclave of its own in the Irish Pavilion at Fondaco Marcello, a building far from the main event of the Giardini and Arsenale venues, where the majority of national pavilions are located. The exhibition opened with three enormous colour

Installation view of the exhibition *The Family of Man* at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), January 24 to May 8, 1955. Photo: Rolf Petersen
COURTESY THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE, THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (NEW YORK) DIGITAL IMAGE © THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART/LICENSED BY SCALA/ART RESOURCE (NEW YORK)



[1] See, for instance, Susan Gibb, "An Ongoing State of Conflict: Richard Mosse's *The Enclave*," *Art Monthly Australia* 269 (May 2014): 20–25; Cathy Haenlein, "Richard Mosse's *The Enclave*," *The RUSI Journal* 159.1 (2014): 106–10; Cristin Leach Hughes, "War, in Its True Colours: Richard Mosse's Infrared Images of the Congo Put the Conflict There in a Fresh Light," *Sunday Times* (London, England), February 9, 2014; Alexandra McIntosh, "Richard Mosse: An Engaged Distraction," *BlackFlash* 32.2 (Spring 2015): 38–45; John Pohl, "Solarized Photos, Infrared Film Manipulate Reality at DHC/ART Foundation Show," *Montreal Gazette*, October 22, 2014; Outi Remes, "Floating above the Waterline," *Afterimage* 41.2 (September–October 2013): 4–6; Willy Staley, "The Color of War," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 16, 2012: 51(L); Christian Viveros-Faune, "The New Realism," *Art in America*, June 1, 2012, www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/the-new-realism/. Accessed February 22, 2015.

[2] Gibb, "An Ongoing State of Conflict": 21.

[3] In a description often paraphrased by reviewers, the Aperture Foundation (publisher of two books on Mosse's work in Congo) wrote of the Venice Biennale work that, "Mosse has captured a landscape that is deceptively seductive, alluring. Ultimately, however, the resulting images and film map the otherwise invisible edges of violence, chaos, and incommunicable horror." See http://aperture.org/shop/the-enclave-richard-mosse-books. Accessed February 22, 2015.

[4] Mary Walling Blackburn and A. B. Huber, "The Flash Made Flesh," *Triple Canopy* 11, http://canopycanopycanopy.com/issues/11/contents/the_flash_made_flesh. Accessed February 22, 2015.

[5] Aaron Schuman, "Sublime Proximity: A Conversation with Richard Mosse," *Aperture* 203 (Summer 2011), www.aaronschuman.com/richardmosse.html. Accessed February 22, 2015.

[6] Two texts diverge from the dominant model of writing about *The Enclave*. The first is Mary Walling Blackburn and A. B. Huber's discussion of the ethics of spectatorship in several contemporary photographic projects, including Mosse's, in "The Flash Made Flesh," *Triple Canopy* 11, http://canopycanopycanopy.com/issues/11/contents/the_flash_made_flesh. Accessed February 22, 2015. The second is Christy Lange's detailed description and analysis of the film in her essay "At the Edge of the Visible," in *A Supplement to the Enclave*, ed. John Holten (Berlin: Broken Dimanche Press, 2014): 4.

[7] David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000): 22–23.

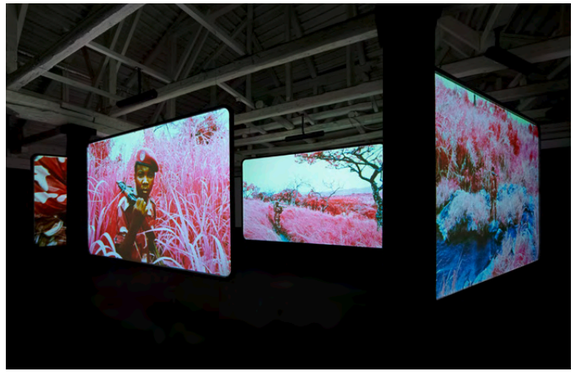


Richard Mosse
"Here Come the Warm Jets, North Kivu, Eastern Congo" from *Infra*
2012
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE





Richard Mosse
Above, top: "Beaucoups of Blues, North Kivu, Eastern Congo, November 2012"
Above, bottom: "Tombstone Blues"
from *Infra*
2012
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE



Installation view of *The Enclave* (2012–13) by Richard Mosse at the Irish Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale. Photo: Tom Powel

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© RICHARD MOSSE

photographs from Mosse's *Infra* series, each depicting an incredibly detailed view of the Congolese landscape in Aerochrome's distinctive pink spectrum. Developed as an aerial military surveillance film stock in the 1940s and used during the Cold War, Aerochrome was designed to detect hidden weapons by distinguishing living plant life from camouflaged fabric and paint. Healthy plant life appears in Aerochrome as a hot pink, while dead foliage and camouflage register as a muted brown. Advances in camouflage design (which have made it impervious to infrared detection) eventually made the film obsolete, and, aside from a brief renaissance in the late 1960s when it was adopted for album-cover art by Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead, it fell out of use, with Kodak discontinuing it in 2009. Mosse's adoption of Aerochrome to depict Congo's rich vegetation results in what the artist has described as a "fabulous Dr. Seuss landscape" of neon pink grass and red trees, offset by emerald lakes and cloudy white skies, their natural colours appearing even more startling when set against their high-voltage surroundings.[8] Without any human figures or buildings to contextualize these scenes, Mosse's landscapes are hard to place—a placelessness made all the more acute by the artist's choice of titles, each of which is drawn from a song or album title. *Love Is the Drug* (2012), titled after a Roxy Music single from 1975, depicts a serpentine river winding through the mountains of South Kivu; *Here Come the Warm Jets* (2012), a nod to Brian Eno's album of 1974, shows a patchwork of fields that stretches far into the horizon; *Beaucoups of Blues* (2012), the title of Ringo Starr's solo album in 1970, offers a sweeping view of Lac Vert on the edge of Goma, also the site of an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp. Mosse's lyrical, anachronistic titles are perhaps meant to recall the period of psychedelia and kitsch with which Aerochrome was previously associated, but they also prompt a reading of the DRC's landscapes as dreamlike spaces—moments of suspension from reality, captured from an elevated, nearly celestial view that might suggest a particularly pleasant acid trip.

These huge, still images work as establishing shots for Mosse's video installation in the adjoining room. You hear *The Enclave* before you see it, thanks to an enthralling, masterfully composed soundtrack by electronic musician Ben Frost, which layers and occasionally distorts Congolese field recordings that Frost made on the crew's last trip to Congo.[9] Bird song, insects, lapping water and wind rustling through grass mix with the sounds of human voices singing or shouting, radio static, truck engines, hammering and the occasional gun shot or mortar shell. Like the still images of *Infra*, *The Enclave* is also shot with Aerochrome, but this time in expired 16mm motion-picture film, handled by cinematographer Trevor Tweeten (and later transferred to video). In contrast to the crisp detail of Mosse's photographs, *The Enclave* is grainy and filmic. Projected across six double-sided screens placed at oblique angles to one another, each accompanied by its own audio channel, the design of the installation makes it impossible to see all six channels at once, forcing viewers to pivot and rotate, duck and weave as one screen goes black, only to have new imagery leap to life on another across the room.[10]

[8] Richard Mosse in Adam Hochschild and Richard Mosse, *Infra* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2012): 132.
[9] "A Conversation between Richard Mosse and Ben Frost," in *A Supplement to the Enclave*, ed. John Holten (Berlin: Broken Dimanche Press, 2014): 14–15.

[10] Frost's soundtrack is also not synched with the activity on the screens, adding to the viewer's feeling of disorientation.
[11] "A Conversation between Richard Mosse and Trevor Tweeten," in *A Supplement to the Enclave*, ed. John Holten (Berlin: Broken Dimanche Press, 2014): 8.

If the photographs in the pavilion entryway suggest a drug-induced trance, *The Enclave* immerses us in a feverish dream. Unlike Mosse's empty landscapes, *The Enclave* throngs with human figures and activity, particularly the bodies of male soldiers and rebels, who perform for and confront the camera as it floats and pans through the landscape. Shot using a Steadicam that hovers just above eye level, moving so smoothly that it sometimes appears ghost-like, *The Enclave* offers a strangely disembodied viewing experience that at first seems at odds with its photojournalistic content.[11] The film depicts the activities of some of the more than fifty military and paramilitary groups jockeying for power in Congo, many of them supported by neighbouring and foreign states with a vested interest in the country's mineral resources, while also registering some of the effects of this state of total war on its inhabitants. Filmed over three years and more than seven trips to the DRC, *The Enclave* is non-narrative and non-linear in its structure, but it nevertheless has a distinct trajectory from exposition to climactic action to dénouement. Mimicking the still photographs, it opens with all six screens showing wide views of the shoreline of a lake. On several screens, the images shift to a view of a man piloting a boat across the water, the flag of the Democratic Republic of Congo—usually blue, yellow and red—appearing purple and yellow as it flaps behind him. On other screens, the images switch to a static shot of a grassy hill, tall blades swaying violently in the wind. Then suddenly, we are moving, the camera swooping into and between the tall leaves of grass to follow an M23 (Congolese Revolutionary Army) rebel soldier as he tracks through the field, his brown hair and skin and shiny metal AK47 standing out against his pink fatigues and beret and the even more brilliant neon landscape. A rapid cut and the view is reversed, showing us several soldiers face-on, many of them staring resolutely, even defiantly, into the camera.

The rest of *The Enclave* unfolds quickly, employing rapid editing to move viewers from scene to scene (and screen to screen). There is a scene of war "play," in which a group of Mai Mai (an umbrella term used to describe a number of community-based militias in the eastern DRC) soldiers rehearse their strategy for battle after being blessed to make them "bulletproof," the men and children performing for the camera, often laughing and smiling as they play-act their own deaths. There are extended shots from the back of a truck as we travel along gravel roads, members of the FARDC (Congolese Armed Forces, or the Congolese national army) patrolling their edges with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers resting over their shoulders. As the pacing of the film picks up, we are brought through the doors of a community hall in Rutshuru, North Kivu, for what appears to be a concert, with singers, musicians and dancers performing on stage for a full-capacity audience. Because Frost's soundtrack is asynchronous with the film footage, we cannot hear what the performers are saying or singing—in fact, it is one of the quietest scenes in the film—but their swaying bodies and the clapping of the audience provide a visual rhythm of their own. All six screens then feature a long tracking shot through an IDP camp at Rubaya in South Masisi, the camera floating past hundreds of people on its way out of the site to show the mass of huts in which some of the more than 2.6 million people who have been displaced by recent violence in the DRC have found temporary refuge. Kids run alongside the film crew, men stop and turn to stare at the camera, one hip cocked, while women walk with parcels balanced on their heads or reach out to grab the hands of wandering children.

The screens go black, and then just as suddenly display a montage of intercut scenes that function as the climax of the film. Footage of a house being moved by hand from one neighbourhood to another in Goma plays on one screen, while another shows a burial of the victims of a massacre in Masisi, North Kivu. We see mourners at a funeral near Baraka, South Kivu, more shots from the IDP camp at Rubaya, and finally a harrowing interior scene of a woman giving birth

[12] Lange, "At the Edge of the Visible": 3.
[13] "The Kodak on the Congo" was the title of a photo essay published in September 1905 in *The West African Mail* that included reproductions of several of Alice Seeley Harris's photographs of Belgian atrocities in the Congo Free State. See Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 59.
[14] Hochschild and Mosse, *Infra*: 126.

by emergency Caesarean section. The soundtrack swells with a cacophony of hammering, human cries, a shovel being driven into dirt, and gunshots, and the screens once again go black. When the images return, we see grainy, hand-held footage of the M23 rebels seizing the city of Goma in November 2012, which plays in total silence. A man lifts a sheet that covers a dead body lying in the road, and the images, with one exception, return, once again, to the shot of Lac Vert. On one screen, however, a man walks away from the camera toward the lake and disappears into the water's depths. (As art critic Christy Lange observes, this is the only constructed scene in the film, staged with a friend of the crew.)[12] The screens return the spectator to the view of the lake, and the loop starts anew.

"Kodak on the Congo"[13]

There is nothing new about what *The Enclave* shows us. While the film avoids the tropes of NGO newsletters and sponsor-a-child infomercials, it represents many of the scenarios we have come to expect from contemporary photojournalism. Child soldiers, refugee camps and armed rebel forces are all recognizable subjects within conflict reporting. As Mosse and others have been quick to point out, the international news media has not documented the DRC with the same kind of photographic coverage that was devoted to the Ethiopian famine from 1983 to 1985 or to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Writing in the monograph for Mosse's photographic series *Infra*, historian Adam Hochschild suggested that the lack of visual representations of Congo is due to the mind-boggling scale of the conflict—one in which an estimated thirty thousand children have been conscripted into various fighting forces, more than three hundred thousand women have been raped, and 3.4 million people have been forced to flee their homes, for months or sometimes years.[14] These practices constitute pervasive systems of terror and violence, perpetrated by a constantly shifting cast of antagonists, which are difficult to succinctly and effectively capture in photographs.

But if the DRC is indeed the site of a kind of "invisible violence," as Mosse suggests, it is one that viewers have wilfully made unseeable. There is no shortage of statistics, reports and images about conditions in Congo. One only need look to MONUSCO, a United Nations' peacekeeping mission devoted to stabilizing the political conditions in the DRC, to see hundreds of colour photographs of the same camps, crowds, children and troops that appear in Mosse's film.[15]

What separates Mosse and Tweeten's depiction of Congo from that of MONUSCO is their foregrounding of the performative and the cinematic over reportage and the "straight photography" typically associated with the documentary genre, a distinction reviewers make much of, describing the film as "intent on challenging the orthodoxies of documentary photography"[16] and "redefining the articulation of colour in the genre of war documentary."[17] As the subjects of *The Enclave* ignore, perform for, stare down and refuse the gaze of the floating camera, it is unclear who holds the power in the exchange between subject and photographer, who benefits from this photographic encounter and how much of it is staged, who is directing whom. From Goma in 2012, Mosse wrote to the curator of the Irish Pavilion, Anna O'Sullivan, saying, "I am beginning to perceive this vicious loop of subject and object. The camera provokes an involuntary unraveling, a mutual hijack of authorship and autonomy."[18] It is this tension between the supposedly "artful" style that Mosse and his crew have adopted—one that invites a hijacking of authorship—and the controlled, distanced, black-and-white imagery commonly associated with the documentary genre that so many critics claim is unique to *The Enclave*, no matter how flimsy and historically inaccurate the alleged separation of these two modes might be. Charles Stankievech writes of this opposition between art and documentary, so often mobilized in assessments of Mosse's work:

> The typical typological differences between the documentary image and the art image

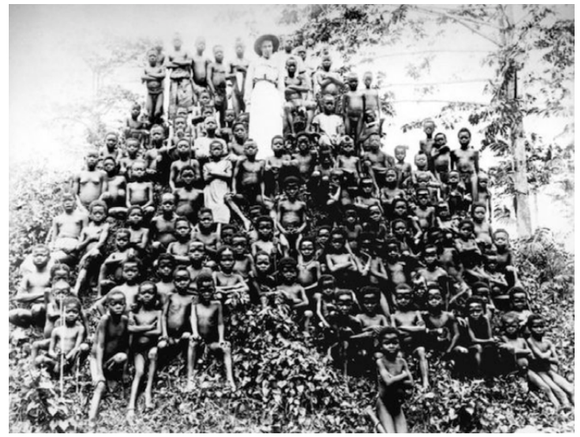
[15] The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). See http://monusco.unmissions.org.
[16] Schuman, "Sublime Proximity": 4.
[17] Remes, "Floating above the Waterline": 4.
[18] Quoted by Anna O'Sullivan, "Curator's Statement," in *The Enclave: Richard Mosse* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2013): 4.
[19] Charles Stankievech, "Piercing the Screen of the Vegetable Kingdom: Remarks on Infrared," in *A Supplement to the Enclave*, ed. John Holten (Berlin: Broken Dimanche Press, 2014): 16.

> are based on boundaries normally drawn between effect/affect or fact/fiction, but this is a misconception that art is more emotional or manipulative than press images or that ideological narratives are the exclusive strategy of propaganda. Both forms of the image can evoke despair or dazzle with spectacle, sublimate into icons or reveal the structure of the everyday.[19]

This distinction between art and documentary styles is not just misconceived, as Stankievech suggests. It is also historically myopic. A cursory glance at Mosse's still imagery from the DRC, shown in exhibitions and reproduced in two books published by Aperture—*Infra* in 2012 and *The Enclave* in 2013—reveals the lasting influence of earlier documentary photographic projects on Mosse's work, in both their evocation of despair and their dazzling spectacle.

The Enclave is, of course, not the first time that Kodak film had been used in Congo in an effort to reveal the conditions there. Between 1902 and 1908, a British missionary, Alice Seeley Harris, produced a series of black-and-white photographs that documented the atrocities being committed in what was then the Congo Free State, "the world's only privately owned colony," established in 1884–85 by King Leopold II of Belgium.[20] Then, as now, Congo's natural resources were being extracted and exported overseas for the profit of another nation. In this case, it was rubber, for an industry that was booming thanks to increased imperial expansion and the invention of the automobile. To extract the greatest amount of rubber in the shortest amount of time, Leopold imposed rubber quotas for Congolese villages. Villagers who failed to meet their daily quotas were subject to severe and inhumane punishment, often being whipped publicly and, in some cases, having their hands or the hands of their children cut off by colonial police.[21] Harris began photographing evidence of the colonial brutality being enacted on the Congolese people, staging confrontational portraits in which adults and children presented their mutilated limbs to

Alice Seeley Harris with a Large Group of Congolese Children, Congo Free State (1904) by J.H. Harris
COURTESY ANTI-SLAVERY INTERNATIONAL AND AUTOGRAPH ABP (LONDON)





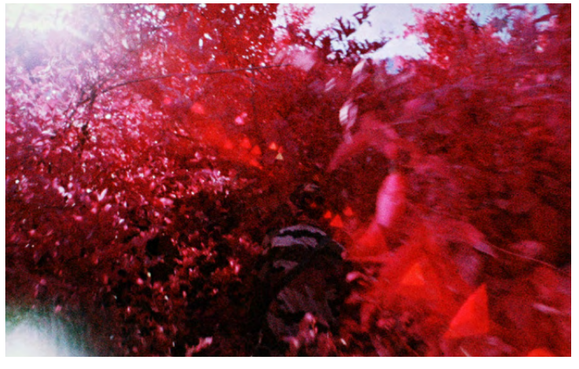












Richard Mosse
Film stills from *The Enclave*
2012–13

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE







Richard Mosse
Above, top: "Of Lillies and Remains"
Above, bottom: "Safe from Harm"
from *Infra*
2012
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK
SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE

Richard Mosse
"Vintage Violence" from *Infra*
2011
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK
SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE

"Untitled" (2011) from *Infra* by Richard Mosse
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK) © RICHARD MOSSE



[20] Hochschild and Mosse, *Infra*: 121.
[21] See Sliwinski, "The Kodak on the Congo: 1904," in *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 57–81.
[22] *Ibid.*: 58.

the camera, their dark skin starkly set against bright white fabric. While these images were reproduced in newspapers and in pamphlets circulated by the Congo Reform Association (CRA)—an organization that was part of the larger anti-colonial Congo reform movement in Britain, which became the largest humanitarian movement in the Victorian era—they were most often seen, throughout the United States and England, as lantern slide lectures that were narrated by Harris herself, who would dramatically detail the atrocities occurring in the Congo Free State in an effort to outrage spectators and incite them to join the CRA's efforts to liberate Congo from Belgian colonial rule.[22]

More than one hundred years later, I cannot help but see echoes of Harris's dramatic, emotionally affective documentary strategies in Mosse's photographs of Congolese subjects. Amid the sweeping, empty landscapes and the posturing machismo of the soldiers and rebels in the photographs in *Infra* are images that eerily resemble those of the Congo Reform Association. Mosse's *Untitled* (2011), for instance, is a closely cropped portrait of a young man facing the camera, his mouth unrecognizably altered, his right hand reaching across his body to touch the place from which his left has been severed. Captions at the back of the monograph tell us this is "a severely disfigured young man in Masisi Central, North Kivu." Though we do not know how he was injured, the man's presentation of his injuries to the camera calls up the long history of photography in making claims for the rights of its subjects—claims that have been made through the use of spectacle, immersion and drama just as often as through the supposedly dry, objective visual language of the documentary.

Likewise, the installation design for *The Enclave* is more familiar than it at first seems. The use of six channels across six screens, set up to block the spectator's view as much as to support the projected images, means that no two viewings of the film are the same. And without the detailed captions that Mosse provides for

[23] *The Enclave: Richard Mosse* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2013): 48. A study of the political economy of Mosse's film and photographs vis-à-vis his publications is sorely needed but unfortunately beyond the purview of this text. While *The Enclave* has been seen by blockbuster-sized crowds at the Venice Biennale and is now on a worldwide tour as an exhibition, Mosse's books have been published in tiny print runs of one thousand copies, with new copies of *Infra* selling for up to $1,700 CAD on eBay. This means that, departing from the customary logic, according to which exhibition catalogues inexpensively make reproductions of the work available to larger audiences and often provide important contextual information for understanding the work, the books themselves have become fetishized as fine-art objects.

the images in his books, it is often impossible to discern whose interests are at play in the scenes depicted. As the exhibition catalogue reveals, for instance, the "community concert" at the centre of the film's narrative arc is not a concert at all, but an M23 propaganda rally, at which children and young women performed while rebel leaders stuffed their pockets with money.[23] We might think of these strategies—withholding some of the contextual information about the images, or making a complete and hermeneutic reading of the artwork impossible in order to foreground the viewer's role in the making of meaning—as uniquely postmodern, but they are also resolutely modern. Walking into *The Enclave* for the first time, I was immediately struck by its resemblance to *The Family of Man*, Edward Steichen's exhibition for the Museum of Modern Art in which photographs by documentary image-makers around the world, with all contextual and captioning information removed from them, were cropped, mounted on panels and suspended from the ceiling in formations not unlike the floor plan of *The Enclave*. The message of Mosse's film is a far cry from Steichen's humanist message for which *The Family of Man* is now infamous: that everyone around the world is born, works and dies and is therefore part of the universal family of man. But it is not inconsequential that Mosse has borrowed a similar mode of presentation for his moving images, nor that his film concludes, and begins again, with footage of a birth and a burial. In other words, the subject matter, stylistic choices and modes of display deployed in *The Enclave* are not radically new or different; indeed, they mimic the universalizing methodology for which Steichen has been so widely criticized. Such strategies should be familiar to an international community of viewers that knows, or should know, that the distinction between artistic and documentary images has always been a fiction.

Chromophobia

The difference here, of course, is that Mosse's images are pink. Though the appearance of pink takes centre stage in every account of *The Enclave*, it is always for the wrong reasons. In the critical writing about colour in Mosse's work, pink is described in language that, according to David Batchelor, characterizes Western attitudes toward colour more generally and expresses an attitude he has described as chromophobia, or the fear of contamination through colour. He writes:

> Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity. More specifically: this purging of colour is usually accomplished in one of two ways. In the first, colour is made out to be the property of some "foreign" body—usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. In one, colour is regarded as alien and therefore dangerous; in the other, it is perceived merely as a secondary quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration. Colour is dangerous, or it is trivial, or it is both. (It is typical of prejudices to conflate the sinister and the superficial.)[24]

Reviews of *The Enclave*, describing Aerochrome's pink hues as either dangerous (fevered, narcotic, psychedelic, lurid), trivial (artificial, flashy, flamboyant, frivolous) or both, read like a litany of symptoms of chromophobia. These, of course, are also the words employed in colonial writing to describe exotic and primitive cultures, a similarity that is unsurprising, considering the film's debut at the Venice Biennale—an event that purports to encapsulate and present national cultures to visitors in an encyclopedic overview every two years.

For all this fixation on the colour pink, however, there are other colours in Mosse's work that viewers tend not to see. Yes, *The Enclave* is pink, and this pinkness appears in many shades: crim-



"General Février" (2011) from *Infra* by Richard Mosse
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE

son, red, magenta, rose, lavender and lilac. But it is also brown. *The Enclave*'s invitation to, even seduction of, the viewer to look—to notice and take visual pleasure in the different ways Aerochrome registers the natural environment—also beckons us to see the many shades of skin captured by the film. The skin that appears on-screen is not just black—as a 170-year racist legacy of photographic representation has taught us to perceive racial difference—but is registered in a spectrum of colours. These differentiations, and the shift of colour from "natural" to "non-natural" in Mosse's images, remind us of photography's long-standing role in constructing race as a category of natural, visible, classifiable, *coloured* difference, and in determining what both blackness and whiteness look like. It is a legacy in which Kodak, in particular, has played a defining role, using a white model for its test images for its colour Ektachrome film in order to calibrate skin tones, thereby effectively making it impossible for darker skin tones to register in photographs.[25] (Jean-Luc Godard famously refused to use Kodak film in Mozambique, declaring it "racist" because of the way in which it had been calibrated.[26]) In Mosse's work, however, it is white skin that is rendered invisible. Although a few images of white subjects appear in the *Infra* series, including a portrait of the crew on site in the DRC, these images do not appear in the final film. Mosse at one point even goes so far as to say that an image of Frost recording the sounds of the funeral attendees who appear in the climax of the film, accidentally captured by Tweeten's camera, appears alien: "Because of the way the film depicts white skin, [he] actually rather looked like an alien."[27] It is in these moments of confusion, of refusing to see what is right in front of us, that *The Enclave* seems to have the potential to shake loose some of the ways in which we think we know the world through photography. By turning the world pink, Mosse's photographs raise the question of whether, rather than colour itself, it is the performance of masculine bravado, of posing and play, the looks of confrontation and defiance, and the spectacle of black death at the side of the road, that we have learned to categorize as racial difference. This is, of course, a gendered categorization that obscures other kinds of difference, and its attendant violence. The hundreds of thousands of women who are subjected to mass rape and sexual violence in the DRC do not appear as photographable subjects in Mosse's extensive visual narrative. If there is an "invisible violence" taking place in Congo, it is undeniably directed at women.

That the subjects of colonialism and race are absent from so much writing about *The Enclave* is not just an omission or oversight. The proximity of visual pleasure, race and (post-)colonial violence clearly troubles viewers. Critics' insistence that the war in the DRC is so complex that it is incomprehensible is likewise a rejection of the difficult knowledge that MONUSCO's reports,

[24] Batchelor, *Chromophobia*: 22–23.
[25] Lorna Roth, "Looking at Shirley, the Ultimate Norm: Colour Balance, Image Technologies, and Cognitive Equity," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 34 (2009): 111–36.
[26] See Sean O'Toole, "Yes, but (Some Thoughts on Broomberg and Chanarin's New Work)," Gallery TPW, http://gallerytpw.ca/publications/pdf/RD-02Broomberg-Chanarin.pdf. Accessed August 31, 2015.

and Mosse's images, might offer us. But this is not a conflict we can so easily push away. It is one in which, as contemporary viewers, we are directly implicated. The mountains in South Kivu that form the backdrop to Mosse's film and constitute the overwhelming subjects of his psychedelic landscape photographs are the site of huge deposits of rare minerals, including wolframite, cassiterite and coltan, materials that are essential in the construction of mobile phones, smart phones and computers.[28] The DRC alone holds 64 per cent of the world's reserves of coltan.[29] (This might explain Mosse's somewhat fetishistic relationship to a discontinued form of analogue film, which necessitates that he produce his work in the same conditions used by nineteenth-century survey photographers, who carried with them cumbersome large-format cameras and tripods, and sometimes even portable developing rooms, in order to be able to complete their work. His devotion to analogue film required that the film canisters be changed in a dark bag in the back of a Jeep. Moreover, the 16mm Aerochrome film, now ten years expired, is so unstable that Mosse and his crew had to haul it around in coolers to prevent it from degrading in the heat.[30])

In reviewers' obsession with the beauty that is produced in Mosse's pink landscapes, I read a displacement—an inability to see or to reckon with the histories of race, colonization and global capital that have produced conditions of perpetual war in the DRC, and terror at the possibility that we might see these conditions and still take pleasure in visually consuming them.

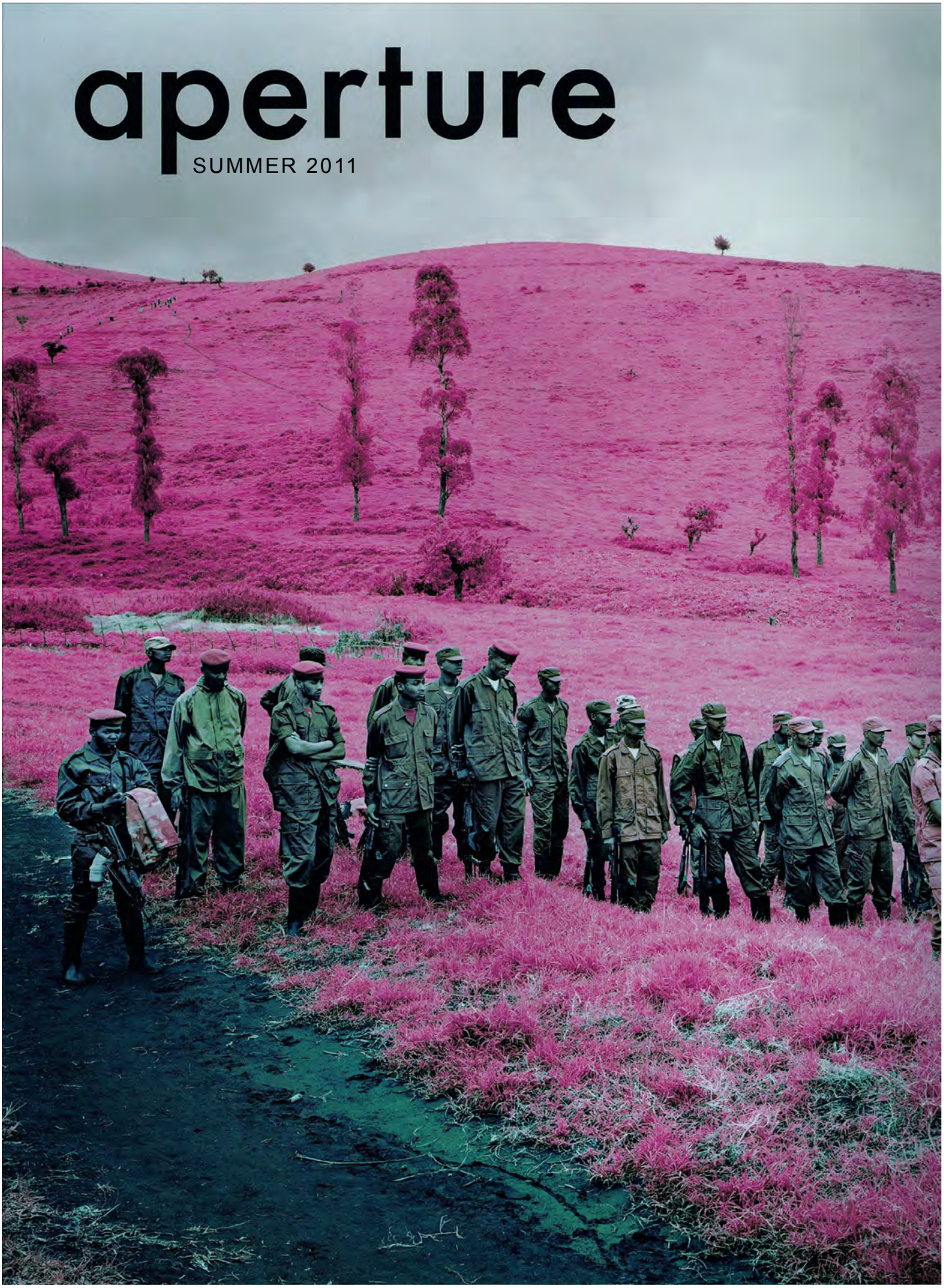
For their thoughts and feedback on the ideas in this essay, the author thanks Michèle Pearson Clarke, Benjamin D. Hunter, Yaniya Lee, Erin Silver and Charles Stankievech.

[27] Mosse, in "A Conversation between Richard Mosse and Ben Frost": 14.
[28] Rebecca Horne, "Kodak's Cold War-Era, Pink-Saturated, Camouflage-Detecting Film," *Discover Science Magazine*, April 20, 2012, http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/visualscience/2012/04/20/kodaks-cold-war-era-pink-saturated-camouflage-detecting-film/#.VageuLcbYcM. Accessed July 16, 2015.
[29] Willy Staley, "The Color of War," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 16, 2012: 51(L).
[30] "A Conversation between Richard Mosse and Trevor Tweeten": 12.

Chromophobie : Race, couleur et plaisir visuel dans *The Enclave* de Richard Mosse

Depuis sa première présentation publique lors de la 55e Biennale de Venise en 2013, l'installation vidéo de Richard Mosse, *The Enclave* (2013), s'est mérité une grande attention critique pour son illustration remarquable de la région est de la République démocratique du Congo dans des tons de rose vif — l'effet de l'utilisation d'une pellicule infrarouge de surveillance discontinuée, l'Aerochrome, pour documenter un conflit en cours dans la région. Scrutant l'installation de Mosse et les photographies qui l'accompagnent, Gabrielle Moser examine la fonction critique de la couleur dans ce travail et analyse les manières dont *The Enclave* puise dans ses prédécesseurs historiques, tout en s'en écartant, pour dépeindre des corps radicalisés et la violence coloniale.

Schuman, Aaron. “Sublime Proximity: In Conversation with Richard Mosse.” Aperture Magazine, no. 203 (Summer 2011).



SUBLIME PROXIMITY

A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD MOSSE

INTERVIEW WITH AARON SCHUMAN

Over the course of the last seven years, Irish photographer Richard Mosse has photographed postwar ruins in the former Yugoslavia, cities devastated by earthquake in Iran, Pakistan, and Haiti, the occupied palaces of Saddam Hussein, airport emergency-training simulators, the rusting wreckage of remote air disasters, nomadic rebels in the Congolese jungle, and more. Reading through his catalog of subject matter, one could easily assume that Mosse is an inveterate photojournalist in the most traditional sense, chasing hard facts in order to illustrate breaking news. Yet through his work—generally photographed in large format and presented large scale, with a penchant for the staggering, the allusive, the historical, and the Sublime—Mosse is revealed as a practitioner intent on challenging the orthodoxies of documentary photography, in particular the contexts, imperatives, and "responsibilities" that are often both assumed by and imposed upon the documentary genre, and indeed upon the photographic medium as a whole.

—A.S.

AARON SCHUMAN: How did you first become interested in photography?

RICHARD MOSSE: I come from a family of artists. My grandfather was a sculptor, my uncle is a painter, and my mother studied at Cooper Union in New York under Hans Haacke, so becoming an artist was very natural. My parents are potters, and photography seemed like a kind of antidote to that. Its light-sensitive simulation is at a far remove from ceramics, so I took to it at an early age. Shards of pottery that were formed from earth by hand will outlive us all, unlike photographs, which will perish in the sunlight that they once traced. Photography allowed me to be an artist without working in anyone's shadow. That's especially the case in Ireland where the medium is not so celebrated, in spite of seminal work by Willie Doherty, Paul Seawright, Donovan Wylie, and others.





Initially I was drawn to cinema as a teenager, and became obsessed with the French New Wave. But I found the military-style hierarchy of working in a film crew unsatisfying, so I gave up filmmaking and concentrated on my degree in English literature. I dug deeper into a career in academia, getting a master's degree in cultural studies at a left-field institution called the London Consortium—a research body formed in the interstices between the University of London, Tate, the Institute of Contemporary Art, and the Architectural Association. Studying there gave me the freedom to integrate my own photographs into a written examination of the postwar Balkan landscape, and things evolved from there.

AS: How did that academic experience influence your subsequent pursuit of photography?

RM: I think it's important that photography is cut through with other disciplines and a wider understanding of the world. Though I loved spending my days in the university's library, a life in academia seemed removed from lived experience. I wanted to be a maker rather than a critic, a producer rather than a consumer. Photography is an engagement with the world of things, and it has given me a genuine pretext to travel widely and experience what James Joyce called "good warm life." I'm most excited when there's an elision of the critical and the creative in my work, so I haven't discarded my academic foundations. Instead I try to build on them.

AS: The first time we corresponded, in 2003, you quoted Sol LeWitt: "When words such as *painting* and *sculpture* are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a consequent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on the artist who would be reluctant to make art that goes beyond limitations." You then wrote: "Yet I've always insisted on using photography. I think something is about to shift." Has this "shift" occurred yet—for you, or for photography in general?



RM: At the time I wrote that, I was working at *Art Monthly*, a British art magazine. I wasn't yet fully practicing as an artist. I was the listings editor, consuming gallery press releases all day long—the best art education possible. Sol LeWitt's statement now seems slightly tautological. Perhaps a better quote to answer your question might be from Robert Adams: "Photographers have generally been held to a different set of responsibilities than have painters and sculptors, chiefly because of the widespread supposition the photographers want to and can give us objective Truth: the word 'documentary' has abetted the prejudice. But does a photographer really have less right to arrange life into a composition, into form, than a painter or sculptor?"

Where LeWitt uses the word *traditions*, Adams says *responsibilities*. How much more limiting are your traditions when they are saturated with a moral imperative? The photographer is expected to be "responsible," but responsible to whom? Documentary photographers whose work bears some relation to photojournalism are particularly constrained. Their expressive arteries have been hardened by years of World Press Photo Awards and the shadow of the intrepid photojournalist sporting a scarf and a Leica. Where would we be if Robert Frank had hidden his Leica in a scarf?

PAGES 52–53: ***Colonel Soleil's Boys, North Kivu, Eastern Congo*****, 2010; OPPOSITE:** ***747 Heathrow*****, 2008; THIS PAGE:** ***Grand Voyager Sunni Triangle*****, 2009.**

AS: So do you see your work as part of an evolution of photojournalism? And if so, when you find yourself at a hotel bar in Baghdad or Beirut, surrounded by traditional photojournalists, what discussions take place? I know that you've got the dusty, weathered boots . . . surely you must have a scarf and a Leica in your wardrobe somewhere as well?

RM: I found myself in Haiti this spring, shooting for a news magazine. It was my first editorial commission, and I ended

up back at the hotel bar each night deeply confused, trying to reconcile my instincts with what I felt was expected of me by the editors. Two photojournalists—Jake Price and Scout Tufankjian—rallied to my side. They pointed out that the editors only wanted me to do exactly what I do; they wouldn't have hired me otherwise. It was so simple, but I couldn't see that without their help. I find working alongside photojournalists can be very inspiring. They work incredibly hard and are deeply committed. They also make excellent drinking partners.

AS: How do you decide upon your subject matter—is it driven by research and theory, which then leads to a search for the physical manifestations of your underlying idea in the real world, or vice versa?

RM: My process is very intuitive. The idea must come first, but the process of making the work becomes a pursuit of that idea—a "quest," or more usually a kind of staggering picaresque narrative. My journeys are often very problematic, unplanned, and full of failure. For example, earlier this year I wanted to use a highly unstable infrared film technology as a way of thinking through the conflict in Congo. My concept was very raw and underdeveloped. Embarking upon the journey, I found myself challenged in many ways, not least because I had no knowledge of moving through this difficult land, and no experience of using this type of film. I was dealing with the unknown, negotiating my own ignorance. Since infrared light is invisible to the human eye, you could say that I was literally photographing blind. As soon as I arrived in Congo I had crossed a threshold into fiction, into my own symbolic order. Yet I was trying to represent something that is tragically real—an entrenched and endless conflict fought in a jungle by nomadic rebels of constantly shifting allegiances.

The actual situation that I discovered in Congo became folded into the initial idea, and I began to find ways to interpret what I encountered on my journey through this conceptual, logistical, and technical precariousness. Over time, these failures became synthesized into a kind of epiphany. I had privately reached a kind of messianic state where I could no longer perceive the absurdity of my task. So the research and theory adhere to, and become ramified by, an initial driving intuition.

AS: Your work bears more than a slight resemblance to artistic movements that directly preceded the invention of photography, such as Romanticism and history painting. These movements were eventually overtaken by Realism in the nineteenth century, and photography—as both a technology and medium—seems to have, until recently, been aligned more with Realism than with Romanticism. Do you think that a Romantic approach to photography is appropriate within contemporary practice?

RM: Photographic realism has become so inscribed upon twentieth-century depictions of war that we often forget that there were other forms before it: the panorama, the history painting, even 3-D spectroscopic views of the battlefield. In the past, this is how the public understood their wars—as distant, sweeping landscapes of enormous scale and detail. I feel that early war photographers like Mathew Brady and Roger Fenton were influenced by these precedents. But they were soon forgotten with small-format technologies, and with changes in the way that wars were fought during the twentieth century. Warfare is constantly evolving; it has recently become abstracted, asymmetric, simulated. We are so removed from the experience of war in the West that I feel the genre may shift once more. The realist forms that were so powerful throughout the twentieth century may now be obsolescent.

In my practice, I struggle with the challenge of representing abstract or contingent phenomena. The camera's dumb optic is intensely literal, yet the world is far from being simple or transparent. Air disasters, terrorism, the simulated nature of modern warfare, the cultural interface between an occupying force and its enemy, the martyr drive in Islamic extremism, the intangibility of Eastern Congo's conflict—these are all subjects that are very difficult to express with traditional documentary realism; they are difficult to perceive in their own right. Very often I am fighting simply to *represent* the subject, just to find a way to put it before the lens, or make it visible by its very absence. This process is inherently "Romantic" because it often requires a retreat into my own imagination, into my own symbolic order.

But the real is central to my interests, as it's something that eludes conventional genres, particularly Realism. The real is at the heart of contemporary global anxiety; proximity to the real is endured by us all. But I feel that the real is only effectively communicated through shocks to the imagination, precipitated by the Sublime. That may seem like an archaic term, but what I'm referring to here is contemporary art's unique ability to make visible what cannot be perceived, breaching the limits of representation.

AS: When you first arrive at a location—a U.S. military base, a Congolese village, etcetera—and explain your intentions, what's the response?

RM: I'm always surprised by how generous people are when they encounter my photographic handicap, the view camera. The people on the ground who watch me set up my tripod and unfold my bellows are generally more aware of the significance of my subject than I am. The problems are usually encountered further up the line, with press officers, spokesmen, lawyers, corrupt officials, red tape. My journeys occasionally lead me into abject situations and *Groundhog Day*–style cul-de-sacs. For example, on a recent trip to



Ethiopia my guide got us lost on the Eritrean border, a recent war zone. Our vehicle's four-wheel-drive malfunctioned, and the engine overheated constantly. The driver stopped every half-hour to pour tinned tomato purée into the radiator to cool it down. Then we were tricked by Afar tribesmen with Kalashnikovs into taking the wrong road, which we traveled for days, ending up in a refugee camp. My crew feared potential intertribal violence so we decided to sleep in the police station. When we finally approached our destination, the Land Cruiser's tires got stuck in the desert sand, the seven armed guards who were traveling with us started to fight with the cook, the driver fell asleep, and our guide began to pray. I had to dig the vehicle out of the sand. We never reached our destination. It was an invigorating jaunt, but not a sustainable way of life.

AS: In the past two decades, there has been a wave of what is often referred to as "aftermath" photography. Would you regard your own work as a part of this movement?

RM: Aftermath photography took everything interesting about the New Topographics and turned it into a movie set. Thankfully, there's a place for these photographers . . . it's called Detroit.

AS: But how do you differentiate your images of Iraqi or Serbian ruins from those of the many photographers who have flocked to Detroit or post-Katrina New Orleans to photograph debris with heavy tripods and large-format cameras?

RM: Guilty as charged. Although even if some of my work is similar in form to aftermath photography, I do feel there is a distinct difference in both my approach and intent.

For the Romantic poets, the *ruin* carried tremendous allegorical power, and that power resounds today in contemporary photography. Perhaps the ruin's absent totality signifies something very different to us now than it did back then—its timeless resonance shifts for each generation. Nevertheless, we are still drawn to the same imagery that Caspar David Friedrich was. I'm not so sure that we're always honest with ourselves about this fascination.

The thing that strikes me about a lot of aftermath photography is the moral high ground that the photographers often take. Their journey into darkness becomes a kind of "performance of the ethical"; witnessing the catastrophe becomes an act of piety, of *noblesse oblige*, when in fact it's nothing of the sort. I would imagine that most aftermath photography is really just an artist's quest to find meaning and authenticity through extreme tourism. I'm reminded of the *poète maudit*, the Romantic antihero who will go to the ends of the earth and transgress all moral boundaries for the ultimate aesthetic experience. This irresponsible, self-destructive rogue was best embodied in the crapulent, wayward lives of artists like Arthur Rimbaud or Paul Gauguin. The "responsibilities" that

***Curtiss Commando Patagonia*, November 2008.**

Robert Adams complained about, abetted by the documentary, seem to preclude the *maudit* in photography.

AS: Is the notion of "spectacle" important to you?

RM: Last summer I found myself trespassing in an abandoned, war-damaged hotel near Dubrovnik. I tinkered about this Brutalist ruin with my camera, finding various Yugoslav relics from 1991, the year that the hotel became a front line in the fighting between Serb snipers and Croat militias. Then, as I was making my way through the wreckage, I noticed a modern cruise ship anchored in the nearby waters. This huge luxury vessel mirrored the hotel in form; the parallel between the two vast structures was uncanny, and I began to think about their relationship. Placed alongside each other, what sort of dialogue did they open up? The cruise ship, I reasoned, is an unmoored signifier of globalization par excellence, its tourists comfortably numb within their air-conditioned matrix, blissfully ignorant of the traces of war facing them on the cliff. The ruined hotel, on the other hand, spoke of local tribal enmities, of painful regional memories, of conflict and war. I meandered to the conclusion that perhaps war is the only remaining hurdle standing in the way of global amnesia; perhaps war is the only thing that redeems historical narratives in the face of this leveling of identity.

These thoughts followed me back to New York, where I developed the rolls of film that I'd shot in Croatia. On my contact sheets I discovered one image depicting shattered mirrored steps, broken beer bottles, fake flowers, and a hangman's noose on a dusty ballroom floor. This photograph seemed to mock my fallacious theory about war, memory, and the consequences of globalization. I'd dreamed that the evocative ruin represented an alternative to the society of the spectacle—that I'd trespassed in the forbidden wreckage of the real. I flattered that afternoon's adventure as some sort of original transgression of the spectacular. But the souvenir document that I'd returned with reminded me that the hotel's bombed-out ballrooms were also the occasional haunt of local ravers. International DJs come with smoke machines and strobe lights and use the place as an exotic live venue, appropriating its authentic war remnants as a stage for hipsters to celebrate their alienation.

I was reminded of Guy Debord's words. The spectacle, he writes, "is the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory." ◆



***Pool at Uday's Palace*, 2009.**

All photographs © Richard Mosse, courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Biswas, Allie. "Seeing Red, Richard Mosse on blurring the lines between art and reportage." *Glass Magazine*. Fall 2016: pp. 146-151, illustrated.

Seeing Red

Richard Mosse on blurring the lines between art and reportage

Richard Mosse came to international attention five years ago, barely thirty years old, with his series of large-scale photographs entitled *Infra*, detailing the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo., These striking images, which depicted uniformed soldiers and luscious natural landscapes, were even more compelling due to their psychedelic, almost lurid, colours. Mosse created this unexpected palette by using an obsolete infrared surveillance film, originally intended for the purpose of carrying out aerial vegetation surveys and identifying camouflaged targets within military contexts. The film renders green matter (grass, hills, plants) into hot pinks and crimson reds, making Mosse's version of a warscape unlike anything that had come before, presenting conflict with a curious, new perspective. Besides capturing the ongoing war between rebel factions and the Congolese national army in the DRC, Mosse has travelled extensively around the world to photograph the wonder and tragedy of destruction, from remote, abandoned plane wrecks, to the former palaces of Uday and Saddam Hussein. Irish-born, New York-based Mosse is the winner of the 2014 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize and in 2015 became a nominee member of Magnum Photos, the legendary international documentary photography co-operative.

When did you first start taking photos?

When I was about ten years old. I was given a simple point and click camera and graduated to the Olympus OM-1, my mother's old camera, when I was about 14.

What or who were your sources and inspirations at that time?

I grew up in a very artistically-oriented household. My folks would host artists showing at the nearby kunsthalle in Kilkenny city, the Butler Gallery. We had some extraordinary artists passing through and staying with us. Some of the people I remember visiting back in those days are Christian Boltanski, Bill Woodrow, James Turrell, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Richard Long, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Richard Wilson, Andy Goldsworthy, David Nash, Barrie Cooke, and others.

Your parents also trained as artists, didn't they?

My father is a potter and my mother studied under Hans Haacke [a highly influential German modern artist] at Cooper Union. My grandfather was a sculptor who trained at the Slade, and was a friend of Roland Penrose and Lee Miller, as well as Henry Moore. My uncle is an abstract expressionist painter, although some of his recent paintings have become so big that they have turned into sculptures. My mother turned to gardening and we got an EU grant when I was about six years old to restore our home, which was an old Romantic-era historic garden dating back to the 1790s. That's where my mother still lives. It was a nice place to grow up. I guess all this took its toll.

After studying English at King's College London, you took a postgraduate diploma in Fine Art at Goldsmiths. Was it during this time that you started thinking about war, destruction and catastrophe as part of your practice, taking these themes as primary references in your work?

At Goldsmiths I remember making some bizarre art to do with the photos of torture victims from Abu Ghraib [a US prison in Iraq during the second Gulf war], which were leaked in the *New Yorker* around that time. I went up the Edgware Road [in West London], where London's Iraqi community live, with a choke chain around my neck, asking Iraqi shopkeepers to tug the chain and choke me. I had a friend come along to

All images courtesy of Richard Mosse and Jack Shainman Gallery



Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams, Congo, 2012

photograph this. They all said 'no' of course, except for a teenager who was filling in for his dad behind the counter of a newsagent. He gave the chain a tug and choked me nicely. It's a very odd photograph.

But I was making art about conflict years before, having started documenting the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars around 2001. I was particularly interested in the missing persons crisis – all these people who had disappeared several years ago, who had never come home, and who were probably buried in various mass graves that had still not been uncovered or located. I found this particularly challenging as there was a basic problem of representation – you can't see someone who has disappeared, therefore you can't photograph them. So you're trying to take a photo of an absence. That got me thinking, and I turned it into my MA thesis at the London Consortium, thinking about this in relation to the sublime. It turned out that my work in the Congo operates using the very same principles, trying to document traces of something hidden. I keep bumping into this in my practice.

> In tense places, it pays to move fairly quickly, as you tend to *stick out* like a sore thumb.

What did you make for your thesis show at Goldsmiths?

It included a video I made in Gaza and the West Bank, where I asked students at Bir Zeit University [a non-governmental public university in the Palestinian West bank] to tell me what the word 'intifada' means. Back then we heard the word constantly on the news, but we never stopped to ask ourselves what the word actually means. Turns out it has many meanings. Some of them are quite everyday or domestic, like 'shaking the dust out of a carpet', for example. Arabic is a very poetic language.

How did your work develop afterwards at Yale, where you studied photography?

At Yale I worked tirelessly. I think I must have cranked out about twelve projects in two years. One of them was about photographing the traces of illegal immigrants coming across the US–Mexico border. Some of the things I photographed were concrete evidence of illegal crossings, but a lot of what I photographed was just bric-a-brac that got my imagination fired up. That seemed to tell the story better, so I guess this was an important step for me into fiction, as well as the powerful blurry area between fiction and documentary.

You gained representation from the respected New York gallery Jack Shainman in the same year that you received your MFA. How did you manage this very quick transition?

I was completely surprised to get Jack's attention. I was incredibly lucky to get into one of the city's top galleries right out of college, especially considering how interesting the other artists in Jack's stable are. A lot of those premium galleries are rather sterilised and lifeless but Jack Shainman Gallery is a living organism and I feel like all of his artists are still growing in very interesting ways.

One of the earliest exhibitions you presented was *The Fall* (2008–9), which featured photographs of extremely remote aeroplane crash sites, with often partially disintegrated wrecks disappearing into an uninhabited landscape. What was it that drew you to investigating such terrains?

This body of work evolved from a previous series that I had made at Yale called *Airside* – photographs of air disaster simulators in various disaster training sites around the world. In *Airside* I was interested in the imaginary spectacle and simulation of the air disaster, while in *The Fall* I wanted to look at the final resting places of antique aircraft, long forgotten. I suppose they are both aspects of the same project, and are quite sci-fi in their own way. *The Fall* is really about the landscape, about a return to the wilderness, a kind of post-apocalyptic sublime. It was a great journey locating these wrecks. There is a whole community of air wreck hunters online.

In early 2009 you visited Iraq and photographed the palaces of Saddam Hussein, which were at that point being used as temporary housing by the US military. What were your expectations, assuming that you had already seen images of the palaces?



747 Schiphol, 2007



727 San Bernardino, 2007

I hadn't actually seen the palaces comprehensively photographed. I may be wrong, but I don't believe that any photographer had really done the story justice at that stage. I had read about these palaces in an article by Jon Lee Anderson in the *New Yorker* and we met up after he gave a lecture in Ireland, which provided me with a little more info. *Breach* (2009) documents Saddam Hussein's palace architecture under US military occupation. Iraq's former dictator had around 84 imperial palace compounds throughout Iraq, many of which he never visited, but which were seen by Iraqis as expressions of his immanence and proximity. They were designed to instil fear. Because of their strategic location, they were attractive to the US army as bases to garrison troops, especially in densely populated urban centres where they featured multiple layers of defensive walls, sentry towers, and sometimes even moats. The inner palace architecture was usually vast and grandiose, featuring ballrooms and ceremonial halls designed to impress, yet was often poorly built, with salinated foundations, for example, or cement painted to look like marble. Occupying US forces brought their own forms of provisional architecture into these spaces, such as office partition walls, air conditioning units, gym equipment and sandbags. The resulting imagery is an incongruent blend of architectural forms, a sort of palimpsest of power and occupation.

In making this work, I wanted to evoke older, even mythic themes of bygone empires. There's a fairly well known poem by PB Shelley called *Ozymandias*,



Foyer at Uday's Palace, Iraq, 2009

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies…

I think that poem gets at what attracted me to this story. My work in Iraq was very much a snapshot of recent history but it was also layered with the thing that attracted the Romantics to ancient ruins:



Gym at Al Faw Palace, Iraq, 2009

how they foretell our own decline. My approach as a photographer was to try to portray my subject prosaically, to allow the subject's poetry to emerge in its own right, through juxtaposition and detail.

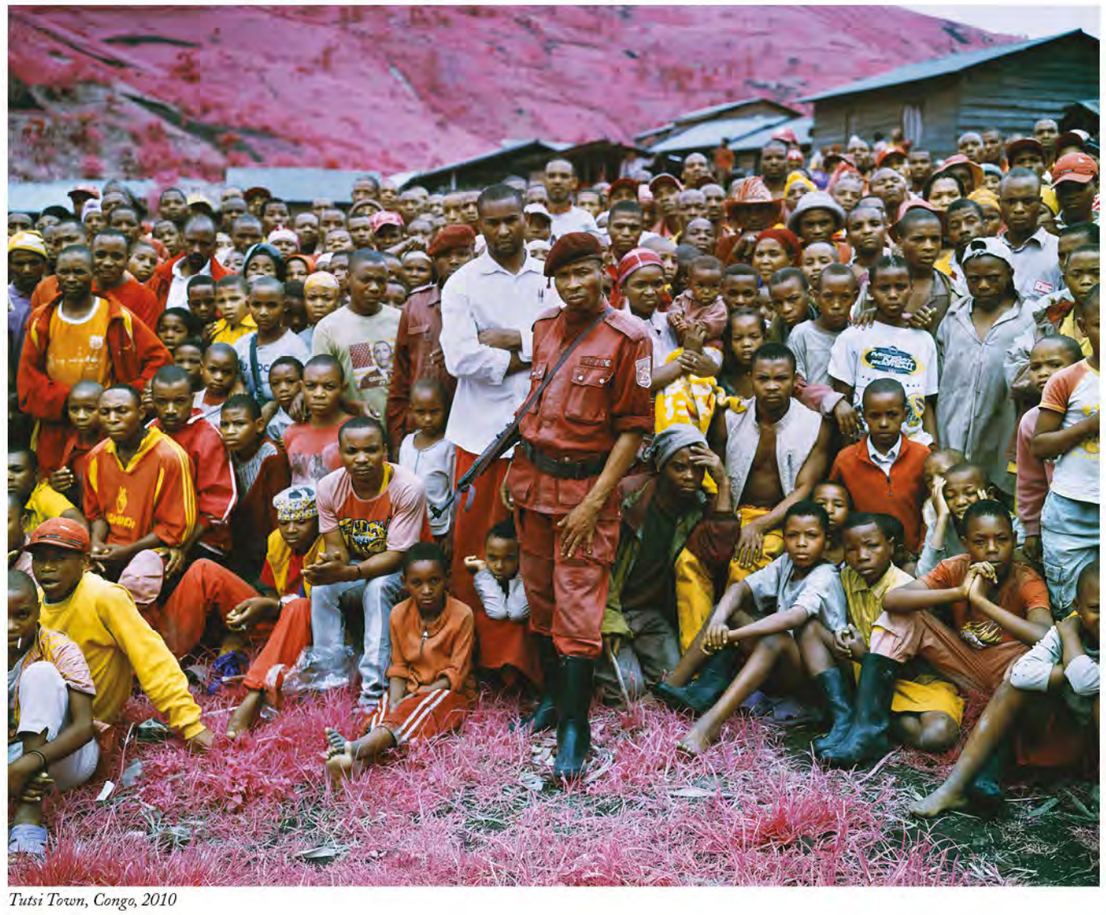
The *Infra* series from 2010–11 introduced your usage of Kodak Aerochrome, which made colour such a central part of the image. Did this series change the way you approach taking photos and did aesthetics begin to play a more significant role?

Aesthetics, yes. But I guess a more overtly conceptual approach becomes more integrated too. In other words, it wasn't just an attempt to create beautiful or sublime photographs, but to use them as part of a larger strategy, folding aesthetics along with the history of photography and an investigation into the medium as a way of finding a more powerful way of expressing difficult narratives. It was in order to tell a deeper, more complex story. So it's not aesthetics for its own sake. It's aesthetics that becomes a means to an end.

> After Iraq, I became quite *lost* as an artist, which is always a good place to be.

What tends to be your immediate response when you get to the site you are photographing? Is there a particular routine that you follow or, given the locations you travel to, does a lot of it depend on what you are allowed to do, or what is safe?

If there is any risk involved, that is certainly a factor in how I would respond. For example, if there's an angry mob, that can be a very dangerous thing. Crowds can get out of hand very quickly. I always err on the side of caution. Portraits often require a certain level of human civility – a handshake or an introduction. The same goes for contested sites. It usually pays to make sure you have permission. When you can't get it, that's when you have to steal a photograph by hook or by crook. In tense places, it pays to move fairly quickly, as you tend to stick out like a sore thumb. So it is often a good idea to get the shot and keep moving. However, many of my photographs are not taken in such tense situations, and I have a little time to walk around the subject and to feel it out. Sometimes I return weeks later after dreaming about it for a little. I often miss shots, which makes me kick myself, but over time you learn to let things go. It's part of the game.



Tutsi Town, Congo, 2010



Everything Merges with the Night, 2015

Your recent show at The School, in Kinderhook, New York, offered a short survey of your work to date. How did you go about compiling the images for this display, and what does it signify to you?

I wanted to show a selection of works that I had made prior to my series in the Congo, in order to make it clear where the work had come out of. My work in Iraq, made in 2009, had a very interesting subject – the US Army's occupation of Saddam Hussein's palaces – which was quite clear. I felt the subject required a more prosaic approach. Yet while I travelled through Iraq, it happened to be the season for dust storms. These dust storms had a very peculiar effect on the quality of light in the Iraqi desert. As a photographer, you become sensitive to the white balance of different qualities of light. Daylight is actually rather blue. Lamplight is really rather red. Fluorescent bulbs are quite green. During a dust storm these rules go out of the window. The sunlight has to penetrate thick layers of dust carried in the atmosphere, filtering it from bluish light to blood red. The resulting imagery, shot with daylight balanced film, seemed completely otherworldly. I found these photographs haunting and expressive. It felt like working in a whole new register.

After Iraq, I became quite lost as an artist, which is always a good place to be. It was a confusing time. I had grown tired of my chosen genre, tired of myself really. I wished documentary photography could be more expressive. The world, I thought to myself, doesn't need another large format photograph of an abandoned place.

These ideas took some time to gather momentum, but they evolved into a very incongruous and eccentric approach to war photography in my Congo project, which began in 2010. In spite of the difference between these two bodies of work – from hyperfocal to expressive, from prosaic to romantic – they are both concerned with conflict's trace on the landscape and on the built environment. In selecting works for my show at The School, I wanted to give the viewer a chance to see this trajectory, my journey as an artist from here to there.

Would you say that this exhibition is also a kind of full stop in relation to the Congo project?

I saw it as a chance to try to make a final conclusive statement in my work on the Congo. Since so many of my landscape photos in Congo map sites of massacres or human rights abuses, I wanted to end the journey on a positive note, to say something optimistic about this beautiful country. So for my last photograph, *Everything Merges with the Night*, I travelled to a peaceful place, a serenely beautiful valley that was once dangerous prior to 2004, but which, in recent memory, has been safe and secure. I wanted to show the country's extraordinary beauty and its future potential for tourism, if and when the conflict ends. To give the viewer space to reflect on that emphasis, I installed this piece at an extraordinary scale, 14 × 24 feet. At that scale, the image seems monumental, of course, but right for the space in which it is installed, and there's a wealth of detail that almost seems to become abstracted when enlarged to this level. You can literally get lost in the undergrowth.

– By Allie Biswas



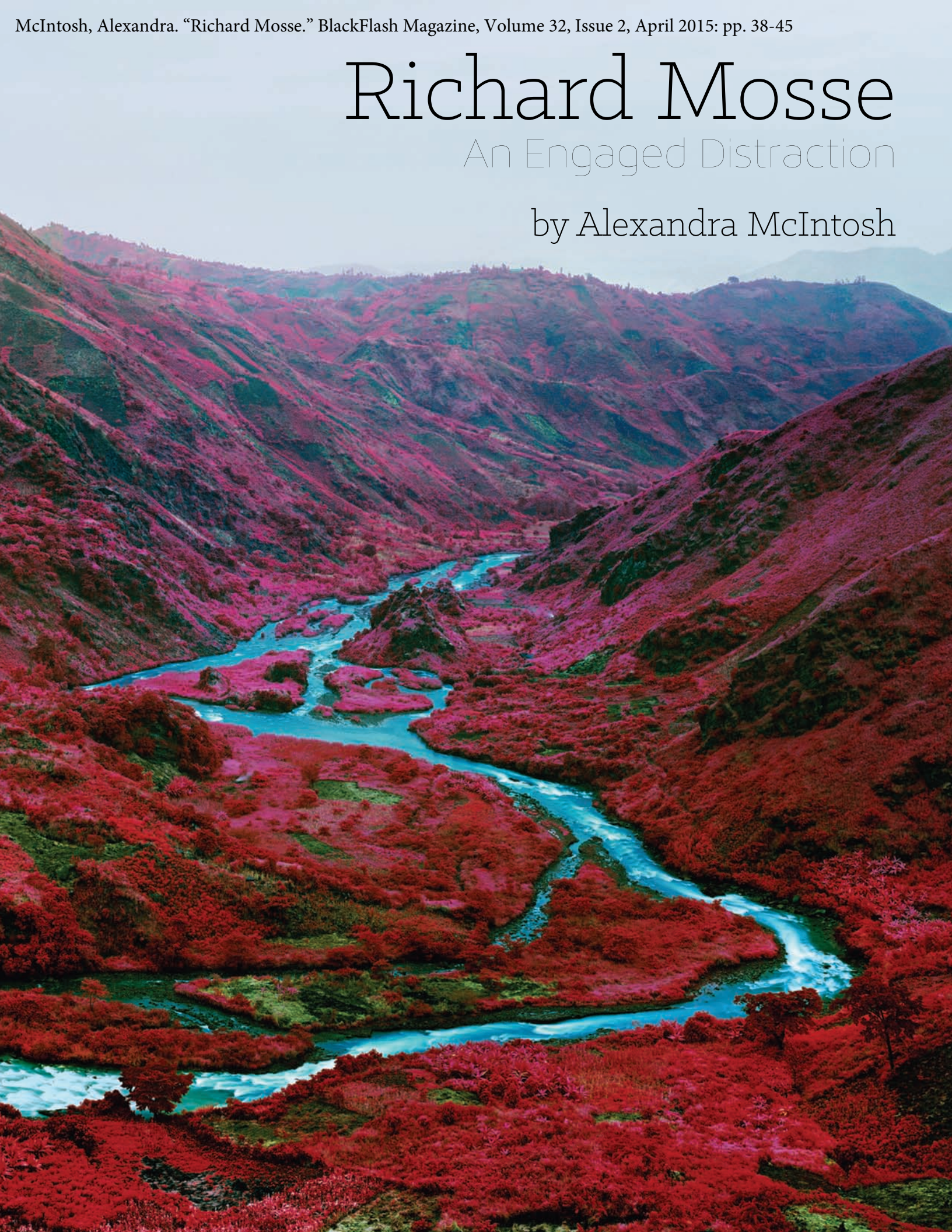
Space Wagon Mosul, Iraq, 2009

McIntosh, Alexandra. “Richard Mosse.” BlackFlash Magazine, Volume 32, Issue 2, April 2015: pp. 38-45

Richard Mosse

An Engaged Distraction

by Alexandra McIntosh





Previous page: Richard Mosse, *Love Is The Drug*, 2012, digital chromogenic print, 279 x 535 cm, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. **Left:** *Madonna and Child*, 2012, digital chromogenic print. 152 x 122 cm, image courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, Burning in Water / Free Arts NYC collection.

The history of the Democratic Republic of Congo over the past 500 years encompasses everything from slavery and colonization by a megalomaniacal king to military coups, dictatorships, multi-year civil wars and a CIA assassination plot, not to mention the incessant extraction of the country's vast mineral resources by and to the benefit of foreign interests.

Irish artist Richard Mosse first travelled to the eastern Congo in 2010. Over three years of research, documentation, and travel in the region he completed two major works, the photographic series "Infra," 2011, and *The Enclave*, 2012-13, a six-channel video installation that represented Ireland at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. The installation was shown along with a selection of photographs from "Infra" at DHC/ART, Montreal, from October 16, 2014 to February 8, 2015, and is presented at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, from February 6 to May 25, 2015.

Since the mid-1990s, the eastern Congo has been devastated by violent conflict between factions of armed rebels. At least twenty-five paramilitary groups, of dubious and wavering allegiances, wage war against each other and innocent civilians over resources, land, or ethnic enmities. Among these, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) were among the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, while the national Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) is itself "a complex web of warlords and paramilitaries."[1]

Despite aid and intervention from a coalition of international forces, human rights violations including mass rape and the conscription of child soldiers are a chronic occurrence.[2] Since 1996, an estimated 5.4 million people have been killed or have died of war-related causes, and thousands of others displaced. And yet the conflict remains relatively unknown and sparsely covered by Western media.

According to American journalist Adam Hochschild, "the bewildering complexity of Congo's current violence is surely a major reason why the rest of the world generally ignores it. Americans, in particular, prefer foreign conflicts where there seem to be clearly identifiable heroes or villains…"[3]

Compelled by this lack of awareness, Mosse travelled to the DRC to make "Infra," a series of large-format photographs documenting the lush landscapes, agricultural pasturelands, and provisional settlements of the eastern Congo. The series features portraits of rebel leaders and young conscripts in poses of defiance, as well as gatherings of soldiers and civilians, and scenes of daily life.

Mosse returned to the same region in 2012 and 2013 with cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and composer Ben Frost to shoot *The Enclave*.

Both "Infra" and *The Enclave* were made using Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued infrared reconnaissance film. Developed for military aerial surveillance, the false-colour reversal film renders chlorophyll in vibrant reds and pinks, thus exposing camouflage in drab contrast among the natural vegetation.

Mosse's resulting images depict lush fuchsia forests, bubble-gum pink tall grasses that move languidly in the wind, and purple mist-covered mountains with flecks of turquoise. This is a world cast in a sublime beauty, yet one that belies its troubling realities.

Among the filmed sequences of *The Enclave* are rebel soldiers with guns poised over a rushing river, their muscles tense with anticipation. Others stand at attention or shout rallying cries, fearsome despite their pink and purple battle fatigues. Dead bodies dot the landscape. In a crowded town, a group of men peel back the ragged cloth that covers a body lying in the middle of the road, as if checking for signs of recognition.



Tutsi Town, North Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2010, digital chromogenic print, 71 cm x 89 cm, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

The footage is both enthralling and destabilizing. In one sequence the camera keeps in rapid step behind a soldier as he rushes through dense foliage, brushing aside the draping leaves and vines. The outcome of this route, whether made in ambush or retreat, is unclear.

Continuous film shots thread through the landscape; the work of a ceaseless, restless camera. Moving through a refugee camp, the camera weaves along narrow pathways between mud and straw huts covered with tarps. The camp's inhabitants look into the camera, move aside to allow its passage, or remain oblivious to its presence.

The body is inherently present in this movement: I, you, the viewer, keep pace with the soldier; I attend to the death rites.

The Enclave installation comprises four screens suspended in the centre of a room at opposing angles, with two placed on the surrounding walls. The individual screens alternate between distinct images, at times doubled or depicting the same scene filmed from different perspectives. They sometimes show nothing at all, or in rare instances, the same image on all six screens. As a result there is a sense of impossibility at seeing everything at once. As the scenes shift and change from one screen to the next, the viewer also feels continually in the way, blocking the story as it unfolds.

The soundtrack, composed by Ben Frost, layers natural sounds of bird song, insects and rustling wind with human voices; at times rising in conflict or gently singing. The high-pitched wine of radio static drones in and out, along with the sound of trucks clattering along dirt roads. A single audio channel accompanies each screen, contributing to the sensory immersion and disorientation of the installation. At what feels like the climax of the film, all screens go black and the sound rises to an overwhelming intensity. Explosions, gunshots, and human cries ring out from all sides in the darkness.

Interspersed amidst the chaos, however, are moments of seeming normality; reminders that daily life continues despite the desperate circumstances. Women gather at water's edge to wash their clothes. One continuous sequence depicts a celebration in a crowded church hall. Multiple performers come on stage to sing or out-dance each other in a jubilant rush of bodies. Towards the end of the film, a community is shown coming together to move a small wooden house, gripping the bottom of the structure and stumbling over rocky terrain, while on a parallel screen, a baby is born by Caesarean. Two signs of hope as the film draws to a close.

The Enclave offers a complete sensory immersion in the landscape and conflicts of the Congo. The gorgeous chemically treated palette of both "Infra" and *The Enclave*, with popping colours of magenta, yellow, purple and teal, stands in contrast to the violence done to the country and its people.

In the Breach

Mosse's earlier photographic series "Breach," 2009, was made while the artist was embedded with the US military in Iraq. The images depict the luxury architecture of Saddam Hussein in various states of preserve or ruin. Hussein built over eighty extravagant palaces across Iraq following the end of the first Gulf War in 1991 (including the Victory over America palace commemorating that conflict). At once extravagant follies and opulent symbols of power, they served to convey a sense of the dictator's all-pervading presence throughout the country.

During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US military took possession of many of these palaces, turning them into headquarters for the coalition forces, operational bases, or accommodations for soldiers. In the latter, Mosse's images show grandiose ballrooms turned into makeshift barracks with plywood and fabric divisions.

Mosse has noted the irony of a situation where the (arguably self-declared) liberators of a country occupy the same seat of power proclaimed by the deposed despot.[4] This is perhaps his inspiration

behind the title "Breach," which refers to breaking through a wall or barricade, as well as a failure to observe a law.

Many of the images in the series are striking for their depictions of decadence and kitsch: Cavernous entrance halls in marble, mosaic, and gold, vast colonnades, and glittering chandeliers. They also serve as stark indicators of the vast discrepancies between Hussein and the average Iraqi citizen.

Yet most intriguing of all are the images of US soldiers within the architecture: Lifting weights in a grand courtyard turned open-air gym, in seemingly endless anticipation of some call to action, or smoking a cigarette and gazing out over a spectacular vista. Here Mosse captures some of the human dynamics within the united military force, as well as the peculiar contradictions of warfare—the lulls in intensity, the boredom, the provisional solution. These images go some way to depicting the ineffable: That which exceeds our typical understanding of organized warfare.

The Ethics of "Aftermath" Photography

Mosse has travelled extensively in zones of conflict familiar to the Western world, including Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Iraq. Like many photographers working in the documentary tradition, to which Mosse admits a certain if conflicted allegiance,[5] the complexity and gravity of such volatile situations provides rich fodder for exploration. Many photographers who venture to warzones do so with socially motivated goals. Yet the ethics of representing conflict are rather murky, particularly when the formal qualities of an image are emphasized.

A visually compelling photograph of a conflict or atrocity has a stronger likelihood of circulation and dissemination in the media. Indeed, numerous iconic images have come to represent specific wars and catastrophes in the West's collective memory, from the 1930s Farm Security Administration photographs by Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans (among others), and Huynh Cong Ut's Vietnam War image from 1972 of a naked girl fleeing a village that has been drenched with napalm, to the green-tinged night vision footage of Iraqi anti-aircraft guns firing over Baghdad during the first Gulf War, and the abhorrent images of prisoner torture at Abu-Ghraib in 2003.

There is no shortage of enthralling images of war that have mobilized external parties into action, served as instruments of propaganda or, in the case of the Vietnam War, swayed public opinion against the US government's military strategy. Yet contained within such images is an inherent danger of reducing a complex situation to an icon, and in the process, constructing a dominant historical narrative of a world event.[6] "Photographs of the victims of war," writes Susan Sontag, "are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create



Pool at Uday's Palace from the "Breach" series, 2009, digital chromogenic print mounted to dibond, Dimensions variable, ©Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.





Cigarette at Al Faw Palace, 2009, digital chromogenic print face-mounted to plexiglass, 102 x 127 cm, ©Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

the illusion of consensus."[7]

At the heart of such work is a moral ambiguity: In the act of capturing and seeing a visually striking image of atrocity we may draw much needed attention, but risk distancing ourselves from the trauma and reducing it to a spectacle. Such images are especially problematic when, Sontag notes, they "focus on the powerless, reduced to their powerlessness," and where the powerless are not named in the captions.[8] This beautification of misery and suffering may serve to placate the viewer, as if merely witnessing and abhorring a horrific image is sufficient in condoning its source.

Revealing the Unseen

To render the conflicts of the Congo as Mosse does in such glorious imagery, then, is surely an aestheticization of another country's tragedy.

Mosse's approach to photographing and filming in the Congo goes some way to counter this criticism. Foremost are the sheer physical constraints of working with large format view cameras in a rural setting, and of lugging coolers through the equatorial jungle in order to preserve the highly heat-sensitive infrared film.

More significant is the time Mosse spent negotiating contact and gaining the trust of nomadic rebel factions and detachments of the national army in order to capture them on film. His approach reveals a sustained commitment to the region, its history and fractured communities. But this alone does not distinguish Mosse's work from social documentary, where an implied narrative within a photographic series is sought to reveal underlying aspects of a situation.[9]

Mosse writes, "while my work is in the documentary spirit, I have struggled with the idea that documentary photography, regardless of the photographer's concerns, arrives pre-loaded with an implicit assumption of advocacy. My work is not a performance of the ethical. I'm concerned less with conscience than with consciousness."[10] Broadening awareness, his own and possibly that of others, was a goal when he set out to photograph the Congo, over a stated critical engagement or sense of ethical responsibility.

He also describes the "unseen, the hidden, the invisible"[11] as integral aspects of the Congo's war. In "Breach," the US soldiers in combat fatigues, the bullet-ridden vehicles, and the rubble of destroyed buildings are the recognizable signs of orchestrated armed conflict. The Congo's war leaves fewer obvious traces on the landscape, due in part to the temporary nature of its rural architecture, and the forms of violence waged on its population,[12] and on women's bodies in particular.

If there is a narrative to be gleaned from Mosse's work, it is evocative rather than prescriptive. Mosse does not show the "powerless reduced to their powerlessness" but multiple aspects of the situation: The community gatherings, death rites, and celebrations, as well as the sheer brutality and violence of warfare. In many cases his subjects are named (for example, *General Février or Colonel Soleil's Boys,* 2010). They are real people rather than iconic representatives of a tragic situation.

Following the completion of "Infra," Mosse wrote "my photography [in the Congo] was a personal struggle with the disparity between my own limited powers of representation and the unspeakable world that confronted me."[13] Infrared photography becomes Mosse's transformative filter; a tool to render the invisible visible. Ultimately, art becomes a way to attempt to understand

a situation of human-wrought suffering that defies comprehension.

Mosse's work seduces through gorgeous and surreal imagery yet engages at the moment when we might otherwise turn away. The physical configuration of the installation and the unpredictability of its changing images frustrate the desire to obtain a comprehensive view, just as we, as outsiders, struggle to grasp the complexity of the Congo's conflict. Similarly, as the viewer is obliged to shift his or her position within the room, there arises a feeling of not just involvement, but complicity in the action.

The sequences engulf the viewer, eliciting a feeling of being among the rebels, of taking part in the training, and examining the corpses for signs of recognition. *The Enclave* renders the conflict thoroughly real and tangible.

While his depictions of soldiers in "Breach" and "Infra" go some way to represent the ineffable in armed conflict, *The Enclave* goes further. The immersive nature of *The Enclave* pushes Mosse's work beyond the acknowledged boundaries of social documentary and the dangers of aesthetisizing war. It reveals the multiple factions and complexity of the conflict just as infrared exposes the camouflaged amongst the foliage. The installation provides a shock to the system and revealingly recasts what would otherwise go unnoticed.

The viewer is thus left not with an indelible image—a reduction of Congolese conflict to an iconic image—but a feeling of immersion, indeed saturation, like the infrared landscapes, in the brutality and complexity of the country's multiple conflicts.

The Enclave *simultaneously seduces and interrupts, distracts and engages, serving not to anaesthetize but to awaken our awareness.*

Alexandra McIntosh writes on art, architecture, and design for numerous publications, and is a member of the artist collective CRUM (Centre de recherche urbaine de Montréal). She is based on Fogo Island, Newfoundland.

Notes

1. Cheryl Sim, *Richard Mosse The Enclave*. Curatorial essay for the exhibition at DHC/ART, Montreal, 16 October 2014 to 8 February 2015.
2. While there have been small victories in the United Nations and partners' mission, the ongoing conflict shows few signs of abating. On 2 January 2015 the FDLR failed to meet a six-month grace period imposed by MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo) in which to voluntarily surrender. Instead they used this time "to continue to commit human rights abuses against innocent people in Eastern DRC, recruit combatants, and champion its illegitimate political agenda." On January 5, MONUSCO announced preparations for military intervention. http://monusco.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=11476&ctl=Details&mid=14931&ItemID=20840&language=en-US http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49733#.VLq2IWTF_38
3. http://monusco.unmissions.org/, 125.
4. Aoife Rosenmeyer, "Points of Conflict: An Artist Goes to War," in *Modern Painters*, vol 22, no 8 (November 2010): 39.
5. Adam Hochschild and Richard Mosse, *Infra* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2012): 130.
6. Manon Slome and Joshua Simon, *The Aesthetics of Terror* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2009): 13.
7. Susan Sontag, "Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death," in *The New Yorker* (December 9, 2002): I.
8. Sontag, "Looking at War," IV.
9. For more on the history of documentary photography see Brett Abbott, *Engaged Observers: Documentary Photography Since the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010): 1-31.
10. *Infra*: 130.
11. *Infra*: 131.
12. *Infra*: 131.
13. *Infra*: 133.



MOVING FORWARD
NEVER FORGETTING

FEBRUARY 28 – APRIL 19, 2015

Moving Forward, Never Forgetting creates a space for intercultural dialogue and storytelling. The exhibition and related events encourage sharing, empathy, and deeper understanding of what it means for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to co-reside in these territories. Newly commissioned works and performances, as well as significant pieces from the MacKenzie's permanent collection, are accompanied by living speakers—Story Keepers—a new initiative at the Gallery.

Artist Residencies

Peter Morin: February 23 – February 27
Cheryl L'Hirondelle: March 11 – March 25
Adrian Stimson: March 16 – March 20

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Michael Belmore, *Smoulder*, 2010-2011 (detail), carved stone, gilded copper. MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina Collection, 2013. Image: Courtesy of the Artist.

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The 50 Most Exciting Artists of 2014

Christian Viveros-Fauné, Monday, December 29, 2014



Courtesy Pop Video Blog

Life can't be boiled down to a listicle. Neither can art or money. Yet all three have become so intimately intertwined that they could seriously stand the kind of rearranging that only an alternative inventory can provide. Some readers will invariably quote *The Guardian*'s snarky 5 Ways the Listicle Is Changing Journalism to complain about the lite-beer nature of the form. But I ask you: Didn't Wallace Steven's use a list to structure his poem “13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"? And didn't Moses himself bring down the mother of all listicles from Mount Sinai etched into stone tablets? Per Buzzfeed's own accounting, the Internet is obviously several thousand years behind an Old Testament trend.

Put in new media lingo, the following are three good reasons to generate a list featuring 50 of the most important artists of 2014 who are also likely to be historically well remembered. Firstly, lists like these can help soothe the sense of helplessness many folks feel about visual art's current transformation into a plaything for the megarich. Secondly, similar lineups organize ideas about the role critically minded art can play in a rapidly changing art ecology. And thirdly, the exercise—together with other end of the year wrap-ups—helps reestablish a sturdy counter-agenda to those put forward by auction houses, art fairs, and art market shills.

As Ben Genocchio put it recently in a piece for artnet News, “short-term market values actually have little bearing on long-term value." This is mainly because art ultimately answers to historical evaluations far bigger than today's Fortune 500 list. So screw the style section snapshot of the art market and its myopic listicle fodder. Let's take the long view. Here goes, then: This is this my first (very) contrary list of the 50 most exciting artists of 2014, important (and enduring) artists who were active in 2014, with no apologies and in no particular order.

22) Richard Mosse: The Irish artist's photography and film portraying the human tragedy experienced in the Democratic Republic of Congo drew raves at the 2013 Venice Biennale, and was awarded the 2014 Deutsche Börse prize.

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Somerstein, Rachel. "Reenvisioning Reality: Five Photographers Push the Boundaries of the Medium by Using Faux Documentary Images to Create a New Kind of Cultural Critique." Art + Auction, Ocboer 2014: pp. 93-94.

REENVISIONING REALITY

FIVE PHOTOGRAPHERS PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF THE MEDIUM BY USING FAUX DOCUMENTARY IMAGES TO CREATE A NEW KIND OF CULTURAL CRITIQUE

BY RACHEL SOMERSTEIN

The photographs in *Blisner, IL*, the book Daniel Shea published under London's Fourteen Nineteen imprimatur last month, seem to depict an industrial American town that has fallen on hard times. Palimpsests of a once-vital public life show faded murals painted on brick walls, a blank marquee, dried roses in a red bucket. Most compelling is a plate that appears toward the book's end, showing two traffic signals hanging from a wire, glowing a yellow that looks almost red. In Blisner, the photograph suggests, a slow pace is indistinguishable from a full stop. On its face, the book reads like the epitaph of a once-bustling town. But a read through Walter Benn Michaels's essay reveals there is no such town as Blisner. Shea made it up.

Shea's project is a hybrid form of documentary and conceptual photography. Neither fakes nor composites, the images show real scenes, objects, and people the artist photographed and assembled to create a fiction—but a fiction that represents a reality, giving a face to vast regions of the deindustrialized United States and towns you've never heard of.

Cindy Sherman, of course, has long moved between fact and fiction, exploring notions of authentic self and performance to great success, while Joan Fontcuberta has been creating "hoaxes" and photographing them for decades. Like the work of other emerging photographers such as Richard Mosse, Cristina De Middel, Christian Patterson, and Sara Macel, *Blisner, IL*, questions the capabilities of photography as a medium. "Somebody like Patterson comes out of the generation raised on conceptual artists like John Baldessari," explains Anne Wilkes Tucker, curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The boundary pushing has also cropped up in popular media that blur the line between fiction and documentary. Most controversially, Kathryn Bigelow's film *Zero Dark Thirty*, 2012, provoked government censure in part because it was at once too true and not true enough. Hilary Mantel's Booker Prize–winning *Bring Up the Bodies*, also 2012, fictionalized the affairs of King Henry VIII's court so effectively it prompted *New Yorker* book critic James Wood to describe it as creating "a third category of reality, the plausibly hypothetical. It's what Aristotle claimed was the difference between the historian and the poet: the former describes what happened, and the latter what might happen."

In photography, the trend toward the plausibly hypothetical can be explained by a number of cultural shifts in news delivery. "Many documentary photographers are frustrated with the images that will run and those that won't," says Tucker. The limitations include boundaries on graphicness and the paltry number of images used to narrate a news story. Additionally, the mass media typically circulate only certain kinds of stories about certain places. "About Africa, you only get wars and starving children," says De Middel, who worked as a photojournalist for years before embarking on "The Afronauts," a documentary-fiction project based on a schoolteacher's attempt to launch a national space program in Zambia in the 1960s.

Valerie Dillon, whose Dillon Gallery in New York represents De Middel, points to the culture's ever-growing obsession with transparency as another influence on this work. On the one hand, she says, technology has made it possible for people to comb through all kinds of resources in search of the real story. At the same time, "so much information we thought was a de facto truth isn't," thanks to whistle-blowers who have lifted the veil on the inner workings of corporations and governments—questioning, in the process, the images that sell them. "Things are so transparent they've almost become opaque. Our sense of solid ground has completely disappeared," Dillon says.

Ariel Shanberg, director of the Center for Photography at Woodstock, New York, which showed Macel last spring, agrees. "Now we're in an era when fact is fiction, when anybody can be anything through the Internet, where identity is more morphable than it was 20 years ago."

Although many artists and critics accept that photographs, whether as journalism or fine art, are never purely objective, documentary photographs "still have some purchase on the plain truth," says Karsten Lund of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, who, as a guest curator, included Shea and Mosse in "Phantoms in the Dirt" at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Photography, on view through October 5. Photography's legacy as a forensic tool is further evidence of our faith in the medium's capacity to tell the truth. A firewall persists between photographic fiction and photographic reality that divides photos into news or art, truth or artifice, forensic evidence or fictional invention. "Artists are supposed to be on one side or the other," says Andrew Rafacz, the Chicago gallerist who represents Shea. This may be why photography that blurs the lines between the two makes some people uncomfortable.

"THINGS ARE SO TRANSPARENT THEY'VE ALMOST BECOME OPAQUE," SAYS DEALER VALERIE DILLON. "OUR SENSE OF SOLID GROUND HAS DISAPPEARED."

Collectors, however, seem more than willing to blur boundaries. "Photo collectors are more interested in incorporating different kinds of works into their classic collections," says Vanessa Hallett, worldwide head of photographs at Phillips, which pioneered secondary markets for artists such as Gregory Crewdson and Loretta Lux. "As collectors go deeper, they become more curious about photography as an ever-evolving medium." Works by such conceptualists, however, hold weight in sales of both contemporary art and photography. "We place pieces in the sale we feel will garner the best result for the consignor."

This fictional photography questions the medium as evidence and truth, but while it destabilizes, tweaks, or even invents, it maintains its relationship to reality. "Reality has a place in engaging our emotional life," says Tucker. "But to really convey it, [these artists] have to figure out new paths to push us into different perspectives. They ask what images can and can't do .... They push the parameters outside the picture frame," sometimes even working in objects. Such work, adds Lund, "is as much a question about photography as what it is to be an observer."

RICHARD MOSSE AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

RICHARD MOSSE

Digital chromogenic color prints from Mosse's "Infrared" series, commenting on the nature of war through images of the unfolding conflict in the Congo, include, from top, *Niyo*, 2014, and *Drag* and *First We Take Manhattan*, both 2012. *Madonna and Child*, 2012, appears on the previous spread.







AS A STUDENT AT GOLDSMITHS college in London, the Irish-born, New York–based photographer and 2014 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize winner showed his pictures of conflict from around the world at a student crit. "Some in the group said, 'That's not art,'" says the 34-year-old, who went on to earn an MFA in photography from Yale. A 2009 series of documentary-like photographs of Saddam Hussein's palaces put him on the map; a 2008 Leonore Annenberg fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2011 granted him freedom. As an artist—not a photojournalist, he stresses—he traveled to eastern Congo to document the country's decades-long interethnic conflicts, which rarely make headlines in the West. But rather than doing straightforward documentary photography, Mosse used a discontinued type of infrared Kodak film sensitive to chlorophyll in live vegetation, which the U.S. military had employed in Vietnam to detect camouflage and manmade blinds. Mosse's photos show a red-and-pink-colored light spectrum reflected by healthy green plants and otherwise invisible to the naked eye.

At the most basic level, explains Tamsen Greene, director of Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, the "Infrared" series offers a meta-message on the Congolese conflict. The film makes the invisible visible, much as Mosse's images portray strife rarely seen in news reportage. The images also comment on the many unseen elements of war, like rape, frequently used as a tactic in the Congo. Mosse pushes viewers to think about what is revealed and concealed in all conflict photography. Luridly beautiful, the images cause some critics discomfort. Lund, however, points out that even traditional news photographs express aesthetic choices. Editors "typically choose the most compelling composition, which affects how you look at the images," he says.

Mosse's immersive film installation *The Enclave*, 2013, shot on 16 mm infrared film, was shown in the Irish pavilion in the most recent Venice Biennale. It travels to Montreal, the Portland Art Museum in Oregon, and the Nasher Museum of Art in Durham, North Carolina, this year. Prices range from $9,500 for a print to $150,000 for an installation.

ALL IMAGES RICHARD MOSSE AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Holten, John. A Supplement to The Enclave: Richard Mosse. Broken Dimanche Press, 2015: illustrated.

A Supplement to THE ENCLAVE

WITH CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN RICHARD MOSSE
AND TREVOR TWEETEN
AND BEN FROST

WITH TEXT
CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
CHRISTY LANGE,
CHARLES STANKIEVECH
AND PATRICK MUDEKEREZA

EDITED BY
JOHN HOLTEN

A BROKEN DIMANCHE
PRESS PUBLICATION TO
ACCOMPANY EXHIBITIONS
OF THE ENCLAVE BY
RICHARD MOSSE

RICHARD MOSSE

Christy Lange

At the Edge of the Visible

'That a gory battlescape could be beautiful – in the sublime or awesome or tragic register of the beautiful – is a commonplace about images of war made by artists. The idea does not sit well when applied to images taken by cameras: to find beauty in war photographs seems heartless. But the landscape of devastation is still a landscape. There is beauty in ruins.'

Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others [1]

1 Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others (London: Penguin, 2003), 75 – 76.

While there's nothing inherently wrong with beauty in a photograph, Richard Mosse is aware that the alignment of beauty with images of war or atrocity creates 'an ethical problem in the viewer's mind'. But, as he sees it, 'sometimes war is beautiful (...) Beauty is one of the mainlines to make people feel something. It's the sharpest tool in the box'. [2] It almost sounds like an old-fashioned sentiment, particularly given the suspicion cast on the aestheticization of war among contemporary artists and photojournalists alike. But Mosse's work operates on a different register, in a part of the photographic spectrum that departs from our expectations of conventional photojournalism or representations of suffering.

2 Richard Mosse, Richard Mosse: The Impossible Image, 28 May, 2013. http://www.video.frieze.com/film/ richard-mosse-impossible-image

On multiple trips in 2010–11, Mosse travelled deep into the bush in eastern Congo with his large-format camera, embedding himself with rebel and paramilitary forces, in places media outlets and journalists hadn't documented or even seen. For his photographic series *Infra*, Mosse used Kodak Aerochrome film – a colour film developed by the US military that is able to register infrared light invisible to the human eye. The infrared light is reflected off the chlorophyll in green plants, and therefore able to reveal camouflaged soldiers hiding in the landscape. (Today's camouflage has made the film obsolete, and Kodak discontinued it in 2009.) Mosse thought it would be fitting to bring film that registers the invisible into a conflict that is so little seen and so difficult to show: 'Congo's vicious little wars are largely without trace, therefore not easy to photograph.' [3] His challenge was compounded by the fact that he didn't know how the developed film would look. But he felt its unpredictable colour palette might be an apt reflection of the 'disorienting, kaleidoscopic conflict' in the Congo: [4] a powerless government; warring tribes made up of Rwandan Hutu refugees, the Congolese national army, at least thirty different armed rebel groups, local Mai Mai militias and child soldiers; fighting over mineral wealth and torturing, raping and murdering the civilian population. Over 5.4 million people have died since 1998 due to conflict, yet there has been little coverage in the Western media.

3 Email correspondence with the artist, 15 December, 2013.

4 Ibid.

Mosse confronted not only logistical challenges but also ethical and aesthetic ones: how can an artist represent a conflict that is largely unshown and unshowable? 'I was pursuing something so trenchantly real that it verges on the abstract, at the very limits of description,' says Mosse. 'I needed to find an appropriate form to better describe this sinister resonance.' [5] The effect of his infrared film is at once jarring and dreamlike. It casts green foliage in overwhelming pinks and reds. Palm trees look plastic. Lush, expansive vistas of aqua rivers cutting through valleys blanketed in magenta treetops show no apparent trace of the conflict. It's a surprising and disorienting overview: where our senses expect greens and browns, we encounter seductive, intensified colours – a beauty we hadn't anticipated. That sense of discrepancy, between a violent subject and its aestheticization, is what Sontag said 'does not sit well', and what Mosse identifies as 'an ethical problem'. [6] But, as Mosse says, 'I feel that the real is only effectively communicated through shocks to the imagination, precipitated by the Sublime.' [7]

5 Jörg Colberg, A Conversation with Richard Mosse, 21 September, 2010. http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/ extended/archives

6 Richard Mosse, Richard Mosse: The Impossible Image, 28 May, 2013. http://www.video.frieze.com/film/ richard-mosse-impossible-image

7 Aaron Schuman, Sublime Proximity: In Conversation with Richard Mosse Aperture 203 (2011): http://www.aaronschuman.com/richardmosse.html

His subject matter often breaks through and transcends the formal constraints of the pink palette. We can't help but notice the organs of a disemboweled animal or the disfigured face of a young man. It's not the pink that makes these images shocking. Throughout the series of photos, Mosse's camera seeks out views both close-up and distant. He captured sweeping aerial views from a UN helicopter, as if searching for clues to the conflict inscribed in the cliffs and wild hillsides. His photos reveal a place where traces have been absorbed and have disappeared into the bush, as in his photographs of collapsed and abandoned huts submitting to the entropy of the landscape.

Mosse returned to North and South Kivu in 2012 and 2013, with a team of three, to make *The Enclave* for the Irish Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale, this time using outdated and unstable 16mm infrared film. He managed to obtain the last few existing reels, and faced the challenges of the fact that they would need to be constantly refrigerated while he travelled in remote rebel territory. But the medium of the moving image provided an added immediacy: 'making a film, you have a completely different set of tools as an artist. (...) It's much more proximate – it strikes straight into the heart,' says Mosse, 'whereas a still photograph has this sort of endlessness about it. It's a much more distant thing. It's something to be reflected upon... But it doesn't have this mainline to the emotions that film tends to have.' [8]

8 Conversation with the artist, 4 April, 2012.

The Enclave unfolds over nearly forty minutes of sound and imagery on six massive, double-sided screens, in a structure that mirrors the complex, fractured form of the conflict. As Mosse describes the installation, 'the point is to formally parallel our own experience of the conflict in eastern Congo, which is multifaceted, opaque, unknowable, carried down mud roads by rumour and fear.' [9] As the scenes elapse, it looks as if the camera doesn't know what it's going to find – a breathtaking vista at the top of a precipice, or corpses laying in a ditch by the side of the road. It lingers on these discoveries the way our eyes would, or circles over them the way our bodies might. Walking among the screens, we cannot see them all at once, but only in fractured pieces. It's fitting that the film begins with the pale water of a lake lapping at the horizon, accompanied by the ambient sound of birds and insects chirping in the bush. It is a motif associated with the sublime, and water is considered life-giving by the Congolese warriors they travelled with. But the film's mood quickly shifts, as the soundtrack by composer Ben Frost turns darker, with static-filled, echoing radio transmissions. Pink grass the colour of sticks of bubblegum sways in the wind. Cinematographer Trevor Tweeten cuts a swathe through the tall grass, following a soldier with an AK-47 slung over his shoulder down a slim dirt path. Unlike the candid face-offs with the still camera in the *Infra* portraits, here the cameraman is clearly following. It's not reportage in the conventional sense: Mosse and his team bring an unexpected intimacy to what they witness. These scenes attest to an act of bearing witness, but they also bear the inevitable weight and ambivalence of being a witness to a complex and ultimately foreign situation. To reflect that ambivalence, the film is a constant flow between the surreal and the unreal, reportage and stolen candid moments, clear performances for the camera. Moments of stillness and silent face-offs with the lens are contrasted with movement, following the soldiers deeper into unknown territory. Throughout, the pink is an ever-present filter we struggle to see through, another layer of representation between Mosse and his subject, between the Congo and us.

9 Email correspondence with the artist, 15 December, 2013.

In one sequence, a prophet douses the Mai Mai warriors with reeds of grass dipped in 'blessed water', which they believe makes them bulletproof. Then, as Mosse describes it, they 'demonstrated for us a battle sequence... rebels crawling through the bush commando-style, enacting different ambushes on each other.' In the film, we see them chasing each other with weapons and feigning casualties. This simulation of battle for the camera and real battle are deliberately conflated, as is the soundtrack of soldiers making gun noises, contrasted with real gunshots. 'Amidst the chaos one gun actually did go off,' Mosse recalls. 'The fact that no one was hurt was further proof that they were bulletproof.' [10]

10 Conversation with the artist, 4 April, 2012.

The film is full of contrasts that reflect and compound the discordance between the unreal colour palette and the immediate subject matter. Moments of horror, like a woman having an emergency c-section, are embedded in scenes of daily struggle, which are contrasted with highly-staged performances, like a beauty pageant and acrobatics display organized for the media. The crack of gunfire rings out over serene pink clouds nestled between mountaintops. Daily life and stark reality are filtered through this coloured lens, but are no less affecting because of it. We can't access the 'real' no matter how close Mosse's camera comes, or how sharp the focus. Sometimes the contrast is buried or invisible, such as the recording of a girl singing a lullaby at Lac Vert. Her hushed voice, heard over screens filled with sunlit ripples on the lake, feels like a respite from the chaos. Only later did Mosse realise what the lyrics of the lullaby meant: 'If you look inside the bushes, you will find many / Some were cut into pieces with knives / Others died because they were shot / Give thanks to God for being still alive.'

Birth, death, food, shelter – here is life in all its haunting and specific detail. Mothers are faint with grief beside the coffins of their children, a nurse repeatedly tries to revive a tiny newborn's limp body, soldiers grab handfuls of a communal lunch. At one point, the camera traces a path toward a camp for internally displaced persons, with its white tents carving out the pink landscape. A crowd of people awaits, regarding the camera with suspicion and silence. Children dart in front of the lens as if leading it further inside the camp. The soundtrack is a recording of students singing about growing up in wartime. Frost manipulated the sound while he was processing the recording, and the resulting effects to the audio track sound uncannily like gunshots.

The Enclave's final scenes feature footage of the M23 rebels as they seized the city of Goma in November 2012. These scenes, played without sound in total silence, show more immediate, reportage style imagery, reminiscent of old news reels: we see a man lift a sheet covering a dead body lying in the road. Then all six screens return, one by one, to the horizon of the lake again. But Mosse contrasts these scenes with a scene of a man walking into a lake and disappearing into the water's depths. (Mosse's team staged the scene with their friend. It is the only constructed scene in the film.) Meanwhile, soldiers take aim through the sights of their weapons at an invisible enemy across a river. Both are enveloped by this strange, intangible landscape, and their retreat from our vision seems to represent the aimless, ineffable nature of the conflict. Then all six screens return, one by one, to the horizon of the lake again.

War is not black and white, but abstract and complex. The range of types of conflict is so broad, but the means of representing them are finite and limited. The stylistic range of portrayals in Mosse's work is what art allows for – a representation less tethered to the 'reality' of war, and as untethered as one might find the experience of witnessing it. As Mosse sees it, 'naturalism has no greater claim to veracity than other strategies.' [11] Naturalism as a photojournalistic strategy assumes war is natural, or resembles life. War is not necessarily close to what we think of as 'real' – 'war is dreamlike', admits Mosse – and therefore realism or transparency may be an inadequate way to represent it. [12] Mosse portrays it as he sees and experienced it – viscerally, overly vivid, otherworldly, in all its bizarre, haunting, unforeseen unreason.

11 Jörg Colberg, A Conversation with Richard Mosse, 21 September, 2010. http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/ extended/archives

12 Ibid.

Patrick Mudekereza

Reflections on Seeing The Enclave in Venice

Translated from the original French by John Holten

An artwork about the Congo: yet one more. Patricia Druck, the director of the Mercosul Biennial, managed to convince me to go and see the 2013 Irish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale: "The work is great, the artist also." The vaporetto journey that I was making for the first time seemed somehow familiar. In fact I'd seen the building in the film entitled *Maison Tropicale* by Manthia Diawara that was about the work of Angela Ferreira. This artwork was partially shot in Brazzaville, on the other side of the river, in the other Congo, and was screened in 2007 in the same building in Venice, with Jürgen Bock as Commissioner, when the location was the Portuguese Pavilion. 1 Would the Fondaco Marcello, who was host to Richard Mosse's *The Enclave*, become a Congolese pavilion? The organizers of the ghost D.R. Congo pavilion in 2009 could have thought of it. 2 In the meantime, this year, the pavilion was Irish.

1 In August 2013 Manthia Diawara's film was presented in the town hall of Lubumbashi during the residence of Angela Ferreira as a production of the 3rd Lubumbashi Biennial.

2 The DRC was invited to the Biennale in 2009 but no programme indicated the place or the exhibition that would be presented.

An artwork about the Congo, and not just any Congo. An artwork about Kivu, and the war in Kivu. A war that is overexposed in the media, of which after a few days or weeks everyone has their own interpretation, analysis, expertise, and hard-won experience? One does not say if he was there or not, rather he says that he 'did' it. A war that is, finally, underexposed and badly treated by various media around the world to the point that they entertain the idea that it is a fiction, erasing the reality so that they see only the sensational. Kivu and its war that never ends seem to be an invention of journalists. The most contradictory theories, all more fantastical than the next, circulate and show up the inability of each to decipher what is going on. Richard Mosse wants, for his part, to show the war through the eyes of an artist; but what can that mean? One hell of a challenge!

It is the opening and a festive atmosphere prevails. The room is packed. The work seems to have hit the spot. An air of pride. The Congo, once again, does the job.

The plan is nothing less than spectacular: giant photographs in the first room and no less than half a dozen screens on the other side in the video installation. You are immersed in an enchanting setting made of oneiric landscapes. The Congolese that appear on the screens are living a normal life, going to concerts, swimming in a lake and then intermittently cries of distress, gunshots, blood, etc. I sit for the hour it takes for the loop of the videos to come full circle, trying to find an angle that gives me access to the maximum number of screens simultaneously. Sometimes you just want to close your eyes or to follow a singing voice and the excellent audio work filling the room, or not to see too much violence. One thing is certain: inside you're seized upon.

You come out really quite devastated. By the beauty, by the cruelty, by the manipulation that is felt in every gesture of the rebels, by these people who are trying to get by and live. To be themselves. These soldiers who go to war, these witchdoctors playing at making the fighters immortal. All manipulated and vulnerable. But we don't see the oligarchs and their authoritarian offices, we don't see the hands that pull the strings, we don't see the bespectacled experts behind large libraries with the assurance of knowledge, we don't see the chiefs surrounded by their bodyguards, worthy of American movies from the 1980s – all of which so many photographers have snapped away at. Ultimately, you learn nothing. You just feel things. You are 'just' devastated by a resolutely sensory, moving experience.

In limiting to report what he saw, to share an experience, with all that might seem contradictory, has Richard Mosse managed to avoid the trap of preconceived interpretation? Has he managed to put images and sound to the unspeakable, indescribable, unnamable? Has the aesthetic managed to express the unintelligible?

In response to this difficulty in decipherment, many works of art and articles have somewhat chaotic words to say about the situation in the Congo. The Congolese writer André Yoka, took exception in a lampoon he wrote for a newspaper in Kinshasa:

Has in fact Africa, and the DRC in particular, reverted to being another anthropological Eldorado, another type of deposit for research and exploitation on the part of a new "Tintin in the Congo", a new "Professor Calculus", a new "Conrad" (The Heart of Darkness), a new "Coppola" (Apocalypse Now), with the new boy-scout feelings of the great and the good? Besides I don't know which author among the successful that we allude to here said that of ten people who speak about the Congo, nine will talk bad and the tenth who tries to speak well will do bad! 3

3 Andre Yoka Lye Mudaba, 'Benda Bilili: éloge de la commisération?' in Le Potentiel, 9 November, 2012 and commented on the blog by Didier de Lannoy: http://jodi.over-blog.net/article-yoka-lye-mudaba-112382450.html

In the work of Richard Mosse, it is not about speaking good or bad but to offer forth sight and hearing, to share captured moments.

More than the 'anthropological Eldorado' that André Yoka outlined in his article, T.J. Demos sees in the work of European artists returning to the former colonies a field of exorcism and of hunting ghosts. His study focuses on recent works by four artists, including two about the Congo: *Episode III, Enjoy Poverty* by the Dutchman Renzo Martens (2009) and *Spectres* by Belgian Sven Augustijnen (2011):

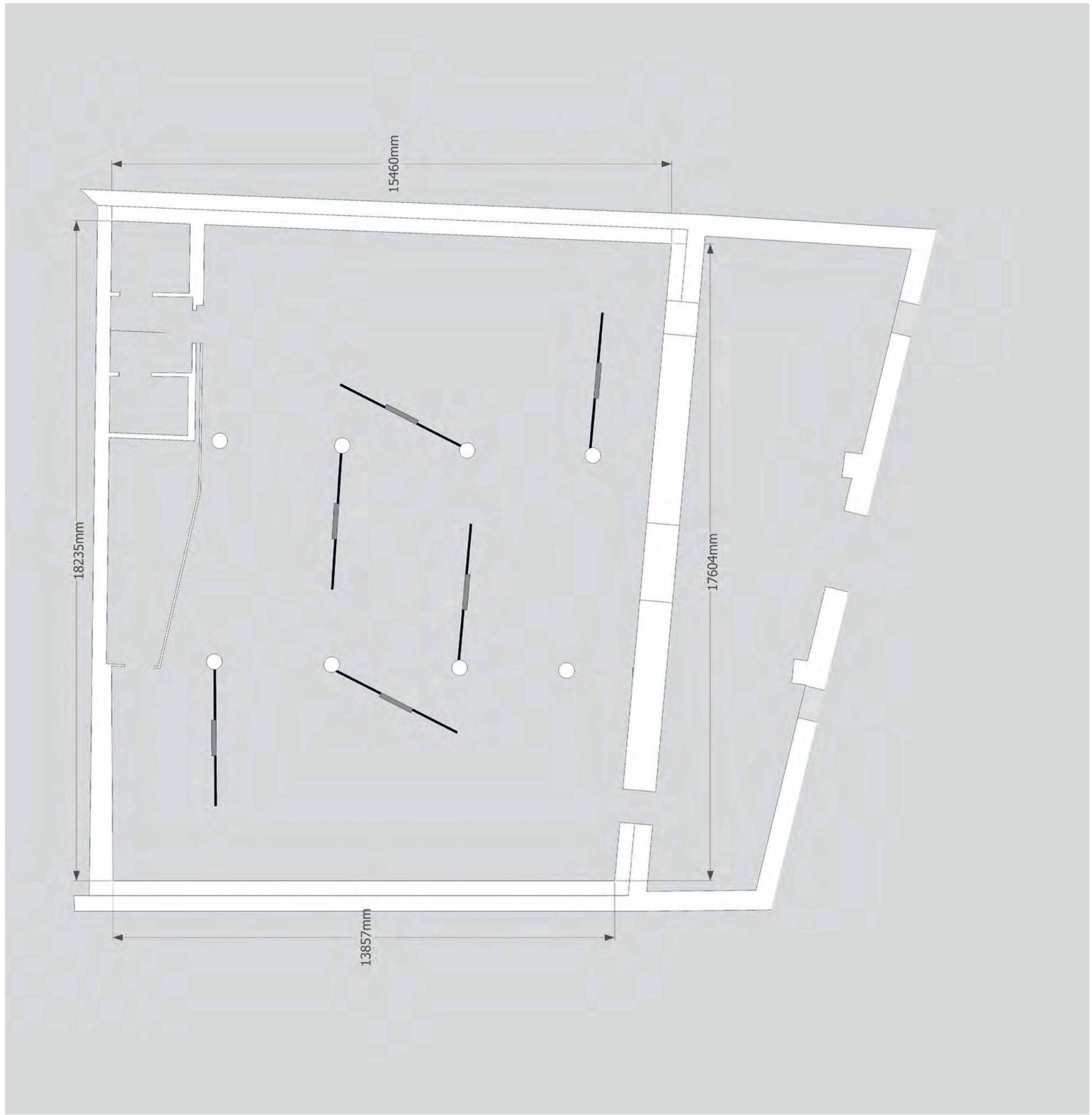
It is precisely the negations, disavowals, and rejections of historical responsibility and present advantage, occurring in political discourses as much as in cultural representations, that allow and even causes the ghost to fly free. This recognition of negation as a causality of haunting raises a problem in relation to aesthetics given its definition as a mode and medium of appearance. For how can we account for an aesthetics of the negation of appearance, or the appearance of the negation, that determines the spectropoetics found in the works of (these) artists? 4

4 T.J. Demos, 'Return to Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art', Stenberg Press, 2013.

Richard Mosse's approach does not have an entryway into history. This detachment can expose a raw, naked present. Aesthetics is no longer a negation of appearance here. It expresses appearance, and even dares to magnify it.

But there still remains a place, as in any work that tackles a sensitive issue, to restore dialogue, to confront the need to accept the otherness that underlies it. How can these men and women, the families of the victims, those who identify with the crowd or those who recognise their "home", see, feel, hear this work? It will no longer speak only to their senses, but also to their memories. They will connect to other events that were not filmed, to other places, to themselves. The experience will be much richer. In such a space, interpretation becomes unavoidable. I see this dialogue with the "rights-holders" as a step in creating a way to close the loop, or more accurately, to open it to more complexity. My privileged position of "spectator " at the Venice Biennale and as a Congolese citizen does not cover anything more than a single role, a personal self-expression, which tries to be professional, and is therefore insufficient.

So, what if we organised an exhibition of *The Enclave* in the Congo?


15460mm
18235mm
17604mm
13857mm

A Conversation Between Richard Mosse and Trevor Tweeten

January 9, 2014 at *The Local*, NYC

RM Let's have a bit of context. So it's more than a year since our last trip, and that was back in November 2012. And our first trip was in March 2011. That means it's almost three years since we started to go to the Congo together. And I've just returned from the Congo on what was probably my last trip. I was almost killed in a very stupid car crash in which my driver drove off a bridge, landing twenty feet below, flipping in mid-air, landing on the roof, luckily the roof didn't buckle, and rolling another two or three times. Everyone was fine except the driver who gashed his knee because he wasn't wearing his seatbelt. And at that point I asked myself: Why am I still here? I almost killed not just myself, but these people in the car. For photos!

TT Yeah but surely there was that risk all along?

RM Oh yeah. We'll get to risk later presumably. But what made you decide to go on the first trip?

TT I didn't want to go if you remember! I said no the first time. You had asked me and I vaguely agreed and then I backed out at the last minute because I didn't want to go. You went in January sometime and then we were supposed to go together and then I freaked out… But, sometime after that you asked me to come along and help proof some photographs with Esteban and that's when I saw the large print of *Nowhere to Run* for the first time, the huge 6 × 8 foot infrared landscape photograph from South Kivu, and then I changed my mind.

RM Why?

TT Well I just saw how incredible the work was ultimately. So then I realised that there was something to be done there, based on that. And I saw it as a continuation of the trajectory of the work we'd done together in the past. Because it seemed like the pieces were all there to really make something exceptional. It was this combination of things and the opportunity to work with a really interesting format.

RM Though initially it wasn't the same format. It was digital infrared. We began off on the wrong footstep.

TT It wasn't really wrong. With Congo, you have to return. And for me it wasn't until the final trip that I really felt like I had some kind of bearing of the place so that I could really work. The first trip and some of the second trip really felt that the place itself was disorientating which made it difficult to make work there. I don't know if you found that.

RM Yeah totally. Do you remember you said once that when you returned to Congo you felt it was like returning to a dream, and then you corrected yourself and said no, you said, 'This is the reality but when I went away for a year the interim was a dream back in New York.'

TT This is the thing: when I left after the first trip and I went back to New York it felt like the trip had been somewhat like a dream because it was so much outside of my own reality. And then also spending the whole time looking through this viewfinder and seeing the world in some sort of strange candy-coloured spectrum. Everything had this bright crystal sugar aspect.

RM The plants were literally glowing.

TT So when I went back it was as though that time in between was actually the dream and that I had never actually left and maybe that was just because the place itself is so familiar once you know it, and it doesn't change that much it seems, it has this pace which is very slow compared to New York.

RM An interesting thing you said was that your work was trying to register a place through a viewfinder, so it was a false-coloured reality essentially, which forces you to switch your brain around to relate to it. And I find that a lot with the 8 × 10 inch camera which has a ground glass; when you look through it you have an upside down mirror image of the world. But I forget that's the case now, I guess my brain flips it back unconsciously.

TT It's like when you wear those glasses that turn the world upside down with mirrors, and if you wear them for long enough, a week or two, your mind actually switches everything back to the right side up.

RM Yeah. And I remember reading in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a young child that the eye optically views the world upside down but your brain flips it back again. So perhaps the human brain has a certain limberness or flexibility in relating different realities. But I mean when you came back the second time we had procured this very special 16mm Kodak Aerochrome which represents the world as a pink universe exactly like the *Infra* photographs. So did you have to relate to the Congo in a different way because of this change of media? From digital infrared shot on a modified Red One, which is more of a monochrome thing, where the plants are almost glowing white, to Kodak Aerochrome which is shot with a mechanical, sewing machine of a camera, an Arriflex SR2, with which you don't really see much through the viewfinder because it's a very dim optical viewfinder, and the plants glow pink.

TT Well I have to say that I enjoyed shooting the film much more because it was a lot more like having this box that I could just point at things, if I could put it like that. With a digital camera you have to bring along a generator to recharge batteries, you have to bring your computer and external hard disks, and in general there's all this hassle. Whereas with the film camera it's more a case that you just bring the film and you worry, stress and lose your mind over whether the film is getting warm or not [laughing]. Other than that it's really simple though. You don't know because you don't have this really precise viewfinder and aren't able to view it on the computer, it's a lot easier: you see something interesting, you point the camera at it, and you forget about it after that because you have no idea whether you got it or not. And if it was really good you really hope you got it, but other than that it's much more free flowing…

RM Are you closer to your imagination?

TT I think so. There is something really special about seeing the shutter moving, seeing the film flicker and seeing the light flicker through the viewfinder, versus pressing a red button and seeing a little LED turn on a video camera. It's really quite different knowing, when you go into the dark bag and unload the film and put that into the can, that this film may or may not actually turn into anything at all. It might be blank.

RM It's a leap of faith. And this is a huge part of everything we did in the Congo. That was a really significant aspect.

TT The first time we went there with the film we had no idea. A: What it's going to look like. (I think we did a test but I think we didn't even find a lab to process it.) B: We had no idea where we were going to process it, if we were even going to be able to find a lab that would process it.

RM We did process the initial tests in a still photography lab.

TT Just a little strip. But we had no idea what that would translate into, or whether it would even be possible to find a cine-film lab to do the same.

RM We had no idea if the rest of those reels were any good, or how they would behave.

TT And the film was, at that point, nearly ten years expired.

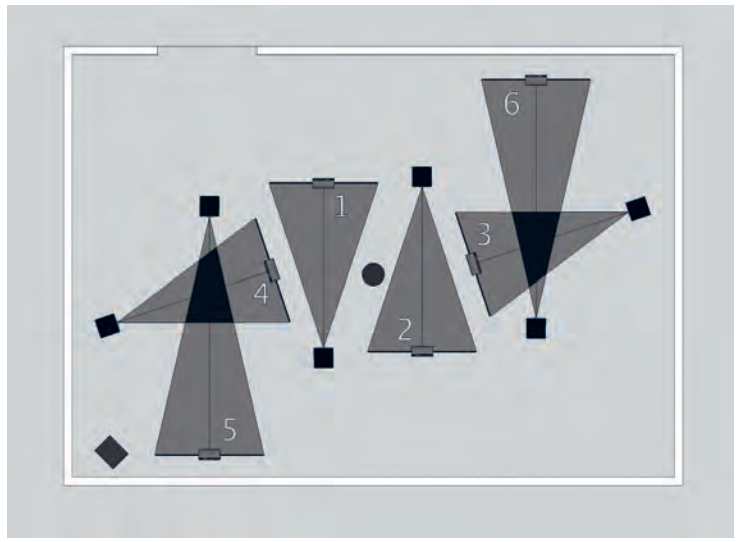
RM It's a lot longer than the film I had been using for the photographs. Which was a couple years expired, but not ten years…We also had no idea if it had been kept in a freezer.

TT And we got that camera which itself was pretty shady [laughing]. So there were all these crazy variables which make it all seem totally ridiculous and in hindsight you really wonder why the hell you were there. By the time the third trip came around we had seen the footage from the second trip and we knew that there was huge potential. And we also knew that Venice was on the horizon.

RM That's right and that was a massive motivation.

TT And we had a certain direction at that point so it seemed necessary to go back a third time and really tie it all together. That trip in a lot of ways for me was incredible because everything came together: the team was all there, Ben and John, you and I, everyone came together at the right moment through these crazy variables. And we got closer to the conflict than we ever had been.

RM Well there is that sad aspect of what happened on that third trip which was simply that history also coalesced with the project, crystallized, so that the things we had been struggling to represent with metaphor – for example these present participle verbs we were working with, working with gestures, moving a house, a woman giving birth by caesarean section, and so on – they were all very simple, poetic gestures through which we were trying to represent the conflict. But it was difficult to behold and was out of reach, it was beyond the lens, and then in the third trip it wasn't anymore. We didn't have to walk for days into the bush to find the rebel groups because this time they came to us. And this is another variable I guess but it's a sad thing for the people there as the conflict escalated. History lent itself to the piece. Which doesn't make me feel entirely comfortable, but that's why we were there, I guess. When you arrived you were a man on a mission. And you gave a lot of momentum to the team; it was extraordinary to see. I think that was what



Courtesy: Eidotech

was different during the third trip: the way the group dynamic operated. Ben had been there, it was his second time; John's first time; my seventh time and your third. And the powers amongst us were very specific. I think if we had lost any team member we would have been a lot less effective.

TT It's weird, you seem to be apologising for the piece in a way but what needs to be remembered is that those events would have happened if we were there or not.

RM Very true. But that was the refreshing aspect when you turned up on the third trip. You announced: 'Let's go, this is what we're here for.' But to go back to the first trip when we shot digital infrared. We hadn't really seen what we shot at this point: we were on our way to the airport. We crossed the border late (because you met the love of your life the night before…) and we were driving across Rwanda in the taxi, over the thousand hills of Rwanda, *les milles collines*, to Kigali airport and we both agreed that we had to find the film, the medium wasn't fully resolved.

TT I remember talking about the 12 × 20 inch film on the way to Kigali. Because you had shot only 8 × 10 inch sheets at that point, and had been talking to your film guy and from that came this idea of being able to make these long, wide strips for your 12 × 20 inch camera. We must have talked about 16mm as well.

RM I had forgotten that. You have a great memory.

TT It was a while after that in some bar not unlike this place we're in right now, that you said there was maybe a way you could get a hold of 16mm Aerochrome film and I said well then we should go. I think it just seemed like it needed to be done. The whole thing felt terribly intuitive.

RM Impulsive. Helter-skelter.

TT That's not to say that there wasn't a critical element: but in terms of the process of it and how we got there, if we had been too cautious it never would have been done, never would have been made.

RM Or too conceptual.

TT Yeah. But that said while I was there, until the end, I had conflict in myself.

RM When? On all of the trips?

TT Yeah about what it meant to take a camera to a place and start pointing it at things, people. Certainly the last trip, and there was a certain faith in the project and the concept and what it could become. That's good though: to feel a certain inner conflict, a kind of struggle, because if there wasn't it would be too easy and it wouldn't result in something as fascinating as it turned out to be. The struggle with it is part of what makes it as good as it is and the idea of the gaze of the camera being returned by the gaze of the Congolese people is very complicated, and in turn this becomes very complicated for the viewer to understand and experience.

RM The predatory aspect of photography, particularly street photography, is a problem that's as old as the camera itself. So many photographers give up taking pictures because they can't reconcile themselves as predators. I remember on the first trip we were shooting on the fancy digital camera, the Red One, and you had a certain filter on the front of the camera. It was a sort of polarizer or something? Oh no, it was a neutral density filter.

TT Yeah it was just a light blocker. But it had a mirror.

RM Yes right it had a mirror: it had a mirror effect for the people you shot. And I remember you shot a series of children staring at their own reflection. They basically peer down this lens, but they're not particularly aware or interested that they're being photographed.

TT No, they were just looking at themselves [laughing]. They were fascinated by being able to see themselves in the mirror.

RM As an idea, it's fascinating. It would seem to resonate with a lot of the portraits of the photographic work. I remember looking at the footage, on an airplane actually, and I remember thinking this has got to go straight into the bin. I just couldn't watch that stuff! Cute children waving right down the camera lens, beckoning at the viewer: it was terrible! And so I shut the laptop feeling depressed and ordered another gin and tonic from the stewardess, which I downed immediately. But on the way to get my baggage a very cute girl who had been sitting across the row behind me had been watching all this footage and she came up to me saying: 'I just have to say, those pictures of those children, oh my god! My heart exploded. So beautiful!' [laughing] And I was like: are you sure? And she was like: 'Was that in Africa? I once went to Uganda and did charity work.' [laughing] And inwardly I was like: shit this is exactly what we're trying to avoid.

TT I think there was a sort of systematic avoidance of the quote unquote 'African child'. And we definitely tried to avoid that on all the trips, maybe less on the last one.

RM We were very self-conscious. That can be destructive. The last trip, why do you say that?

TT Well we went into the IDP [Internally displaced persons] camp and I think the children are an amazing element in that shot. It makes you realise that this country is full of children. I mean John was struck by that: the amount of children. Especially when you think that the life expectancy is what, 40-50?

RM It's fucked… I mean we could talk a lot more about the making of it, and I think that's why we're here tonight, but I'd like to talk about what it signifies to you, how you interpret it, because to me *The Enclave*, all of the work, has been a little bit open and multi-layered, multi-faceted and you can take it or leave it in a number of different ways and I hope it never really tells you what to think. Or that it isn't too simple to interpret. In this case it's tempting to attempt to say what it means to each of us.

TT You start. [laughing] I haven't seen it in a long time! It's impossible for me to interpret *The Enclave*.

RM Well then how ought one interpret it? What is the intention?

TT I think a big part of it was creating a visceral experience, an experience that one has to physically move to be able to engage with. And this is speaking especially about the manner in which it is installed. One of the big things we were trying to achieve with both the edit and the installation was to create something that someone couldn't sit down in one place and watch from one point of view only. They would have to move around it: a screen would go blank for a certain amount of time and other things would be happening out of their field of vision and they would have to physically stand up and move. And this created a series of possible paths and a way for multiple viewings ultimately and the idea that you could never take in the whole piece yourself. Even after multiple viewings things would still be revealed, expressing the complexities of not only the conflict in eastern Congo but also the complexities of conflict and war in general and what it means to photograph and film that. And challenging the concept of taking this grand idea of war or conflict and buttoning it up into some 60 second clip that appears on your screen at night and says this is what is actually happening and that people believe that as a certain fact – but that is ridiculous. *The Enclave* is offering a different way to view these things, a more challenging way perhaps of thinking about it because the viewer has to become the person who puts those screens together and puts the thread that ties them together as opposed to having something fed to you.

RM It's fascinating how so many people are frustrated by it, though not young people who seem to relate to it somehow. I've watched teenagers go in there and-

TT Maybe they're more adept-

RM I guess they're happier to walk around [laughing]. For forty minutes. A lot of people have an issue with that, and particularly with the screens going black [laughing].

TT I think that's great. I fucking love that.

RM Yeah the blank screens, the dead ends. Some had a problem with them. It's hard to articulate the work, it's such a long, multi-layered thing. It changes gears so often and it frustrates expectations and slips in and out of cliché and builds these spectacular and cinematic crescendos which are then in turn undermined. I should ask you: What is the core scene? What scene provides the beating heart of *The Enclave*?

TT I think there are two elements that are the keys. There is a lot of strong stuff but for me, cinematically speaking, the two strongest elements are, first: the descent into the IDP camp where in one shot we move from the macro-scale landscape, during which you might not really know what you're looking at before the shot moves in and ends on this really micro-scale shot of a man and his child and his

family and the journey in between which is fluid and continuous is this really weird discovery. I think this is very strong in the way that it comes in a critical moment in *The Enclave* where it links the two worlds of the real and the sort of fantasy that was created. And the second shot is the one of the hills in the distance which were shot on a really long lens, shot at a sort of early moment in the last trip where we had just come across a massacre and it was the first time I had seen dead bodies in the Congo and specifically that of the small child whose face had been speared. It was truly horrifying. On the way back from that we stopped to shoot this landscape and it seemed like it was a throwaway: it was a long pan across a series of hills, there were clouds, a mysterious aura. In the end we laid that down with the sounds of the attack that we were caught in the middle of at the end of the trip and I think that juxtaposition is really strong and it reminds me of these old 1950s 16mm documentaries and it relates it to all these weird places of the imagination. I find it funny that the shot gets re-appropriated as the visual reference for this bombardment; you don't really know what you're looking at, you see these clouds which could just as well have been smoke from bombs, mortars. So I think this shot speaks of the power of how one can play with imagery in an attempt to create the uncanny.

RM I remember shooting that with you and I had my large format camera out and you had your 16mm on a tripod doing slow pans, which are something of a cliché in an art film. I guess we stopped to get that landscape shot because we felt we hadn't adequately represented the burial of that massacre which we'd seen. Or something. There was something on our minds. Then we had a glimpse of this beautiful vista and it was sort of on the fag end of dusk, a very miserable day in terms of weather. Crowds of people were corralling into that village for protection, having heard of the massacre, and you could feel their fear, many of them were Hutus, and there was a lone policeman in that little place, who had to protect hundreds, perhaps a thousand people. That cold dusk coming across those hills, with low clouds clinging to the valleys, call me a Romantic, but it spoke to me, it communicated the situation. That was when I made the photograph titled *Because The Night*. It's a powerful image, for me, but I remember how I felt when I took the pictures. I exposed two sheets, with the intention of stitching them to create a panorama. I didn't feel particularly aroused by the image I had made and I turned to you and I said, 'What do you think Trevor,' and you said, 'I'm not feeling it,' in a very gruff way, and I agreed. And I think that was the start of a new approach.

TT Yeah I don't think I did another slow pan after that.

RM Because we spent the first trip doing slow pans. I think that first shot where we felt the inadequacy of our optics, our tools, and ourselves essentially, to say or do anything sufficient, that set the tone.

TT But then some of the best shots are the slow pans, with the 16mm. Because they become this relief. And you follow this line of horizon and there are so many dramatic points, there's the shot of the two mountains that look like breasts and it follows the line up and then falls down that cliff – and as the viewer watches and enjoys this ruggedness because of the nature – you know I just set the camera on the tripod without a camera plate, because we didn't have it that day actually!

RM You weren't connected to the tripod?

TT Yeah, when I said I wasn't feeling it [laughing]. It's because the tripod plate was still in Paris. I was too worried about the Steadicam before I left to remember the tripod plate. Actually that plate ended up coming down with the lens that Marine sent down with MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières].

RM Jesus! Well, that reminds me of that other landscape you mentioned, with the two mountains that look like breasts. Do you remember we rode for several hours down mud trails on the back of motos to reach that place and when I pulled my camera out I realised I had forgotten the lens plate adaptor. How stupid! I was about to pack it all up and call it a day when you pulled out your penknife and fashioned a provisional lens plate adaptor from a dark slide and some camera tape. That allowed me to produce that photograph, *Poison Glen*. Which in turn reminds me of that time in Gaza where you fell twelve feet from a concrete plinth, using the camera to cushion your fall. You were up all night rebuilding the damaged matte box with a metal file and pliers and you fixed the bloody thing. Tell me about the time in Rutshuro when you broke the special lens.

TT The only lens I ever broke in my life. So Ben had just arrived and I was holding the



lens in my hand, cleaning it and then it just slipped out of my hand, it didn't fall more than four inches, and it hit hard on the surface of the table so that the metal bent into the corner of the glass and chipped the back element of the glass. I just stared at it for a long time, very angry.

RM You were very, very defeated. You looked very angry with yourself, disconsolate, rather like an earthquake was about to create a tidal wave. I felt quite scared.

TT I just couldn't believe that I had done that. I always try to treat equipment as horribly as possible, to not really care about it because that would insure that it doesn't get broken. Because it's when you really worry about stuff that you actually break it.

RM And that was the key lens for the entire shoot, the perfect lens for the Steadicam.

TT That and the super-wide. Which also fell right on its face in the last shot I took on the trip.

RM You never told me that!

TT We were sitting on the beach in Rwanda, I can't believe I'm telling you this. It was the last shot. I was shooting the water landscapes, which actually went to make up the start of the piece. I was shooting those over a long period of time to capture different qualities in the lake. Lake Kivu is amazing because every five minutes it's got a different sort of climate. I was chatting there with John as he's drinking ten cups of coffee and having ten cigarettes and I step away from the camera and as I turned around I just watched it fall on its face and I just knew then that we were done in the Congo [laughing]. *Basta! Basta!* And I didn't shoot another shot. Hopefully the camera works still – well I guess we used it since then in Iceland.

RM Going back to those slow pans that skirt the hills and the rills, there's something really almost endearing about them because there's something homemade almost. The medium is such a small format.

TT Yeah, you recognise them from somewhere, you recognise them from these beautiful old 16mm films.

RM Like the New Wave. And early Herzog.

TT *Fata Morgana.* Or the film where he goes up into the mountains and does the time lapse?

RM Yeah about the potters in the south of Germany. A weird film, I don't know what he was trying to do. There's a lot of that. He puts it with some strange music. It was similar to what he did in the Whitney Biennial. It was the only piece in the whole Biennial that made me feel anything and in fact it made me feel so much I wept. He was tracking over an engraving.

TT Well he kept zooming in and had these slow motion shots of the cellist who did the music for it. He uses his music for all kinds of stuff. I had a similar reaction.

There's another shot in *The Enclave* that goes down into the lake. Water was really key the last time. I'm talking about the shot that gets us into Lac Vert, with the girl singing the lullaby. There's this tilt that leads down into the lake and then there's all these static shots of kids playing in the water with the sun glints and there's this moment when these boys are swimming in big arcs toward each other. And this was on a totally failed day, when we had turned around in the jeep at four in the afternoon because we knew we wouldn't get anywhere, and so we went to this lake. I knew I had only one roll of film but I saw this event happening, the swimmers moving toward each other, and I knew I had to keep rolling and not stop because it was just so beautiful. I think that was something important to try and find those moments that were so overwhelmingly beautiful and to translate them into becoming a part of this crazy palette that is the final piece. Because one has these extremes and I think that leads to the visceral reactions in the audience. And they walk away from it so conflicted because you have both ends of it. That day was incredibly important.

RM You describing this now I can sense a little bit of emotion in your voice. And I'd like to talk about people's emotional response to the work because contemporary art is often bereft of emotion, is deliberately as dry as possible, perhaps because emotion means *interest*, as Kant had it, and art should be *disinterested* I suppose. But fuck, people feel dirty if they're looking at art that makes them feel emotional. Some people.

TT We're fearful of going toward those places in ourselves and I think really good art can access that. It can become a sort of interface that allows us to (I mean usually you only experience these really intimate feelings with your significant other, a family member or when someone dies, you feel this deep emotion), but art becomes this sort of anonymous thing in which you can feel comfortable with being so open, I guess. I think that's one of the things that I love about art: you can approach works with emotion, I think that's ok. I think music works the same way.

RM Well music really hits you, it kills you – straight to the heart.

TT And when it becomes sentimental or emotionally manipulative, it is dangerous and with art it's the same thing. But one important element in *The Enclave* is the way that it's constantly undermining itself. So even though you do get emotionally invested in it at some point that gets cut down later, or there's a moment that's fetishizing the weaponry and all that, the Hollywoodesque shots of these soldiers with guns and it's building, building and it's very intense and you get sucked into this hyper-world and suddenly that gets taken away and all of a sudden you're in this very newsreel type footage, cinema verité or documentary style sequence so that there's this shift of gears which causes a change in the way you're viewing it. You have to question what you saw before constantly. That's very important.

RM That's right. I feel that the transition that leads into the sequence showing scenes from the battle for Goma, which is played in complete silence, this transition is a crucial hinge in the piece. It's also the only sort of audio intervention that we made into Frost's soundtrack, but it made such great sense and I think it's important that someone else did it. The dramatic suspense of the preceding scene, with tremendous bass and a piercing insect whine at the high end, this gets sucked slowly away over the course of six or seven seconds, starting initially with the bass, then the silence encroaching on the mids, until finally carrying away the peeping high-end of the soundtrack, leaving viewers in an embarrassed silence, so perfect you can hear the whir of the fans in the projectors. The dramatic spectacle of the preceding scene, where rebels anticipate combat on the banks of a fast flowing river, a scene depicted in high contrast with lurid colours – this is replaced by scenes of actual death and violence shot during a genuine battle, depicted in a milky low-contrast and rather gritty palette, This transition leaves me feeling hungover, in a way, the juicy drunken suspense for battle is replaced with sober tones of actual combat. Jerome did an amazing job in post-production getting these colours right.

TT Creating a really different look. And that footage [of Goma] was shot stylistically differently. With long lenses, handheld.

RM Really different. It shocks me when I see it, especially this scene which is so close, formally, to a predictable kind of classic reportage photography. Yet emerging from the rest of the piece, which is so very different in style and tone, it feels somehow refreshed. Tension, or resistance, is an important aspect of the piece. Indeed, in the Irish Pavilion there were three landscape photographs, which provided a kind of respite to the experience of watching the film installation, which was a much more aggressive affair. Those large landscape photographs, though they document sites in an on-going land conflict, seem very reflective and, in spite of their enormous scale, they're quite intimate, I think because of that huge level of detail in the print. I am struck by the disparity between film and photography, the latter being an essentially passive, mutable medium. A good photograph is endless, whereas film is durational. They're remarkably different ways of approaching the world, and I like the way the two forms worked against each other in the Irish Pavilion, captivating the viewer (or not) in such different ways, counteracting each other.

TT The hardest part about film is letting it become as enigmatic as photography can be.

RM In its own way.

TT That's the great challenge. Because the whole thing with motion picture is that its sequential, it's time-based, so there's consequence and there's expectation and all those things that go along with time-based media, whereas photography is made up of moments, frozen, and therefore all this poetic openness which you can't have with film which is constantly moving forward, building or moving away from something. It becomes narrative as well.

RM You've been talking about your core or favourite sequences of *The Enclave*, and its funny you didn't mention the one that for me really casts a spell across the whole thing, which is the propaganda rally. The M23's rally in a townhall in Rutshuru. For me, I don't know why I gravitate toward that as some sort of spine, perhaps because it's the least explained and yet the most mesmerising scene. The one that people are the least comfortable with.

TT I think to me that was certainly one of the more exciting things to film. Because there was a lot of people and there was a lot of things going on. When we were shooting I saw certain sequences that needed to be filmed. That entrance, for example. We had the whole idea of entering into spaces: so this was a perfect way to explore that: the doors open and we move all the way up onto the stage. There's this sort of violation that happens with the camera almost right away, it happens in this really bizarre almost MTV style, which I love, but I also think it's very complicated. It has this weird Lynchian feeling. And that was one of the first pieces that I was editing with, when we set up the multiple screens, that was the first sequence where I realised the potential for how you could use those screens to create multiple realities at the same time. We had shot things a couple of times, the same event essentially, but then it wasn't quite the same event, so then you play that back at the same time and then you have these two realities at the same time which the viewer has to look at and edit themselves, they have to make the connections. This idea of Kazarama [M23 Press Officer] bouncing around all these screens…

RM It works with the principles of cinema, and I'm not saying that in a glib way, but I think you're not working against those principles in this sequence, but working with them in a very cool way.

TT It became about the fact that in traditional cinema you have only a single edit, only one option which is the clean cut, but when you have multiple screens you can bring up other images and it's the viewer who becomes the editor which to me was an incredible realisation and I think for the piece – we talked about this a lot – the viewer can become the editor and who experiences and sees it in certain ways.

RM So what's the most intense scene in the whole piece?

TT Objectively or personally?

RM Both. Presumably they overlap, no? No I guess they don't. I'm thinking that your personal is the caesarian section child birth.

TT No. Not at all. It was intense but… when you have the camera in front of you it becomes a sort of filter, a sort of force field that what you see through the lens ceases to be reality and so it doesn't have the same impact.

RM That's why we can hang out of helicopters as long as we're looking through the ground glass.

TT Really the most intense thing was getting bombarded, when the camera wasn't there. When I wasn't shooting. Being in the middle of the actual conflict. Sitting in the UN base when we were surrounded by mortars and gunfire. That was the moment when we put the cameras down, we had to duck and cover.

RM You managed to crack out the Zoom audio recorder [laughing].

TT Yeah that was the first thing.

RM And we were both shouting at each other: have you got the Zoom? Is it on? We were very close to being killed. [Laughing]

TT We hear gunfire and the first thing to do is to grab the Zoom out of the backpack and start recording.

RM We both said that to each other. When I crashed two weeks ago [in the Congo], the first thing I thought about was: where's the mosquito repellent, where's the mosquito repellent! And I literally just almost had been killed. Got out of the car, mosquitos everywhere, we landed in a cloud of them, and I thought all I need was mosquito repellent and spent around ten minutes looking for it. Very petty though compared to what we went through. That sequence is fucking tremendous. When's the last time anyone ever made a binaural recording of pitched battle, from the no-man's land in between the opposing forces? With the sound of goats and birds? [laughing] Goats sounding slightly perplexed and birds sounding quite all right with the proceedings.

TT It's the best part of the soundtrack.

RM Apart from me having a freak out [laughing]. The thing that annoys me about that part is that I've seen *The Enclave* presented in three venues and the sound: nobody can really afford to get the good speakers (Meyer Sound), so the sound breaks down at that sequence because it's explosive. But in Krakow, because it was Unsound Festival, they had the really good speakers and it make my skin creep – I was back there! I had the flashbacks. By the way, how are your nightmares?

TT I still have crazy nightmares. I still have really violent dreams.



Richard Mosse (right) with Trevor Tweeten (left), inside the enclave held by General Janvier's APCLS rebels, March 2011. Photo by Robert Shamwami.

RM About what?

TT Firefights. Being in strange places, people starting to fight each other. I had some strange dreams after the Congo. Headless people running around with guns. Once I dreamed in Aerochrome. I was talking with Jerome the colourist and he said he still dreams in Aerochrome all the time. How are your dreams?

RM I had a lot of wild dreams, but the most intense were directly after our traumatic experience, maybe about three weeks after. You said you had some that involved Arab headscarf patterns.

TT There were crazy zombie firefights, and then we'd be suddenly in an Arab cityscape, maybe Jordan or Syria and there were all these buildings that turned into scarfs and they'd just flutter away, disappear in the wind. There was one really funny one: violent warfare was happening but then it turned out that the whole thing was an advertisement for Red Bull.

RM We spoke directly after the trauma [of being caught in the bombardment] of how bloody our dreams and flashbacks were. Flashbacks are more interesting in a way.

TT On July 4, recently, here in New York, I had just gotten back from Europe, and I realised I hate fireworks now. I lose my mind.

RM I can't stand them. I hit the ground recently in Berlin after someone lit a banger.

TT I realised how as a display, it is revolting.

RM You also realise how silly war is, how much of that type of war is about shock and awe, an assault on the senses rather than on the flesh. It's not so much about material damage, or casualties, but about fear. And I think fear is what turns the world around.

TT This is everyday life for a lot of people. A significant experience for us, and it was bound to happen at some point, but this is reality for a lot of people. Do you want to go back to a place like that?

RM No. Do you?

TT I have no desire. When I was there, I realised I had no desire to be part of it.

RM That was the unique aspect of that situation: we had lost agency for the first time. We totally lost it at that moment. And that was the scariest thing I ever encountered.

TT Yeah it didn't matter who you were or what you were doing. When the mortar falls in a certain place it doesn't matter.

RM They were the scariest things: the mortars. It must have been harder for the UN guys because they were ordered not to fire back.

TT Yeah but I'm sure they've experienced that before.

RM I know I'm never going back to that, which is a very privileged position to be in. I've had a hard time resolving my trauma. I know you're aware of this, but for the record it was a very weird year in terms of trauma.

TT The trauma of the UN base and being caught under fire or what?

RM I don't know, I was unravelling something in my mind.

TT What unravelled?

RM I don't know. My reality.

TT What was the reality?

RM The reality was that I was living in a fiction and the fiction stopped being a fiction and burst open. And. It's hard to discuss. Hard to talk about.

TT I'm curious: what was the fiction?

RM Well it was that all would go well. Remember we did all those walks into the bush on the first journeys? Well I guess that was the fantasy: that we'd continue to walk into the bush to meet armed groups who would be interested in telling us their stories, a bit like going into Peru to put a boat over a hill. You're your own enemy.

TT But I mean we saw the soldiers, they all had weapons. RPGs.

RM But the civilians came up to us, remember we came up that hill and crossed that rickety rope bridge, and we were shooting that and one of the teachers came up to us in Janvier's enclave and explained to me, I think you were there, and he said in English: 'You know you're lucky they're not shooting at us now', and he pointed at the hills, where the FARDC were, 'normally they shoot at us'. That's about as close as we got to the conflict in those days. Well this is a good moment to move on to the idea of the exotic. So what did you make of the propaganda rally? Very interesting in relation to the exotic.

TT That was an interesting thing about the way symbols are interpreted, and the way representing something, which to the Congolese was a way of celebrating the liberation of young women, by giving them money and showing how beautiful they were, but to a more Western audience this would seem much closer to a beauty contest or strip show kind of situation where the warlords are giving them money to strip in front of them or strut around. There's this dissonance between what the reality meant to them and what it means to us just from looking at it from our own perspective. And the camera floating around and the way they were reacting to it and building the show upon that, I think it was a big deal to have a white man with a Steadicam running around with a 16mm camera.

RM By anyone's measure! To have a Trevor with a flatcap with a Steadicam and an SR2 [laughing]. But it was a bit like the moment of the people looking at themselves in the mirror of the filter on the camera. It was a short circuit of reflexivity. John's input. Tell me what you think about that. It's a hard one to put your finger on.

TT I can easily put my finger on it. There was a time when I had arrived and then you had to go back to Paris for a few days to open a show. You had a month with John before I arrived and you guys had sat there and gone into long, dark Tembo [a local dark beer] conversations.

RM Oh yeah, a lot of drink was taken.

TT Mythology.

RM Modernism.

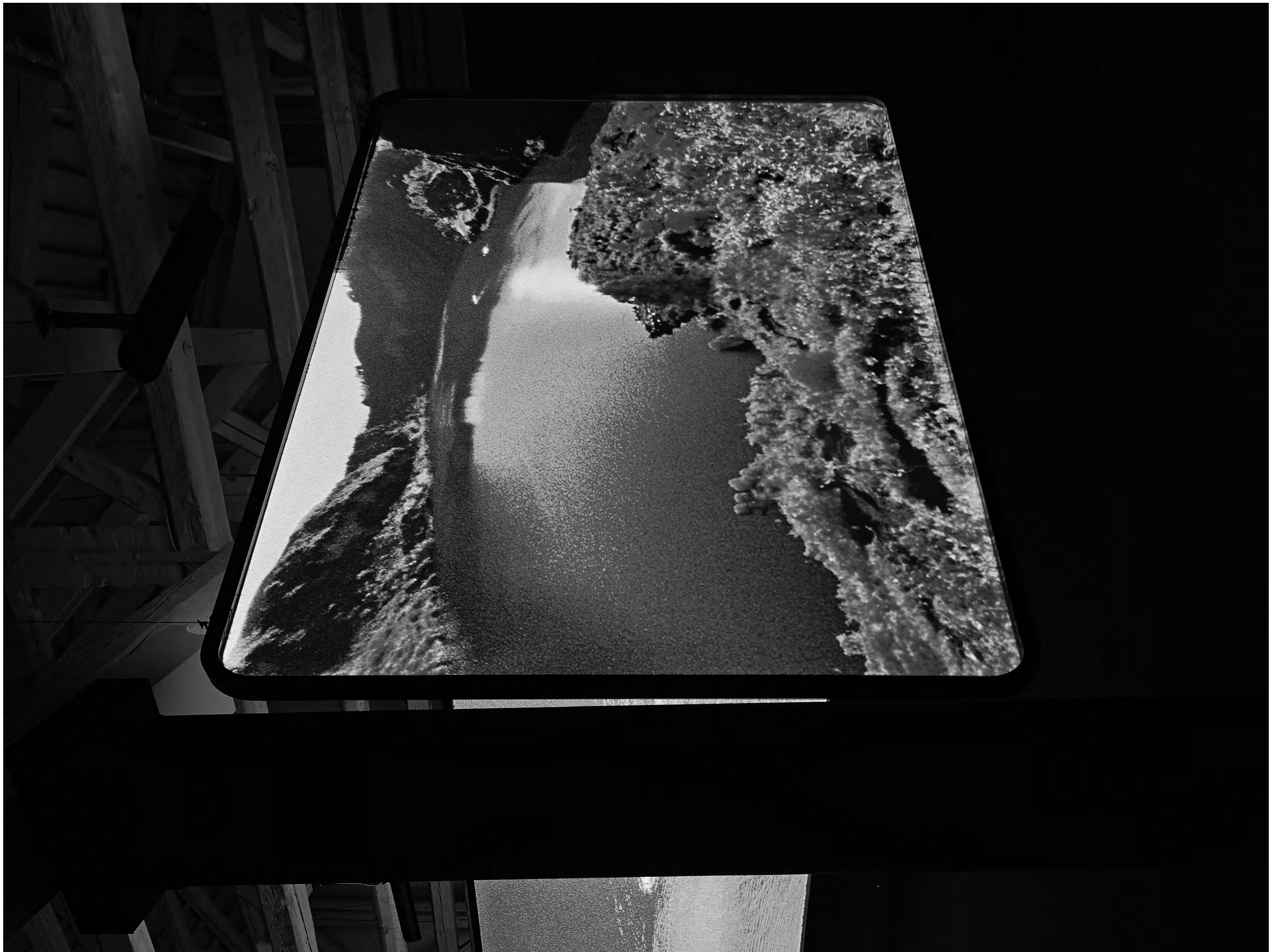
TT Yeah beautiful things. But you guys had in that time begun defining the idea of what *The Enclave* means. Just previous to us going back you had titled the whole idea 'The Enclave'. And I think John was very curious what that actually meant and you guys spent a lot of time talking about this, and then we all spent a lot of time talking about this. For me his input, coming out of his attempt to write a piece of fiction, built this idea of entering into something, this movement into things. And to me I relate that to what became a visual motive that expressed itself throughout the piece. There's this entrance into rebel territory. There's this entrance into the rally. It was something that informed the decisions I made.

RM The journey.

TT Yes. So there was this idea of trying to define *The Enclave* visually and for me John expressed that verbally in a way that made sense so that it was able to translate visually in the end.

RM Moving into something: that came





from our previous trips when we left Goma and would walk for days into enclaves, which didn't happen when he was there sadly. It didn't happen for any of us that time. It was still there, in terms of shifting realities.

TT Well we still went into the M23 enclave and went across front lines many times. And we saw that frontline shift and saw the ragtag government army and we saw them shifting back and then later the leftovers of the frontline once it passed. There was a lot of in and out, but it was more in a jeep not on foot.

RM It's about moving realities. It comes back to this idea you mentioned of the dream, when you came back the second time it was like New York had been the dream. I used to try and talk about logic but it's about realities, like changing timezones. I think that relates to the work of the fixers, with each fixer we worked with and we worked with several, each would have their own rhythm.

TT Realities though… I guess to me one of the original reasons I went to Congo was because I was interested in investigating the idea of realities and the idea of realities being transmitted through a camera onto a little window on someone's television and that becoming a sort of understanding of a place. Which doesn't seem adequate at all. Then in going to the place and trying to deal with that, I don't know if we got necessarily anywhere in transmitting some sort of a reality. But still it was a motivating factor.

RM Well we met the guy at the end of the opening at the Venice Biennale; the last person to leave the Pavilion was a Congolese guy from Lubumbashi who grew up in Bukavu who understood intimately the language, the landscape and the conflict and he was almost in tears. That was very cathartic. What was his name? Patrick Mudekereza. He was willing to participate in our strange fantasy and he seemed to understand it in his own way.

TT Well it's not like the fantasy came out of nowhere. I mean the work is created through a give and take with the place and the experience there: it's very much this push and pull. We often would go out on some kind of programme, which inevitably fell apart, and we ended up just going with things and letting ourselves being pulled into unexpected events, for example the funerals, or the beautiful scene from Lac Vert. Often the most interesting events happened out of a failed day, one where we didn't reach the intended destination. On the other hand, there are moments, which were specifically staged, for example Chiku walking into the lake with the gun on his back, which calls into question the documentary nature of the rest of piece. Together this seemed to express something of a reality to the Congolese man who saw it in Venice. Ultimately, though it's pretty bizarre – to attempt to express a place by playing it back in pink across multiple screens. Maybe there's something to the size of the screens, it's interesting we were just talking about scale and monumentality, and there was something to the screens and their size, the way they were presented in Venice, how they became windows, the camera being at eye level on the Steadicam and the screens being themselves at the horizon right where they'd be for the normal eye, I think that was really important because it gives you a sense of reality that conflicts with what you're actually seeing with your eyes, this pink jungle fantasy.



'It was beautiful to be able to describe space that way' Trevor Tweeten with Steadicam shooting behind the M23 frontline north of Goma, November 20, 2012.
Photo: Richard Mosse

RM A lot of people ask me how did I get the camera so high. I'm like: it wasn't really me behind the camera but I don't think it was higher than Trevor's eyes. Trevor's not a terribly tall man, he's not enormous. A lot of successful photojournalists are seven foot tall and that's really their strength. It strikes me that the camera is below eye level but it's that lens.

TT It's about eye level. The lens is wide angle so even if you're just slightly above where you'd see below it sort of distorts that.

RM I think a lot of people are shocked by the imagery whether or not it's pink because of the Steadicam and the wide lens and the medium. I'm talking about photographers. I don't think people have seen that for a while. When have you seen that in a film?

TT In a documentary? No I haven't, not that often. It's a weird marriage for sure.

RM It's a work of virtuosity, like I think that level of skill with a Steadicam is very unusual.

TT Well it's totally different than… I can't say I'm a very good Steadicam operator-

RM Ah ha, really?

TT Not in the traditional sense of being able to capture a moment in a cinematic way, like on a movie set you walk in and the camera goes here, here and here and darts around. This was a really different use of the Steadicam: it was more like dancing with what was going on. So there was a soldier walking toward me and I sort of move with him and it becomes this dance, whereas if I went toward him he might react in a certain way, and he might stop and then the camera stops and then he starts inching and the camera starts inching. What it really is: it's more about reacting to the events themselves and then the smoothness of it creates this dreamy feeling. And it allows me to – what I think I loved about the Steadicam was the idea of getting from point A to point B in a way which was totally watchable. Because it takes out all the jerkiness. It was beautiful to be able to describe space that way. For example there's a shot where we're moving through this abandoned soldier outpost where the frontline had passed through and there's this beautiful end to the sequence, overlooking this landscape onto Rwanda, and all the way you were able to travel through and see all these events, and you see it in such a way that is sort of hypnotic and you wouldn't be able to do that with any other tool except this Steadicam. So it really made possible a certain way of seeing space, of seeing these weird events which had taken place and documenting them in a way that was different from the standard slow pan or the simple shot of something happening.



'The idea of bringing the rolls of film and loading them in a back of a jeep. I mean, it's insanity' Trevor Tweeten changing the can of film in a dark tent in Virunga park, November 13, 2012. The process, done as it is blind, can take anywhere up to thirty minutes. Photograph: Jean-Petit

RM Why don't we see that very often in documentary?

TT It's the whole apparatus, it's crazy. It's a crazy thing to try and bring into a place like that. The idea of bringing the rolls of film and loading them in a back of a jeep. I mean, it's insanity. It's stupid! In the end it works and because of that insanity a certain style develops which really aids the whole piece.

RM Which brings me back to this idea of, I guess I can't find the right word, I guess the 'method'. The method became so preposterous that the magic crept into the journey. When we tried to start this interview by email, which didn't go anywhere, I was talking about Duchamp and what he was talking about in the new Calvin Tompkins book, setting up strategies for undoing the traditional responses. And I think all artists find their way by upsetting their conventional reactions through a certain methodology. Resistance. We gave ourselves a tremendous amount of additional resistance while we worked in Congo. We weren't exactly aerodynamic, not with that heat-sensitive film and the wooden camera on a tripod, or the old 16mm machine with its battery belt. Or those layers of coloured filters that would make the film impossibly slow to expose.

TT Yeah and a big part of that is challenging yourself. The first time we went to Congo I never would have wanted to bring a Steadicam because I think a Steadicam is a completely vulgar object.

RM And there were certain moments in the last trip where you rejected the Steadicam entirely and you said no, this is not the right time to use it.

TT Yeah, for sure because it wasn't. I don't know any other way of explaining that. You just kind of know when it's time to use it. It's the same reason why you choose a lens, when you look at a landscape you instinctually know which lens to grab in order to make the photograph?

RM Yeah.

TT It's the same thing whether something needs to be shot on handheld, Steadicam or tripod. It's about a reaction, how it's going to express itself. For example in the moments where I said no to the Steadicam they were the moments that were too real I guess.

RM I'm very interested in your statement that a Steadicam is a crass thing.

TT It's vulgar, disgusting.

RM Why is that?

TT It's hypnotic and it's sort of a vanity, it calls attention to itself when really there's nothing there. If the subject you're filming with the Steadicam becomes interesting only because of the Steadicam then the tool is totally useless. I don't know, I think it's completely overused. Just like editing on MTV – people use it to get someone's attention as opposed to actually having something to say. I hate it.

RM Do you think it works in *The Enclave* because it's an inversion of expectations?

TT I hope so.

RM Against all the odds…

TT For me, I came to really love it actually in those instances, I loved what it allowed me to do, and allowed the piece to do. We talked about this before: the movement down from the macro to the micro, I think that's incredible to have been able to do. I don't mean that in a vain way [laughing].

RM No, it was very cool, I'd not seen anything like it.

TT We'd discussed it a lot, filming in the camps. You had been there with John and had been to the IDP camps, I know initially I had thought: oh no refugee camps, children, it was really hard to try and conceptualise how you could film that in a way that was interesting and avoid the TV news cliché. And I think ultimately this shot, which is just a single shot, moving down the hill, really does something that you don't see anywhere else. It becomes a curious journey. Because it's on a real scale in real time without edits, when you see it on a big screen it's as if you were there. This is problematic as well because you have strong music and you've got this intimate moment at the end with the man and the child.

RM I always have trouble choking down my tears when that scene occurs.

TT But that moment wears itself on its sleeve. And that's where it becomes problematic.

RM The proximity to cliché.

TT The proximity to being manipulative. And so at that moment it bursts open, but then it's closely followed by… what? By the massacre burial, birth and house moving.

RM A very complicated scene.

TT To me, I love that scene, because it's the most chaotic.

RM It's a complete disjunction with the previous scene.

TT I love it because it's the real version. There are these different versions of violence throughout the piece: there's the simulation of violence, there's the sound of violence, there's the visual aftermath of violence, but then there's also this mo-

ment of violence which is the lives these people (the refugees and IDPs) are forced to live which means having to move all the time to escape war. Which is being born into these conditions. Which is eating food on the go, lacking resources and access to education. These sort of things which go into making a violent sort of existence, violent in terms of the everyday struggle to survive. And to me the chaos of that whole scene – there are all these things going on from daily life, birth, death, eating food – perhaps it's cliché but at the same time I think it's really interesting because it's so disjointed.

RM Yeah, it's very disjointed. It's a house of cards of meaning and that's always the danger with an artwork, when you build these houses of cards that make sense to you. And I think that was the trickiest scene for me to accept because I felt we would lose people. Maybe that's the crux of the piece because that's where the viewer has to work the hardest. And it's all around you. It really is the most disorientating scene.

But in terms of the audio it's also more disjointed because the scene before it was so melodious.

TT It was really harmonic and unified. You see all these overwhelming shots which are united and that's powerful. The scene is very emotionally devastating but also uplifting. Because you're feeling things, you're being pushed in certain directions. And then that falls apart, it transitions into these daily life things and it becomes really challenging and I think that's great, I love this contrast. I think it would be a shame for people to walk into *The Enclave* and just be able to feel things simply based on the images without being challenged at the same time. Without being confused somehow, without being disoriented, without feeling lost.

RM But at the end of the opening in Venice, after the piece was finished, one of the things you said was: 'Well that's it, that's great everyone just feels so emotional'. But I'm left wondering: what else is there, everyone's just feeling emotional, what the fuck?

TT Well this is the problem of the piece. I mean it's the same problem with a lot of these liberal documentaries where people feel like they've done something by watching it but really they've mostly just sat in darkness, they've done absolutely nothing. Maybe they have a conversation afterwards with their friends.

RM It's not just about not doing anything, it's also about a stigmatisation of a place, it's not ultimately about one thing it's about many things, which are not all about conflict. And that's how it's a hard problem to deal with as a documentarian or a photojournalist.

TT It's challenging for sure. I had a hard time coming around from the Congo trying to rationalise the experience, and ultimately I think every society is on the brink of this. We saw this in Europe not so long ago.

RM Where, in former Yugoslavia?

TT Yeah for sure.

RM But it's almost like if you're an intelligent documentarian you're not allowed to represent violence. And if you're a white documentarian you're not allowed to represent Congo.

TT No but wait, I was thinking about this earlier today. When we were in Iraq, we made these really boring videos-

RM They're not that bad.

TT No but they're boring, intentionally boring.

RM They are boring.

TT I love them because of that, the banality of those videos: they're painterly in a way. They're very slow, documenting that landscape. This relationship to architecture. And they never cut to the throat. And I wonder if that's because we didn't see any violence? Because in Congo when we saw violence we did film it. We filmed bodies.

RM You didn't film the massacre.

TT I chose not to. I didn't want to shoot the baby.

RM Why was that?

TT I didn't feel right about it.

RM Why?

TT I couldn't bring myself to do it.

RM Why not?

TT I don't know. It didn't feel like a good thing to do.

RM Was it taboo?

TT It wasn't about taboo. It was about respect to the environment we were in.

RM You feel it could have been transgressing those people?

TT Yeah I guess to some degree, but also myself. So maybe it was taboo for me. For myself.

RM That decision set in process a whole chain of decisions after it. I mean the whole experience was seminal for us. Ultimately if you had of shot it, what would it have been? Underexposed. It was very dark in there.

TT It would have been underexposed.

That child was probably one of the most horrifying things I've ever seen.

RM Absolutely.

TT That and maybe the soldier who had his, his body had been blown…

RM Yes, was his head down in a trench?

TT Yeah. That was…it was like on some sort of piece of concrete. It was just…horrifying.

RM I remember you being disturbed by that and I didn't go around to have a look from where you were looking from.

TT It was too much. It was too much.

RM Why, was the head blown off?

TT Yeah you could see into his brain, the thing is, it was like…the must vulgar part of it was that I related to it as if it were a movie or something. It was a scene I'd seen before in a film but this was some real human being and it's crazy that this is how we relate to the world, through these images we've been exposed to.

RM Totally. Which is why nobody seems to… we need to be so careful as image-makers. But also not so careful, also feel our originality. I don't know. What do you make of Frost's intervention? It wasn't overt, he didn't tell you what to do with it. He said: look here's what I did, if you like it, use it, if you don't, fuck off. He was very respectful and minimal in terms of collaboration. But when the work was finally used it was really operatic in a grand sense, even though he was deliberately being very restrained in how he composed. He understood that the imagery would be so vivid and aggressive that his work needed to hold off. Yet when we put it with the footage, the sound became really extraordinary.

TT His work was amazing. I think no matter how it was mixed in it would have been very powerful. I think he knew that we had the best sense of how it was going to fit and he trusted that. And that's the strength of a good collaborator: letting go when you need to let go. In the first place, he made very strong pieces that really complimented and also motivated the editing process. Sound is really integral to the way one edits and to have that stuff that he provided was very important. It set the tone. We were watching the rally with some of the droning music, which is what ended up being with it in the end and we realised how powerful that would be.

RM Yeah I remember I edited the trailer on an airplane, the one I approached the Irish government with, it all happened quite quickly and the beauty about it was that I laid down the mock battle sequence and the most wild thing was after I laid it all down once without thinking really very hard about it, I realised: oh my god, the sound synced up with the image accidentally. It was a total mistake. What are the chances of that? A million to one.

TT And that happened three more times during the editing process.

RM [laughing] Yeah! I remember.

TT I think we laid down that piece one more time and it happened again!

RM [laughing]

TT The other sync moment was the guy doing the Mai-Mai blessing.

RM The prophet.

TT He's blessing. And that synced. And then one more time with the hammering and the houses.

RM That was the wildest thing.

TT We threw some audio in there and literally the hammering, the pounding, which was like impossibly synced, the recorder was something that Ben had taped and nailed to the inside of the house which was being ripped apart and at some point during this four hour ordeal I walked inside and filmed and somehow–

RM [laughing]

TT In the four hours this lined up between the audio and the video.

RM I think there's some weird spirit. We're haunted I have to say. What was in your head when you were about to be killed?

TT Mostly just a desire to be anywhere else.

RM And then?

TT An acceptance of being completely out of any control.

RM You weren't going through the motions of saying goodbye to yourself or your friends or your family?



Richard Mosse and Trevor Tweeten right after the fall of Goma to M23 rebels. November 21, 2012 (Tweeten's 29th birthday).
Photo: Nkinamubanzi Karim

TT That would have been useless.

RM Well presumably anything would have been useless if you're out of control?

TT Yeah except for acceptance.

RM So you were working on acceptance?

TT I guess I was just nearing a form of rationalisation.

RM I was working on – I was trying to work out if I still believed in god. And I quite quickly realised, within five minutes, that I don't. I thought should I pray now? And I realised: no it's no use. And then I thought, well who do I want to say goodbye to?

TT I guess my mind didn't go that far down the rabbit's hole. Maybe. I didn't really believe we were going to die necessarily. I mean I remember being really terrified, and I remember really loathing the sound of the mortar coming in. That was the worst thing: the sound of the mortar falling before it hit. It was a good two seconds before it exploded that you heard the incoming whistle, you know?

RM Yeah. It comes at you screaming.

TT Before it actually hits and that was the worst. I guess even in that time, I don't know if I really believed, I just knew that I didn't want to be there.

RM I was certain that we were going to be killed. And I know it sounds really kitsch actually, but I was certain that you were going to be killed before your birthday which was the next day and this sounds really dreadful and sentimental and I'm sorry, I'm sorry but it's not! And I was filled with all kinds of manner of awful thoughts, but the one that overwhelmed me the most was that Trevor has to live to see his birthday.

TT No well this is the thing: ultimately you were in the position where you were caring about these people. You were the reason why we came and were there.

RM Totally stressed out about everything.

TT And I respect this very much. I wouldn't want to be in that position.

RM I really almost slit my throat in advance. But I was like terrified that something would happen to someone else for nothing. For NOTHING! Really, what were we there for?

TT That's what John said: it's all in the name of kunst.

RM Kunst? Yes! But imagine if someone lost a limb for nothing.

TT Yeah but what do the journalists lose limbs for? Or their lives?

RM For JOURNALISM!

TT Yeah but what the fuck is journalism?

RM Yeah, well that's a fucking moot point.

TT Why is that a moot point?

RM It's a belief system.

TT So is art.

A Conversation Between Richard Mosse and Ben Frost

February 28, 2014, Reykjavik, Iceland

RM So what did you go to Congo to find?
BF That is a very fucking big question. Weirdly enough when you and I started talking and you invited me to go down there, I think the main reason for going in the first instance was probably because it was somewhere I would never go on my own, of my own accord. I would never have a reason to go there, so the fact that I was being given an angle was probably the main reason. But then I think... I was thinking about this today actually: the pivotal moment when the kind of gravity of the situation sunk in, was on that first day and we drove by that funeral and I said 'Stop, let's go back there,' and we reversed and went back. It was very much like I felt I was outside of the situation, I was this observer. Through that whole funeral experience, we were standing there and the women splayed themselves for the camera. I felt like I was floating outside the reality that we were dealing with, and the thing that brought me back was this moment when I was standing in the grave.
RM Did you actually get into the grave?
BF Yeah. I remember the moment my boots were getting filled with dirt, and it snapped me into exactly this moment, like a huge slap: you're here! I think from that moment on my reason for being there was to document exactly that experience. Every single person in my vicinity was focused on the burial, and up until that moment it wasn't affecting me because I was still somehow outside it. Surrounded, but still an alien object in the space.
RM Well we descended from nowhere. In that respect, it was like a science fiction or something.
BF Absolutely.
RM And they totally accepted us at the funeral, without question.
BF Remember on the first edit when Trevor is panning across the people and I'm like two foot taller? That summed it up, that moment.
RM Because of the way the film depicts white skin, you actually rather looked like an alien.
BF I was like: 'What am I doing here? What am I doing here?' And listening to the whole space through the headphones there's a weird distance, it's like a lens that you're using to hear the situation.
RM That shot of you in the crowd – we should have kept it in.
BF That recording actually, the track that accompanies the house moving, burial, and childbirth, that particular recording is interesting. Amongst all of the work that we did there, that one recording is quite unique in the sense that it's the only true instance of me cross-fading from one thing into another, using the microphone as an instrument. So you have the really heavy drums of the funeral procession and then you have the guy digging in the grave. They're two separate recordings that have been laid over. That was me pointing my microphone at the drums and then getting into the grave, shielding the sound of the drums with my body and the dirt landing on me, so it's this shift of focus as a purely documentary gesture.
RM Like the camera itself. It's fascinating. I didn't realise it was like pulling focus. I always wondered about that track because it seemed so perfectly...
BF It's a mono recording!
RM When initially you first landed, as the alien, you insisted on using your iPhone, and I was like, 'Come on use the digital recorder.' But you were like: 'Ah, the iPhone is great!'
BF It kind of is.
RM I kept shaking me head, 'Who is this guy?'
BF The thing about the iPhone is that it's a much smaller device: it's much easier to hide. But I quickly realised that in Congo we didn't require stealth. My perception was that when the camera was on people in Congo they just stepped it up a notch, and it became even more theatrical.
RM Me and Trevor were up with Mai Mai Yakutumba in South Kivu before you came on board, that was his first trip, but they enacted a simulated battle which is in *The Enclave*. After that we had such limited film stock and the midday sun was so brutal we just couldn't shoot. We were in the middle of nowhere. They're nomadic because they're hunted by the FARDC. Anyway, they did these Nollywood-style episodes, basically like soap opera dramas where they demonstrated different episodes such as, 'This is what the FARDC do to us', and 'This is what they do to civilians, they extort them at the crossroads.' They got really into these episodes, all camped up.
BF So weird. You know what's really interesting about those recordings of the simulated battle, as recordings, is that they're so theatrical. Even with the violence of the sounds they're making and the violent context, there's so much joy in what they're doing, like I feel I can hear the smiles on their faces, which is fascinating. It's a funny thing when you record a human voice how you can almost hear the expression on the face. If someone says something with a smile it changes the way it sounds, whereas it's different with a frown. It adjusts the whole larynx, it changes the whole meaning of the thing which is being pushed through the vocal cord. More than anything, that's what makes that particular recording so disturbing. How much fucking fun they're having. Just thinking about the whole... the way I made it was... not cerebral. It was reactive. And in hindsight I probably should have thought about it more.
RM It was intuitive. How else can you make art?
BF I don't know. I'm not sure.
RM Why do you think you should have thought about it then?
BF Let me rephrase that: I don't think I should have thought about it more. I just wonder what would have happened if I thought about it more, if I had done something different. What I hear in that music now, in that sound, is that it has two gears, it has two speeds: there's this one aspect of it which is purely like a documentary of an event, which is to say pointing the microphone at something and capturing it and whether that's me doing it or you or Trevor or Abdu, it's a purely journalistic gesture. Here's this thing that's happening and I'm going to capture it. But then the other side of it is this weird aural parallel or counterpart to the Steadicam, this sort of floating unanchored presence that meanders through an unnatural sonic space and is not affected by what's around it. Which like I say intuitively, in the end, is like everything the camera is doing with the Steadicam: where it has movement and it's not a jagged movement, like it has a weird spirit, it floats, and the sound does that as well. But it's a very alien presence: it creates a disturbance between what you're looking at and the nature of that sound. It's a very voyeuristic gesture, musically.
RM Voyeuristic? Like a disembodied gaze?
BF Yeah I think so. It's not connected: it's not connected to the other things around it. Remember when we were stuck on the road and I walked off up into the jungle and I stood there in the middle of those reeds, recording the sound, and the recording is so textural? You can hear schoolchildren in the background. Remember the ones that stole my shirt?
RM No I don't.
BF They stole my clothes while I was recording. I took my shirt off because I was so hot, and I was standing in the reeds, and when I came back my shirt was gone and I saw a seven year old girl wearing it.
RM That was on the way to the Haut Plateau.
BF Exactly. Another aspect to the sound, it sort of permeates the whole landscape: it doesn't belong. One of the main themes that has emerged to me in the score of *The Enclave* is the alien presence of myself.
RM The sci-fi, to go back to that.
BF It was never a conscious thing at the time but the sounds that always worked



Ben Frost helps push a stuck jeep on the road to Kibabi, South Masisi, November 2012.
Photo: Richard Mosse



Trevor Tweeten, John Holten, Ben Frost and Richard Mosse, South Masisi, November 2012.
Photo: Abdu Namula Jean Bedel

well were those that were synthesised from a non-space. I mean I processed that choral stuff and all kinds of things, like the kids singing. I was processing, then revealing the source again. Or revealing the source and then sort of obfuscating it at some point later on. But then there are other elements which are sort of purely synthetic and exist outside of that reality.

RM So what do you think the two worlds are? You have the documentary, and then what's the other one? Floating, haunting, disembodied, spectral… What is that?

BF I think you can read it in two ways. For example during the propaganda rally sequence I think that that note, that synthetic element reveals the nature of the event. It reveals the actual meaning of that event, which is something very dark, a series of fucked up images.

RM But you didn't write that composition for that visual.

BF No.

RM So for example let's take that particular track: how did you compose that, what happened?

BF John and I woke up that one morning in Rutshuru. The first day after I arrived from Uganda, and you and Trevor were hungover so we decided to go for a walk. I had my iPhone with me and we were walking past a school and could hear kids singing inside. John and I, without really discussing whether or not it was ok, we found ourselves standing outside the classroom of this primary school, me holding an iPhone up to the window recording these kids. Then the teacher came out and was like: 'What the fuck are you guys doing here?' and it was at that moment that we were just like, 'Oh shit, sorry, I guess we should have asked.' After we apologised, the teacher brought us into the classroom and the kids sang for us. They sang a song about the war. That's how I made that piece, all the tonal aspects are playing off the kids, they're the ones who decided what key it was in.

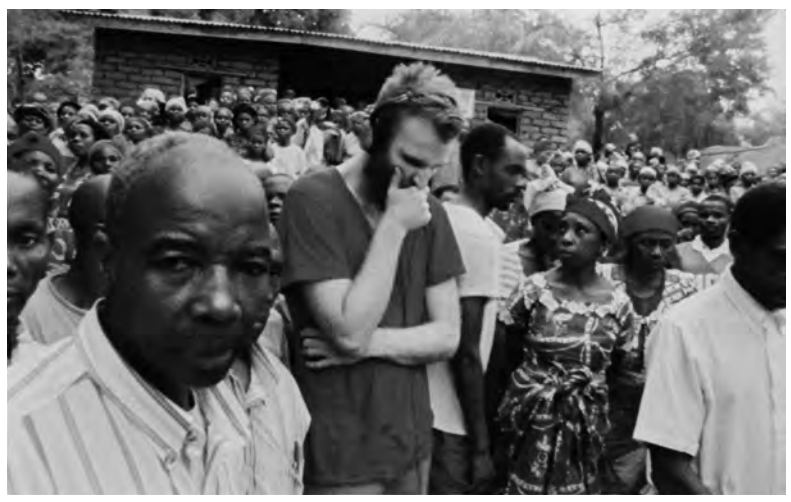
RM Oh really? So that doesn't get skewed when you modulate it? What do you actually do to it?

BF I process it. Like if you take an image and play with contrast. So you have an image with some shadow but then you up the contrast to the point where the shadow becomes overwhelmed and that's basically what I was doing with that recording of the kids, taking the subtle intonations and harmonic information and increasing it to the point where it became this droning.

RM Do you mean that the contrast is increased to the extent that it reveals the medium or it reveals the nature of the event?

BF Both.

RM So it's a deconstruction in a way?



'Listening to the whole space through the headphones there's a weird distance, it's like a lens that you're using to hear the situation.' Ben Frost caught in the frame during a funeral in South Masisi, March 2012.

Does this happen through distortion?

BF No it's a delay actually. So if you have this one event [clicks fingers] and then you repeat that same transient event a hundred times, it goes from being a single sliver to becoming a blurred repetition…

RM Like slow-mo?

BF Kind of.

RM But it still has contours or it's just flat?

BF Yeah but then you blend that against the original so it becomes a sort of, like slow motion but overlaid against the original speed.

RM Like phasing. So again there's this dialectic we're talking about, hard and soft, black and white, documentary and spectral. The real time and the frozen. Why did you decide to do that?

BF That's a good question.

RM You may not have an answer. But you did it. I have to say for the record, that you came back and you knocked it out and I was absolutely overwhelmed. It wasn't just that piece it was also the track for the IDP camp scene as well, right?

BF Yeah.

RM All in one morning. You returned from a stroll in the M23 enclave with a Zoom recorder and we were all sitting in Ana Guesthouse and while we're all chatting away, you joking away with us with your headphones on, you produce in a single hour – how many tracks did you make that morning? And shortly after, I sat down and put on the headphones and I was blown away. Was that like a recurring methodology for all the tracks or just those two or what?

BF Yeah, there's always these moments in the classic Hitchcock where he deliberately places himself in the shot. He'll walk across the scene, everyone knows what Hitchcock looks like: big fat guy, bald, and he'll be the bus driver or whatever and reveal himself and it's an interesting dramatic gesture where he's basically saying: here I am, look behind the curtain. You destroy the illusion. I think in the audio for *The Enclave* there are a lot of moments like that where it has a synthetic, heavily processed abstraction that allows you to be unaffected by the monumental nature of what you're hearing. It's working on a much deeper, visceral level but I think every now and then it reveals exactly what it is that you're hearing.

RM This reminds me of the sequence on the boat with the sailor where he's trying to look at the lens while pretending it's not there.

BF While I was sleeping on the roof!

RM Yeah we were both sleeping on the roof. Trevor was working hard. Alongside that scene, we ended up using that beautiful insect track. It's not droning. You get a little droning later in the piece. It's very placid, peaceful and reflective. But there's one moment where you fumbled with the recorder and you hear the microphone! I always said we must edit that out. But then I learned to love it and realised that this was the real focus of the whole track and you can barely hear it, it's just a little tap, I think you touched a wire or something.

BF It's so fucking sensitive that thing.

RM I know. I'm surprised you don't know about shotgun mics.

BF Well the thing about the shotgun mic is that it's a blessing and a curse because you can miss so much as well. I don't know.

RM But just to go back to the Hitchcock thing you made me think of the fact that I show up in *The Enclave* several times. [laughing]

BF Yes, it's like Where's Waldo.

RM What's your favorite track of the piece?

BF That's a good question. I think I have different favourites every time I see it. The one that comes to mind now is the one with the house.

RM Really?

BF Just because of the level of insanity inherent to the way that it was recorded. The fucking gaffer's tape holding the microphone to the inside of an unrooted wooden building and then one hundred people picking it up and dragging it across a lava field, it's so violent. Actively violent. It's a terrible, terrible recording. It distorts all the time. [laughing]

RM It's fucked. It's so disjointed, and in the edit it destroys the beautiful harmony of the preceding scene in a great way.

BF I think for very different personal reasons, all the Lac Vert recordings are very special for me just because of how that was the most controlled recording situation that we had when I was there. By the time we got to that stage I was more in control. Basically, I asked around for people who had songs. I asked for songs and her brother put her hand up and said 'my sister'. I only had a slight sense of what it was they were singing and talking about at the time. It wasn't until we got the translations back six months later that we understood. That's a weird judgement to make, you're bearing witness to this thing but not fully understanding what it is you're capturing and then months later–

RM It's a bit like being a sci-fi ghost. Like those Human Rights Watch people go in and do interviews and have procedures and they know what they have come to listen for and document, but we were really interlopers in that respect. So is *The Enclave* a tragedy Ben? A very self-conscious question.

BF A good one. Well, if it's not what else is it?

RM Is it in the minor key? Are there any moments when it's in the major key?

BF It's not sternly minor. I think musically it's just really unresolved. I deliberately never allowed it to resolve as I felt that's a very cinematic gesture, to resolve. In my mind I always imagined it as a non-linear construction. There's not much resolution in there at all.

RM It tallies very nicely with the piece itself, which doesn't tell you what to think. Yet there are moments in there in the dark, surrounded by all those screens, when I become overwhelmed with emotion, and I begin to weep, even though I've seen *The Enclave* many times.

BF Are they always the same moments?

RM That's a good question. What always gets me is the long tracking shot through the IDP camp and then it turns to the road and the screens go and my heart just breaks and I think that's a dangerous moment in the piece.

BF Because it's a money shot?

RM It's a money shot but it also encroaches on cliché in a certain respect. But it's a genuine narrative, an extremely hard narrative, very hard and lived by the people depicted, and which needs desperately to be told, to be brought into the world by any means necessary.

Piercing the Screen of the Vegetable Kingdom: Remarks on Infrared

Entering the exhibition, Travis sees the atrocities of Vietnam and the Congo.... Captain Webster studied the prints. They showed: (1) a thick-set man in an Air Force jacket, unshaven face half hidden by the dented hat-peak; (2) a transverse section through the spinal level T-12; (3) a crayon self-portrait by David Feary, seven-year-old schizophrenic at the Belmont Asylum, Sutton; (4) radio-spectra from the quasar CTA 102; (5) an antero-posterior radiograph of a skull, estimated capacity 1500 cc; (6) spectroheliogram of the sun taken with the K line of calcium; ... To Dr. Nathan he said, "And all these make up one picture?"
J.G. Ballard, The Atrocity Exhibition, 1970 1

The chromatic has a strange duplicity and if I may be permitted such language among ourselves: a kind of double hermaphroditism. A strange claiming, connecting, mingling, neutralizing, nullifying, etc., and furthermore a demand on physiological, pathological, and aesthetical effects which remains frightening...
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, A Theory of Colours, 1810 2

With a significantly slower life than images constructed by photojournalism, images in the artworld can consider problematic imagery from an oblique angle that strategically allows for a different temporality of seeing. The typical typological differences between the documentary image and the art image are based on boundaries normally drawn between effect/affect or fact/fiction, but this is a misconception that art is more emotional or manipulative than press images or that ideological narratives are the exclusive strategy of propaganda. Both forms of the image can evoke despair or dazzle with spectacle, sublimate into icons or reveal the structure of the everyday. Rather their difference fundamentally functions within the realm of speed: the life cycle of the periodical is faster than the arc of the artworld. Infrared photography, in particular, pushes the notion of slowness into the materiality of light, for when we look at such false-colour representations, technically speaking, the only difference is their subtle shift in wavelengths: slower oscillations of electromagnetic energy exuding from decaying matter.

What follows is a historical projection of the infrared as entwined with photography on six screens: astronomy, camouflage detection, spirit photography, espionage, environmental sciences and forensics.

1 J.G. Ballard. The Atrocity Exhibition. London: Fourth Estate, 2006. pp.12, 133.

2 Quoted on p.62 in Rudolf Arnheim. Visual Thinking. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1969.

1. Calorific Rays from the Stars

Art does not reproduce the visible, it renders visible.
Paul Klee, Creative Credo, 1920 3

The discovery and measurement of infrared coincides with the birth of photography, but it took another hundred years to pass before the two processes were united. Attributed to the astronomer Friedrich Wilhelm Herschel, who accidentally discovered the infrared in 1800 during an experiment to establish a scientific control measuring the temperatures of the different colours in the visible spectrum, Herschel measured "empty" air, or the region just beyond the red end of the spectrum as parsed by a prism from sunlight. Noticing that the temperature was higher outside the rainbow of colour, he theorized there must be electromagnetic energy out of the range of the visible senses that he called "calorific rays." It wasn't until ten years after the invention of photography that a specific device was invented to measure infrared energy: the thermopile. Today, the measurement of infrared energy from stars continues and is important in the visualizing of the deepest and oldest reaches of the universe, rendering NASA photos in psychedelic false-colours.

3 §1."Kunst gibt nicht das Sichtbare wieder, sondem macht sichtbar." Paul Klee. "Schöpferischer Konfession" (1920). in Kunst-Lehre. Aufsätze, Vorträge, Rezensionen und Beiträge zur bildnerischen Formlehre Leipzig: Reclam Verlag 1987. pp. 60-66.

2. Piercing the Screen of the Vegetable Kingdom

Military intelligence has perpetually struggled to rival with natural phenomena in terms of power and duration... the night must not mask objects or troop movements, neither must fog hamper the progression of soldiers; one must pierce through the screen of the vegetable kingdom with infrared rays or defoliants that renew, for the forest's mask, the effect of flares on nocturnal darkness. Anticipation and ubiquity are war's requirements, and distance or prominent obstacles must not impede intelligence or reconnaissance. On the one hand, one must see all and know all, and, on the other, must create masks and screens infinitely tighter than any nature offered.
Paul Virilio, Bunker Archeology, 1975 4

(The wrong picture confuses, the right picture helps.)
Ludwig Wittgenstein. Remarks on Colour. 1950 5

Already by WWI black-and-white infrared photography participated in the new field of aerial reconnaissance, though at first it was used primarily for cutting through hazy conditions since infrared light scatters less than visible light, creating a sharper and deeper penetrating image. 6 Most dramatically, the chlorophyll found in healthy vegetation absorbs blue and red light, but reflects green and (surprisingly even more so) infrared rays and therefore found quick adaptation into the novel field of camouflage. By WWII, military field manuals instructing in camouflage strategies warned of infrared photography and suggested countermeasures such as paints with matching spectral properties, thus rendering traditional black-and-white infrared film obsolete. 7 As war departments were publishing countermeasures to infrared, in the typical weapons development game of cat-and-mouse, Kodak scientists filed in 1942 for a patent called "camouflage detection." The patent outlined the first colour infrared process and already created the signature fiery magenta landscapes most associated with infrared today. 8 Commercially, the trademark for this infrared film by Kodak became Aerochrome, since "Aero" signified its primary aerial use and "chrome" was the suffix identifying transparency film. Eventually, conquered on the market by the Eastman Kodak company, Technicolor is one of the original trademarks of colour film pre-dating Aerochrome, but it is burned into the cultural imagination as the colour of film since it introduced colour as a major stylistic contribution to cinema in landmark films such as Gone With The Wind. 9 Significantly, the signature Technicolor films used the affect of over-saturated reds since the technical development of the new process overcame the traditional limitations of silver halide crystals, specifically their inability to absorb the lower end of the spectrum of light – the exact same problem when developing infrared film. The chemistry between art and military are double bonded however, and as one would expect catalysed for minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, who early in the war "had the opportunity to see very recent American films – particularly Gone with the Wind – which the German navy salvaged from intercepted Allied Ships. Compared with the American Technicolor, the German process struck Goebbels as nothing short of shameful.... At the height of total war, it seemed to Goebbels and to Hitler himself that the rescuing of the German cinema from black-and-white would provide it with a competitive edge against the tonic power of American productions." 10 Yet, it wasn't until the Vietnam War that colour infrared film was refined. 11 Unlike its black-and-white forerunner, colour infrared film was always about death. Developed during the wars, for war, colour infrared film's main purpose was detecting dying foliage, cut and stacked to cover military assets in the jungle. As Werner Herzog delineates: "Just as there is a clinical death, there is a tropical death." 12 Technicolor rendered the burn of Apocalypse Now, infrared renders The Heart of Darkness in irradiating Aerochrome.

4 Paul Virilio, Bunker Archeology, Trans. George Collins. NYC: Princeton Architectural Press,1994. p. 43.

5 Ludwig Wittgenstein. Remarks on Colour / Bemerkungen Über Die Farben. Editor G.E.M. Anscombe. Trans. Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1997. §III.20.

6 U.S. Govt. Annual Report of the Director Bureau of Standards to the Secretary of Commerce for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1919. United States National Bureau of Standards, 1919, p. 115-119. "Detection of Chromatic Camouflage" is however mentioned in passing in this 1919 government report but field implementation was restricted to filters as the complex chemistry of photography was still experimental even at the end of the war in 1919. pp. 117,119,136.

7 US War Department Field Manual. FM 5-20: Camouflage, Basic Principles. February 1944. pp. 9, 20.

8 E. E. Jelley et al. Camouflage Detection. US Patent # 2,403,722. Filed Oct. 24, 1942. Awarded July 9, 1946; Mark Monmonier. Spying with Maps: Surveillance Technologies and the Future of Privacy. Chicago: Chicago U P, 2002. Ch. 3 "Eyes on the Farm."

9 While Paul Simon's nostalgic 1973 pop song Kodachrome articulates for many the rose-tinted colours of youth, Kodachrome replaced the Technicolor process not because the colours were better; in actuality Kodachrome was inferior in quality but superior in quantity, better able to handle the expansion of cinema distribution and thus wrote "the writing on the wall" for Technicolor.

10 Paul Virilio. War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception. Trans. Patrick Camiller. London: Verso, 1989. pp. 10–11. Note also Virilio mentions: "In Britain, the Ministry of Information housed a 'propaganda think-tank', one of whose best-known members was the actor Leslie Howard, star of Gone with the Wind." p. 31. See also Michelangelo Antonioni: "within a few years, films in black and white will no longer be tolerated. The viewer's eye is becoming accustomed to colors; it is caressed by the sweetness of certain combinations; it senses more truth in them, an inner truth, and draws new pleasure from them. America above all has understood this state of affairs and, as always, is preparing to turn it to its own advantage. Instructed by the [precedent] of sound [in cinema], it is counting on the war now occupying Europe and the limited possibilities of European producers to allow them to monopolize all our markets. And the danger is real. If the multicolored Hollywood wave reaches us before our production—including color—can thwart its advance, it's over." Originally published in Cinema, December 10,1942 and reprinted in "On Color". OCTOBER 128, Spring 2009, Trans. Marguerite Shore Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009. p. 112.

16 Clarice Lispector, Água Viva, Trans. Stefan Tobler. NYC: New Directions, 2012. p. 59.

17 Prof. Robin Williams and Gigi Williams. Pioneers Of Invisible Radiation Photography. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Accessed online Feb. 17, 2011: http://www.msp.rmit.edu.au/Article_04/06.html ; see source document: Wood, R., 1919, "Communications secretes au moyen de rayons lumineux," J. Phys. Theor. Appl. Volume 9, Number 1, 1919 pp. 77-90; U.S. Govt. Annual Report of the Director Bureau of Standards to the Secretary of Commerce for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1919. United States National Bureau of Standards, 1919. p.146.

18 Robert Wallace & H. Keith Melton. Spycraft: The Secret History of the CIA's Spytechs from Communism to Al-Qaeda. NYC: Dutton, 2008. Ch.11. Footnote #24. p. 496.

21 Dorothy Harper. Eye in the Sky: An Introduction to Remote Sensing, Information Canada: 1976. p. 27.

22 Ursula K. Le Guin. The Word for World Is Forest. London: Granada, 1980. p. 27.

23 Kodak Aerochrome III Infrared Film 1443. Kodak Publication No. AS-77, 2005, pp. 2–3.

26 Reza Negarestani, Cyclonopedia: Complicity With Anonymous Materials. Melbourne: Re:press, 2008. pp. 53,63.

27 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1987. p. 339.

3. Ghost-Blossomings

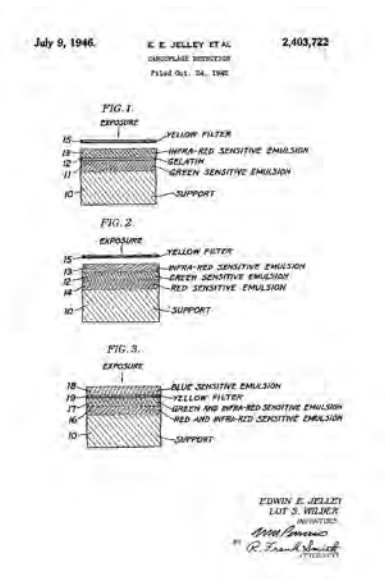
"When the tobacco smoke smells also of the mouth which exhales it, the two odors marry by infra-thin"
Marcel Duchamp, View Magazine, 1945 13

One of the most vivid, visual memories of the Victorian Era remains the phenomenon of Spirit Photography. Using special effects such as double exposure and other darkroom sleights of hand, a photographer could capitalize on the obsession with the occult world using modern technology's magical access to the invisible… or at least expose the shadowy spots of one's ignorance. Debunked by famous court cases at the turn of the century, a more modern type of technology – infrared photography – continued the function of materialising one's desires in the twentieth century. Much like E.V.P. (Electronic Voice Phenomenon), spiritualist's use of infrared film pushed the boundaries of making the invisible visible: "The photographs taken by a journalist for a British tabloid newspaper… using infrared film, at séances Webber held in the year before he died are among the most remarkable visual testaments to Spiritualist manifestations ever produced."14 The specific infrared photograph made by Webber manifests ectoplasm flowing from a subject's face like an infra-thin shadow of smoke. Used as a special effect, the use of infrared illustrates the desire to capture the external expression of an inner reality, like in all portraiture, or to steal the language of Thomas Pynchon in Gravity's Rainbow, the "ghost-blossomings of a personal infrared."15

4. Intelligence Is Knowledge With A Shelf Life

I keep hidden what needs to be hidden and needs to irradiate in secret.
Clarice Lispector, Água Viva, 1973 16

The basic rule of espionage is to observe without being observed. Intelligence is knowledge with a shelf life, and if one is seen extracting information or gleaning data, then the knowledge quickly passes the expiry date. Before infrared photography was commercialised in the interwar period, its inventor R. W. Wood tailored his chemical experiments to create an infrared filter that assisted in WWI secret communications for the US military: "His 'invisible radiation' technique worked either in infrared, which he suggested was useful during the daytime, or in ultraviolet, which he used for night-time applications."17 It turns out infrared is also extremely useful in the dark, not to communicate but rather to secretly record. According to one history of CIA spycraft the use of "Kodak high-speed-infrared 2481 film and a flash unit fitted with an infrared filter over the lens (Kodak Wratten gelatin filters nos. 87, 87C, 88A, or 89B) allowed photographs to be taken in complete darkness without betraying the use of the flash." 18 An invisible light illuminates a sub rosa world. In 1947, Léon Theremin, most known as the inventor of the titular electronic instrument plaguing science fiction soundtracks, developed a system to eavesdrop on foreign embassies in Moscow using focused infrared light beams targeted at "points of architectural resonance" such as glass windows. 19 Sound becomes light as we listen for that which we cannot hear, vibrating under the senses "perceiving a crooked reality. Seen through an oblique cut…. trying to photograph perfume." 20 The infra-thin pane as transducer between infra-sound and infra-light.



Camouflage detection patent, 1946

5. Red-Green Colour-Blind

The only function of colour for us is to delineate boundaries.
Dorothy Harper, Eye in the Sky: An Introduction to Remote Sensing, 1976 21

There was no seeing everything at once: no certainty. The colours of rust and sunset kept changing in the hanging leaves of the copper willows, and you could not say even whether the leaves of the willows were brownish-red, or reddish-green, or green.
Ursula K. Le Guin, The Word for World Is Forest, 1976 22

The applied topological question of how few colours are necessary to create a map where bordering nations do not share the same colour was touched on by August Ferdinand Möbius in 1840. 23 More than just metaphorically, the surface of the Earth was divided into kingdoms of shades, and not until The Whole Earth photographs reprinted from NASA in the 1960s (which pictured Spaceship Earth as a homogenous blue utopia floating in space) were representations of the Earth so poignantly critiqued. 24 But the majority of satellites orbiting the Earth do not capture natural colour images, rather they cover, literally, the entire spectrum of the electromagnetic: from radio through infrared into gamma rays. When human perception is required to analyse this data, the strategy of false-colour – or colours arbitrarily assigned to values based on clarity of design – communicates an interpretation of non-visual information quickly and effectively. Infrared rays, being one of the oldest and most effective means for this technique called "remote sensing", can assist in a variety of agricultural fields, environmental sciences, and resource industries, including but not limited to: crop yield and health, species identification, surface mining and mined land disturbances, hydrological studies, ice reconnaissance, monitoring oil spills, erosion and urban mapping. 25 As the world thinks greener it sees more magenta.

6. An Archaeology of Forensics

Military and political practitioners have long formulated as an archaeological law the asymmetry between ground's consistency and the consistency of poromechanical entities or porous earth: For every inconsistency on the surface, there is a subterranean consistency. …archaeology, with its ingrained understanding of Hidden Writing, will dominate the politics of future and will be the military science of twenty-first century.
Reza Negarestani. Cyclonopedia. 2008 26

The earth has become that close embrace of all forces, those of the earth as well as other substances, so that the artist no longer confronts chaos, but hell and the subterranean, the groundless.
Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus. 1980 27

X-rays are not the only invisible wavelengths that can peek under the skin of an image. Researchers also analyse historical works of art with infrared rays that penetrate the surface layer of paint and reflect off the underdrawing – paint being more translucent to the long waveforms of infrared than the graphite's carbon. 28 Under such analysis, a work can be determined as to the likelihood of originality since more corrections and underdrawings signify a working-through of process typical to an autochthon. On a larger canvas, archaeologists scan the Earth as an image searching for anomalies in the landscape that might signify ancient ruins and the origin of culture itself buried by time. 29 Terraformed geological strata below the surface disrupt or fertilise an overlapping time leaving Anthropocene traces. At the turn of the twenty first century, forensic analysis – as accelerated archaeology – gleans infrared satellite imagery testifying as evidence of hidden mass gravesites. 30 Darkness descends as ethnic cleansing entombs cultures by burying bones, hell's heat exhumed by the coming light of the infrared.

11 KODAK AEROCHROME III Infrared Film 1443. KODAK Publication No. AS-77, 2005, p.2; US Department of the Army. F-20: Camouflage, 1968, 6p; Dorothy Harper. Eye in the Sky: An Introduction to Remote Sensing, Information Canada: 1976, p. 28.

12 Werner Herzog. Conquest of the Useless: Reflections from the Making of Fitzcarraldo. New York: Ecco, 2009. p. 58.

13 Rear cover. View. 5, no.1 (March 1945).

14 John Harvey. Photography and Spirit. Reaktion Books: London, 2007. p. 103.

15 Thomas Pynchon. Gravity's Rainbow. NYC: Penguin, 1987. p. 741.

19 Ibid. Ch.12. Footnote #21. p. 498.

20 Clarice Lispector, Água Viva, 1973. pp. 47, 61

24 Reza Negarestani, Cyclonopedia: Complicity With Anonymous Materials. Melbourne: Re:press, 2008. pp. 53, 63.

25 Kodak Aerochrome III Infrared Film 1443. Kodak Publication No. AS-77, 2005, pp. 2–3.

28 Battle of the Nudes and Picasso—two case studies: http://www.clevelandart.org/exhibcef/battle/html/9209080.html ; http://www.artic.edu/collections/conservation/revealing-picasso-conservation-project/examination-techniques/infrared

29 Andy Finney. "Infrared Photography." Focal Encyclopedia of Photography: Digital Imaging, Theory and Applications, History and Science. Fourth Edition. Editor Michael R. Peres. Oxford: Focal Press/Elsevier, 2007. pp. 556–62

30 See: Laura Kurgan. Spot 083-264: Kosovo, June 3, 1999. (NATO Surveillance Photographs of mass burial sites and grave tampering near Izbica, Kosovo) http://www.l00k.org/spot/spot-083-264-kosovo and Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman. Mengele's Skull: The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics. Berlin: Sternberg/Portikus, 2012.

Wei, Lilly. "Critic's Pick – Richard Mosse" (Jack Shainman Gallery exhibition review). Art News (March 2014): p. 112.

CRITIC'S PICK RICHARD MOSSE



Still from the *The Enclave*, 2012–13, shot on infrared film and transferred to video.

Weaving between blazing pink, violet, and crimson fields of tall grasses and other exotic flora, we follow rebel troops in berets and camouflage through a stunning panorama of plains, mountains, and villages that might, at first glance, evoke a *Vogue* fashion shoot set in the Land of Oz. Instead, this six-channel video projection takes us through the killing fields of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, jumping from screen to screen and offering a deeply immersive experience without 3-D paraphernalia. This is *The Enclave* (2012–13), an extraordinarily beautiful yet jarring 40-minute multimedia installation by New York–based Irish photographer and video artist Richard Mosse.

Installed in the Irish Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, *The Enclave* was made with Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued infrared surveillance film used to detect hidden targets for aerial bombing (and a favorite medium of psychedelic artists in the 1970s). Mosse's film glows with a supercharged surreality, as the green landscape is transformed into saturated pinks and eye-catching reds. This color palette has characterized Mosse's photographs and videos for the past several years, since he first discovered the film. "My process is deeply intuitive, and all I did was turn everything pink," he says. "I've been criticized for that, but my images are no more abstract than a black-and-white photograph. They are both constructs."

Born in 1980 in Kilkenny, Ireland, Mosse has a B.A. from King's College in London, a postgraduate diploma from Goldsmiths College in London, and an M.F.A. from Yale University. Since 2008, he has been represented by Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, where *The Enclave* is on view through March 22. Known for enormous photographs of conflict zones, the artist discovered Aerochrome while looking for less conventional, more gripping ways to represent harrowing narratives that "exist beyond language"—a search that became increasingly urgent after his travels through Iraq in 2009, where he photographed Saddam Hussein's palace and other devastated sites.



Richard Mosse.

"My work had nothing to do with photojournalism," Mosse says, "but hardly anyone noticed the difference between my photographs and those seen in the newspapers." And although the Aerochrome film was something that "no serious photographer would touch," Mosse liked it because the infrared, made to "detect the invisible, also made a little-known war that was a humanitarian disaster visible."

With that goal in mind, he travelled from 2010–11 to the war-ravaged eastern Congo, accompanied by American artist and cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and Australian musician Ben Frost, who composed the soundtrack for *The Enclave*. There, Mosse made his first series of eerily gorgeous, impossible-to-overlook photographs, radiant with his now signature rosy hues. "Beauty is important to me," he says. "It's a way to make people see, to make them feel. But it also creates an ethical problem in people's minds, a confusion when human suffering is made beautiful. I want that; I want people to pay attention." ***—Lilly Wei***

Lilly Wei is a contributing editor of ARTnews.

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK (2); BOTTOM: MARK MCNULTY

Gioni, Massimiliano. The Encyclopedic Palace: 55th International Art Exhibition : La Biennale Di Venezia. Volume II, 2013: pp. 82-83, illustrated.

Love Is the Drug, 2012
Digital C-Print (Stampa a Colori Digitale)
110 x 210.5 inches; 279.4 x 534.67 cm
Edition 1/2 (Edizione 1/2)

Beaucoups Of Blues, North Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2012
Digital C-Print (Stampa a Colori Digitale)
72 x 90 inches; 182.8 x 228.6 cm
AP

Here Come the Warm Jets, North Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2012
Digital C-Print (Stampa a Colori Digitale)
72 x 90 inches; 182.8 x 228.6 cm
Edition 1/2 (Edizione 1/2)

The Enclave, 2013
Six screen film installation (Installazione di film su sei monitor)
Editions TBD

Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery

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la Biennale di Venezia

55. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte

Partecipazioni nazionali

RICHARD MOSSE
THE ENCLAVE
The Pavilion of Ireland
La Biennale di Venezia
1 Jun 2013—24 Nov 2013

THE ENCLAVE

Curator's Statement

The Enclave is an immersive multiple-screen film installation, a series of photographs, and a monograph—the culmination of Richard Mosse's three-year exploration of the conflicted landscape of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mosse reveals an unseen humanitarian tragedy by using a discontinued military reconnaissance film, originally designed for camouflage detection, that registers an invisible spectrum of infrared light. Employing a psychedelic palette, he poses disturbing questions, one of which is, what does it mean to make human suffering beautiful? Throughout 2012, Mosse and his collaborators, cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and composer Ben Frost, traveled to eastern Congo and inserted themselves into armed rebel groups in a war zone plagued by frequent ambushes, massacres, and systematic sexual violence. The resulting nonnarrative work is an explosive fusion of photographic image, sound, and film.

The Enclave is portrait- and performance-driven. The imagery reveals much about posture and machismo. The Congolese fighters stare, defying the camera, yet they pose nonetheless. In November 2012, Mosse wrote from Goma, "I am beginning to perceive this vicious loop of subject and object. The camera provokes an involuntary unraveling, a mutual hijack of authorship and autonomy." Neither scripted nor directed, Congolese rebels return the camera's gaze in a distinctly confrontational and accusatory manner. The lens seems to mesmerize and provoke everyone it encounters in *The Enclave* , including figures under the command of those sought for trial by the International Criminal Court. This precarious face-off reveals inherent ambiguities of masculinity, defiance, vulnerability, and indictment. Isolated groups of rebels deep in the remote bush—a terrain with its own seemingly inscrutable rules and logic—pose for three equipment-laden interlopers walking a fine line between artistic and journalistic prerogatives.

The beauty of the landscape of the Congo is a fundamental presence in *The Enclave* , but it is a beauty that belies the horrors that are hidden in the bush. The work bears witness to the people of the Congo as the population is driven into makeshift refugee camps, camps that have to be abandoned regularly with the approach of warring rebels, the inhabitants forced to flee again with their belongings on their backs. We see the dejection on the faces of the long-suffering women and sympathize with their ill-fated circumstances. Amidst this footage we also watch a woman give birth by caesarean section. Her newborn boy struggles to breathe and after much rough manipulation he lives and enters upon an uncertain future.

Ben Frost's ambient audio composition, comprised entirely of field recordings from the Congo, hovers bleakly over the calamitous scenes, underscoring the complexities of those stories. A young girl sings a sweet song—a song that sounds like a lullaby but when translated reveals itself to be a tale of the inequity of life as a refugee. "Pow, pow, pow"—the sound of soldiers in training going through the motions of simulated attacks—forms a counterpoint to the battery of real bullets and bombs, which distinguish themselves unmistakably by their crack and boom.

Death is plainly observed by the camera, which pans over twisted bodies lying on the side of the road, already bootless, looted by passersby. Rebels line either side of a roadway, their intensity of purpose evident as they survey the thick undergrowth that surrounds them.

Working on a tangential path from humanitarian and UN infrastructures, Richard Mosse creates a discomfiting and sinister world, making this ineffable nightmare visible. This reality does not allow for indifference; instead it provides a compelling new way of seeing, an attempt to reconcile ethical agency with aesthetics. It demonstrates the power of contemporary art to manifest an intangible and forgotten conflict in a deliberately nondidactic and nonpartisan way. Like Joseph Conrad's uncompromising novella Heart of Darkness, *The Enclave* delivers a pure and unapologetic approach to understanding the Congo through the eyes of an artist, transcending facts and statistics to penetrate our sensibilities on every level.

Anna O'Sullivan, Director, Butler Gallery and Commissioner/Curator of the Pavilion of Ireland
In the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

THE ENCLAVE

Dichiarazione del Curatore

The Enclave è una coinvolgente installazione di film su schermo multiplo, una serie di fotografie e una monografia – il momento culmine dei tre anni in cui Richard Mosse ha esplorato il panorama di conflitti della Repubblica Democratica del Congo. Mosse rivela una tragedia umanitaria invisibile utilizzando un film da ricognizione militare caduto in disuso, originariamente destinato a rilevamenti mimetizzati, che registra uno spettro invisibile di luce infrarossa. Con l'impiego di una tavolozza psichedelica, egli pone quesiti inquietanti, uno dei quali è: che cosa vuol dire rendere bella la sofferenza umana? Nel corso del 2012, Mosse e i suoi collaboratori, il cineoperatore Trevor Tweeten e il compositore Ben Frost, hanno viaggiato nel Congo orientale infiltrati tra gruppi di ribelli armati in una zona di guerra flagellata da frequenti imboscate, massacri e sistematiche violenze sessuali. L'opera non narrativa che ne deriva è una fusione esplosiva di immagine fotografica, suono e film.

The Enclave è animato da ritratto e performance. Il linguaggio figurato rivela molto a proposito di atteggiamento e machismo. I combattenti congolesi hanno lo sguardo fisso e sfuggono la telecamera, ma risultano cionondimeno in posa. Nel novembre 2012 Mosse scrisse da Goma: "Inizio a percepire il circuito vizioso di soggetto e oggetto. La cinepresa provoca un involontario svelarsi, un reciproco dirottamento di condizione di autore e di autonomia". I ribelli congolesi, non guidati da un copione né da una regia, rispondono alla sguardo dell'obiettivo in modo nettamente polemico e accusatorio. La lente sembra ipnotizzare e provocare chiunque incontri in *The Enclave*, comprese le figure sotto il comando di personaggi ricercati dalla Corte Penale Internazionale . Questo confronto precario mette in luce le intrinseche ambiguità dei concetti di virilità, disprezzo, vulnerabilità e accusa. Gruppi isolati di ribelli nel profondo di cespugli remoti —un terreno le cui regole e logica sono in apparenza insondabili—posano per tre intrusi carichi di equipaggiamento che percorrono un confine sottile tra prerogative artistiche e giornalistiche.

La bellezza del paesaggio del Congo è presenza fondamentale in *The Enclave*, ma è una bellezza che contraddice gli orrori nascosti tra i cespugli. L'opera testimonia per il popolo del Congo come la popolazione sia spinta entro campi profughi improvvisati, campi che devono essere regolarmente abbandonati per l'avvicinarsi di ribelli belligeranti e i cui abitanti sono di continuo obbligati a fuggire con i loro averi sulle spalle. Vediamo scoramento sui volti di donne che sopportano da troppo tempo e proviamo solidarietà per le loro condizioni sfortunate. In questo filmato osserviamo anche una donna che dà alla luce suo figlio con parto cesareo: il neonato lotta per respirare e solo dopo una prolungata e brusca manipolazione riesce a vivere e a fare ingresso in un futuro incerto.

L'audio composizione ambientale di Ben Frost, fatta per intero di registrazioni sul campo congolese, si libra tetra sulle scene calamitose, mettendo in evidenza la complessità di quelle storie. Una ragazza intona una canzoncina dolce—una melodia che sembra una ninna-nanna ma che, una volta tradotta, si rivela un racconto dell'ingiustizia della vita da rifugiata. "Pow, pow, pow"—il suono dei soldati in allenamento che provano attacchi simulati—fa da contrappunto alla batteria di proiettili e bombe veri, che si distinguono in modo inequivocabile per i loro scoppi ed esplosioni.

La morte è semplicemente osservata dalla cinepresa, con una panoramica su corpi attorcigliati che giacciono ai lati della strada già senza stivali, depredati da passanti. I ribelli sono allineati su entrambi i lati di una carreggiata, l'intensità del loro proposito è evidente quando sondano la fitta vegetazione bassa che li circonda.

Lavorando su un sentiero tangenziale alle infrastrutture umanitarie e a quelle delle Nazioni Unite, Richard Mosse crea un mondo sconcertato e sinistro, rendendo visibile questo incubo ineffabile. Una realtà che non autorizza l'indifferenza; al contrario, fornisce un nuovo e convincente metodo per l'osservazione, un tentativo di riconciliare l'opera etica con l'estetica. Dimostra il potere dell'arte contemporanea di rendere manifesto un conflitto impalpabile e dimenticato, in modo deliberatamente non didattico e non di parte. Come accade nel severo racconto di Joseph Conrad Cuore di Tenebra, *The Enclave* consegna al pubblico una strategia pura e non apologetica per comprendere il Congo attraverso gli occhi di un artista che trascende fatti e statistiche per penetrare la nostra sensibilità ad ogni livello.

Anna O'Sullivan, Direttore della Butler Gallery e Commissario/Curatore del Padiglione dell'Irlanda
alla 55.Esposizione Internationale d' Arte – la Biennale di Venezia

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The Enclave, 39 minutes 25 seconds, 16mm infrared film transferred to HD video
(***The Enclave***, 39 minuti e 25 secondi, film in infrarosso 16mm trasferito su video HD)

Director/Producer *(Regista/Produttore)*	Richard Mosse
Cinematographer/Editor *(Cineoperatore-Direttore Fotografia/Montaggio)*	Trevor Tweeten
Composer *(Compositore/Progettista del Suono)*	Ben Frost
Production Assistant *(Assistente alla Produzione)*	John Holten
Colourist (Controllo cromatico)	Jerome Thelia
16mm processing *(Elaborazione 16mm)*	Rocky Mountain Film Lab
16mm scanning *(Scanning 16mm)*	Metropolis Film Labs
Projection and Install *(Proiezioni e Installazione)*	Eidotech

Team Credits ***(Ringraziamenti)***

Artist *(Artista)*	Richard Mosse
Cinematographer *(Cineoperatore-Direttore Fotografia)*	Trevor Tweeten
Composer *(Compositore, Progettista del Suono)*	Ben Frost
Director Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, Ireland Commissioner/Curator *(Direttore della Butler Gallery di Kilkenny, Irlanda)*	Anna O'Sullivan
Project Manager *(Direttore del Progetto)*	Mary Cremin
Venice Project Manager *(Direttore del Progetto in Venezia)*	Diego Carpentiero
Graphic Design & Print Consultant *(Consulente Progetto e Stampa)*	Tom Feehan www.dynamite.ie
Administration *(Amministrazione)*	Ailis Feehan
Projection *(Proiezioni)*	Eidotech

Venue Attendants ***(Sorveglianza e accoglienza in sede espositiva)***
Paolo Bernardelli, Kristen Cavagnet, Jennifer Duignam,Michael Fitzgerald, Sheena Malone, Grace Mc Evoy, Maeve Mulrennan, Banbha Nic Canna, Lynda Phelan, Sharon Phelan, Eva Richardson-McCrea, Pauline Swaine

Bradburne, James M., Franziska Nori, Walter Guadagnini, Francesco Careri, and Ulrich Beck. Territori instabili: confini e identità nell'arte contemporanea = Unstable territory : borders and identity in contemporary art (exhibition catalogue), 2013: pp. 106-113

Richard Mosse



The Enclave, 2013
Installazione video a 6 canali / 6-channel video installation
Veduta della mostra / Exhibition view
Pavillion of Ireland, Biennale di Venezia 2013
Courtesy l'artista / the artist
e / and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Platon
North Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2012
Digital c-print
Courtesy l'artista / the artist
e / and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Stalemate
North Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2011
Digital c-print
Courtesy l'artista / the artist
e / and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York





The Enclave, 2013
Installazione video a 6 canali / 6-channel video installation
Still da video / Video stills
Courtesy l'artista / the artist
e / and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Richard Mosse è nato e cresciuto in Irlanda, paese segnato da duri conflitti religiosi e politici che ha visto intere generazioni vivere in un clima di violenze e paura. L'Irlanda ha inevitabilmente influenzato la sua ricerca artistica in rapporto con diverse zone di crisi nel mondo. *The Enclave* è un progetto video e fotografico che ha impegnato Mosse per tre anni, dal 2010 al 2012, con l'intento di portare alla luce alcuni aspetti di una delle tragedie maggiori, e meno conosciute, del panorama geopolitico contemporaneo: la guerra in atto tra il governo centrale della Repubblica Democratica del Congo e una serie di milizie locali per il controllo delle province del Nord e del Sud Kivu, situate nella parte orientale del paese, al confine con Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi e Uganda. È un teatro di guerra in cui quotidianamente avvengono atrocità che coinvolgono la popolazione civile costretta, a causa degli alterni andamenti del conflitto, a rifugiarsi in campi profughi improvvisati, regolarmente assaliti dai ribelli, con il conseguente seguito di violenze, in particolare sulle donne.

Mosse si è posto di fronte a questo soggetto utilizzando due particolari accorgimenti tecnici e linguistici, che sono le prime chiavi di lettura delle immagini prodotte. Innanzitutto, ha deciso di riprendere le scene che si svolgevano davanti ai suoi occhi con una pellicola sviluppata negli anni Quaranta per scopi militari, la Aerochrome, la quale utilizzando la tecnologia a raggi infrarossi permetteva di scoprire gli armamenti nascosti e mimetizzati nella vegetazione. Il risultato è quello di una visione allucinata, a metà fra la favola e l'incubo, sia del paesaggio sia delle persone che agiscono in esso, una negazione della fedeltà al vero, tipica della pratica documentaristica e fotografica, e un'esaltazione della emotività di ogni scena in cui la dimensione visiva e quella acustica hanno una propria autonomia che si rafforza vicendevolmente. A questo elemento, Mosse aggiunge la decisione di proiettare su più schermi il materiale realizzato, utilizzando le riprese del cineoperatore (nonché direttore della fotografia e del montaggio) Trevor Tweeten. Elemento cruciale è anche quella della colonna sonora realizzata interamente con suoni, rumori e voci provenienti dall'audio originale dal compositore Ben Frost, anch'egli presente sul campo durante le riprese.

Mosse affronta così le grandi questioni della fotografia documentaria e del fotogiornalismo oggi, e ne è pienamente cosciente: «Dal momento che la luce infrarossa è invisibile all'occhio umano, si può dire che fotografavo a occhi chiusi. Avevo attraversato la soglia della finzione, ero entrato nel mio stesso universo simbolico. Eppure continuavo a rappresentare qualcosa di tragicamente reale, un conflitto interminabile in trincea combattuto in una giungla da nomadi ribelli che cambiavano continuamente alleati».

L'utilizzo dell'Aerochrome è, dunque, anche un'ammissione della propria impotenza, della propria impossibilità di spiegare la realtà e il significato profondo delle immagini di fronte a cui si è trovato. L'artista entra nel cuore della questione di rappresentare l'inenarrabile, forzando il linguaggio sino ai limiti delle sue possibilità. Non a caso il lavoro di Alfredo Jaar *The Eyes of Gutete Emerita* del 1996 è un importante e dichiarato riferimento per l'artista.

Mosse replica l'instabilità del territorio presentando lunghi frammenti visivi su sei diversi schermi tra i quali lo spettatore deve muoversi per tentare di coglierne il senso. Lo spettatore si trova in questo modo destabilizzato e costretto a una forte esperienza visiva ed emotiva. L'artista individua l'Altro non solo nel soggetto da rappresentare – sia esso oggetto, persona o paesaggio – ma anche nel linguaggio adottato per rappresentarlo. A terra incognita corrisponde tecnica incognita. È chiaro che di fronte ai temi prescelti dall'artista, e al suo linguaggio, sorge immediata anche la questione relativa all'estetizzazione del dolore, questione aperta in particolare per la fotografia di guerra almeno dai tempi di Benjamin e Brecht, rinforzata da un testo ormai classico di Susan Sontag *Sulla fotografia* (1977).

Coerentemente con l'intero sviluppo del suo progetto, Mosse porta alle estreme conseguenze anche questo aspetto, super-estetizzando la realtà attraverso un colore psichedelico, rendendo alcuni paesaggi degni della grande tradizione pittorica ottocentesca. Non a caso Mosse proviene da studi di storia dell'arte, e si riferisce spesso al "sublime" come categoria attraverso la quale leggere il rapporto tra opera d'arte e realtà, nella convinzione che la sfida sia proprio quella di rendere, attraverso l'estetizzazione, l'ambiguità sia di una situazione complessa e in gran parte inafferrabile come quella congolese, sia del rapporto dell'autore stesso con la sua opera. Seguendo un'estetica che si muove contraddittoriamente tra bellezza e orrore, Mosse apre visioni frammentarie e prive di spiegazioni esplicite, lasciando liberi interpretazioni e giudizi. *The Enclave* non permette di trovare un punto fermo, una prospettiva da cui leggere il reale secondo canoni come il bene e il male, il giusto e l'ingiusto. Mosse non spiega, non racconta, non illustra, non cerca simboli per un possibile ulteriore significato.

La scelta stessa della proiezione simultanea su più schermi, che da un lato rompe la continuità narrativa del filmico e dall'altro nega l'assolutezza dell'inquadratura fotografica riportando l'immagine dentro un flusso temporale, può essere interpretata come un'ulteriore affermazione dell'impossibilità di fornire una risposta univoca allo spettacolo ripreso e proiettato, i cui frammenti si sovrappongono. La disposizione spaziale del lavoro a sei schermi è realizzata in modo tale che lo spettatore diventi parte di una sorta di paesaggio multifocale, muovendosi fisicamente all'interno di un flusso continuo di immagini e suoni, alla ricerca di una visione totalizzante che però gli è negata. Le immagini comunicano la realtà in tutta la sua frammentaria incoerenza. Così le stesse persone rappresentate non sono contraddistinte da attributi che ci permettono di riconoscere a quale delle tante parti nel conflitto si trovano coinvolte, né come ci sono arrivate. Mosse conosce il limite delle immagini che rappresentano un momento preciso nel tempo, ma non riescono a narrare il passato che ha portato alla realtà attuale. L'occhio della macchina da presa spesso incontra quello di soldati i quali, con inaspettata calma, lo corrispondono, a volte assumendo pose piene di orgoglio, altre fotografando a loro volta chi li riprende. Non sempre riusciamo a comprendere il grado di reale pericolo della situazione alla quale assistiamo.

Come afferma l'artista: «La forza che contraddistingue l'arte risiede nella sua capacità di rendere visibili e formulabili cose che si negano alle possibilità del linguaggio». In questo senso risulta anche chiaro il riferimento al protagonista di *Cuore di tenebra* di Joseph Conrad: il racconto del marinaio Marlow e del suo lungo viaggio dalla Londra di inizio secolo verso il cuore dell'Africa Nera, alla ricerca di merci preziose e di un misterioso e inquietante personaggio, Kurtz. Fonte di ispirazione anche per il film *Apocalypse Now*, il romanzo ha svelato all'Occidente non tanto la violenta opera di colonizzazione belga del paese centroafricano, ma le profondità insondabili del confronto con l'Altro, descrivendo un viaggio nel cuore dell'inestricabile e malsana foresta africana, una sorta di transizione da un mondo conosciuto e razionale a una realtà irrazionale, mistica e alienante.

Mosse cerca di scardinare alcune caratteristiche tipiche della fotografia di reportage come l'inequivocabilità e la riconoscibilità dei soggetti o l'assonanza tra soggetto rappresentato e linguaggio estetico. Tinge di rosa acido le violenze che non appaiono mai direttamente nelle sue immagini, ma di cui ascoltiamo i suoni e vediamo le tracce lasciate sul paesaggio e sui corpi di uomini e donne, a volte soffermandosi su particolari che quasi offendono un comune senso del pudore. Eppure in questo territorio la vita pulsa, inscindibile dalla morte onnipresente. L'artista infatti assiste al movimento di profughi tra accampamenti provvisori, secondo un ciclo inesorabile tra vita e morte, ma sofferma il suo sguardo anche sulla magnificenza della natura, sui paesaggi tropicali, sull'orizzonte infinito, sul mare increspato, tentando quasi un allontanamento momentaneo verso qualcosa di eternamente bello. *The Enclave* sembra fluttuare tra la brutalità e la poesia, tra le testimonianze di drammatiche storie e vissuti particolari e l'universalità delle immagini dell'Africa in guerra. [FN-WG]

Richard Mosse was born and raised in Ireland, a country ravaged by political and religious conflicts which has seen entire generations live in a climate of fear and violence. Ireland has inevitably influenced his artistic research in connection with various crisis areas around the world. *The Enclave*, a video and photographic project that has kept Mosse busy for three years, from 2010 to 2012, aims to draw attention to some aspects of one of the major, and lesser known, tragedies on the contemporary geopolitical scene: the ongoing conflict between the central government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and a series of local militias for control of the provinces of North and South Kivu, situated in the eastern part of the country, on the border with Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. It is a war zone in which atrocities are perpetrated daily and involve the civilian population, forced, due to the alternating fortunes of the conflict, to find shelter in improvised refugee camps which are regularly attacked by rebels, with inevitable episodes of violence, particularly those against women.

Mosse tackled the subject using two special technical and artistic devices, which are the initial keys to interpreting the images created. First, he decided to shoot the scenes that unfolded before his eyes with a film developed in the 1940s for military surveillance, Aerochrome, whose infrared technology made it possible to detect armaments that were concealed and camouflaged by vegetation. The result is a garish and eerie spectacle, something between fantasy and nightmare, both the landscape and the people moving within it, a negation of anything true-to-life, typical of documentary and photographic practice, and an enhancing of the emotional charge of each scene in which the visual dimension and the acoustic dimension each have an identity that is mutually reinforced. Mosse subsequently projects the material onto several screens, using the sequences of the cinematographer (as well as director of photography and editor) Trevor Tweeten. Another crucial element is the sound track, made entirely with sounds, noises and voices coming from the original audio by the composer Ben Frost, he also being present on the field during filming.

Mosse confronts thus the great issues of documentary photography and photojournalism today, and is fully aware of it: "Since infrared light is invisible to the human eye, you could say that I was literally photographing blind. I had crossed a threshold into fiction, into my own symbolic order. Yet I was trying to represent something that is tragically real—an entrenched and endless conflict fought in a jungle by nomadic rebels of constantly shifting allegiances.» The use of Aerochrome is, therefore, also an admission of his own impotence, of the impossibility of explaining the reality and profound significance of the scenes he is witnessing. The artist enters into the heart of the question of representing the unspeakable, forcing the medium to the limits of its possibilities. It is no coincidence that the work of Alfredo Jaar, *The Eyes of Gutete Emerita* (1996), is an important and openly declared reference for the artist.

Mosse responds to the instability of the territory by presenting long visual fragments on six different screens which the spectator has to move between in order to make any sense of them. The spectator is thus destabilized and forced into a strong visual and emotional experience. The artist identifies the Other not only in the subject to represent—be it object, person or setting—but also in the medium adopted to represent it. "Terra incognita" is therefore matched with "tecnica incognita". Of course, given the themes chosen by the artist, as well as his unique style, the whole question of the aestheticization of suffering immediately comes up, an open debate particularly for war photography at least from the time of Benjamin and Brecht, underlined by Susan Sontag's now classic text on the subject, *On Photography* (1977).

In keeping with the entire development of his project, Mosse takes this aspect to the extreme, hyper-aestheticizing reality through the use of psychedelic color, imbuing landscapes with a quality reminiscent of the great 19th-century artistic tradition. It is no surprise that Mosse has a background in art history, and often refers to the "sublime" as a category through which to read the relationship between artwork and reality. His conviction is that the challenge is precisely that of rendering, through aestheticization, the ambiguity of a complex and in large part unfathomable situation like that of the Congo, as well as the ambiguousness of the author's relationship with his work. Following an aesthetic that moves in a contradictory way between beauty and horror, Mosse opens up fragmentary visions devoid of any explicit explanation, leaving interpretations and judgments free. *The Enclave* does not allow us any firm ground, a perspective from which to contemplate reality according to conventional standards of good and bad, right and wrong. Mosse does not explain, or tell a story, or illustrate, nor does he seek symbols for a possible further meaning.

The choice itself of the simultaneous projection on different screens—which on the one hand breaks the narrative continuity of the film sequence and on the other denies the totality of the photographic viewing by confining the image within a time flow—can be interpreted as a further affirmation of the impossibility of providing a single answer to the filmed and projected spectacle whose separate pieces are superimposed. The spatial arrangement of the work on six screens is done in such a way that the spectator becomes part of a sort of multi-focal landscape, physically moving within a continual flow of images and sounds in search of a totalizing vision that in any case is denied him. The images communicate the reality in all its fragmentary incoherence. Thus, the people represented are not distinguished by attributes that enable us to recognize which of the many parts of the conflict they are involved in, nor how they came to be there. Mosse knows the limitations of the images, which represent a precise moment in time yet are unable to narrate the past that has led to the present reality. The eye of the camera often meets the eyes of the soldiers, who gaze back with unexpected calm, some assuming poses full of pride, others in turn photographing those who are filming them. We are not always able to comprehend the degree of real danger in the situation we are witnessing.

As the artist himself declares: "The power that distinguishes art lies in its ability to render visible and formulable things that are denied the possibility of language." In this sense there is an obvious reference to the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The story, set at the beginning of the last century, of the sailor Marlow and his long journey from London into the heart of Africa in search of precious goods and a mysterious and sinister character, Kurtz. The novel, which also inspired the film *Apocalypse Now*, revealed to the Western world not so much Belgium's violent colonization of the central African country, but the unfathomable enormity of that confrontation with the Other, describing a journey into the depths of the inextricable and unhealthy African forest, a sort of transition from a familiar, rational world to a mystical, irrational and alienating reality.

Mosse attempts to invalidate various characteristics typical of reportage photography, like the unequivocability and recognizability of the subjects or the matching of the subject represented and the aesthetic language. He tinges with shocking pink the violence which is never seen directly in his images—though we hear sounds and see traces of it left on the landscape and on the bodies of men and women—at times dwelling on details that almost offend our common sense of decency. And yet this land is pulsing with life, a life inseparable from omnipresent death. The artist shows refugees moving between improvised encampments, in a kind of inexorable cycle of life and death, yet he dwells also on the magnificence of the natural environment, the tropical landscapes, the infinite horizon, the ruffled sea, almost as if wanting to pull away momentarily towards something eternally beautiful. *The Enclave* seems to hover between brutality and poetry, between the testimonies of dramatic stories and unusual experiences and the universality of images of Africa at war. [FN-WG]

Milone, Anna and Oswaldo Friz. "Richard Mosse: Anatomie d'un Photojournalisme d'Aujourd'hui." The Modern Directory, Issue #1 – Paradox, January 2014: pp. 34-39

Richard Mosse

Anatomie d'un Photojournalisme d'Aujourd'hui

ANNA MILONE ET OSWALDO FRIZ

Dans un monde abreuvé d'images où l'horreur est devenue banale et quotidienne, comment encore susciter les réactions ? Comment encore mettre en marche les canaux saturés de notre indignation ? À l'heure où nous avons accès à tout, nos cerveaux ont peu à peu fait le choix de ne plus tenir compte de rien, prêtant au trop plein d'information d'aujourd'hui le rôle incapacitant de son trop peu d'hier. Qu'importe que le cadrage soit bon, qu'importe que le sujet soit dur, qu'importe que le cliché soit vrai, ces images le spectateur les connait et déjà il s'ennuie. Pour susciter encore un intérêt, la pratique photojournalistique se doit de renouer sans cesse avec les apparats de la nouveauté. Mais lorsque tout a été vu, que reste-t-il à montrer ? Nouvelles ficelles d'un métier en crise.

In a world showered with images of banal and ordinary horror, how can any reactions be aroused anymore? How can the saturated channels of our indignation be stimulated again? Disturbing paradox of our modern societies: at a time when nothing can be hidden anymore, our brains have slowly decided to become impervious to everything, information overflow appearing to be as incapacitant as its earlier lack. However good the composition, disturbing the subject or true the picture could be, the spectator already knows these images and soon starts to get bored. To have a chance to capture any attention, the photojournalistic field must constantly provide to its public the illusion of something radically new. But when everything has been seen already, what else could be shown? New methods of a radically changing practice.



At Home He's A Tourist, 2012 digital c-print,
Inventory #RIM12.046



Come Out (1966) II, 2011, digital c-print, Inventory #RIMII.005, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY



Vintage Violence, 2011, digital c-print, Inventory #RIMII.004, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY

Mettre à jour une chose cachée

Armé de ses pellicules infrarouges Kodak Aerochrome, Richard Mosse photographie ce qui, par essence, ne peut être montré. Détournant l'usage d'une technique militaire autrefois largement utilisée par l'armée américaine, Richard Mosse a sillonné la République Démocratique du Congo pour en dresser un étonnant portrait, tout de rose et de pourpre paré. Un voyage qui fait la lumière sur un monde à la fois étrange et ordinaire, comme l'envers d'un décor familier, où la beauté onirique des clichés le dispute à la rudesse des sujets. Des camps d'entrainement militaires, des factions d'enfants soldats, des immensités vierges, des adolescents mutilés, et partout cette végétation écarlate, insistante, omniprésente, qui semble noyer ses sujets dans une douce abstraction et défier l'horreur de la réalité qu'elle abrite. Captant la lumière au delà du sensible, Richard Mosse nous invite à traverser le champ chromatique pour plonger là où l'œil humain ne peut aller.

Rendre au regard ses facultés

Ce que l'on regarde trop, on finit par ne plus le voir. Et l'œil, toujours habitué à plus, ne se laisse désormais plus surprendre par rien. La réalité brute des images ne suffit plus à exciter les nerfs optiques, et l'information visuelle peine aujourd'hui à dépasser le seuil de la rétine. Dans ce contexte, le photojournalisme traditionnel se heurte aux remparts de sa propre définition : se faire relai neutre de la réalité, objective et froide. Une sobriété qui ne trouve plus aujourd'hui de pupilles attentives et dont Richard Mosse prend ici le contrepied en un témoignage insolite et subjectif. En sublimant par le prisme esthétique une réalité aujourd'hui devenue banale, Richard Mosse oblige son public à poser un regard neuf sur des images qu'il ne voyait plus. Usant ainsi de l'infrarouge comme d'une métaphore visant à rendre à ces réalités exsangues une substance, il démontre au passage que le réel peut parfois se dissimuler dans des replis échappant à notre primo perception. Un photojournalisme de genre qui tranche radicalement avec la rigoureuse objectivité d'hier comme si, dans une société du spectacle au regard engourdi et à la sensibilité en berne, bousculer le réel était devenu le seul moyen de le faire surgir à nouveau aux yeux du spectateur.

Reveal an hidden thing

Armed with his Kodak Aerochrome infrared films, Richard Mosse takes pictures of what cannot be seen. Hijacking an old military technique once used by the US army, Richard Mosse travelled through the Democratic Republic of Congo to shoot some surprising portraits, all dressed in pink and purple tones. A photographic work displaying the other side of some familiar sceneries and bringing to light a strange and ordinary world where the oneiric beauty of the pictures competes with the harshness of the subjects. Some military training camps full of child soldiers, some young mutilated people, some vast and pristine landscapes — and everywhere this ubiquitous and insistent scarlet vegetation which seems to drown its subjects into a sweet abstraction and defy the horror of the reality it shelters. Capturing the light beyond the visible spectrum, Richard Mosse invites us to cross the chromatic field to explore these places where the human eye is not allowed to go.

Give back to the look its full faculties

When looking at something for too long, we eventually start to stare past it like if it was not even there. And the eye, always used to more and more, now ends up to get bored by everything. The crude reality of the pictures is not evocative enough to stimulate the optic nerves anymore, and the visual information struggles to travel any further than the retina still. In this context, traditional photojournalism collides with the battlements of its own definition: being the neutral messenger of a cold and objective reality. A sobriety which today struggles to find any receptive pupils and from which Richard Mosse distances himself, embracing a diametrically opposed approach to deliver his testimony through strangeness and subjectivity. By sublimating — through the aesthetic prism — a terrible reality which has slowly become mundane and tepid, Richard Mosse forces his audience to consider it under the paradigms of a new reading. Using of the infrared as of a metaphor aiming to bring back the light on some "invisible" realities, he demonstrates that actuality can sometimes lie beneath the surface of the obviousness. A photographic style which divorces from yesterday's rigorous objectivity as if, in a lethargic society of endless entertainment, shaking up the reality was the only way to make it likely to arouse any spectator's interest.

Renouer avec l'imagination du spectateur

Mais capter l'attention n'est pas tout. Encore faut-il que consentent à se mettre en branle les mécanismes de l'imaginaire, seuls à même de permettre au spectateur de ressentir les implications de ce qui est montré. Or, conséquence directe d'un œil écœuré qui ne communique plus que rarement au lobe occipital : l'imagination hiberne. Elle joue les précieuses, elle pinaille, ne daignant plus se pencher que sur l'exceptionnel, l'extraordinaire. Entité fertile par excellence, l'imagination se fait alors faculté contreproductive, rendant le spectateur incapable d'empathie. Domestiquée et infléchie par les médias, elle juge les stimuli que l'œil lui soumet d'un air morne, ne s'attachant plus qu'au message de façade, qu'à la réception immédiate : pour la mettre en mouvement, il faut savoir la convaincre au premier regard.

L'image se doit alors de ménager sa forme, si elle espère pouvoir délivrer un peu de son fond. Elle doit séduire, cajoler notre imagination. Lui prémâcher le travail. Le travail du photojournaliste n'est plus aujourd'hui de produire des images mais de fabriquer pour nous des imaginaires. Dialoguant avec notre imagination sur les territoires du féérique et du merveilleux — terrains de prédilection de cette dernière — les photographies de Richard Mosse développent un univers sur/réaliste, retravaillant ses contours jusqu'à les rendre susceptibles de se frayer un chemin vers la conscience.

Révéler un message au delà de son sujet

Dès lors, le message sous-jacent à l'image peut enfin espérer surgir hors de son trou pour rouvrir les sentiers en friche de la cognition : et que voit-on ? Des enfants soldats qui brandissent leurs armes d'un air de défi. Des visages défigurés. Une violence toujours suggérée et pourtant palpable, pesante, oppressante. Des clichés qui, à la manière d'un Roger Fenton, semblent occulter volontairement l'horreur de la guerre comme pour mieux nous la suggérer hors-champ. Une réalité dure, crue, que l'on regarde souvent mais que l'on ne sait plus voir. Une accusation, obligeant l'imagination à faire un tour sur elle-même jusqu'à la prise de conscience de sa propre indolence.

Car cette série ne parle pas d'une énième guerre ou d'une lointaine détresse étrangère. Elle parle de nous. De notre engourdissement, de notre torpeur. Elle parle de notre culpabilité. Elle parle d'elle-même aussi, et des stratagèmes qu'elle a dû mettre en place pour que l'on daigne la considérer : déformer le réel pour nous le rendre réel ; tel est le paradoxe d'un monde où la réalité est devenue triviale et indigne d'intérêt tandis que l'extraordinaire est célébré comme la nouvelle normalité.

Revive the spectator's imagination

But capturing the attention of the attendees will not be sufficient. To allow the spectator to feel the implications of what is shown, the imagination and its mechanisms must find a way to emerge from their somnolence. Direct consequence of a nauseated eye which hardly communicates with the occipital lobe: the imagination hibernates. It quibbles and plays the condescending, paying attention to nothing but the exceptional, the "extraordinary". Imagination then stops being a fecund faculty to become a counter-productive one, making the spectator incapable to empathize. Domesticated and inflected by the medias, it judges the stimulus submitted by the eye with nonchalance and laziness, only focusing on appearances and primary meanings: to have any chance to respond, imagination must be convinced at first sight.

Images must then look carefully over their form if they wish to deliver a little bit of their content. They must flatter our imagination, seduce it through stories and fairytales. Nowadays photojournalist's job is not to produce images anymore, but to build imaginaries. Diving us into an oneiric and enchanting universe, Richard Mosse dialogues with our imagination on its favorite playground: using of his photographs to develop a super/natural macrocosm, he reshapes and disguises his messages until they become likely to find their way to the conscience.

Reveal a message beyond the subject

Then, the underlying message might have a chance to reopen the fallow patches of the cognition: and what do we see? Some child soldiers proudly brandishing their firearms. Some disfigured faces. A very palpable violence, heavy and oppressing, displayed through pictures which seem — in the footsteps of Roger Fenton's work — to deliberately eclipse the horror of the war only to better suggest it to our brain. An harsh and crude reality, which is often shown but hardly ever seen anymore. An accusation, forcing the imagination to suddenly become very aware of its own indolence.

In the end, these images are not talking about an umpteenth war or a far-away distress. They are talking about us. About our numb and drowsy minds. They are talking about our culpability. They are talking about themselves as well, and about the elaborated stratagems they had to set up so we deign to consider them: to misrepresent the reality so it can become "real" to us; here is the paradox of a world where reality has become banal and unworthy of any interest while the extraordinary is celebrated as the new normality.

Sticky Fingers, 2011, digital c-print, Inventory #RIMII.032, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY



La Vie en Rose, 2010, Cibachrome print, Inventory #RIMI0.010, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY



Wender, Jessie. "Photo Booth: The view from The New Yorker's photo department: Technology and Photographic Art." *The New Yorker.* 18 November 2013.

THE NEW YORKER

PHOTO BOOTH

Nov. 18, 2013

The view from The New Yorker's photo department.

TECHNOLOGY AND PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

Posted by Jessie Wender

The New Yorker's Tech Issue hits newsstands this week, and it got me interested in photographic projects that are anchored in various technologies, from antiquated processes to Internet crowd-sourcing. Here's a selection of technology-based works that I find myself returning to, accompanied by text from the artists.



Richard Mosse, "La Vie en Rose" (2010). Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery.

" 'La Vie En Rose' is from a body of work called 'Infra.' These photographs were made using Kodak Aerochrome, a now-discontinued military surveillance film that was originally designed for camouflage detection during the Second World War. I chose to photograph eastern Congo with this special film, which registers infrared light. I have been struggling with the limits of perception, especially in relation to documentary photography. The camera, after all, is dumb technology. It is just a piece of glass with some film or a digital chip behind it. The struggle of a documentary photographer is to put the subject in front of that piece of glass. This is sometimes extremely difficult, especially when the subject is intangible, abstract, or extremely complicated. The conflict in Congo is like a palimpsest of different wars—by turns tribal, territorial, national, and international—layering each other in obscure and unusual ways. I wanted to try to bring these two very different things—infrared military surveillance film and Congo's suffering— together, to brush them against the grain."

Wender, Jessie. "Technology and Photographic Art." *The New Yorker*, 18 November 2013. Online.
<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2013/11/technology-and-photographic-art.html#slide_ss_0=5>

The Wall Street Journal Magazine (wsj.com)
P. 30
June 2013



Kermeliotis, Teo. "Stunning Congo artwork shows conflict in a different light." *CNN*, 5 June 2013.

Stunning Congo artwork shows conflict in a different light

By **Teo Kermeliotis**, for CNN
June 5, 2013 -- Updated 1505 GMT (2305 HKT)



(CNN) -- As you step closer to the artwork, it's as if you're venturing into a crimson-hued dreamscape, a psychedelic realm immersed in feverish landscapes and eerie sounds. Yet, this is no dream.

Using a special and discontinued technology, which registers an invisible spectrum of infrared light, Irish artist and photographer Richard Mosse has captured beautiful and challenging imagery of people and landscapes in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Designed by the U.S. military in the 1940s for camouflage detection, the Kodak Aerochrome film renders the landscape in an unexpected light, turning shades of lush green into dramatic pinks and glowing reds.

Kermeliotis, Teo. "Stunning Congo artwork shows conflict in a different light." *CNN.com*, 5 June 2013. Online.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/05/world/africa/congo-richard-mosse-the-enclave/index.html?sr=fbmainintl>



Richard Mosse: "Suspicious Minds"

COURTESY OF RICHARD MOSSE AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

The result is both spectacular and shocking: Rolling hills appear dotted with candy-coated trees; river valleys are covered with pink savannah grasses; gun-holding soldiers, clad in purple uniforms, stroll under darkened skies.

Set against the horrors of eastern DRC's humanitarian disaster, where more than five million people have died due to war-related causes since 1998, Mosse's surreal palette presents an alternative view of the region's complex situation.

It's this juxtaposition of alluring panoramas and defiant militia, of haunting beauty and unsettling violence, that forces viewers to pause and think.

"The idea was to use this medium to see into the unseen, to reveal the hidden and make visible the invisible of this forgotten conflict," says Mosse, 33. "That works really on a very simple level through the color palette," he adds. "The pink is so surprising and shocking and unnatural that really makes people stop."

Mosse first used infrared film in his highly praised 2011 photographic series "Infra," also about eastern DRC. He now takes that project a step further with "The Enclave," a multimedia installation that opened last weekend at the Irish Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in Italy.

Kermeliotis, Teo. “Stunning Congo artwork shows conflict in a different light.” *CNN.com*, 5 June 2013. Online. <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/05/world/africa/congo-richard-mosse-the-enclave/index.html?sr=fbmainintl>



Richard Mosse, "The Enclave" - Photo: Tom Powel

COURTESY OF RICHARD MOSSE AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

"The Enclave" is centred on a six-screen projection of a nearly 40-minute documentary, shot on 16mm infrared film.

Throughout large parts of last year, Mosse traveled across eastern DRC with cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and composer Ben Frost. Embedded with armed militia, they captured video, stills and audio to create a powerful installation about the region's rebel groups and their surrounding communities.

"There's no plot, there's no narrator, there's no dialogue -- it's very much a video art piece," says Mosse, who first travelled to eastern DRC in 2010.

"Throughout, the camera it's very much a documentary work," says Mosse. "It is unscripted; we just really go into the warzone and it comes to us. We can't really make things up; it's really what we had the luck to capture and what we turned our sights on."

Mosse says that at the heart of the project is an effort to bring "two counter-worlds into collision: art's potential to represent narratives so painful that they exist beyond language, and photography's capacity to document specific tragedies and communicate them to the world."

"The Enclave" is exhibited at Fondaco Marcello in Venice until November 24.

Kermeliotis, Teo. “Stunning Congo artwork shows conflict in a different light.” *CNN.com*, 5 June 2013. Online.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/05/world/africa/congo-richard-mosse-the-enclave/index.html?sr=fbmainintl>

Wrigley, Tish. “Richard Mosse: The Enclave.” *AnOther*, 4 June 2013.

AnOther

ART & CULTURE

Culture Talks | *Richard Mosse: The Enclave*

— June 4, 2013 —

Conversations with leading cultural figures



Richard Mosse, Safe From Harm, South Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2012 *Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York*

The palette of war photography has long been established as green, brown, black, red. Camouflage, dirt, guns, blood. **Richard Mosse**, in his installation for the Irish Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale, chose to shine a new light on the coverage of conflict, literally. Using an infrared film developed by Kodak and the military for the detection of camouflage, Mosse’s moving image work **The Enclave** explored the war zone and humanitarian disaster currently taking place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, rendering its scenes of horror, despair, bravado and destruction in vibrant magenta, scarlet, puce and purple.
Mosse first worked with this film in his photography project Infra, describing The Enclave as the culmination of this work. The effects are at first mesmerisingly beautiful and seductive, landscapes and people glazed in a surrealist wash of shocking pink. Yet as the truth of the subjects push through the pink, the colours become less fantastical, more grotesque and terrifying. A boy in a headdress of leaves loses his Peter Pan charm as the deadliness of his rifle becomes the focus. Candyfloss trees behind throw the skeletons, ragged tents and tombstones into sharper relief. This is a world without rules – not even of colour – and Mosse’s fairytale patinas force the reality to the surface more profoundly than the established tropes of war coverage that we are often so inured to.

Wrigley, Tish. “Richard Mosse: The Enclave.” *AnOther*, 4 June 2013. Online.
<http://www.anothermag.com/current/view/2764/Richard_Mosse_The_Enclave>.

Here, as the dust of the Biennale settles, Mosse talks to AnOther about the inception of The Enclave and the pursuit of the sublime amid the horrors of the Congo.

Infra is an extraordinary mixture of beauty and violence - can you describe how the project came about? What took you to the Congo?

In 2009 Kodak announced the discontinuation of a certain type of infrared film, which was originally designed for camouflage detection, and used by the military for reconnaissance. I was fascinated by this medium's ability to register an invisible spectrum of light, and felt compelled to use it to examine the forgotten humanitarian disaster in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Described as the African World War, Congo's cancerous conflict has claimed at least 5.4 million people since 1998, according to the International Rescue Committee. That is a huge number of deaths, yet many of us have never even heard about this war.

"I've put everything I have into this. It's all there. The landscape's radiant beauty and the volatile, turgid climate, married to such an unstable conflict situation, have put me in a very peculiar place."

It is extraordinary how the seemingly simple act of altering the palette of the landscape shocks and alters our perceptions of these situations. Do you think it is necessary to provoke in order to create strong reactions to situations that we are perhaps inured to by their proliferation in our daily lives?

I go to great lengths to keep my work as open as possible in terms of signification, trying especially hard to avoid didacticism. So the viewer can bring whatever they like to the work, and its unusual colours. I suppose for me, though, the colours are deeply emotional, as I have developed a strong affinity for eastern Congo over my many journeys in the region. So, for me, it's a deeply personal response, rather than a deliberately didactic provocation. If people are moved by the work to take a longer look at the humanitarian disaster in eastern Congo, that is superb.

The Enclave pushes the aesthetics of Infra from stills into moving images - why was this move important for you?

The Enclave is the culmination of Infra. The work has evolved a good deal since I began in January 2010. Throughout 2012, I have been working with my collaborators, Trevor Tweeten (cinematographer) and Ben Frost (composer/sound designer) to bring this body of work to a devastating conclusion, and to do justice to my extreme experiences from Congo.

It is quite different to my earlier photographs from Congo simply because motion picture and still photography are such extremely different animals. Motion picture strikes the heart immediately, rather like music, while still photography is more reflective, more endless, yet less proximate. The Enclave is deeply visceral, sometimes terrifying. You can't really achieve that with still photographs in the same way. They are a slower burn.

I've put everything I have into this. It's all there. The landscape's radiant beauty and the volatile, turgid climate, married to such an unstable conflict situation, have put me in a very peculiar place. Travelling in Congo, I feel at once deeply lucid yet entirely lost in my imagination, in my waking dreams, often verging into nightmare. As these journeys have evolved, and the deeper into the conflict that I have found myself,

this state has pushed me further out. It's a pursuit of the sublime, a very personal one, but dressed in the tidy uniform of the documentary photographer.

The Enclave describes an escalating conflict situation in North and South Kivu throughout 2012. The camps of the internally displaced, a child's lullaby that describes finding piles of bodies in the bushes, rebels being blessed with bullet-proof potion by their prophet, dead bodies left to rot on the road, a rebel propaganda rally in which children jump through a burning ring of fire, footage of actual conflict captured while mortars were landing all around, the radiant landscape during rainy season, glowing a nauseous pink. These are the subjects, and they are represented through a crystallization of styles and transgression.

How has your experience of Venice been so far? What have been your highlights and what are you looking forward to?

I've been working on the Irish Pavilion in Venice since February 2012, and feel I know Venice fairly well over the four months I've been here. The city itself is a fascinating organism, especially in the winter months, when the damp cold gets into your bones and the smelly water choughs onto the footpaths. Living here has been wonderful. I have actually been working too hard to see any of the rest of the Biennale yet, so I can't speak yet about what's hot. Now that the Biennale vernissage has finished, and I am absolutely exhausted, I am planning to travel to Greece to find some peace, and begin to think about future projects.

Richard Mosse: The Enclave will show in the Irish Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale until November 24.

Text by Tish Wrigley

Tish Wrigley is the AnOther editorial assistant.

Wrigley, Tish. "Richard Mosse: The Enclave." *AnOther*, 4 June 2013. Online.
<http://www.anothermag.com/current/view/2764/Richard_Mosse_The_Enclave>.

Crow, Kelly. "Arena: Richard Mosse." *The Wall Street Journal: Arena*, 31 May 2013.



Richard Mosse

Age 32

Ireland

As a teenager growing up Kilkenny, Ireland, Richard Mosse said he used to hear radio reports of genocide in the Balkans—and something struck him about the incongruity of so much violence happening in cities with "beautiful" names like Sarajevo. So when he was 20 years old, he packed his camera and went to take a closer look.

The same impulse spurs much of his photography and films today—to some, he's still best known for "Theatre of War," his 2009 short film of dusty soldiers sitting around Saddam Hussein's rubble-strewn swimming pool in Iraq.

But his work on view in the Irish pavilion, "The Enclave," will likely become his signature series in part because it's set in eastern Congo and because it's pink.



A few years ago, Mr. Mosse began filming rebel-controlled areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo using a discontinued military surveillance film that captures infrared light. The film registers green hues in shades of purplish pink—lending an eerie, psychedelic spin to his portraits of soldiers and others caught in the cross hairs.

"You're struck at first by how beautiful it is, and then it hits you how much the people in these photos are suffering," said Anna O'Sullivan, the curator helping Mr. Mosse with the pavilion. "He doesn't let you off the hook."

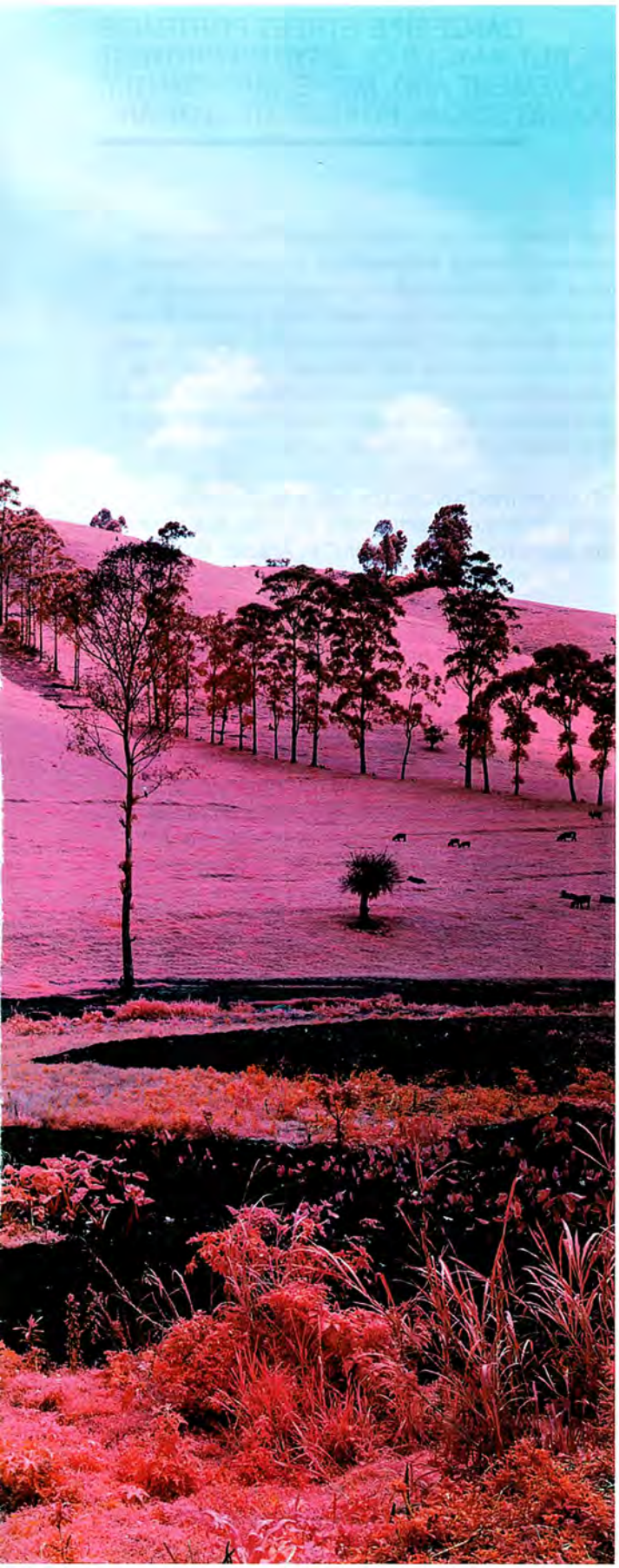
Maybe that's why collectors appear to prefer the hot-pink landscapes to the tougher soldier portraits in this series, but prices for both have risen 20% in the past year and a half, according to Tamsen Greene, a director with at his New York gallery, Jack Shainman. Although his photos typically sell for between $12,000 and $24,000 apiece, she said the two 20-foot-long photos in the pavilion are bigger all around—so the gallery is asking $75,000 for each.

—Kelly Crow in Venice

REBEL ROUSER A still from Richard Mosse's "The Enclave," set in Congo and shot with infrared film.

Sarah Sze: (l-r) Stefano Scatà for The Wall Street Journal; Sarah Sze/Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and Victoria Miro Gallery, London/Tom Powel Imaging (photo); Valentin Carron: (l-r) European Pressphoto Agency; Valentin Carron/Stefan Altenburger (photo); Anri Sala: (l-r) Noah Rabinowitz for The Wall Street Journal; Julien Mignot/Eté 80; Richard Mosse: (l-r) Richard Mosse/Jack Shainman Gallery/Tom Powel Imaging (photo); Richard Mosse; Lee Kit: (t-b) Lee Kit/M+, WKCDA and HKADC/David Levene (photo); Cristiano Corte

Viveros-Faune, Christian. “The New Realism.” Art in America. 2012.



Richard Mosse: *Men of Good Fortune*, North Kivu, eastern Congo, 2011, digital C-print, 72 by 90 inches. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

THE NEW REALISM

From Mexico to China, artists are actively exposing the authoritarianism, violence and corruption around them—much to the dismay of authorities.

BY CHRISTIAN VIVEROS-FAUNÉ

IN A SCENE STRAIGHT OUT of a Latino “CSI,” the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles scrounges for bits of glass and gore following a killing on the streets of Ciudad Juárez, murder capital of the world. Her use of these grisly “art supplies” at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 wins her death threats from anonymous parties and de facto excommunication from Mexico’s official cultural scene.

The U.S. photographer Nina Berman portrays Iraq War veteran Ty Ziegel and his wife, Renee Kline, in their wedding clothes. Showing a disfigured Ziegel and a dazed Kline, Berman’s image exposes the real-life costs of war, and goes viral after appearing in the *New York Times* in 2007.

An Egyptian artist named Mohamed Fahmy, aka Ganzeer, is picked up by the police on the streets of Cairo in May 2011. His crime: pasting up a sticker featuring a gagged man and an Arabic phrase that translates as “Mask of Freedom.” On his release, Ganzeer states his desire to paint a mural for each of the 800-plus martyrs to the 18 days of national revolt that began in January 2011.

The great Chinese rebel Ai Weiwei finally pushes his ongoing criticism of Communist rule too far. The regime demolishes one his studios and later detains him. When the artist emerges 81 days later—following an international pressure campaign that mobilizes the worlds of culture and politics—he shows little sign of quieting his very vocal dissent. As of this writing, he continues to harass the authoritarian rulers of China.

This is today’s New Realism. In response to a host of global challenges ranging from political repression to economic crisis to endemic poverty and human rights violations, artists around the world are taking up pencils, brushes, cameras and iPhones to make art that connects with large numbers of people outside the system of galleries and museums. Despite living in far-flung

GANZEER'S STREET PORTRAITS CAPTURE KEY IMAGES OF EGYPT'S PROTEST MOVEMENT AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE EVOLVING SOCIAL POSSIBILITIES OF ART.

locales and working in different mediums, these artists express a shared belief in the power of art to promote and effect social change. In the age of Facebook and live Twitter feeds, this conviction links them to a global audience that, for the most part, hardly follows the goings-on of the art world.

With precursors in the art and activism of previous decades—for example, the genuine political radicalism of Joseph Beuys (few remember that he helped found the German Green Party in 1979) and the agitprop of the Argentine collective Tucumán Arde (their short-lived activities in the late '60s erased the line between fine art and political militancy)—this international phenomenon appears not merely as an artistic trope. Representing less a movement than a widespread cultural moment, these figures find cohesion in a growing resistance to an increasingly globalized economic and cultural status quo. A mixture of protest, imagination and refusal, facilitated by social technology and frequent air travel, the new esthetic-political ethos shared by these and many other artists centers on the belief that artworks should be part of a larger social or moral terrain.

CONSIDER, FOR INSTANCE, the case of Ganzeer. A 29-year-old multimedia artist and graphic designer whose *nom d'artiste* means "chain" in Arabic, Ganzeer has rapidly become, according to the English-language *Daily News Egypt*, one of the most recognizable faces on the Egyptian arts scene—the country's "de facto cultural operator."[1] Having participated in commercial exhibitions in his home country, the artist recently said he found his gallery work to be "the least satisfying" as it "is not relevant to life,"[2] so he is currently focusing on mural-size public works rather than discrete art objects. As a response to the government's crackdown on political demonstrations in early 2011, Ganzeer took to painting the walls of Cairo with portraits of the uprising's fallen in red, yellow, white and black, the colors of the Egyptian flag.



Ganzeer is reportedly *the* major player in what London's *Guardian* newspaper describes as the emergence of a flourishing "counter-culture arts scene on the mainstream radar."[3] His popular likenesses function as images of the human costs of authoritarianism, in a country where censorship normally silences political opposition. They also serve as a portrait of the protest movement itself and—in their being much celebrated, frequently visited, and ardently discussed—as a demonstration of the potential of activist work. Like the protestors' often anonymous radical publications and viral videos, Ganzeer's stenciled street portraits capture key images of the movement and, more importantly, the evolving social possibilities of art.

Despite the obvious similarities, the Egyptian artist—who has also done projects in Holland, Germany, Poland, Jordan and Kuwait and was recently invited



Above, a "Voina Wanted" poster in the Nové Butovice station of the Prague metro, designed by Alexei Plutser-Sarno.

Opposite, Ganzeer painting a mural of the Egyptian student Omar Mohsen, who was killed in Cairo in 2012. Photo Munir Sayegh.

to speak before the European Cultural Congress—differs significantly from those who would seem to be his counterparts in the UK and the U.S. Banksy, for instance, has become largely a "profiteer of the village green," as the blog The Radio Paper puts it, and the same could be said of Shepard Fairey. In contrast, Ganzeer remains radically populist and political. The reputed author of an anonymous leaflet called "How to Revolt Cleverly," which contains illustrated advice for confronting riot police and besieging government offices, Ganzeer continues to play the role of artist-as-political-provocateur at great personal risk and for little, if any, financial reward.

"Creating graffiti involves taking ownership of the streets, just like we did during the uprising," Ganzeer told one reporter. "And so of course it's political, and illegal."[4]

SIMILAR LANGUAGE MIGHT be used to characterize the actions of the Russian art collective Voina. The group claims to rely on no Russian curators or galleries, to cooperate with no state or private institutions and to have no sources of funding whatsoever. Carrying out shockingly provocative, not to mention highly dangerous, activities, Voina thrives on the kind of radical independence that violates most political and artistic conventions, and breaks not a few laws.

Voina, whose name means "war," has throughout its outrageous history both gained and alienated the sympathies of Russia's artists, its youth and many mainstream opponents of the Putin regime. Founded in 2006 and consisting of like-minded artists and philosophy students from Moscow and St. Petersburg, the collective carries out an inventive, performance-based campaign against authoritarianism, political corruption and the Russian government's arbitrary use of power. In February 2008, on the eve of the election of Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, five naked couples, including a pregnant woman, staged an orgy inside Moscow's Timirayzev State Museum of Biology. The title of the action: *Fuck for the Heir Medvedev's Little Bear!* (Medvedev's name is derived from *medved*, Russian for "bear.")

Other equally incendiary actions followed. In 2009, Voina smuggled guitars, microphones and amplifiers into a federal courtroom to perform a satirical song titled "All Cops Are Bastards" in front of a judge presiding over the case of curator Andrei Yerofeyev, on trial for organizing the 2007 exhibition "Forbidden Art" at the Andrei Sakharov Museum in Moscow. To protest Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's homophobic and racist comments—as well as the city's inaction after a string of sometimes deadly hate crimes against immigrants—the group mock-lynched gay men and immigrant workers inside a busy supermarket.



Above, view of Teresa Margolles's installation *What Else Could We Talk About?*, 2009, showing exhibition floors mopped with water and blood; at the 53rd Venice Biennale. Courtesy Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich. Photo Luis Cárcamo.

Opposite, Nina Berman: *Marine Wedding*, 2006, pigment print, 24 by 16 inches. Courtesy the artist.

In the summer of 2010, Voina produced what remains their most popular "installation": they painted a huge phallus on a 200-foot-tall drawbridge in St. Petersburg, in full view of the headquarters of the Federal Security Service (successor to the KGB). As images of the functioning drawbridge hit the news and the web, a Voina spokesman claimed the phallus was aroused by Putin's power.

Despite opposition among some members of a seven-judge panel, the artwork was awarded the Ministry of Culture's prestigious Innovation Prize that year (approximately $14,000). "No one wanted to look like a conformist," declared Yerofeyev, who, ironically, served as a judge.[5] He said the panel eventually became convinced that Voina's mockery of state power was already so popular that ignoring it would itself constitute a statement.

Not content to bask in the glow of official honors, Voina upped the ante. On New Year's Eve 2011, in protest of the repeated incarceration and beating of several of its members, the group set fire to a police truck in the courtyard of a St. Petersburg police station. In a prepared statement, the group dedicated this "fire gift" to Russian political prisoners everywhere. As with previous Voina actions, details of the "street performance" were rapidly disseminated online.

Although this act—as well as an earlier campaign of overturning police cars, for which members were prosecuted and, astoundingly, exonerated—might be dismissed by some as mere hooliganism, the collective has gained wide recognition for escalating protests against the Russian state. An international support network of artists, activists and human rights advocates has emerged. Last November saw the group's appointment as associate curators of the 7th Berlin Biennale (on view through July 1). "Free Voina" banners have appeared in places as far away from Moscow as Zurich and Brooklyn. Additionally, in February 2011—in a generous act of solidarity and possibly even artistic deference—Banksy bailed out several of Voina's jailed members to the tune of $10,000 each.

One of Voina's members describes the group's artistic mission this way: "We work on the thin line between activism and art. . . . All our actions have underlying political messages, but we use art language only. We speak in images, symbols, which are mostly visual. In the current socio-political situation in Russia, an honest artist can't be mute and make glamorous 'masterpieces' for oligarchs, who decorate their 'brilliant' dachas."[6]

MIXING DOCUMENTARY PRACTICE AND CONVENTIONAL ESTHETICS, NINA BERMAN PRODUCES NEITHER STANDARD-ISSUE PHOTOJOURNALISM NOR ART PORTRAITURE OF A TRADITIONAL OR POSTMODERN VARIETY.

THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN Voina's aims and those of the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles are remarkable, especially if one considers their geographical distance from each other. Having been described as "one of the unchallenged representatives of a new minimal body art,"[7] Margolles works with human corpses, underscoring the anonymous effects of global poverty as well as the social and political disenfranchisement of millions of her fellow Mexicans. Since Margolles obtained a diploma in forensic medicine in the 1990s, her métier has been, simply put, the social and political economy of death. When touching on Mexico's runaway narco-violence—one day last September, 35 bodies were dumped in full daylight on a congested avenue in Veracruz—her work turns cathartic and visionary.

According to Margolles, Mexico's appalling violence is the only subject worth addressing—in her own art at least. She has scandalized both her countrymen and the international art world on a number of occasions by confronting the problem of violence in her homeland with brutal directness. This she did most notably in 2009, when she represented Mexico at the 53rd Venice Biennale with the eerie installation *¿De qué otra cosa podríamos hablar?* (What Else Could We Talk About?). The installation featured human blood, glass from shattered windshields, and other materials scavenged from behind police barriers in her home state of Sinaloa (birthplace of the Sinaloa Cartel, which is, according to U.S. intelligence, "the most powerful drug-trafficking organization in the world").

Far more affecting than some of her early performances with dead animals or the videos and photographs she shot inside morgues, Margolles's Venice installation eschewed actual representations of violence for a sepulchral display that one interlocutor admiringly referred to as a "temple of blood."[8] Serving in a sense to give political life to the anonymous dead, the installation quickly became both an international succès de scandale and a national diplomatic debacle. It's no secret today, three years after the fact, that many of those who supported Margolles's Venice pavilion within Mexico's official cultural sphere were dismissed on express orders of the government of President Calderón. One presumes that Mexico's ongoing orgy of violence was not what the power suits wanted to talk about—and certainly not in public, with the rest of the world listening in.

Nina Berman, perhaps the best known of the international photographers who are liberally mixing conventional esthetics and documentary practice, has taken pictures of Iraq War veterans, Tea Party activists and Occupy Wall Street



RICHARD MOSSE'S LANDSCAPE AND PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS ARE AT ONCE REALISTIC AND HALLUCINATORY. THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY VIBRANT, GORGEOUS PICTURES OF HELL ON EARTH.

protesters. Producing neither standard-issue photojournalism nor art portraiture of a traditional or postmodern variety, Berman portrays her subjects with a special canniness. She examines how individuals define themselves in the larger social sphere—through their clothing or domestic environments, for instance—and, in a related vein, how ideologies or social hierarchies are mapped onto subjects. She has been quite explicit in characterizing her artistic stance: "I say I'm a political person, and that my work is political, although I'm not saying what that politics is. I'm just saying that [the work] lives in a political world."[9]

For the Irish photographer Richard Mosse, "Art has the potential to reflect our difficult world, shifting the way we see, the way we understand, and can have a cumulative and profound effect on consciousness."[10] Mosse evokes the intractable conflict in eastern Congo with Conrad-like complexity, employing the hot pinks and fuchsias provided by Aerochrome, a disused infrared film once developed for surveillance by the U.S. military. His landscape and portrait photographs, often shot with an obsolete wooden field camera, are at once realistic and hallucinatory. They are essentially vibrant, gorgeous pictures of hell on earth.

Captured visions of a real-life nightmare that has been notoriously hard to fathom, Mosse's frankly esthetic images problematize photography, deftly turning his medium's falsehoods (the red appearance of green hills and valleys, for example) into human certainties (those very pastoral-looking landscapes are the setting of massacres and hide actual blood underfoot). Mosse's work reveals what remains invisible to photographers who record only what the camera sees with its "naked lens." Expanding out from conventional realism, his efforts to represent the unrepresentable break through the apathy often associated with photographs of unrelenting misery. According to Mosse, art "can help us begin to describe, and thereby account for, what exists at the limits of human articulation."[11]

WHILE ARTISTS HAVE long sought to reveal sociopolitical truths in their work, today they can disseminate their messages with unprecedented rapidity and reach. This is demonstrated best by Ai Weiwei, who has successfully resuscitated the figure of the public intellectual in a plugged-in, global guise.

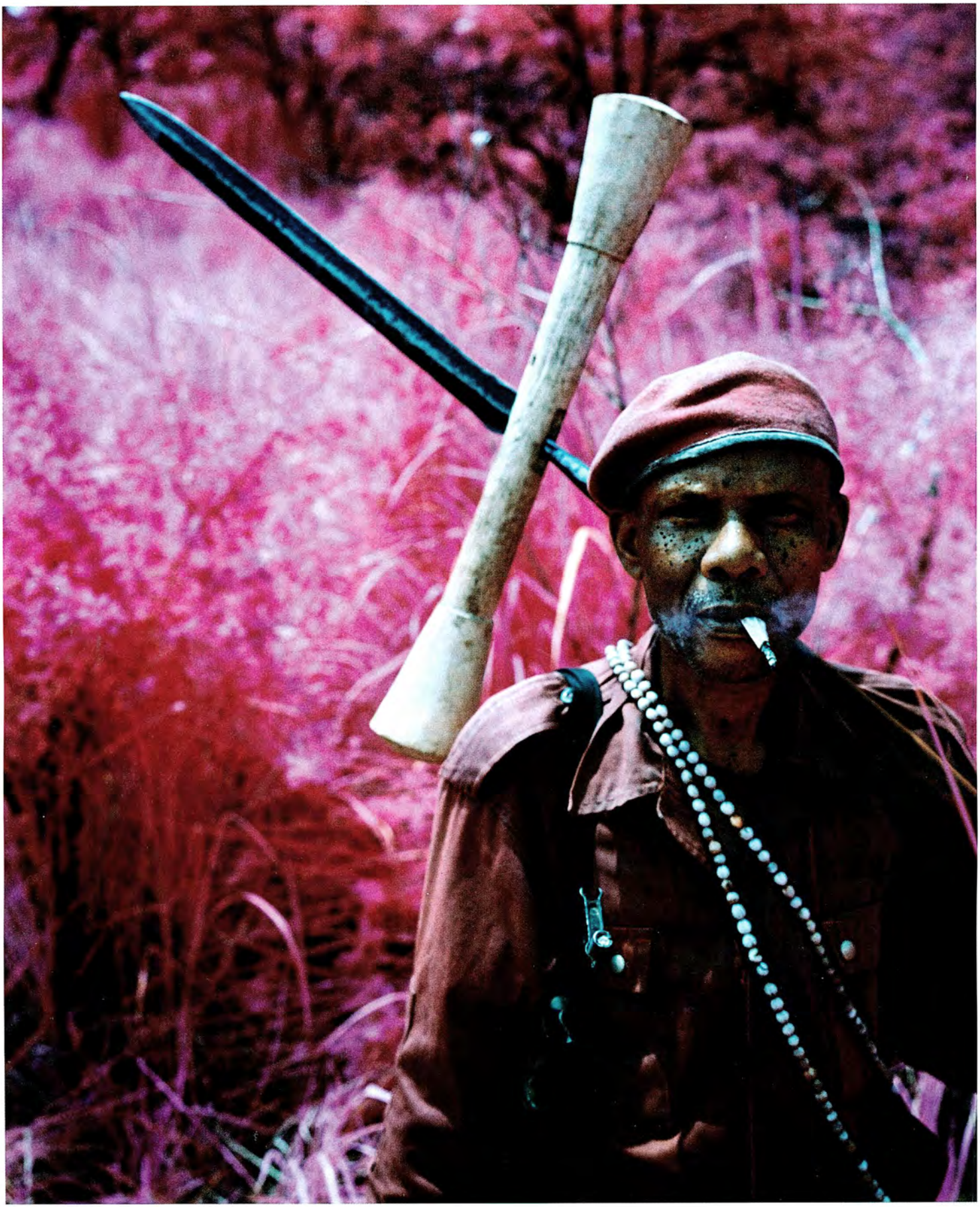
Using art as his bullhorn, Ai has challenged the Chinese government on everything from its corruption to its lethal AIDS policy to its responsibility in the deaths of thousands of schoolchildren in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. In 2006, he went online to widen his audience. When his blog was shut down in May 2009, Ai turned to Twitter and microblogging. Still, the 2,700 posts on his former site make up what curator Hans Ulrich Obrist called "one of the greatest social sculptures of our time."[12] A challenge to contemporary art's often hidebound ways of constructing and circulating meaning, Ai's blog also proved a demonstration—in an era that soon saw the Arab Spring and the efforts of Occupy Wall Street—of the genuine social utility of the Internet.

Ai's arrest by the Chinese Communist authorities on Apr. 3, 2011, at Beijing's Capital International Airport, leapt off the pages of the art press and into the 24/7 international news circuit. Already an art star, a recognized architect (he helped design the Beijing National Stadium for the 2008 Summer Olympics) and a longtime outspoken dissident, Ai suddenly became a cultural symbol of sorts. Today, his story serves to bring a number of apparently opposing ideas into a comprehensible whole: East and West, communism and capitalism, freedom and repression, art and politics, change and status quo. His difficulties are understood by the public—as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's plight once was—to represent the need for the expansion of freedom around the world.

The artists discussed here represent only the tip of the iceberg. There are many other ironists, snipers, agitators and provocateurs who are currently bringing an artistic conscience and cunning to local and global politics. Their various styles and concerns, in turn, provide ethical challenges for the future—for tomorrow's unsentimental and uncynical artists, that is, and the societies they will look to transform. ○

1 Heba Elkayal, "Ganzeer: The De Facto Cultural Operator," *Daily News Eygpt*, July 27, 2011. **2** Ganzeer, "Practical Advice," in *Bidoun*, no. 25, Summer 2011, quoted in Anny Shaw and Gareth Harris, "Arab Protesters Put Their Art on the Streets," *Art Newspaper*, Dec. 30, 2011. **3** Jack Shenker, "Egypt's Uprising Brings DIY Spirit out on to the Streets," *Guardian*, May 18, 2011. **4** Ganzeer, quoted in ibid. **5** Andrei Yerofeyev, quoted in Ellen Barry, "Radical Art Group Wins Russian Ministry Prize," *New York Times*, Apr. 8, 2011. **6** Alexei Plutser-Sarno, quoted in Michael Lithgow, "Even Banksy Couldn't Help Them," *Art Threat*, Feb. 7, 2011, artthreat.net. **7** Niklas Maak, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 21, 2003. **8** Daniel Hernández, "Temple of Blood: Teresa Margolles at the Venice Biennale," *Intersections*, May 28, 2009, danielhernandez.typepad.com. **9** Nina Berman, interviewed by Jonathan Blaustein, *A Photo Editor*, March 3, 2010, www.aphotoeditor.com. **10** Richard Mosse, *Infra: Photographs by Richard Mosse*, New York, Aperture, 2011, p. 133. **11** Ibid., p. 132. **12** Hans Ulrich Obrist, quoted in Mathieu Wellner, "Ai Weiwei," *Mono-Kulture*, no. 22, Autumn 2009, p. 5.

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Mosse: *Prophet*, South Kivu, eastern Congo, 2012, digital C-print, 60 by 48 inches. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery.

Jennings, Dana. “Vivid Guides to Unfamiliar Landscapes.” *The New York Times*. 26 April 2012.

The New York Times

April 26, 2012

Vivid Guides to Unfamiliar Landscapes

By DANA JENNINGS

We hunger after the otherworldly. We crave magic and interstellar travel, the surreal and the mysterious. We want to savor fear and awe in the same breath, and the high priests of pop culture do their best to keep us sated, whether it’s Stephen King, the “Twilight” franchise or “Avatar” in 3-D.

But the otherworldly doesn’t belong to pulp and movie house alone. It also has its place on the palette of the serious artist, especially since the dawn of the atomic age. Some of the artists here took the 19th-century route and journeyed to the heart of Africa in pursuit of the strange, while others looked to outer space or steeped themselves in alchemy and Kabbalah. Yet others peered so deep into the abyss of their own psyches that they found themselves staring at the back 40 of infinity.

As for me, as I gazed at and grazed on the images in these books, I kept hearing Pink Floyd singing, sighing, *insisting,* “I’ll see you on the dark side of the moon.”



Credit: Richard Mosse/INSTITUTE/Jack Shainman Gallery

INFRA
Photographs by Richard Mosse
136 pages. Aperture Foundation. $50.

“Infra” seeks to shed light on the intractable war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to present narratives that, Mr. Mosse writes, “urgently need telling but cannot be easily described.” In a brilliant tactic, Mr. Mosse shot these photos using Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued military aerial-surveillance film. The infrared film is extra sensitive to green and translates the Congolese landscape into torrid pinks, margarita blues and coral-reef fuchsias. Against this surreal backdrop we see the war more clearly: the child soldiers, the maimed, the dead.

"Galleries—Chelsea: Richard Mosse" (Jack Shainman exhibition review). The New Yorker, 19 & 26 December 2011: p. 20.



THE NEW YORKER

December 19 & 26, 2011

GALLERIES—CHELSEA



Richard Mosse's 2011 photograph "Vintage Violence," in his current exhibition at the Jack Shainman gallery.

RICHARD MOSSE

The Irish photographer, who is based in New York, has been working lately in the Congo, and his pictures of that devastated country are big and startling. Mosse uses a type of film created for aerial reconnaissance, which picks up infrared light and renders green as hot pink. As a result, his landscapes—elevated views of mountains, rolling hills, and valleys that stretch for miles—look like cotton-candy land. But because the inhabitants, seen up close, are mostly uniformed men and children with guns, the pink turns both cloying and corrosive, suggesting not psychedelic ecstasy but the ultimate bad trip. Through Dec. 23. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701.)

Miller, Legh Anne. "The Lookout: A Weekly Guide to Shows You Won't Want to Miss." Art in America, December 2011.

Art in America INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
December 2011

The Lookout: A Weekly Guide to Shows You Won't Want to Miss

by Leigh Anne Miller

With an ever-growing number of galleries scattered around New York, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Where to begin? Here at *A.i.A.*, we are always on the hunt for thought-provoking, clever and memorable shows that stand out in a crowded field. Below are seven shows our team of editors can't stop talking about.

This week we check out Richard Mosse's color-warping photos of war-torn Congo at Jack Shainman, Tom LaDuke's layered paintings and materially surprising sculptures at CRG and Joe Sola's humorously gruesome video at Blackston.



Courtesy Richard Mosse: Men of Good Fortune, 2011, digital c-print. Courtesy Jack Shainman.

Richard Mosse at Jack Shainman, through Dec. 23
For Irish photographer Richard Mosse's new series, he traveled to war-torn Congo packing Kodak Aerochrome film, a discontinued military infrared film that turns greens into reddish pinks. The resulting large-scale images show rolling landscapes of pink grass and trees, humble huts on rugged pink terrain, and gun-toting rebel soldiers. The trippy colors render the potent scenes as absurd as war itself.

Johnson, Whitney. “Photo Booth: Postcard from Eastern Congo – Richard Mosse.” The New Yorker. June 2010.

THE NEW YORKER

Nov. 1, 2011

PHOTO BOOTH

The view from The New Yorker's photo department.

GREAT MISTAKES: RICHARD MOSSE

Posted by James Pomerantz

Everybody makes mistakes; some people make beautiful ones.

While many photographers work in challenging locations, few do so lugging an 8x10 large-format camera and the requisite accoutrement. Richard Mosse has kindly taken a few moments from his back-breaking photographic adventures to share the story behind his favorite mistake.



Pomerantz, James. “Great Mistakes: Richard Mosse.” *The New Yorker*, 1 November 2011 (online only). Web. 3 November 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2011/11/great-mistakes-richard-mosse.html>.

Mosse:

> My two-month jaunt in the Democratic Republic of Congo earlier this year was made in vain, evaporating into a sea of double-exposed 8x10 inch landscapes. This single mistake cost me a hundred precious sheets of this discontinued infrared film stock once used for military reconnaissance but now some of the last in existence. I knew I'd made a grievous error after returning across front lines from rebel territory only to discover that both boxes of film seemed to be mislabelled. "This one says that it's exposed but I distinctly remember it being unexposed. And this one says that it's unexposed, but I feel that's not the case. Well," I realized, "I have a fifty-per-cent chance of it working out."
>
> I lost.
>
> You might just be able to discern the crater of a volcano at the center of the image. A bank of heavy black cloud obscures the view to the right of the crater, occluding a patchwork of cultivated fields from the second landscape. These two extraordinary landscapes show sites of tragic conflict. Superimposed, they multiply into a vertiginous and irresolvable world. After a week of tremendous self-loathing and long walks on the gray streets of Manhattan, I decided that I must simply return to Congo and reshoot everything. As Sam Beckett once said, "Try again, fail again, fail better."
>
> For me, this image stands at a particular threshold in my life and work, leading to further journeys in eastern Congo. They have been as exhausting and problematic as the ones before, but continue to elaborate relentlessly within my dreams and imagination. It is curious, the things that lead us to commit to certain places, but the important thing is that we do.

Mosse's print, "Débris," will be available in an edition of thirty from Aperture Foundation. Last year, Whitney Johnson took a look at Mosse's infrared (and single-exposed) photographs from eastern Congo; from November 17th to December 23rd, his series "Infra" will be on view at Jack Shainman Gallery, the monograph of which is being published by Aperture Foundation and the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Pomerantz, James. "Great Mistakes: Richard Mosse." *The New Yorker*, 1 November 2011 (online only). Web. 3 November 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2011/11/great-mistakes-richard-mosse.html>.

Rosenmeyer, Aoife. "Points of Conflict: An artist goes to war." Modern Painters, November 2010.



Points of Conflict

An artist goes to war.

BY AOIFE ROSENMEYER

RICHARD MOSSE IS resting after two hectic years, a whirlwind of work in locations including Iraq, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Congo funded by an Annenberg Fellowship from Yale School of Art; right now he deserves some time off. We rendezvous on a train from Zurich to Lausanne, where we will visit "reGeneration2: Tomorrow's Photographers Today," an exhibition that includes his work at the Musée de l'Elysée. Mosse is en route from his parents' home in Kilkenny, Ireland, via Austria, to the raucous folk festival in Serbian Guca, where he hopes to meet some former fighters in the region's ethnic wars. His most recent series, "Infra," of photos taken in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has sparked criticism from photojournalists—grist for the mill of an artist who operates at the point where art and journalism meet.

Now a resident of New York, Mosse was born in Dublin in 1980 and moved to London to study English literature before shifting focus from words to images while completing his masters at the London Consortium. After a year at Goldsmiths College, he enrolled at Yale, where he earned an MFA in photography in 2008. He has already had solo shows at such venues as Jack Shainman (who represents his work), in New York; the Fotofest 2010 Biennial, in Houston; and the Eigse Arts Festival, in Ireland. His documentary prints, measuring a monumental six by eight feet, have portrayed plane wrecks, bombed buildings, and models built for airport fire-safety training, while his thoughtful investigative video works probe both the verbal and visual vocabularies of

politically fragile locations.

Tall and broad-shouldered, Mosse has the bearing of a man who doesn't mind getting his hands dirty. For years he has traveled to sites of conflict, drawn by the dense histories that underlie so many disputes. Mosse found compelling situations but was dissatisfied with images produced following photographic tradition. "The camera's lens is brutally dumb. That dumbness is terribly frustrating," he says, "but it's also a fabulous tool for unpacking history." Mosse agrees with Susan Sontag's assertion that photojournalism compromises its output to make images audiences can assimilate. In contrast, he is interested in the world as it is, and he makes art, not journalism, trying to access the sublime to convey invisible truths.

In 2009 he went to Iraq, where he was embedded with U.S. troops. The catalyst for the trip was a *New Yorker* article in which Jon Lee Anderson described Saddam Hussein's palaces, 81 monumental compounds with which Saddam had studded the country to display his might and some of which he never set foot in. They are easily defensible and centrally located, and in 2003 the invading U.S. forces immediately occupied several of them. This struck Mosse as symbolically replacing a despot with an aggressor. "If you're trying to convince a population that you have liberated them from a terrible dictator," he says, "why would you then sit on his throne?" Thanks to accreditation from the *Yale Daily News*, he spent a month living with the troops, using any opportunity to document both the colossal structures and the camps that had been set up inside.

Mosse was mindful of Jean Baudrillard's provocative claim, made in his essay "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place," that the first Gulf conflict was actually a scripted media event. From the same events that provided sound bites on international news channels during the second war, he created the 2009 "Breach," a series of immediate and unexpected images of ornate if crumbling buildings and of soldiers marking time within them. Mosaics, chandeliers, and marble contrast sharply with an alfresco gym and the chipboard-divided accommodations, the internal military posters providing their own version of propaganda. The title could refer to the gap in Saddam's defenses that the military has filled, the break with tradition, or a breach of faith. The photographs testify that the palaces, so long targets on the radar of the International Atomic Energy Agency, remain a representational minefield.

If Iraq's media profile is high, the Democratic Republic of Congo's is low. The turbulence of the past decades—so "immanent," Mosse says, "it infuses Congo and has done for 50 years"—remains virtually unseen in the West because of its complexity, our lack of interest, and the fact that it's convenient for us remain ignorant about the dubious source of the metals in our mobile phones. Mosse discovered that in the country itself the war is also, in a sense, invisible, conducted with so-called white weapons, silent arms like machetes and clubs. The rebel Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda live nomadically in the equatorial jungle that covers the country and also swallows the traces of rape, murder, and pillaging. To capture this hidden conflict, Mosse used an unstable and almost defunct photographic medium called color infrared, or false-color film, designed by Kodak in conjunction with the U.S. military, which allows shelters camouflaged in dense forest to be spotted from the air.





The result was "Infra," produced at the close of his Annenberg marathon last summer. The aesthetic of color infrared has been employed by the likes of the Grateful Dead for album artwork, and some photojournalists accused Mosse of frivolity for using it to create his beautiful but threatening scenes, rendered in powdery pink. But he finds the charge absurd, given the history of the medium.

If the artificial prettiness of color infrared film helps him make the invisible more visible, all the better. Ultimately, he says, "naturalism has no greater claim to veracity than other strategies." MP

Art in America
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Kilston, Lyra. "Richard Mosse" (exhibition review). Art in America, March 2010.

Richard Mosse: *Pool at Uday's Palace*, 2009, C-print on Plexiglas, 72 by 96 inches; at Jack Shainman.



RICHARD MOSSE
JACK SHAINMAN

There are many ways for photographers to document war, from portraying its victims or perpetrators, to showing the scars it leaves on the landscape, to making images that speak of the disappearance of a certain population. Irish-born photographer Richard Mosse favors recording the wartime wreckage abandoned as junk, creating pictures of the military vehicles and airplanes left rusting in snowbound forests and barren deserts. In this exhibition, Mosse's second solo in New York, a dozen large-scale color photographs and one video captured the relics of war from several angles.

In a few images, U.S. soldiers are shown lounging beside Uday Hussein's enormous empty swimming pool; the bright turquoise paint of its walls contrasts starkly with the dusty beige of the landscape, the brown rubble on the pool's bottom and the desert-camouflage uniforms of the poolside GIs. In other works, cars so thoroughly riddled with bullet holes as to be nearly collapsed sit abandoned in arid stretches of land, the dust-filled air a sickly mustard yellow. In the series "The Fall," defunct airplanes are shown decaying on snowy mountain ridges in the Canadian hinterlands, or in warmer climes, as in *727 Santo Domingo* (2009), where a thick clump of ivy has begun to climb the body of a rusting plane. (An earlier series not included in this show pictured flaming dummy airplanes used for emergency rescue practice.)

Mosse is not yet 30, but he has already documented some of the most formidable sites in the world, including the smuggling tunnels of Gaza, bullet-scarred Beirut and the wrecked palace of Saddam Hussein (the photographs of which are among those he took while embedded with the U.S. military). The video *Unitled (Iraq)*, 2009, opens on a windswept dune, and as the camera begins to circle twisted metal scraps left in the sand, a voice recites Iraqi place names in alphabetical order from Abu Ghraib to Tikrit. The metal, used for target practice by American soldiers, had rusted into an oxidized lace. Trash in another context, this debris bears witness to violent histories. As with the derelict cars and planes, we can't help but anthropomorphize these meager remains. Mosse's photographs conjure the effects of war we know but do not see here: human bodies shattered and lives lost.

—*Lyra Kilston*



ool at Uday's Palace
from the Breach series),
009, digital c-print
acemounted to Plexi,
32 x 243 cm (unframed).
ourtesy the artist and
ack Shainman Gallery,
ew York

Richard Mosse
The Fall

Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
19 November – 23 December

There is a trio of photographs in Richard Mosse's debut exhibition that would seem to tell the whole story. What we might call the central panel of this triptych, *Pool at Uday's Palace* (all works 2009), shows a team of seven marines, some sitting, some standing, some reclining poolside at what is left of Uday Hussein's onetime getaway on a hilltop in Iraq. The panorama behind the men is spectacular. The parapet of the pool terrace runs parallel to the top and bottom edges of the image, which tells us Mosse is a formalist. But he's not so much of one as to disregard a decisive moment. One reclining Marine, helmet off, legs crossed, has his arms raised, palms up and head cocked to the side as if to say, 'Fuck it, can't we enjoy ourselves?' The gesture is directed at one of the soldiers standing at left, whose own slightly inclined stance betrays a stern authority and disapproval: 'Get your fucking Kevlar back on'.

The scene is worthy of Watteau, but this is obviously no *fête galante*. There's rubble in the pool and not a shred of green – plus, we're in a world without women. Whatever is libidinal about it comes in the embrace of death. This is confirmed in what I'll call the left panel of the triptych, *Foyer at Uday's Palace*, which pulls the camera back five metres and under a stone balcony. The attention of five marines still in the scene is held by something down in the landscape. One marine is crouched at the parapet with rifle raised. Everyone's helmet is on.

Column at Uday's, the third panel of the triptych, finds the camera panned to the right. Two of the balcony's denuded columns (due to shelling) are now front and centre. The empty pool rushes in at the left, and one of the palace's destroyed walls frames the right. The rest is rubble, a decapitated outbuilding, empty ridges, blue sky.

What about that pool? In the central panel it looks huge, given that it bleeds off the bottom edge of the image, its end accelerating out of the frame. But pull the camera back a bit, as Mosse has done in the other two photographs, and the pool narrows, even appears rather middling. When I say these photographs tell the whole story, that is because they reveal the centrality of this depth-of-field distortion to Mosse's work on the whole. We see it in the photographs of airplane wreckage, such as *C27 Beaver Creek* and *727 Santo Domingo*. And though it is not present in the photographs of the impossibly shot-up wrecks of cars that Mosse captured also while embedded with the US military, these objects' own distortions, and the sandstorm atmospheres that envelope them, would seem to reproduce that formal trick here at the level of content.

It would seem safe to say that with this body of work, which he shot while on the first year of two-year Annenberg Fellowship, Mosse opens up a new and promising chapter in the analytic of the sublime. *Jonathan T.D. Neil*

Meek, Miki. "Showcase: A Modern Ozymandias." The New York Times. 17 August 2009.

The New York Times

LENS
PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO AND VISUAL JOURNALISM

Showcase: A Modern Ozymandias

August 17, 2009

By Miki Meek

When Richard Mosse traveled to Iraq last spring, he was intrigued by paradoxical scenes of U.S. troops living in Saddam Hussein's former palaces: weight machines in a courtyard, makeshift dorm rooms in a marbled hallway and barbecue grills overlooking an artificial lake that the dictator once stocked with fish.

"I was surprised at where the U.S. war machine had situated themselves," Mr. Mosse said. "Before, these palaces were seen as places of fear. I read that people would actually avert their eyes when they drove past them."



Richard Mosse Al Faw Palace in Baghdad.



Richard Mosse Uday's Palace in Jabal Makhul.

After receiving seed money from the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund, Mr. Mosse spent a month taking large-format photographs of six palaces. Although the Iraqi government hasn't conducted an official count, it believes that Mr. Hussein built hundreds of them, ranging from massive complexes to smaller structures.

Dust storms and threats of roadside attacks made access difficult for Mr. Mosse, who spent much of his time on U.S. military bases, waiting and asking for troops to escort him out. He likened the down time to "being in prison, ticking off the days."

But once on site, Mr. Mosse sometimes had as little as 10 minutes to shoot, which meant he had to run on intuition and to choose his subjects prudently. "Working that fast with an architectural camera on a tripod will give you palpitations," he said.

Mr. Mosse, 29, has an M.F.A. in photography from Yale. He uses a second-hand, Phillips 8-by-10 Explorer camera, and in less stressful environments, can spend hours working on a shot. "This camera doesn't distort the way other wide-angle lenses might," he said. "There's just something very respectful about the way it captures the details of a space."

Some of the details he noticed at Al Faw Palace in Baghdad and the Birthday Palace in Tikrit included shaky construction. Tiles were falling and walls sagged and cracked. Some of the chandeliers were actually faux crystal.

While a small number of palaces are still occupied by U.S. forces, the majority have gone back to the Iraqi government. The rest will follow by December 2011, the deadline for final American withdrawal.

But for now, there's still debate on exactly how the buildings should be reused. Everything from museums to government buildings and tourist hotels is being discussed. In Babylon, visitors can already tour one of Mr. Hussein's looted, abandoned retreats for a small fee.

Mr. Mosse found himself mesmerized by the emptiness of these same eerie spaces. In the past, he's photographed the architectural ruins of other war-torn landscapes like Bosnia.

"This type of photography has become almost cliché," Mr. Mosse said. "But I felt that there would be something fascinating in pushing it into the realm of kitsch."

At Uday's Palace in Jabal Makhul, north of Tikrit, he photographed a crumbling staircase surrounded by graffiti-covered walls. In another nearby palace, he found a bombed-out ballroom filled with piles of debris.

"The romantic ruin, empty ravaged spaces, have a long precedent in the history of art," he said. "These are all expressions of the sublime, and we are attracted to them because they make us feel our own mortality."