

## “Intimate Violence: Artists Respond to Illegal Detention and Torture”

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From the outset of the declaration of the “war on terror”, then President Bush declared that international law would be ignored in order to exact retribution for the attacks on the U.S.. (McCoy) Prisoners arriving in U.S. Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay on the Island of Cuba. (According to the U.S. government, Guantanamo was a “law free zone,” “free from court scrutiny, free from the constraints of the Constitution, and free, sadly to violate people’s rights with impunity.”<sup>1</sup> Special CIA interrogators were immediately authorized to use whatever means necessary to extract information or to send prisoners to third countries where the practice of torture was well known, a practice known as “extraordinary rendition.”<sup>2</sup>

When confronted with an Iraqi insurgency in the late summer and fall of 2003, the Army rounded up thousands and thousands of Iraqis on the streets of Baghdad in a desperate attempt to gain intelligence. Between July and October the population of Abu Ghraib prison outside of Baghdad escalated from 25 to 18,000. Major General Geoffrey D. Miller was sent from Guantánamo to Abu Ghraib to “Gitmoize” the Iraqi detention center. “This meant facilitating interrogations by having low-level military police guards ‘soften up’ the prisoners, “enabling the intelligence interrogators to get confessions, apparently by any means necessary, ignoring the Geneva Conventions.”<sup>3</sup> Testimony by prisoners released from Guantánamo confirmed that the same tortures were used.

Military police and private contractors photographed the acts of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison during October and December 2003, apparently as a deliberate means to further torture Muslims with photographs of the acts of humiliation to which they had been subjected. A CD with the images downloaded from the computer of one of the perpetrators, Charles Graner, Jr., was delivered by Specialist Joseph M. Darby to the Army Criminal Investigation Division. By the spring of 2004 these images, along with the Army’s Taguba Report that documented in detail many forms of torture at the prison, had been widely disseminated all over the world. The official press was transplanted by the public’s direct access to information and imagery on the Internet.

The photographs contradict as Brian Wallis states “ the studied heroics of twentieth century war photography ...designed to make war palatable – the heroic flag raisings, the dogged foot soldiers close to the action, the sense of shared humanity among combatants, and the search for visual evidence that war is universal and inevitable – the often banal JPEGs from Iraq proffer a very different picture: war is systematic cruelty enforced at the level of everyday torture.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ratner and Ellen Ray, *Guantánamo, What the World Should Know* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green, 2004), iii.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred McCoy, *A Question of Torture, CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 116-117.

<sup>3</sup> Ratner and Ray, *Guantánamo*, xv.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Wallis, “Remember Abu Ghraib,” in *The Disasters of War: From Goya to Golub* ( Middletown: Wesleyan University, 2005), exhibition catalog, unpaginated.

Major news sources picked up the story. "60 Minutes II" ran the story on April 28, 2004. Seymour Hersh wrote a lengthy expose based on the Taguba Report in May 2004.<sup>5</sup> Susan Sontag wrote a strongly worded article in *The New York Times Magazine* the same month.<sup>6</sup> The visual responses multiplied all over the world, particularly in response to the most famous image, of a detainee, Abdou Hussein Saad Faleh, nicknamed "Gilligan," his face covered with a hood, wearing a cape-like blanket, and standing on a box with electrical wires attached to his hands. It generated dozens of responses among visual artists ranging from the "old master" modernist Richard Serra's *Stop Bush* poster to *iRaq* a parody of "iPod" advertisements by a collective of anonymous artists, Copper Greene (the Pentagon code name for detainee abuse in Iraq).

Torture as a practice is not new to the American military, and neither is public outcry about it. After creating an alliance with Emilio Aguinaldo to oust the Spaniards, as the President of the newly independent Philippines in 1898, Aguinaldo rapidly became the enemy when the U.S. forces declared sovereignty over the Islands. As they fought to "free" the country from Aguinaldo, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos died and atrocities multiplied. Soldiers testimony revealed in detail how water boarding was practiced.<sup>7</sup>

Even more shocking is Alfred McCoy's crucial book in response to the Abu Ghraib photographs. He documents that many of the procedures in the photographs were first scripted by the CIA during the Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

Some visual artists immediately began to create art works that reveal the larger historical and political context of the dehumanization, trauma, and power relationships of the torture at both Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo. This article discusses the work of five artists who protested these acts of illegal detention and torture of innocent people through their art. All of them base their art on detailed examinations of public information.

**"I offer this exhibition as a metaphor for the impending threat posed by current times." Roger Shimomura 2007**

In a five part series, *American Infamy* (2006-2011), Roger Shimomura (b 1939) directly connects contemporary detainment to his personal experience of an earlier war-driven detention. The artist was interned at the age of two with his family as a result of Executive Order 9066 issued in February 1942 which authorized the U.S. Army to "remove all persons of Japanese Ancestry from the entire state of California, the coastal portions of Oregon and Washington, the entire territory of Alaska, and a small portion of Arizona." Along with almost 13,000 other persons of Japanese ancestry from Washington State (a total of 110,000 nationally, two-thirds of whom were American citizens), his family was forced to leave their home to "relocate" first to Puyallup State Fair Grounds where they lived in a "cage ringed with barbed wire and guard towers manned by armed soldiers whose guns were pointed inward." They lived in "jerry-built wooden barracks . . . divided into seven one room 'apartments,' each lighted by a bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling. There was no running water. Wood stoves provided heating. There was one window at the back wall of each unit. . . . All ate in mess halls designed to feed 500 . . .

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<sup>5</sup> Seymour Hersh, "Annals of National Security: Torture at Abu Ghraib American soldiers brutalized Iraqis. How far up does the responsibility go?" *The New Yorker*, 10 May 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *The New York Time Magazines*, 23 May 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Kramer, "The Water Cure" *The New Yorker*, 25 February 2008.

<sup>8</sup> McCoy, *Torture*.

and used grouped toilets and showers that were segregated by gender but otherwise offered no privacy.”<sup>9</sup>

In August 1942, they were transported to Minidoka, a specially constructed internment camp in the desert of Southern Idaho with similar conditions of guard towers and barbed wire, barracks of plywood and tarpaper, group toilets, and mess halls. It is this image of the camps which is the basis for the *American Infamy* series, distilled in Shimomura’s work over many years to iconic images “scraped from the linings of my mind- not necessarily what I remembered specifically, but what I respond with when I think of camp.” His work is also profoundly stimulated by the diaries of his grandmother, Toku Shimomura, and as well as photographs of the camps ranging from anonymous to well-known artists like Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams.<sup>10</sup>

The detention of Japanese Americans entailed a more subtle day to day torture and trauma, than the extremes of Abu Ghraib. For these middle class Japanese-Americans, none of whom had committed any crime, to be suddenly forced to live in a desert in a tar paper shack with only the possessions that fit into two suitcases, to sleep on a hard mattress, to use a communal toilet and to eat American food like hot dogs, created enormous psychological stress. Starting in 1978 in the Minidoka Series and continuing in three more series of paintings, as well in theater performances and installations. Shimomura bases his representations on artistic styles that include ukiyo-e prints, pop art, and modernism, sometimes specifically paired with quotes from his grandmother’s diaries.

The artist lived in these camps as a very young child, entering when he was only two years old and not leaving for two years, so the imagery of his earlier series often have the ground level perspective of a child looking up at adults. Some depict daily acts such as doing laundry by hand accompanied by the quote from his grandmother who had been a professional nurse and midwife: “How monotonous life is here. Again another day passed wastefully doing laundry and miscellaneous things. “ Others have a close up of individuals such as well dressed women standing outside a public toilet.

*American Infamy* draws on the artist’s earlier series in its distillation of the camps as tar paper shacks in a vast desert surrounded by barbed wire. But now the perspective has dramatically shifted to those who look down on the detainees from the watchtowers. The detainees are distant ciphers, as soldiers in the towers in the foreground look down on them. For this aerial view the artist has borrowed stylistic elements from the Namban screens (byobu) of seventeenth century Japan.<sup>11</sup> The screens use aerial perspective, a palette of gold and black, and tiny figures. In the *American Infamy* paintings, the figures are diminutive; they are dwarfed by the almost life size scale of the soldiers. In Namban screens, the large irregular dark shapes are bodies of water, while in *American Infamy* they become menacing black clouds, hanging over the camp. The tiny, but specifically represented detainees recede into ever greater invisibility over the span of the five paintings created between 2006 and 2011.

As Shimomura is warning us, it is not a long step from the inhumanity of the World War II detentions of Japanese Americans to detentions in the twenty first century U.S. war on terror. Both are driven by racism. In between are decades of torture techniques taught at the School of the Americas and exported

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<sup>9</sup> Roger Daniels, “Ethnic Cleansing in America? The mass incarceration of Japanese Americans 1942 – 1946,” *Shadows of Minidoka, Paintings and Collections of Roger Shimomura* (Lawrence: Lawrence Arts Center, 2011), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Artist’s statement, *Roger Shimomura Minidoka on My Mind* ( Seattle: Greg Kucera Gallery, 2007), exhibition catalog, unpaginated.

<sup>11</sup>Namban means “southern barbarians.” The screens depict the arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese by ship, bringing both commerce and religion a direct parallel to the war in Iraq.

to Latin America as seen in the huge paintings by Leon Golub of interrogation in Nicaragua from the 1980s. The revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib exposed a practice that is part of an ongoing strategy.

**“Lust for power and territory is the same lust that kills man, women, children and the land itself”**

**Selma Waldman**

Selma Waldman (1931 – 2008) carefully presented the specific acts of torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo so that we cannot avoid their brutality. “The Black Book of Aggressors” (2006 – 2008), consists of 150 expressionist chalk and charcoal drawings on black notebook paper that are displayed as a wall of imagery. Each drawing includes a quotation from public accounts of the depicted torture.

These drawings are a continuation of the artist’s lifelong commitment to the representation of injustice in her art. Growing up in the only Jewish family in Kingsville, Texas, she learned early about racism and injustice both in her own experience of that of the Chicano children of the employees of the King Ranch. While on a Fulbright in Berlin in 1960, she first began to grasp the horrors of Hitler’s Germany. Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 shocked her into committing her life to a “struggle to end genocide and racism.” Waldman depicted the atrocities of apartheid in South Africa with a series of drawings addressing genocide, funerals, detentions, political prisoners, township sweeps, police brutality and political mobilization. For example, *The Torture of Steve Biko* includes two dozen drawings of the police beating, shooting, and arresting Biko, as they kill other demonstrators. She has addressed atrocities and human behavior within war all over the world.

The artist works in charcoal because she believes that the fragility of charcoal parallels the fragility of human life. It is strong and resilient, yet easily crushed. In her commitment to expressionism as the basis for her art, she is consciously working in the tradition of the great German Expressionist artist Kathe Kollwitz, whose career was devoted to celebrating resistance to oppression and emphasizing the impact of war on women. (footnote) Although Waldman’s work comes from Kollwitz’s tradition of expressionist drawing, she uses newspaper images and stories for her source material. Her intricate and detailed notes on hundreds of small pieces of paper are usually quotations, although often the sources are lost. ( footnote Archives)

Her charcoal drawings unrelentingly confront the seductive power of war, the perpetrators of war, the addiction of war and its link to sexual energy. In October 1998, during the Bosnian War, she began a series of drawings on brown notebook paper which became “Wall of Perpetrators: Book of Combatants.”<sup>12</sup> From 2003 to 2006 she focused on how to create an unavoidable wall of imagery. The first set of drawings, drawn on facing pages of a spiral brown notebook measured just under three feet high, when formatted four to a frame. They created a band of imagery 26 feet long. A second group, created in late 2003, framed three to a panel were more vertical and extended over 120 feet. The purpose of the wall is to create the sense of an overwhelming onslaught of acts of violence. <sup>13</sup> The artist

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<sup>12</sup> Sources for the Bosnian series included Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance, One Family’s Story of the War in Bosnia* (New York and London: Norton and Co, 1998) , Slavenka Drakulic’ *S, A Novel About the Balkans* (New York: Penguin, 1999). This feminist author from Croatia details, through flashbacks of a fictional character, the acts of violent rape against Bosnian women “the soldiers came to her village, led her husband away, and locked her up in the bedroom ... . They did it to me on my own marital bed, she says that was the worst. She cannot say how long it lasted or how many soldiers there were. ...” Waldman also drew on numerous clipped (undocumented) articles from the *New York Times* and other newspapers.

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication, January 28, 2013 Cary Ross of Allison and Ross, Framing and Fine Art Specialists According to framing records, there were 20 frames of drawings 4 to a frame measuring 33x14” created in August 2003 and 10 of 3 drawings to a frame measuring 40 x 12.”

added strands of barbed wire in front of the drawings that extended the entire length of the installation to increase the sense of threat. Larger drawings loomed on other walls of the gallery in the final installation called "Naked/Aggression: Profile of the Armed Perpetrator, 1998 – 2003."<sup>14</sup>

Every individual soldier is naked below the waist; often he carries a heavy armament, as in "Dread Launcher" a weapon balanced on one shoulder, or "Tayar (Ready) in which a man sits holding two small missiles on his knees that are spread apart to show the third weapon, his erect organ. Each combatant is drawn with a continuous web of lines, the phallic gun and the soldier's male organ formally and psychologically in partnership.

The atrocities at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo revealed only months after Waldman held her exhibition of Bosnian works openly confirmed her theme of the intimate relationship of war, sex, sadism and violence. In her Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo drawings the victims as well as the perpetrators are represented. The soldiers are highly energized, looming, and terrifying perpetrators. There are no references to specific photographs.

The artist expanded and refined the concept of the wall: vertical panels of three vertical drawings now fill two walls, an overwhelming total of 150 drawings that create a continuous four foot wall. The use of black paper highlights the blackness of the crimes being committed. Blue, red, and other intense colors underscore the horror, rather than hiding it. The main theme is "torture and abuse by naked perpetrators. . . . By confronting the aggressors as naked archetypes, I have wished to subvert the act of mere anti-war illustration, hence the ironic slash in naked/aggression."<sup>15</sup> The artist has included quotations describing the torture on the drawings. Those quotations are based on scavenging for information in newspapers (she owned no computer). In her surviving archives there is an extraordinary amount of information about topics such as CIA Black Sites, specific tortures, quotes from both victims and perpetrator.<sup>16</sup>

In drawing no. 25, "chained and beaten by men in helmets and body armor," four soldiers almost seem to dance against a bright blue ground, in a furious tangle of army green lines that constructs their bodies with erect naked penises. They are raising their arms to beat the prisoner who extends across the foreground, his hands bound to the bars of a cell. The red of his blood spills through the center of the drawing, and onto the bodies of the torturers, underscoring the intimate relationship between prisoner and captor. Some of the images identify Guantanamo, showing men in cages with their hands out. Others look like sexual scenes with the soldier standing or squatting behind a kneeling prisoner; another series refers to female prisoners, "and then he ripped open her abaya to expose her breast." A long series documents the use of dogs to terrify the prisoners, including "military working dogs, devil dogs, party dogs." The *Black Book of Aggressors* also includes forced feeding, stress positions, urination on chained bodies, whipping with chains, beating or shocking testicles, and five drawings of explicit means of waterboarding, with terse descriptions inserted into the drawings such as: "strapped to board upside down, immersed in wet towel to fake drawing, used to impose anguish without leaving marks."

Although these images are, like so many of her works, directly linked to known events and specific episodes, they are really addressing the larger issue of inhumanity in war. The artist planned a series of 8

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<sup>14</sup> The exhibition was held October 2 to November 1, 2003, at Gallery 110, Seattle Washington. It was accompanied by brochure. The *Black Book of Aggressor* was also shown at a memorial exhibition for the artist at Seattle Central Community College, dates. The artist gave all of her work the collective title of "The Altars of Fear."

<sup>15</sup> Letter to the author, 18 March 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Hundreds of small pieces of paper with unattributed quotes and lists culled from many sources are in her archives now deposited with the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C..

walls addressing “Injustice Worldwide,” and she hoped to have them shown at The Hague, but her death cut the project short. But the two walls that she did complete, *The Armed Combatant* and *The Black Book of Aggressors* are an extraordinary art works that present the atrocities in war. Waldman’s point, that atrocities are common in all wars and by all sides, is clear.

**“These works are a result of the indignation that the violations in Iraq produced in me and the rest of the world,” Fernando Botero**

Columbian artist Fernando Botero (b 1932) reacted to the revelations of torture in the *New Yorker* and on the “60 Minutes” report of April 28, 2004, with a series of 82 oil paintings and drawings completed in only one year from 2004-2005. The works are not without precedent in his career. While he became famous for painting small-town life rendered as light comedy with hugely inflated people, in 1971 he painted *The Official Portrait of the Military Junta*, which ridiculed the leadership of the army leaders in Colombia who would perpetrate the deaths of thousands. The painting consciously uses the same composition as Goya’s portrait of the “Family of Charles V,” a group portrait that made the royals look like weak-brained morons. He got to know these works intimately, while supporting himself by copying the masterpieces of Goya and Velázquez in Madrid early in his life.

*War* (1973) represents the senselessness of war, by depicting a large mound of dead people against a blank background: businessmen, soldiers, children, women, and animals—all are dead, piled together with flags, coffins, skulls. The densely packed hill, which perhaps invokes a burial, also recalls Goya’s representations of the absence of any moral motives in the senseless slaughter of war. It also may refer to the 1940s in Colombia when hundreds of thousands of people died during a civil war known as La Violencia. In this pile of dead people are grotesque poses and violations of the flesh that reappear in his Abu Ghraib series.

From 1999 to 2004 Botero created 67 paintings on the drug cartel, death squad murders, kidnappings, car bombs, and resulting funerals in his native Colombia. *Massacre in the Cathedral*, 2002, provides a witness to a rocket attack that killed 120 people including 40 children in a rural church. Botero donated these paintings to the National Museum in Bogotá, as a record of the “dark folklore” of his country.

In contrast to Waldman’s expressionist chalk drawings, Fernando Botero addresses the tortures at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq with the traditional linear perspective and palette of Renaissance paintings, an uncluttered classical style of modeled figures with explicit details. But he also represents the prisoners with his trademark inflated bodies. David Ebony has suggested that their enlarged physical presence also gives them, “psychological and moral weightiness.”<sup>17</sup> In their simplified realism they provoke us to feel the full horror of the unspeakable acts perpetrated against the prisoners.

The artist echoes the perspective obsessions of the Renaissance in the grid of the prison cage and scored floor. Often the grid of the prison bars is behind the prisoners. That places us, as viewers, inside the cage joining the perpetrators of violence as we look down at the naked prisoners. Botero has avoided nothing. He depicts prisoners dressed in women’s underwear, forced to climb on one another and forced to copulate, urinated on, tied in stress positions blindfolded. In the drawings we see the prisoners beaten and threatened by ferocious dogs. We are implicated in the crime as passive viewers.

Botero intentionally echoes well-known representations of Catholic martyrs as well as Christ in these paintings. According to Catholic perspectives, victims of torture rise above their condition to be

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<sup>17</sup> David Ebony, *Botero Abu Ghraib*, (New York and London: Prestel Verlag, 2006). See also Juan Forero, “Great Crime’ at Abu Ghraib Enrages and Inspires an Artist,” *The New York Times*, May 8, 2005.

beatified.<sup>18</sup> Here, the weight of the crimes, the inhumanity of the perpetrators (usually indicated by a hand or boot), rules out the justification of torture as a means of spreading “civilization,” the idea of willing sacrifices for a larger cause, and leaves us only with cruelty and inhumanity. In *Abu Ghraib no 50* both prisoners have been forced to wear women’s underwear. They are blindfolded. Their arms are tied and they have been forced into excruciating positions, one kneeling on the floor (he is vomiting blood), amplified by the huge size of their bodies. We cannot avoid being a witness to their excruciating pain. In the drawing *Abu Ghraib – 37*, a prisoner is hooded, his arms bound behind him. He hangs upside down, his head and one shoulder on the ground at an awkward angle with one leg hanging from a rope vertically, the other hanging out to the side. The specificity of the high stress pose connects it to Abu Ghraib, even as we cannot avoid comparisons to imagery of martyrdom in historical art.

Botero compares his series to Pablo Picasso’s famous 1936 painting *Guernica* which immortalized, and made permanent, an event, the first aerial bombing of a civilian population living in a non military site, that would otherwise have been forgotten in the fog of the Spanish Civil War. Yet Botero is also deeply indebted, as is Selma Waldman, to Goya’s *The Disasters of War* (1810 – 1820) as well as Jacques Callot’s *The Large Miseries of War* ( 1633) These two foundational sets of images of the atrocities of war both emphasize the dehumanizing of war, rather than heroism. Callot’s eighteen etchings describe soldiers pillaging, burning, killing and lynching. *No 11, The Hanging*, for example, explicitly tell us how the hanging of over twenty prisoners was done from a single tree. He juxtaposes it to the insensitivity of the soldier-perpetrators, and the obliviousness of other people. The caption speaks of the inhumanity of the punishment and refers to the hanged men as “unfortunate fruit on a tree.” In Goya’s works, as in Botero, there is a much closer approach to the scenes of atrocity, and the focus is on the acts themselves. But in Goya’s *Disasters*, there is no single side that is the aggressor, all are violent. The inhumanity possible among people supposedly “civilized” is the common theme of all the work.

**“Has our submersion in a society awash in porn, comfortably distant from the atrocities of war, rendered us completely incapable of grasping what modern day sexual torture is?” Coco Fusco (58)**

Coco Fusco (1960), well-known performance artist and theorist, foregrounds the complex role of women in the perpetration of sexual humiliation and its relationship to the myths and realities of women in positions of power. In her performance “A Room of One’s Own: Women and Power in the New America” (2006-2008) and in her book, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, Fusco provides a stunning analysis of female sexuality as a weapon in the war on terror. She begins

Once upon a time . . . Virginia Woolf wrote that every woman had to have a room of her own if she was going to show her strength. Now at the onset of the new millennium, American women finally have what they need to demonstrate their valor. The War on Terror has provided a great opportunity to the women of this country. Our nation has put its trust in our talents and is providing the space and support we need to prove that we are powerful forces in the struggle for democracy. . . .

American women are using their minds and their charms to conquer our enemy. American women in uniform are leading our nation’s efforts to save the civilized world from the threat of

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). This book discusses our conditioning for looking at images of torture through the long history of representations of tortured prisoners from the altar at Pergamon to Michelangelo’s *Dying Slave* and later. He refers to the “shock of recognition” that accompanied his viewing of the photographs,11.

terrorism. I know I am proud to be one of those women and I am here to tell you how you can be one of those women too.<sup>19</sup>

In this highly ironic statement, she exposes (in her persona as Sargent Fusco) the contradictions of women in the military and their relationship to historical feminism. Feminists up to the present revere Virginia Woolf as a founding mother of feminism in her book *A Room of One's Own*.<sup>20</sup> That room is now a prison cell in which women in the military are empowered to torture another human being. She managed to outrage just about everyone with this brilliant insight.

Fusco places her re-enactment within overlapping systems of oppression for both those in the military and those incarcerated. Her emphasis on women in the position of authority in the practice of sexual humiliation within a prison points to the ambiguity of the term "freedom" for women in the military. They must follow orders. They are also imprisoned. But just as the rules of engagement for combat in Iraq were usually non-existent, likewise, inside the prison, in the interior "women's domain," female individuals were encouraged to harass prisoners with ploys of feminine seduction, exposure, sex acts, and other types of objectification of their own bodies in order to humiliate Muslims.

In order to understand better what military women experienced as part of the process of administering torture, Fusco joined a training workshop run by a private firm in what is called "survival, evasion, resistance and escape" (SERE). The workshop is intended to help US personnel survive if they become prisoners of war of enemies who do not follow the Geneva Conventions. Many of the methods taught are the very same procedures used at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib: stress positions and aggressive behavior, waterboarding, and excessive light and loud music to prevent sleep.

Anyone can sign up for these Team Delta workshops, run by former military personnel and interrogation experts.<sup>21</sup> Using a hidden camera, Fusco filmed the six women who had agreed to participate with her. The resulting work *Operation Atropos* (2006) is a curious genre: a documentary of real actions, experienced as performance. Since Fusco had no control over what she was asked to do by the workshop leaders, she did not "stage" the performance but she always knew she had chosen to participate and was not a prisoner.

Fusco blurs the distinctions between performance, simulation, recreation, and documentary, as she explores the contradictions between the image of women in the military created by corporate news, military recruitment media, and commercial filmmaking and the ambiguous realities of their experiences, ranging from being "one of the boys" only tougher, to the constant threat of sexual harassment, to the intentional use of sexual relationships as a means of protection and, finally, the exploitation of female bodies as a means of "coercive interrogation."

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<sup>19</sup> Coco Fusco, "A Room of One's Own, Description" [www.cocofusco.com](http://www.cocofusco.com). Her script varies slightly in each performance. Fusco elaborates on the ideas in the performance in the form of a letter to Virginia Woolf, "Invasion of Space by a Female," *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (New York, London: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 8 – 83.

<sup>20</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1989, first edition 1929).

<sup>21</sup> "Team Delta, a high speed unit of former military intelligence, special forces and other elite military personnel from all branches of the service, takes pride in teaching professional training workshops and providing realistic military experiences." [www.teamdelta.net](http://www.teamdelta.net).



At Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib sexual debasement was escalated for Muslim detainees: female interrogators were ordered to use their sexuality in specific ways in order to extract information. In her *Field Guide* mimicking an Army Field Guide format, Fusco briefly describes and illustrates sixteen tactics that female soldiers “have been reported to be using. All the scenes in the illustrations are based on the testimony of detainees and eye witnesses.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, *The Field Guide* is invented, but the tactics depicted come from participants reports. Innocuous sounding approaches like “Direct Questioning” or “Establish Your Identity” are already creating an aggressive power relationship. *No. 7 Mutt and Jeff* (good guy, bad buy) here becomes one woman ordering the prisoner, the other half dressed sympathizing with him. Much more offensive tactics were used as well, including more undressing and even smearing (fake) menstrual blood on the prisoner.

These tactics demeaned the female soldier as well as the prisoner. In the photographs that emerged from Abu Ghraib, there were no visual records of these sexual tactics. But women dominated the coverage (Lynndie England, Sabrina Harmon, Janis Kapinski ). So women emerged in the torture scandal playing a major role and taking major punishment. In other words, women in the military no matter how they play the game, “one of the boys” (Karpinski), doing what they were told to do (England), or indulging personal fantasies (Harmon), all were embedded in a system that trains them to accept torture as a necessary evil. The scandals exposed that women are just as willing to participate in enabling and practicing torture as men. At the same time, the selected media exposure (images of male soldiers sexually molesting prisoners were suppressed) was intended to “soften” the image of torture, by demonstrating that it was mainly a few bad apple women who had practiced it.

**“Each victim talked about his or her torture in their own way, some recounting every detail, and others spoke around things, as if the worst of the torture was left out. In most interviews, the full brutality was laid out bare.”—Daniel Heyman, 2007**

Unlike any of the other artists discussed here, Daniel Heyman (b 1963) based his art work on individual encounters with detainees released from Abu Ghraib. His prints and watercolors created in 2006 – 2008, detail the accounts of torture as narrated by the victims themselves. Heyman met these men during interviews in Istanbul as part of a preparation for a class action legal case. His art work provides verbatim statements and intimate portraits of these released prisoners as well as dignifying their identities and honoring their survival of the unspeakable degradation to which they were forced to submit. None of the detainees were ever formally accused of any crime.<sup>23</sup>

Heyman listened to hours of testimony, and made watercolor portraits and copper-based dry points on plates which included written testimony. All the portraits were made during the interviews, and the texts are verbatim, without any editing. His portraits capture the dignified faces of innocent men who have survived the depths of degradation. Heyman’s engagement with the prisoners is one on one. He talked about creating his work: “I sit in this hotel room and draw the face of an Iraqi who is telling the most humiliating and degrading story of his life. I try to disappear.”<sup>24</sup>

The narratives are written around the portraits themselves; the large heads of the former detainees are almost like dense landscapes. As the texts wind around the limbs, heads and shoulders of the victims—sometimes in bright watercolor hues—they seem to envelop the person in his own story, like a type of

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<sup>22</sup> Fusco, *Field Guide*, 107.

<sup>23</sup> One lawsuit has ended in a settlement. Neil King, “Iraqis awarded \$5m over Abu Ghraib abuse 10 January 2013, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/iraqis-awarded-5m-over-abu-ghraib-abuse-485237.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Press Release, Kasini House, Burlington, Vermont, undated.

porous covering. In the example illustrated here, it begins “They put me in an animal cage and told me “No Sleep!” He was hitting the cage with a bar. I had to stand all night. “Almahjar” a very small cell – only for 1 person – these were designed under Sadaam for death row inmates. I was put here in Abu Ghraib. I was naked. Then someone came and put a bag on my head and paraded me around naked. This was a tradition at Abu Ghraib.”

Of course these interviews do not reveal all of the shame to which the prisoners were subjected. For example, in one case, an ex-prisoner speaks mainly of his wife and his relationship to Islam: “When I was arrested my hands were tied behind my back. My wife asked a soldier what was happening and a soldier hit her in the head with a gun. She became blind in one eye and now is losing the second eye because of the hit. I was dead for a month and five days and God saved me and now I speak out and talk to the media. My issue is Abu Ghraib. I do not talk about the resistance because I cannot speak their due. Martyrdom does not scare me because the body as a Muslim, the body belongs to God.” By focusing on his devotion to Islam, the prisoner found a means to survive his own abuse. He also gave himself a means to move forward after it ended.

But religious devotion was also manipulated as a means of torture as discussed in the work of Fusco. The prisoners spoke about the techniques used to torture them, in many different ways. As Heyman explained “each victim talked about his or her torture in their own way, some recounting every detail, and others spoke around things, as if the worst of the torture was left out. In most interviews, the full brutality was laid out bare.”

Two of the men whom Heyman interviewed were killed in the violence that engulfed the country in 2006 -2007. A woman interviewed in the project was brutally raped and murdered shortly afterward. Heyman, with her family’s permission, put her testimony on the floor of the gallery where he showed the project in Philadelphia so that, as he put it, “visitors would be forced to confront her story with their own bodies (walking into the gallery).”<sup>25</sup>

Heyman gives a voice to the voiceless, a face to the faceless—moving beyond the media snapshots of hooded prisoners to people whose lives have been ruined by illegal detention and torture. He wants to make the victims of torture real people and to tell what happened to them in detail, not in media bites or clichés. These are all individuals who have been degraded for no reason, they committed no crime, they were simply caught up in a frantic, racist pursuit of information by U.S. soldiers ordered to get intelligence on terrorists. Heyman resists the process that turned the photographs of Abu Ghraib torture victims into icons. He is deconstructing the multitude into individuals, even as those individuals are signifiers of a larger process of oppression.

The artist sees himself as a resistance worker, who wanted to “bring home to America a piece of this war, and also to see what is now permissible in the U.S. . . . I think about them all the time. They are in a tremendous amount of danger. I am worried about them.”<sup>26</sup>

These art works all condemn the practice of torture by their explicit statements, their careful depictions of the victims’ degradation; we are shocked by the images and sickened by the specific acts. As Slavoj Žižek wrote in 2007 “The last time such things were part of public discourse was back in the late Middle Ages, when torture was still a public spectacle . . . This is why, in the end, the greatest victims of torture as usual are the rest of us, the informed public. A precious part of our collective identity has been

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<sup>25</sup> Email from the artist, February 2, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> “Weekend America,” Feb 27, 2007 <http://weekendamerica.publicradio.org>.

irretrievably lost.”<sup>27</sup> The stark contrast between the condemnation of torture by these artists and so many others in 2004 – 2007, and the recent movie *Zero Dark Thirty*, which suggests that torture is justified because it yielded information that led to the capture of Bin Laden, is a dangerous and disturbing shift.<sup>28</sup>

The five contemporary artists discussed here are courageous in their willingness to represent subjects that are difficult and painful. They have chosen to go against the accepted conventions of the art market and create work that is the response to deeply felt concerns for the United States. From Roger Shimomura’s historical connection to Daniel Heyman’s close personal portrayals and testimonies, they provide an example of the ways in which visual artists can make a powerful contribution to the public discourse. As we look at their work, we are deeply affected, we are confronted with the dark side of the U.S. as well as the dark side of humanity.

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<sup>27</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Knight of the Living Dead,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Earlier movies such as *Rendition* (2007), *Lions for Lambs* (2007) and *Redacted* (2007) all depicted the evils of torture without ambiguity, but were only briefly shown. *Zero Dark Thirty* has been nominated for several Academy Awards. For the dissenting view on the film’s claim see, for example, Steve Coll, “Disturbing and Misleading,” *The New York Review of Books*, February 7, 2013 and Human Rights Watch article. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/01/11/us-zero-dark-thirty-and-truth-about-torture>.