

## Image Wars

Curated by Miguel Amado

**Yevgeniy Fiks, Rinat Kotler, Michael Mandiberg, Carlos Noronha Feio, Mary Temple, Kai---Oi Jay Yung**

July 22 – September 3

The Abrons Arts Center is proud to present *Image Wars*, an exhibition that addresses the representation of conflict in visual culture in an age of global crisis. The show is curated by Miguel Amado and brings together works by Yevgeniy Fiks, Rinat Kotler, Michael Mandiberg, Carlos Noronha Feio, Mary Temple, and Kai---Oi Jay Yung. The project's organizing principle is that in an "image---saturated society, looking has become a spectacle and stipulates an optical---based relationship between those who look and that which is looked upon," as Guy Debord once said, and that the proliferation of a war---derived iconography has become the sign of such condition in present times. Mixing archival documentation and fiction, as well as research and personal reaction to daily events, the artists comment on the articulation of geopolitics and the media in the spectacularization of warfare. The works on view examine the picturing of zones of conflict, from armed conflicts between countries through dissent across national borders; the charismatic character of world leaders and unknown soldiers; and manifestations of both control and powerlessness in news and individual narratives.

Carlos Noronha Feio employs a traditional technique to produce a large---scale carpet depicting military motifs that allude to Afghanistan's rug manufacturing of the same genre, which was initiated in the late 1970s with the country's occupation by the USSR and has continued until today in the wake of the US invasion of 2001. As in the Afghan pieces, the distinctive characteristic of Noronha Feio's work is its ability to convey the understanding of antagonism, now not in regard to a regional strife but to the perception of contention. Michael Mandiberg's *Ransom Money* (2010) consists of a Zero Halliburton briefcase holding a one million dinar note, Iraq's currency issued by the fallen Saddam Hussein's government. This is an object favored by Hollywood in its portrayal of evil villains, and was made by the Halliburton company for use in the Texas oil fields; a former subsidiary of this corporation, KBR, is well known for its contracts with the US Department of Defense, including the Iraqi Freedom Operation. Mandiberg's work ironically reflects this intertwining of finance, the exploration of natural resources, and the US intervention in the Middle East.

Mary Temple presents a set of works from her series "Currency," which she has been developing since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's infamous visit to Columbia University in 2007. This episode prompted her to draw a portrait of a world leader every day inspired by a press photograph and its caption, an endeavor that she still continues. On this occasion, she highlights the "Arab Spring" – the wave of protest that has been sweeping the Middle East and Northern Africa since the end of last year – by selecting drawings made between January 14 and February 11, which mark the resignation of Tunisia and Egypt's former presidents. Temple's works not only bear witness to the actions of politicians and its effects on populations across the globe, but also outlines the evolution of the current state of affairs at a societal level. A selection of Yevgeniy Fiks's renderings of members of the American Cold War Veterans Association comprises a display focusing on anonymous servicemen and women who served in the US Army and the US Navy between 1945 and 1991. Fiks's project utilizes the typical formula of veteran portraiture, which includes designs as diverse as flags and medals, and documents the honor of its subjects. However, by dealing with a fight that never took place, he calls attention to the ideological dimension of recent political history.

Rinat Kotler's video records a group of kids from Tel Aviv improvising a reportage of an imagined terrorist attack. While the artist was setting up equipment to shoot a work, two gangs threw firecrackers at each other, provoking a blast; immediately, the children sat in front of the camera and

covered the incident, re-enacting it as if they were journalists broadcasting a bomb explosion. Kotler's work demonstrates the latent violence that emerges from the Israeli-Palestinian hostility and the pervasion of such reality into the collective unconscious. Kai-Oi Jay Yung's *I Have a Story...* (2011) is an emotional account of the artist's experience in Libya in 2007 in the context of an artistic residency and the subsequent exchange with people that she met there. In a text that combines memories, field notes, and thoughts, Yung describes the different expectations she and the locals had towards each other; the connection she established with two female translators and an Iraqi refugee, an artist and a professor at the university; and a recent conversation with an acquaintance that alludes to Libya's current civil unrest.

*Image Wars* is curated by Miguel Amado, 2010-11 curator-in-residence at the Abrons Arts Center.  
Abrons Arts Center 466 Grand Street New York, NY 10002