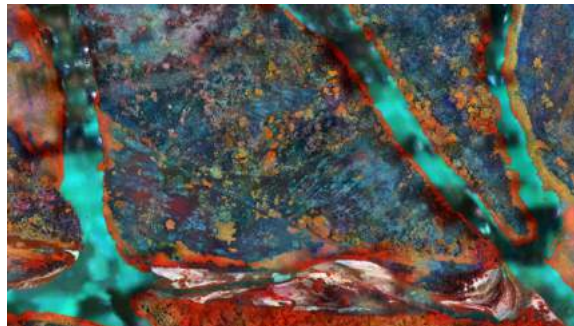




December 16, 2020
By Gavin Butler

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.



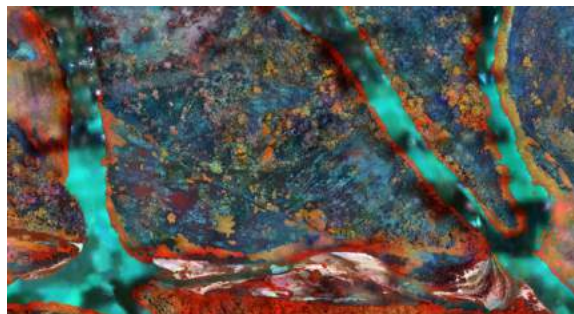
SILVER GELATIN PHOTOGRAPH FROM INFRARED FILM DEPICTING A BUSH FIRE IN THE AMAZON RAINFOREST, PARA STATE, BRAZIL.

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 Bolsonaro’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?

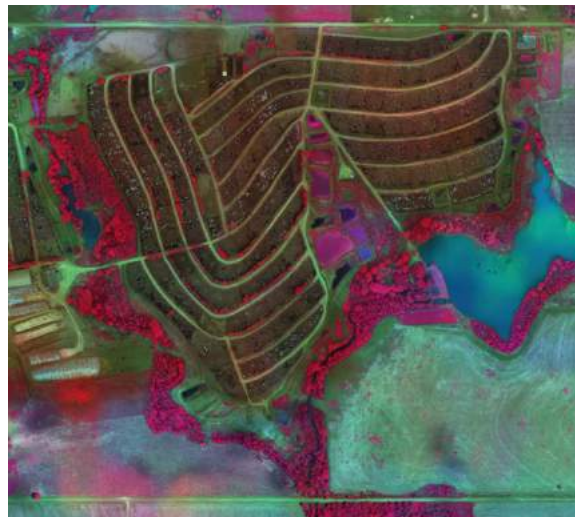
Mosse: I was very moved and saddened last summer by reports in the media about widespread burning of the Amazon rainforest. At that stage, I had been working in the cloud forests of Ecuador on a separate but related project called “Ultra”, taking highly detailed photographs of a microscopic universe 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 Pará, 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.

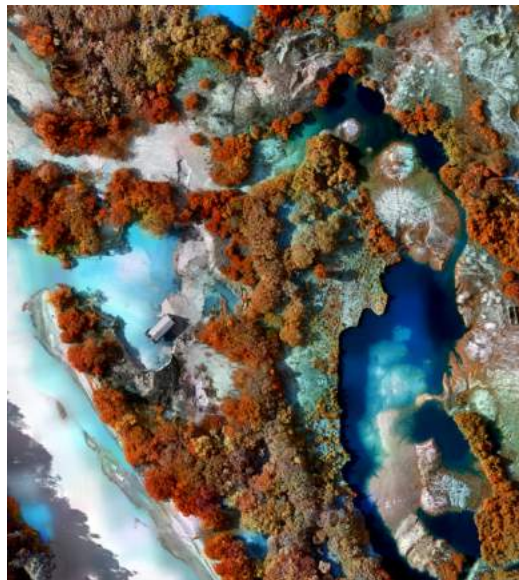
I can tell you that these are some of the most tragic landscapes I have ever seen—and I’ve seen more than my fair share. These areas are warzones. As UN Secretary General António Guterres recently declared, “Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal.”

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.

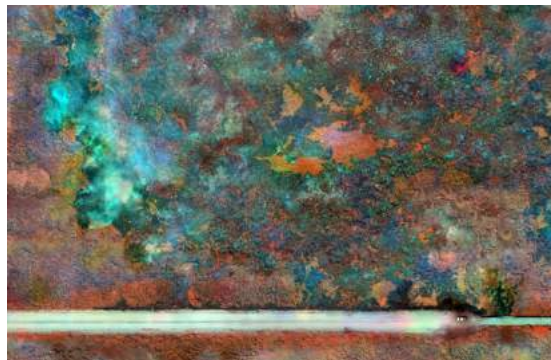


SILVER GELATIN PHOTOGRAPH FROM HEAT-DEGRADED INFRARED FILM SHOWING THE AFTERMATH OF SLASH-AND-BURN AGRICULTURAL ENCROACHMENT INTO PRIMARY RAINFOREST, SOUTHERN AMAZONAS.

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.

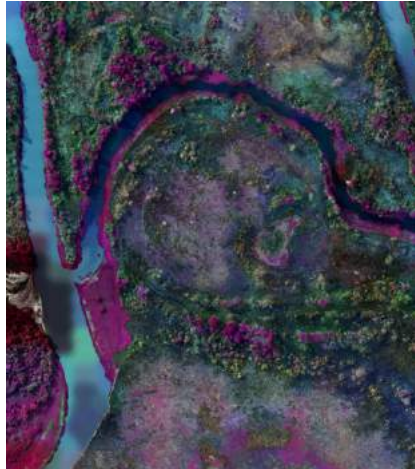
Decades later, these narratives are widespread in the United States and have, in the interests of a wealthy few, wasted the most precious years we had to turn this around. That's a result of storytelling.

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.



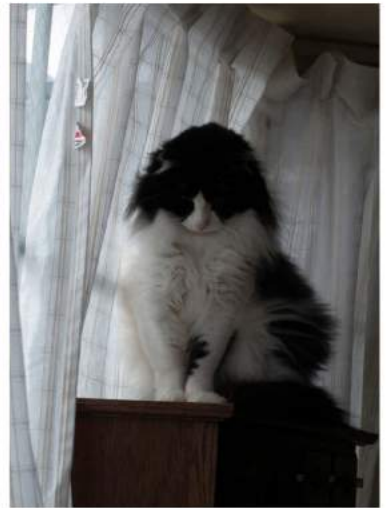
MORE GARIMPEIROS BLASTING SILT IN THE SEARCH FOR GOLD ALONG THE CREPORI RIVER.



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

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.

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 colonized 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 Ijebu 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.



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 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.”

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](#).*



KCUR 89.3

New Collection At Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Shows Photography's True Grit

By SCOTT WILSON • MAY 21, 2018

By then, you've passed W. Eugene Smith's deep-focus black-and-white photo of a hellish Iwo Jima firefight, and you're almost ready to glimpse Richard Mosse's impossibly vivid "Everything Merges With the Night," a 2015 shot using Kodak Aerochrome. That discontinued infrared film finds the chlorophyll in live vegetation, resulting in a psychedelic, Wonka-vision safari.



Richard Mosse's 'Everything Merges With the Night,' 2015.

CREDIT RICHARD MOSSE / THE NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART

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."

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.”

‘Prix Pictet Space’ is at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, May 6-28

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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 clichés 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.i.s.*, which comprises digitally compressed and coloured 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.

REVIEWS

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

Richard Mosse,
Idomeni Camp,
Greece, 2016, digital
C-print on metallic
paper, 40 ¼ × 120".
From the series
"Heat Maps," 2016.



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.

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

ONE TAKE:
Richard Mosse's
Incoming

A new video installation
investigates the refugee crisis
BY CHRISTY LANGE



THERE ARE A FEW SCENES in Richard Mosse's new video installation, *Incoming* (2017), where you can see photo-journalists 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 simultaneously. 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

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.



“
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 renders their 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.

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 Tween, 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).

February 9, 2017

Seeking refuge in the heat of the night



Irish photographer Richard Mosse has come up with a novel way to inspire compassion for refugees. He presents them as drones might see them – as detailed heat maps, often shorn of expression, skin tone, and even clues to age and sex. Mosse's subjects, captured in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, don't look back at us: the infrared camera renders their eyes as uniform black spaces.

Mosse has made a career out of repurposing photographic kit meant for military use. The images here show his subjects as seen, mostly at night, by a super-telephoto device designed for border and battlefield surveillance. Able to zoom in from 6 kilometres away, the camera anonymises them, making them strangely faceless even while their sweat, breath and sometimes blood circulation patterns are visible.

The results are almost closer to the nightmarish paintings of Hieronymus Bosch than the work of a documentary photographer. Making sense of them requires imagination and empathy: after all, this is how a smart weapon might see us.

Mosse came across his heat-mapping camera via a friend who worked on the BBC series *Planet Earth*. Legally classified as an advanced weapons system, the device is unwieldy and – with no user interface or handbook – difficult to use. But, working with cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, Mosse has managed to use it to make a 52-minute video. *Incoming* will wrap itself around visitors to the Curve Gallery at the Barbican arts centre in London from 15 February until 23 April. Images from the project are on show at the [Jack Shainman Gallery](#) in New York City until 11 March, and signed copies of the accompanying book are available from mackbooks.co.uk.

British Journal of Photography

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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 Tween 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.

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.

Wallpaper*

February 9, 2017

In pictures: the W* photography desk's daily digest
of visual inspiration



Human trace

2 Febraury

Until 11 March, New York's [Jack Shainman Gallery](#) will display 'Heat Maps', a new body of work from award winning photographer Richard Mosse. This new series, set in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, tackles the ongoing refugee crisis. With a novel approach, Mosse uses a military grade thermal imaging camera, which can detect human bodies from 30.3 km away. Primarily used for surveillance and in combat, Mosse's use of this medium somewhat dehumanises his subjects, portraying them as a 'mere biological trace'; a fitting metaphor for the reality that millions of refugees and migrants are facing daily. These photographs reveal a harsh, ongoing struggle, showing the fragility of human life. Each photograph is made up of almost 1000 smaller frames, painstakingly blended into one panoramic shot. Alongside this series, a selection of smaller framed video stills from Mosse's new video installation *Incoming*, will be premiered at the Curve Gallery in London's [Barbican Centre](#) between 15 February and 23 April 2017.

Pictured: *To be titled (film still from 'Incoming')*, Richard Mosse, 2016. © Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Writer: Rosie Mackay

Richard Mosse Is Using a Weapons-Grade Camera to Take Chilling Photos of the Migrant Crisis

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY CASEY LESSER

FEB 13TH, 2017 11:55 PM



Portrait of Richard Mosse. ©2012. Mark McNulty. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

One 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 journalists 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 project that has stretched over the past two years and has seen the artist—accompanied by filmmaker Trevor Tweeten and composer Ben Frost—shoot some of the most overcrowded refugee camps in Europe. These include Idomeni, Thessaloniki, Larissa, Elliniko, and Moria in Greece, Ventimiglia in Italy, and the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. 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 *The Enclave* at the Venice Biennale in 2013. The works, immediately recognizable for their fuchsia hue, employed infrared film, typically used for reconnaissance, to capture soldiers and war zones in Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Richard Mosse, *Larissa Camp, Greece*, 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

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 February 2nd in New York; and the film makes its premiere at the Barbican in London on February 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 subjects of our time,” Mosse says. But 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 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. But 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 30.3 kilometers (18.8 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 Berlin where authorities are intent on maintaining refugees' privacy.



Richard Mosse, *to be titled* (film still from *Incoming*), 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.



Richard Mosse, *to be titled* (film still from *Incoming*), 2016. ©Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

“I’m entering into the space of Western 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 Persian Gulf, near the Iraq-Iran border from aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier.

Mosse first learned of the camera through fellow photographer Sophie Darlington, who help him gain access to the U.K. 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 just 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*.)

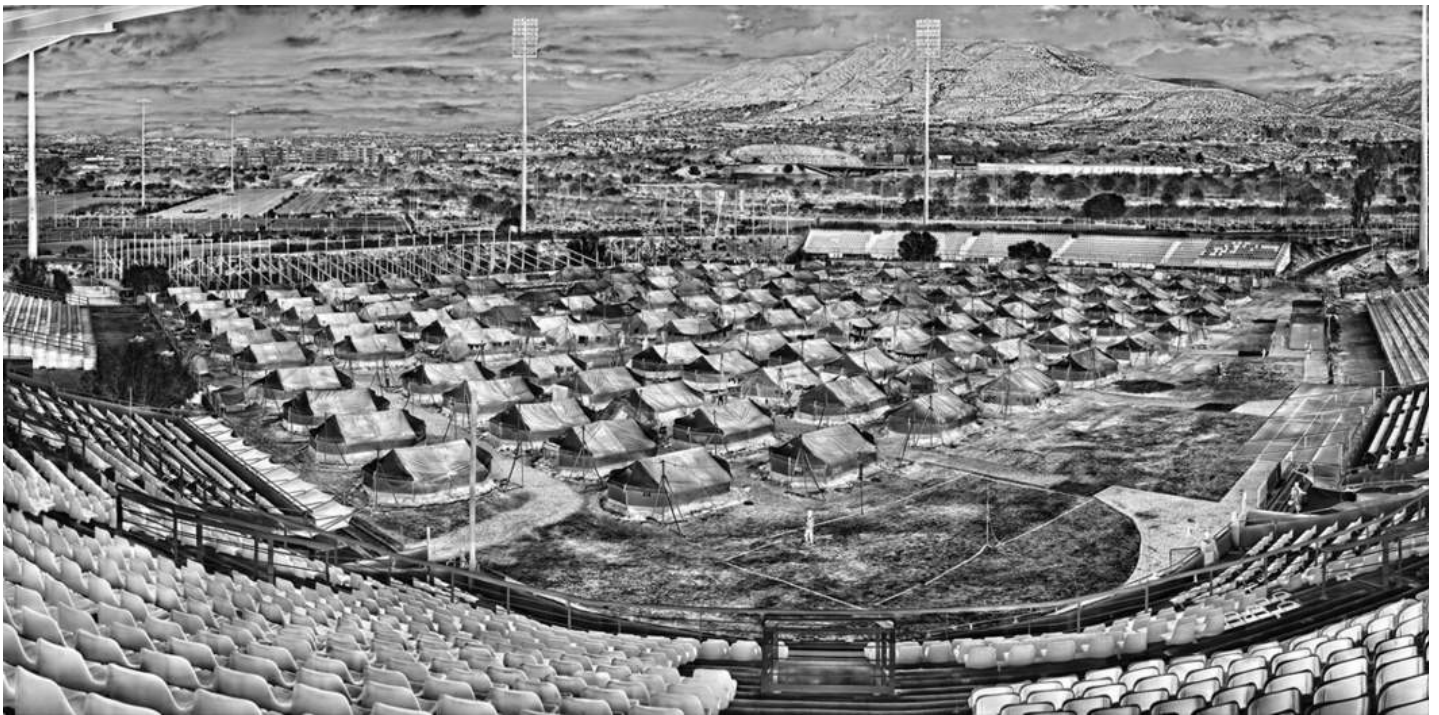
To shoot the “Heat Map” photographs, they developed a robotic arm on which the camera is mounted and programmed to move precisely on a gridded-out plane. All together, the equipment weighs some 175 pounds. Each landscape comprises nearly

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 Bruegel and Bosch. “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. “Both 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, *Helliniko*, 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 subjects. 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

On View

Richard Mosse's New Film Portrays the Refugee Crisis in Thermal Detail

It is set to premiere at London's Barbican Centre.

Christian Viveros-Fauné February 13, 2017



(From right to left) Photographer Richard Mosse, Composer Ben Frost, Writer John Holten and Cinematographer Trevor Tweeten in Lesbos, Greece

On October 28, 2015 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 US military, they captured a human trafficker's boat carrying 300 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 Lesbos, about six miles away.

"We literally watched as people got swept out in the tide," Mosse recalled inside his cavernous studio in Ridgewood, Queens, where he screened his new three-channel, 52-minute film *Incoming*, set to premiere on February 14 at London's Barbican Centre.

"A Frontex (EU 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*, 2014-2017, by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Ben Frost and Trevor Tween, co-commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and Barbican Art Gallery, London. Courtesy of Richard Mosse and Jack Shainman Gallery.

At a time when the world is experiencing 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, 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 unique ability to see at distances of 18-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 London 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 MACK.

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 dozens of chattering AVIs and MPEGs: Mosse portrays a group of refugees radiantly haloed in alabaster light inside the charcoal darkness of the Indomeni refugee camp in Greece.



Hellinikon Olympic Arena, Athens, 2016, Still from Incoming, 2014-2017, by Richard Mosse in collaboration with Ben Frost and Trevor Tween, co-commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and Barbican Art Gallery, London. 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 explained as we considered the real-life choreography of his computer-generated images. Among other jarring footage, the film features monochrome silhouettes of US navy personnel servicing fighter jets on the carrier *U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt*, 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 dehumanizes its subjects and makes them look like zombies by reducing them to their basic biological essence, their heat signature. Among other things, it reads people’s eyes as orbs of viscous black jelly, 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 realized soon after launching his project that his large and unwieldy camera required the development of a set of new artistic routines. For starters, the camera’s heft demanded that it be mounted onto a steadycam rig, 180 pounds of which Tween harnessed and bodied for days on end. Also, since the machine was originally designed for use with a keyboard, Mosse adapted an Xbox controller to hand-tune functions that would normally be conducted digitally.



Still frame from 'Incoming', three-channel video installation with 7.1 surround sound, 52 mins 10 secs, by Richard Mosse, 2016-17. Co-commissioned by the Barbican Art Gallery, London, and National Gallery of Victoria, 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 *pas de deux*: Leonardo and his longtime associate Salai running a three-legged race while trying to draw the Mona Lisa with an etch-a-sketch.

Another aspect of the hair-raising nature of Mosse's two-year project 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 project'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 question costs around \$160,000.

Accompanied by Frost's loudly dissonant soundtrack, *Incoming* is a fully immersive experience that tracks the different stages of the refugee crisis like a modern-day Biblical Exodus. 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 Libya 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 US aircraft strafe Isis positions; as well as a scene featuring dozens of refugees piled up Mad Max-style atop a vehicle as it barrels along a stretch of highway in the Al Qaeda-controlled area of the Maghreb.



Still frame from 'Incoming', three-channel video installation with 7.1 surround sound, 52 mins 10 secs, by Richard Mosse, 2016-17. Co-commissioned by the Barbican Art Gallery, London, and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Courtesy of the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and carlier|gebauer, Berlin.

The entire project 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 MACK book, compares the refugees' trials to those in Homer's *Odyssey*.

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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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—

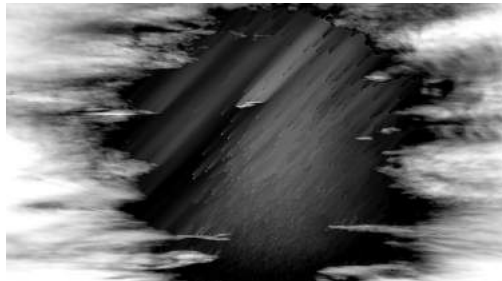
you want to get rid of the vibration. You see little errors in the focus that I quite like sometimes. Then because people are moving sometimes their legs get chopped off; he's missing a torso and he's a floating head on his own. I left all that in because I like the way it reveals how things are constructed. 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 Skaramagha 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.

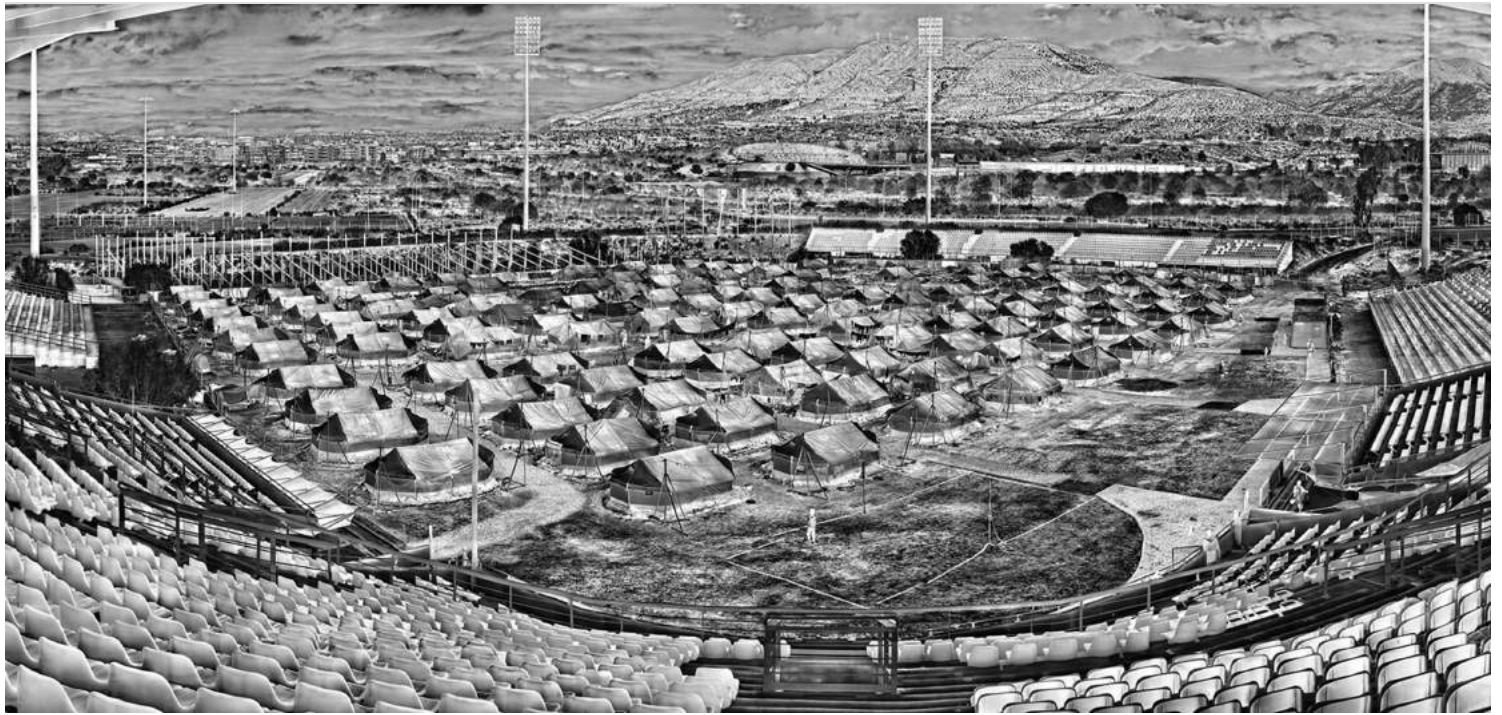
Brecht had this idea of alienation effect, *Verfremdungseffekt*, and that's what I'm trying to play with here. I want to put the viewer into an unfamiliar space so that they can see fresh, to see again without all the baggage of the mainstream media.



© 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 what's 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.

Edited 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.

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.



Richard Mosse, still from his film *INCOMING*, 2016. @Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery

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.



Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece*, 2016. Digital c-print on metallic paper. 40x120 in. @Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery

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."



Richard Mosse, still from INCOMING, 2016. @Richard Mosse, courtesy of the artist and the Jack Shainman Gallery

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

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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.

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.

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 facileness 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





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

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

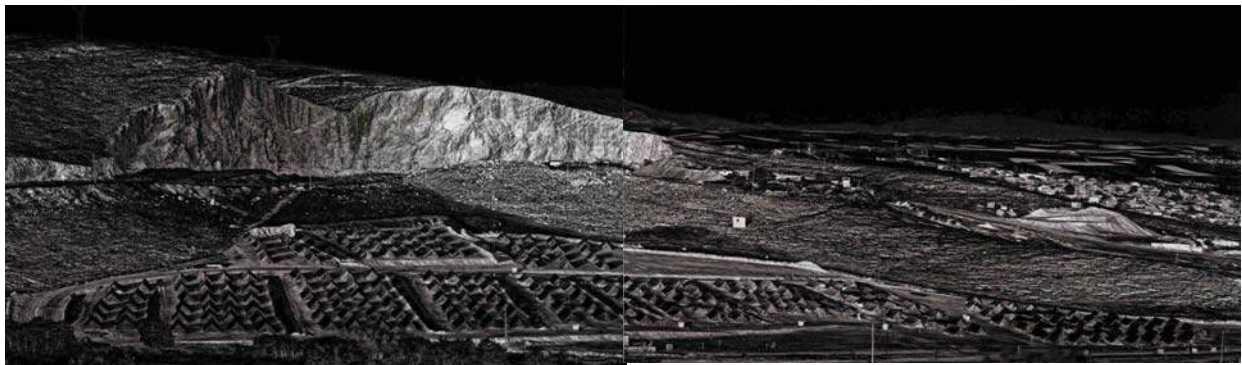
I had no knowledge of moving through this difficult land, and no experience of using this type of film. I was dealing with the unknown, negotiating my own ignorance. Since infrared light is invisible to the human eye, you could say that I was literally photographing blind."

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"



- 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 Tweenen, courtesy the Barbican Centre.



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**

barbican.org.uk

A surreal landscape of rolling hills and mountains. The hills are covered in a dense, low-lying vegetation that transitions from a deep purple on the left to a bright green on the right. The mountains in the background are also covered in this vegetation, creating a sense of depth and scale. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall effect is dreamlike and otherworldly.

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
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK
SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE

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.

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 ignored⁴—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

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.

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)





Richard Mosse

"Here Come the Warm Jets, North Kivu, Eastern Congo" from *Infra* 2012

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)

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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
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE

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.

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; *Beau-coups 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

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 Stankieveh 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 Stankieveh, “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

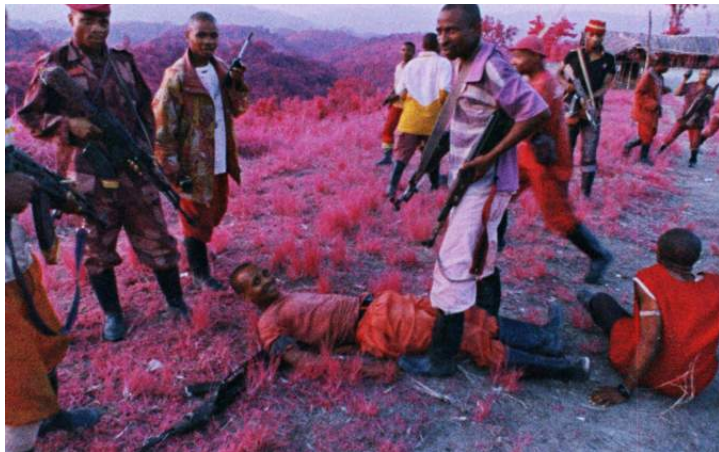
This distinction between art and documentary styles is not just misconceived, as Stankieveh suggests. It is also historically myopic. A cursory glance at Mosse’s still imagery from the DRC, shown in exhibitions and reproduced in two books published by Aperture—*Infra* in 2012 and *The Enclave* in 2013—reveals 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

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)



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



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

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.

“Untitled” (2011) from *Infra*
by Richard Mosse
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK
SHAINMAN GALLERY (NEW YORK)
© RICHARD MOSSE



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

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.

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,

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.

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 perpetu-

al war in the DRC, and terror at the possibility that we might see these conditions and still take pleasure in visually consuming them.

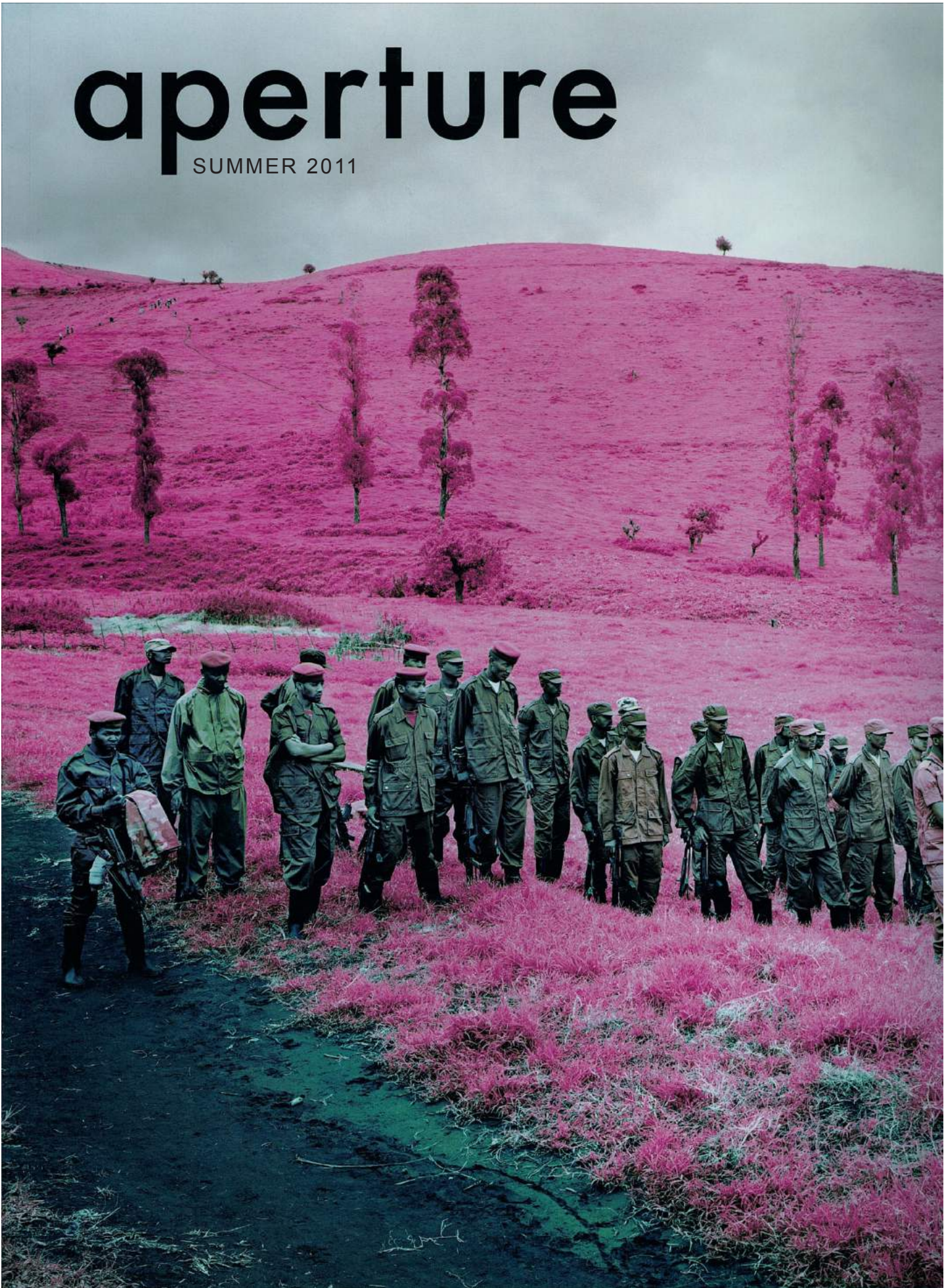
For their thoughts and feedback on the ideas in this essay, the author thanks Michèle Pearson Clarke, Benjamin D. Hunter, Yaniya Lee, Erin Silver and Charles Stankieveh.

Chromophobie : Race, couleur et plaisir visuel dans *The Enclave* de Richard Mosse

Depuis sa première présentation publique lors de la 55^e 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.

aperture

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

PAGES 52–53: *Colonel Soleil's Boys, North Kivu, Eastern Congo, 2010*;
OPPOSITE: *747 Heathrow, 2008*; **THIS PAGE:** *Grand Voyager Sunni Triangle, 2009*.

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?

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





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 lush 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



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The world, I thought
to myself, *doesn't* need
another large format
photograph of an
abandoned place.

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.

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?

In tense places,
it pays to move fairly
quickly, as you tend to
stick out like a sore thumb.



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.

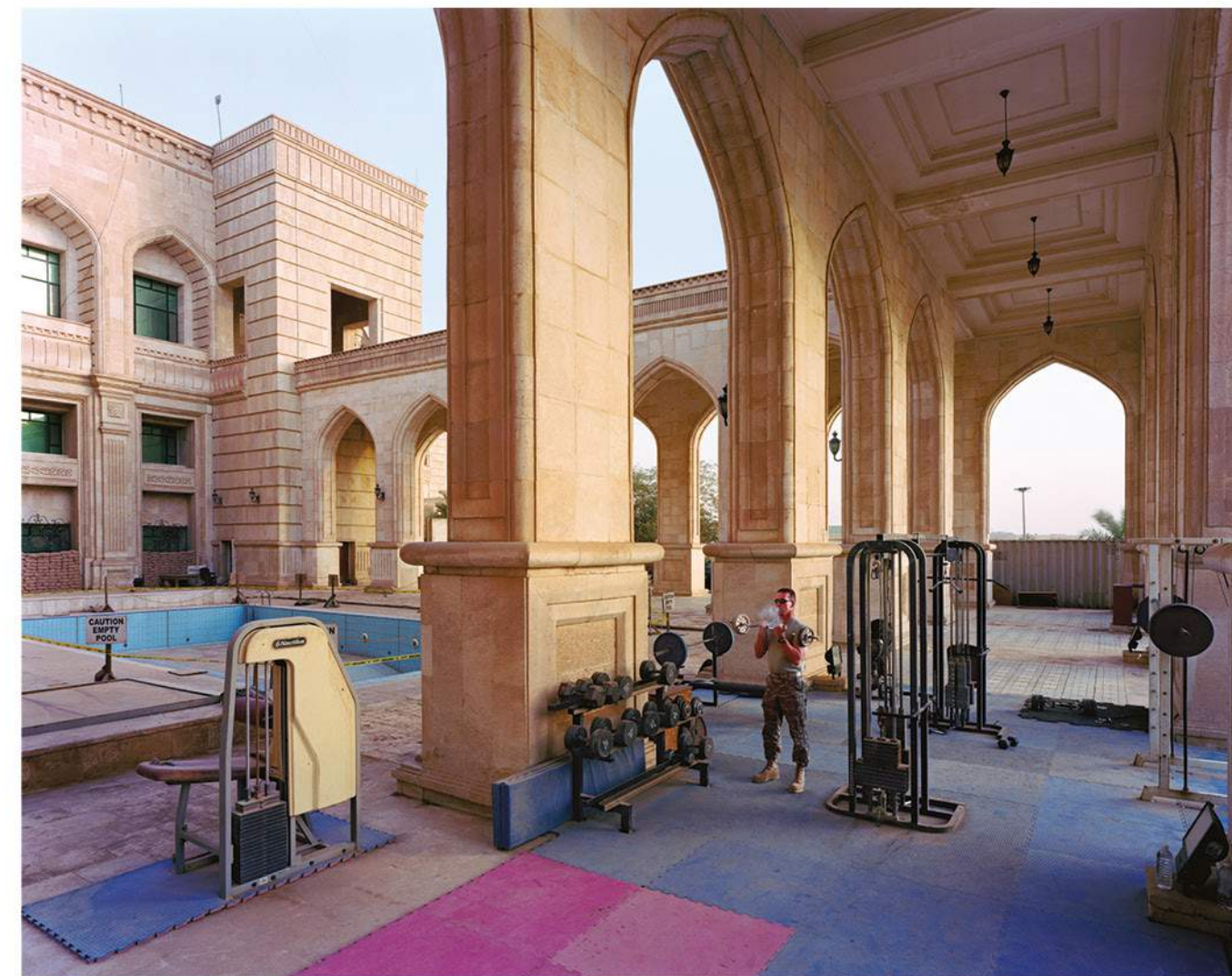
In making this work, I wanted to evoke older, even mythic themes of bygone empires. There's a fairly well known poem by PB Shelley called *Ozymandias*,



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

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After Iraq, I became quite
lost as an artist, which is always
a good place to be.
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Tutsi Town, Congo, 2010

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.

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.



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 x 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

Richard Mosse

An Engaged Distraction

by Alexandra McIntosh



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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



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 / Free Arts NYC collection.

DRC to make "Infra," a series of large-format photographs documenting the lush landscapes, agricultural pastures, 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 Tshibumba, *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 whine 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

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

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

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 war-zones 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 aestheticizing 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 DHCA/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



Organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture, the City of Regina, and the University of Regina. funding assistance from SaskCulture Inc., thanks to the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, which last year invested \$157 million to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country. This project received substantial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Grant: "Creative Conciliation," Heavly Martin principal researcher.

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 skills.

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.

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.

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."

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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.



Lund, Karsten. Phantoms in the Dirt (exhibition catalogue). Museum of Contemporary Photography, at Columbia College, Chicago, 2014: pp. 38-39, 95-96

PHAN TOMS IN THE DIRT

Richard Mosse
Sugar Ray, 2012
Chromogenic print
72 × 90 in.

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Richard Mosse
Beaucoups Of Blues, North Kivu,
Eastern Congo, November 2012, 2012
Chromogenic print
72 × 90 in.

39



Richard Mosse

Irish, b. 1980, lives and
works in New York

Working in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Richard Mosse has photographed both the landscape and rebel soldiers using an infrared film that was developed by the U.S. military during the Cold War. Discontinued in 2010, this film, Kodak Aerochrome, was originally used with aerial cameras to find enemy soldiers in camouflage. While it simply responds to a different spectrum of light than human eyes can typically see, the visual results are strange and arresting: Mosse's photographs depict the rolling hills and trees with a vivid pink complexion, rather than in the usual shades of green. His photographs are like nothing one might see in the world with one's own eyes, but that doesn't mean they should be confused as expressive inventions; once Mosse made his choice to use this film, the transformational effect was assured and it became an automatic operation.

Many people may still associate the Congo with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and yet have little sense of what life is like there today. In fact a brutal war with convoluted origins has been unfolding for years. Mosse points out that the Congo was also one of the first places where photography played a humanitarian role in revealing the brutal truth of Belgian colonialism, but today the violence and other aspects of the conflicts there are exceedingly difficult to capture.³³ Against this backdrop, using a type of film that was originally designed to reveal the

obscured or the otherwise unseeable became a guiding metaphor for the artist. Explaining his interest in this film, Mosse has stated,

In almost all of my work I struggle with the challenge of representing abstract or contingent phenomena that are virtually impossible to see, or at least very difficult to put before a camera lens. This is especially the case in Eastern Congo, where my subject was inherently hidden. From the little I had learned about this conflict, as well as from my past experience working in similar situations, I knew ahead of time that my subject would elude me. Rather like Marlow on the steamer, I was pursuing something essentially ineffable, something so trenchantly real that it verges on the abstract.³⁴

Although a small number of photojournalists today also visit the Congo, Mosse's photographs clearly embody a different approach. Rather than serving as a witness in the usual ways, he creates photographs that are otherworldly and seemingly ahistorical at first glance, approaching this landscape on allegorical terms. His works are detailed photographic records but also monumental ciphers,

Arthur Ou

American, b. 1974, lives
and works in New York

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making one question what one is seeing. Mosse, in his book *Infra*, also alludes to other material aspects of the Congo's history (and present reality) that are not always widely observed. To name one, mining in the country is highly lucrative, a source of wealth for a select number within a poor nation; the struggle for these resources has been decisive, drawing foreign governments and corporations. In some of the places that Mosse photographs the miners have to pay off the rebels. What is extracted from the earth is implicated in the conflict and the struggle for power, feeding into the violence, though one might never see it.

Arthur Ou's photograph *Untitled (Mountain)* plainly depicts a pile of dirt on a tiered side table, the soil spilled onto the ground. An illusion prevails—an alpine vista conjured up by the camera—although these precarious mounds of earth have none of the permanency of solid rock nor the grand scale of a real cordillera. Or perhaps one can speak of it as a photographic transmutation: as the title of the work suggests, the dirt becomes a mountain even as the original artifice remains plain to see. In his work, Ou offers a beautifully lit image of the stuff of the earth, rising from an architectonic structure, imbuing the ephemeral configuration with a knowingly deceptive hint of the solid, grand, and everlasting. The black-and-white photograph becomes a knowing conundrum of sorts, a meditation on the difference between image and substance, or an effort to reckon with two sets of facts—the tangible facts of matter and the transfigured facts of the photographic record.

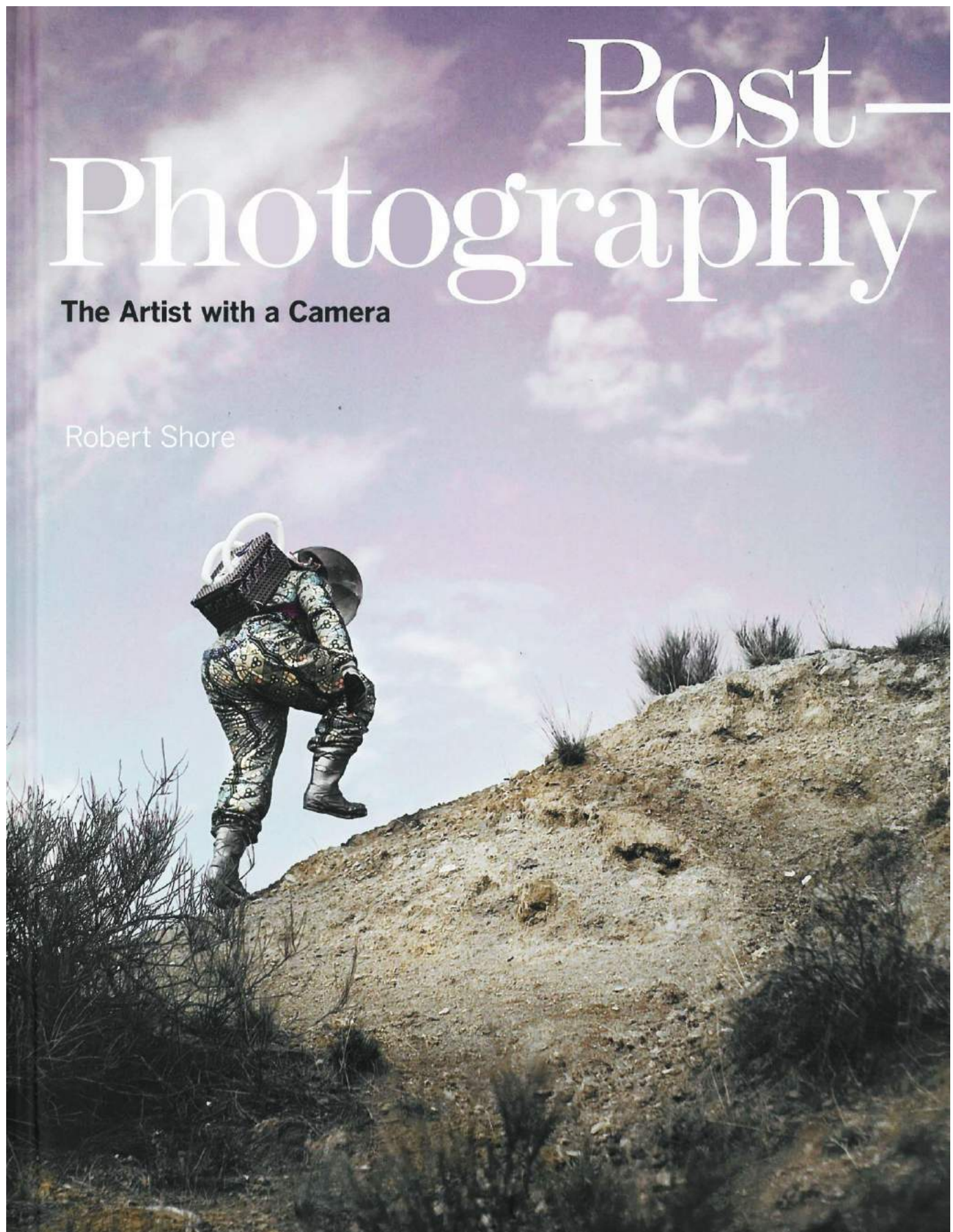
Ou has talked about photography as an "artifactual apparatus," and this aspect is potentially foregrounded here as the camera turns modest materials into a lasting remnant granted new significance.³⁵ The photograph offers certain alternate realities to the eye: the dirt, piled up, has become a mountain of sorts, newly solidified by the camera, given the stability, it would seem, of the geological feature it resembles. And yet, for the staunch empiricist, the potential desire to verify

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Jörg Colberg, "A
Conversation with
Richard Mosse,"
Conscientious, Sept 21,
2010; [jmcolberg.com/
weblog/extended/
archives/a_
conversation_with_
richard_mosse/](http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/extended/archives/a_conversation_with_richard_mosse/)
(Accessed July 20, 2014)

34

Ibid.



Richard Mosse

New York-based Irish photographer Richard Mosse was the toast of the 2013 Venice Biennale for his unique work using Aerochrome, Kodak's newly discontinued colour infrared film. 'I felt Aerochrome would provide me with a unique window through which to survey the battlefield of eastern Congo. Realism described in infrared becomes shrouded by the exotic, shifting the gears of Orientalism,' he writes in his book *Infra*. 'The film gave me a way of thinking through my role as a white male photographing Congo with a big wooden camera. By extension, it allowed me to begin to evaluate the rules of photojournalism, which always seem to be thrust upon me in my task of representing conflict, and which I wished to challenge in my own peculiar way.'

The Limits of Representation:

I originally chose the Congo because I wished to find a place in the world, and in my own imagination, where every step I took I would be reminded of the limits of my own articulation, of my own inadequate capacity for representation. I wished for this to happen in a place of hard realities whose narratives urgently need telling but cannot be easily described. Congo is just such a place. Its war seems essentially intangible. It is a protracted, complex and convoluted conflict, fought by rebels with constantly switching allegiance. These narratives, though brutal and tragic, are not tales that are easily told. I was pursuing something essentially ineffable, something so trenchantly real that it verges on the abstract, at the very limits of description. I needed to find an appropriate form to better describe this sinister resonance.

In December 2009, Kodak officially discontinued their colour infrared film, Aerochrome. This film was developed during the Cold War, in collaboration with the US military, in order to read the landscape, detecting enemy infrastructure. It quickly found civilian uses among cartographers, agronomists, foresters, hydrologists, glaciologists and archaeologists – namely, anyone wishing to study landscape. In the late 1960s, the medium was appropriated in the cover

art of albums by rock musicians like Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead, trickling into the popular imagination as the palette of psychedelic (from the Greek for 'soul-manifesting') experience, eventually accumulating a kitsch aesthetic.

Rethinking the Rules of

Photojournalism: I have always been drawn to working in places of conflict – sites more commonly the concern of journalists. While my work is documentary in 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. And so I became enthralled by Aerochrome's inflation of the documentary, mediating a tragic landscape through an invisible spectrum, disorienting me into a place of reflexivity and scepticism, into a place in consonance with my impenetrable, ghost-like subject.

Articulating the Inexpressible:

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. It can help us begin

to describe, and thereby account for, what exists at the limits of human articulation. According to German art historian Hans Belting, art offers 'a last refuge for the inexpressible, the unsayable, concepts borrowed for the West by nineteenth-century Romanticism from much older civilizations'. On my travels in eastern Congo I encountered a beautiful landscape touched by appalling human tragedy, a people locked in an endlessly recurring nightmare. Their situation lies well beyond my powers of communication, yet I felt compelled to attempt to describe it. My photography there was a personal struggle with the disparity between my own limited powers of representation and the unspeakable world that confronted me.

Richard Mosse
Come Out
from *Infra*, 2012



Richard Mosse
Colonel Soleil's Boys
from *Infra*, 2012



Richard Mosse
Men of Good Fortune
from *Infra*, 2012



Richard Mosse
Vintage Violence
Even Better Than the Real Thing
from *Infra*, 2012



Richard Mosse
Rebel Rebel
from *Infra*, 2012



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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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

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 con-

trasted 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 as-

sumes 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.

¹ Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others (London: Penguin, 2003), 75 – 76.

² Richard Mosse, Richard Mosse: The Impossible Image, 28 May, 2013. <http://www.video.frieze.com/film/richard-mosse-impossible-image>

³ Email correspondence with the artist, 15 December, 2013.

⁴ Ibid.

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.aaronsschuman.com/richardmosse.html>

⁸ Conversation with the artist, 4 April, 2012.

¹⁰ Conversation with the artist, 4 April, 2012.

¹¹ Jörg Colberg, A Conversation with Richard Mosse, 21 September, 2010. <http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/extended/archives>

¹² Ibid.

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.

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 man-

aged 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

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 polit-

ical 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 spec-

trapoetics found in the works of (these) artists? ⁴

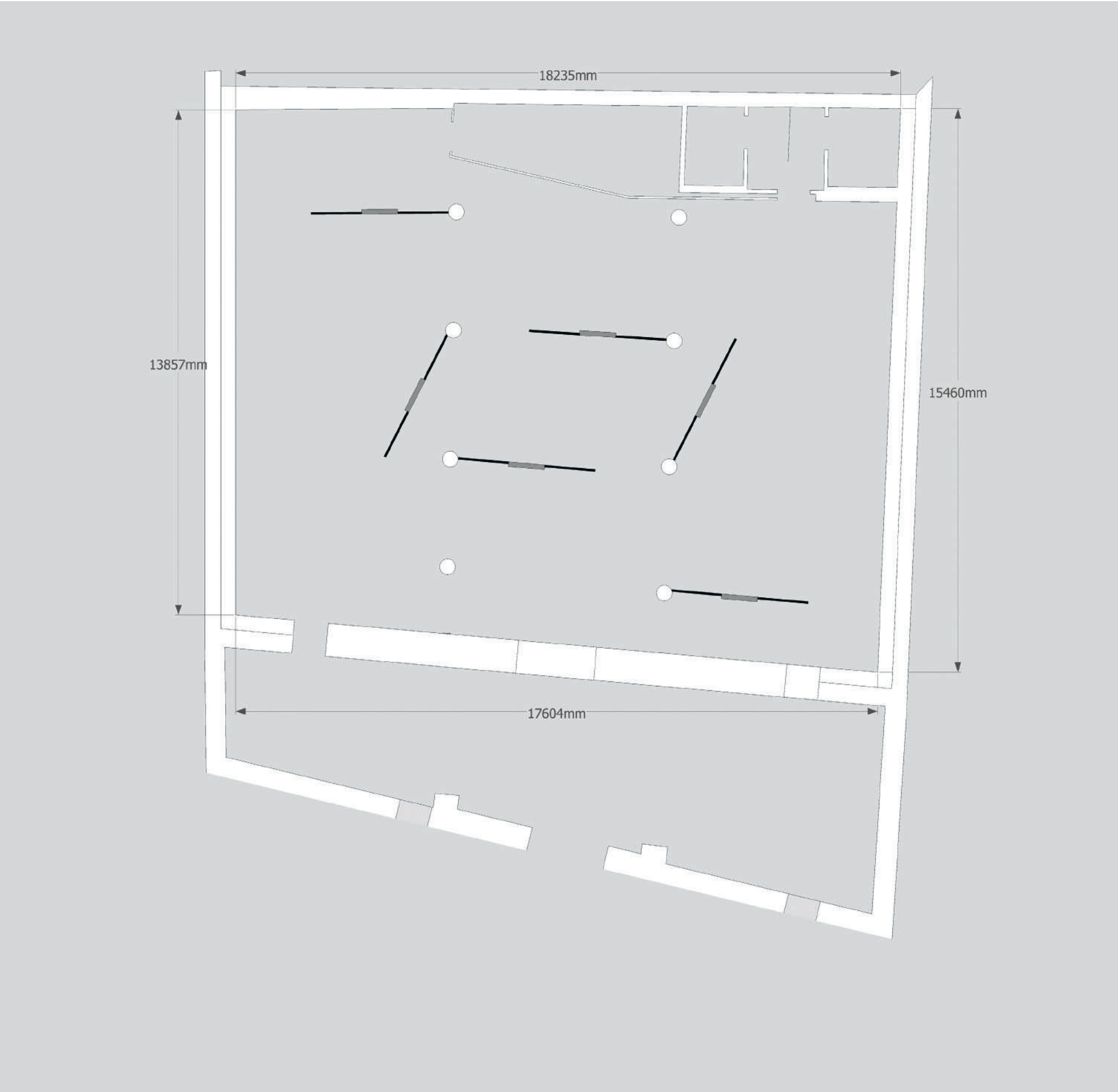
But there still remains a place, as in any work that tackles a sensitive issue, to restore dialogue, to confront the need to accept the otherness that underlies it. How can these men and women, the families of the victims, those who identify with the crowd or those who recognise their “home”, see, feel, 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?

⁴ T.J. Demos, ‘Return to Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art’, Stenberg Press, 2013.

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>



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 x 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 x 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 infra-

red 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

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.

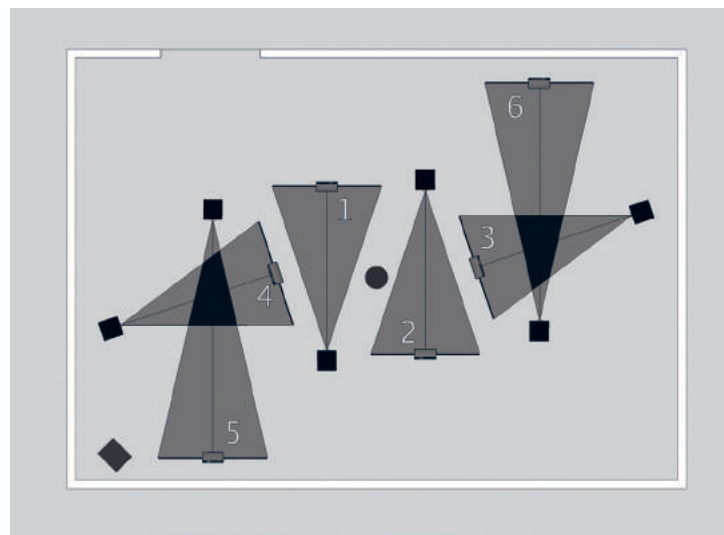
RM The predatory aspect of photography, particularly street photography, is a problem that's as old as the camera itself. So many photographers give up taking pictures because they can't reconcile themselves as predators. I remember on the first trip we were shooting on the fancy digital camera, the 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.



Courtesy: Eidotech

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

A Conversation Between Richard Mosse and Trevor Tweeten

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

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 Bi-



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

ennial. 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 be-

coming 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 vérité 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 it's 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.

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



Richard Mosse (right) with Trevor Tweeten (left), inside the enclave held by General Janvier's APCLS rebels, March 2011. Photo by Robert Shamwami.





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 Mudekerezwa. 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



'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

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.

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



'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

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.

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...horrific.

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

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.

February 28, 2014, Reykjavik, Iceland

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



Ben Frost helps push a stuck jeep on the road to Kibabi, South Masisi, November 2012.
Photo: Richard Mosse

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



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.

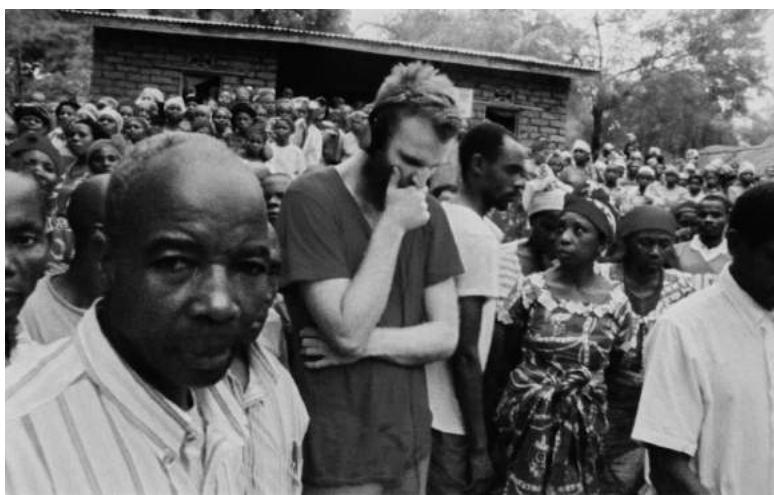
RM Oh really? So that doesn't get skewed when you modulate it? What do you actually do to it?

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 mo-

ments 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, sondern 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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

16 Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, Trans. Stefan Tobler. NYC: New Directions, 2012. p. 59.

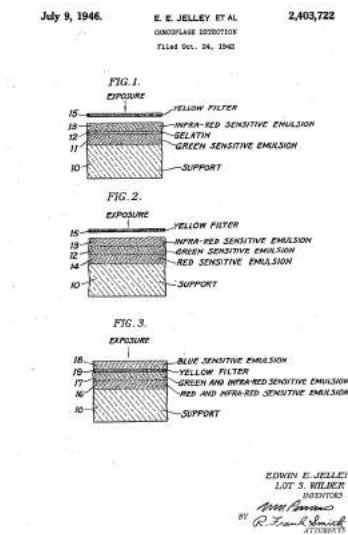
17 Prof. Robin Williams and Gigi Williams. *Pioneers Of Invisible Radiation Photography*. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Accessed online Feb. 17, 2011: http://www.msp.rmit.edu.au/Article_04/06.html ; see source document: Wood, R., 1919, “Communications secretes au moyen de rayons lumineux,” *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 Spytchs from Communism to Al-Qaeda*. NYC: Dutton, 2008. Ch.11. Footnote #24. p. 496.

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

19 Ibid. Ch.12. Footnote #21. p. 498.

20 Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, 1973. pp. 47, 61

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.100k.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.

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.

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



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

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 (<i>Regista/Produttore</i>)	Richard Mosse
Cinematographer/Editor (<i>Cineoperatore-Direttore Fotografia/Montaggio</i>)	Trevor Tweeten
Composer (<i>Compositore/Progettista del Suono</i>)	Ben Frost
Production Assistant (<i>Assistente alla Produzione</i>)	John Holten
Colourist (<i>Controllo cromatico</i>)	Jerome Thelia
16mm processing (<i>Elaborazione 16mm</i>)	Rocky Mountain Film Lab
16mm scanning (<i>Scanning 16mm</i>)	Metropolis Film Labs
Projection and Install (<i>Proiezioni e Installazione</i>)	Eidotech

Team Credits (<i>Ringraziamenti</i>)	
Artist (<i>Artista</i>)	Richard Mosse
Cinematographer (<i>Cineoperatore-Direttore Fotografia</i>)	Trevor Tweeten
Composer (<i>Compositore, Progettista del Suono</i>)	Ben Frost
Director Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, Ireland Commissioner/Curator (<i>Direttore della Butler Gallery di Kilkenny, Irlanda</i>)	Anna O’Sullivan
Project Manager (<i>Direttore del Progetto</i>)	Mary Cremin
Venice Project Manager (<i>Direttore del Progetto in Venezia</i>)	Diego Carpentiero
Graphic Design & Print Consultant (<i>Consulente Progetto e Stampa</i>)	Tom Feehan www.dynamite.ie
Administration (<i>Amministrazione</i>)	Ailis Feehan
Projection (<i>Proiezioni</i>)	Eidotech
Venue Attendants (<i>Sorveglianza e accoglienza in sede espositiva</i>)	
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	

Richard Mosse



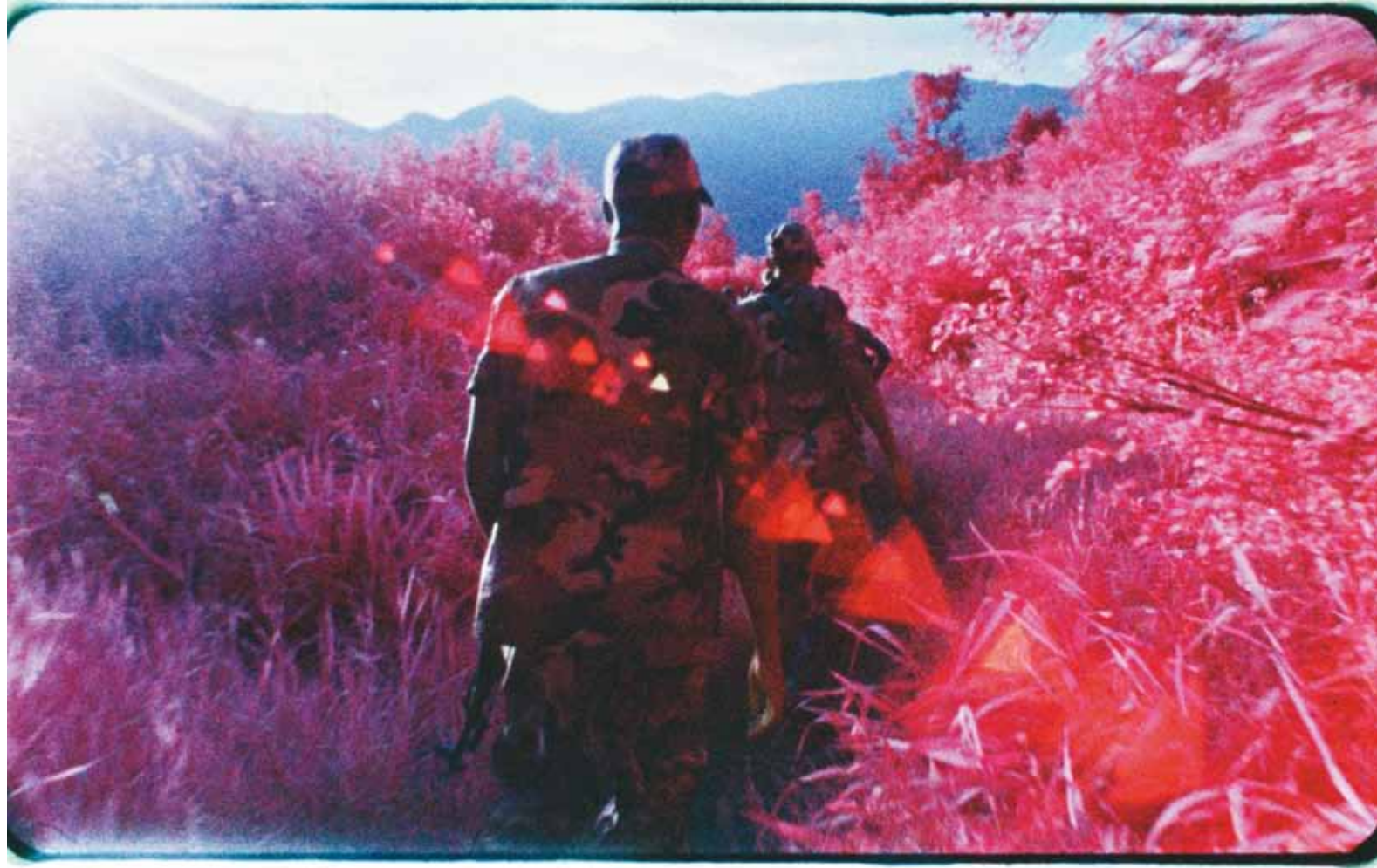
The Enclave, 2013
Installazione video a 6 canali / 6-channel video installation
Veduta della mostra / Exhibition view
Pavillion of Ireland, Biennale di Venezia 2013
Courtesy l'artista / the artist
e / and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



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



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 unequivocality 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]

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 connaît et déjà il s'ennuie. Pour susciter encore un intérêt, la pratique photojournalistique se doit de renouer sans cesse avec les appareils 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 #RIMI2.046



Come Out (1966) II, 2011, digital c-print, Inventory #RIMI.005, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY



Vintage Violence, 2011, digital c-print, Inventory #RIMI.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'entraînement 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 oniric 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 battements 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 #RIMI.032, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY



La Vie en Rose, 2010, Cibachrome print, Inventory #RIMI.010, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY





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.”

The Wall Street Journal Magazine (wsj.com)

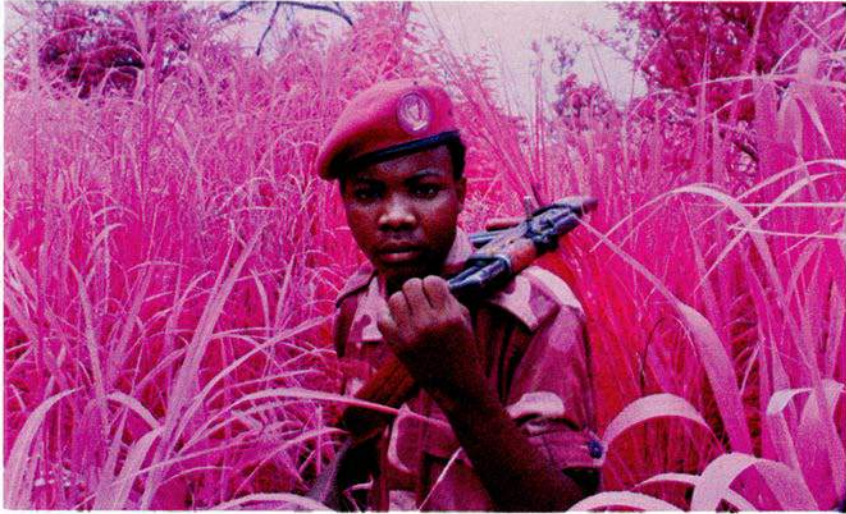
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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MAGAZINE



SHOWSTOPPER

CONFLICT IN COLOR

THE 33-YEAR-OLD ARTIST Richard Mosse spent most of 2012 in Congo, capturing that country's ongoing civil war. The result is a multimedia installation entitled *The Enclave*, his native Ireland's entry for this year's Venice Biennale. Mosse photographed soldiers and landscapes using now-discontinued Aerochrome film, which turns greenery into fantastical pink. Projected onto 12-foot-wide double-sided screens inside the Fondaco Marcello, the work blends sound with still and moving images, art and documentary. "I had to get out in the field and get beyond the limits of war photography," says Mosse. —*Brekke Fletcher*

THE NEW CLASSICS

WHAT TO COLLECT NOW

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.



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.



Richard Mosse, "The Enclave" - Photo: Tom Powell
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 Tweenen 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.

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.

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.



ART BEAST

THE BEST OF ART,
PHOTOGRAPHY, & DESIGN

Seeing War Vividly: Richard Mosse Stars at the Venice Biennale

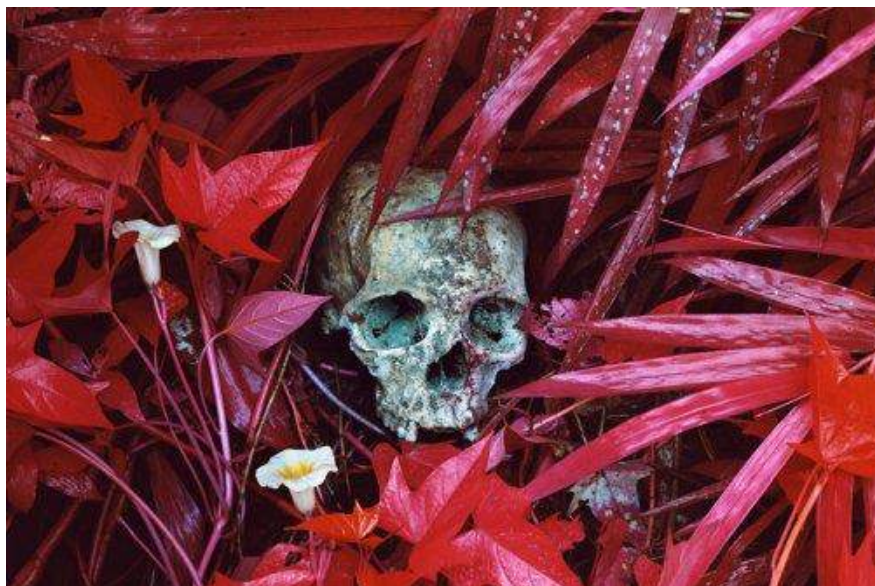
by Amelia Martyn-Hemphill

Jun 3, 2013 4:45 AM

How do you get people to pay attention to Congo? Artist Richard Mosse uses psychedelic color photographs of rebels and warlords to make your head snap. He talks to Amelia Martyn-Hemphill about why some find his work offensive and representing Ireland at the Venice Biennale.

Richard Mosse's photographs capture the darkness of war in vivid color: warlords and rebels armed with AK-47s are tinted with bubble gum and magenta pinks. Stripped skulls lie in the blood-red grass of rolling hills and the haunting stares of huddled women are framed with dusky purples. It's an uncomfortable yet magnetic paradox, which resonates through Mosse's work. Quite literally, he's depicting the conflict in Africa's Democratic Republic of the Congo in a whole new light.

The secret behind the surreal color palette is Mosse's use of the discontinued Kodak film, Aerochrome. Developed by military surveillance during the Cold War to detect enemy camouflage, the film registers the invisible spectrum of infrared light, tingeing portraits and landscapes with psychedelic hues of pink, red, and lilac. "It made sense to me metaphorically. This war is a hidden tragedy, and in that sense it's invisible," Mosse explained. "Making the conflict visible for ordinary people to see is at the heart of this project."



Richard Mosse, Courtesy of the Venice Biennale

From June 1 to November 24, 32-year-old Mosse will represent his home country of Ireland at the 55th-annual Venice Biennale with his latest work, [The Enclave](#). Anna O'Sullivan, director of the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny and Ireland's commissioner curator for Venice 2013, describes the project as a "highly ambitious six-channel multimedia installation on the subject of the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." Mosse says that the exhibition will blend film, photography, and sound to create a hauntingly immersive experience of the eastern region's devastated villages.

The International Rescue Committee estimates that 5.4 million people have been killed or have died of war-related causes in the conflict in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo since it first began in 1996. Though the war officially ended in 2002, fighting is still rife, especially within the mineral-rich eastern region. Rape, looting, and massacres are frequent tactics of intimidation among the different factions. UNICEF reported that, to date, 20 percent of the country's children still die before the age of 5 and hundreds of thousands of women have been raped. "The cancer of conflict is getting more and more problematic. It's really very convoluted, very incomprehensible," says Mosse, who has made six journeys to the region, each for about two months. "Corruption has really undermined any sense of a civic identity." He adds, "It's truly a Hobbesian state of war where everyone's out for himself."

Mosse is no stranger to photographing conflict; since graduating from Goldsmiths in London and Yale School of Art, he has traveled to Iraq, Iran, Gaza, the former Yugoslavia, and Pakistan. But Congo has dominated his work for the last three years. Mosse's initial Congo project "INFRA" garnered a viral hype within months of its first opening in New York. Aperture Foundation and Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting went on to publish a monograph of the work, which was rated one of the top photo books of the year.

With his sandy blonde hair, blue eyes, and lilting Irish tones, Mosse clearly stuck out as a foreigner in the Congo region. Embedding with the rebels was a delicate process that took months of research and work with different fixers. "Often they're very suspicious at the beginning," says Mosse, who has photographed notorious militia groups such as the M23 rebels, the CNDP, and the FDLR. "But essentially everyone wants to tell their story, because they're all fighting for something."

"I think this whole project is about dreams underwritten by nightmares," said Mosse, recalling a harrowing scene he had encountered driving up to a small Congolese town named Masisi. It was bad weather and the roads were almost impassable, but upon arriving at the camp he and his translator were met by crowds of people, standing in silence. They had walked for two hours from their village, carrying the bodies of six massacre victims to show to the town's governor.

"Political correctness is a real disease. I've learned not to be scared of offending people," he said. "I don't want to lock down what you're meant to feel."

“They were all women and children. The women had been raped before being killed with machetes,” recalled Mosse. “The youngest was a boy of 3 years old who had been killed with a spear through his face, leaving his brain exposed. His eyes were still intact and they were staring back at me.” He went silent before continuing. “It’s something that I’ll never forget—it’s worse than nightmares.”

The surreal quality of Mosse’s photographs allows the viewer to take a step back into a more reflective space. Rebels and villagers stare out from the psychedelic images with unfiltered defiance. “They have a very unusual response to the lens,” Mosse said. “They’re very suspicious of the camera, so it becomes a kind of face-off situation. It’s very different to the glib self-conscious reaction to photography that we have in the West.”

Mosse is careful not to label himself as a photojournalist, despite taking documentary-style photographs. “I’m an artist who works in war zones,” he said. He has received his fair share of reproach for the controversial nature of his images, critics questioning both his right to tell the story of the Congolese and his unsettling distortion of realism. Mosse, however, remains defiant. “Political correctness is a real disease. I’ve learned not to be scared of offending people,” he said. “I don’t want to lock down what you’re meant to feel.” Art critic Christian Viveros-Faune of *Art in America Magazine* writes that the photographs are “essentially vibrant, gorgeous pictures of hell on earth,” and Mosse encourages the audience to explore the contradiction further. Many of his photographic titles are references to Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, and Steve Reich song lyrics, a jarring link to the Kodak film’s popularity on album covers back in the ’70s. Mosse argues that this gives space for imagination and frees up people’s interpretations, allowing them to focus on the questions as opposed to the answers.

Representing Ireland at the Venice Biennale has been a lifelong dream for Mosse. “I couldn’t believe it when we got selected—my heart broke,” he said. “Now I’m a man without dreams,” he added with a laugh. He’s quick to acknowledge that his Irish heritage has played an integral part in shaping his fascination with conflict. He recalled the impact he felt as a child from rural Kilkenny when visiting Northern Ireland in 1980s during the Troubles. “I found it very powerful—it was haunting” he recalled slowly. He described crossing the heavily guarded Belfast borders into the bleak, gray city with surveillance cameras watching from every angle. “It’s easier to talk about yourself through other people’s problems,” he said. “I’ve tried to make work in Ireland and it’s impossible. It’s too close to the heart.”



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 Shalman. 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/Étè 80; Richard Mosse: (l-r) Richard Mosse/Jack Shalman Gallery/Tom Powel Imaging (photo); Richard Mosse: Lee Kilt: (t-b) Lee Kilt/M+, WKCD and HKADC/David Levene (photo); Cristiano Corte



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 "Voyna 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 Voyna. 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, Voyna thrives on the kind of radical independence that violates most political and artistic conventions, and breaks not a few laws.

Voyna, 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, Voyna 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 socio-political 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 Egypt*, 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.

CHRISTIAN VIVEROS-FAUNÉ is a New York-based writer and curator. See Contributors page.



Mosse: *Prophet*, South Kivu, eastern Congo, 2012, digital C-print, 60 by 48 inches. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery.

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.



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.)

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.



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.



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.

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 studied 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 conjunc-

tion 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." MF

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 *Untitled (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

Pool at Uday's Palace
from the *Breach* series),
2009, digital c-print
acemounted to Plexi,
132 x 243 cm (unframed).
Courtesy the artist and
Jack Shainman Gallery,
New 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*

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LENS

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO AND VISUAL JOURNALISM

Showcase: A Modern Ozymandias

By Miki Meek

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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."