

COLLECTOR DAILY

Light in Wartime @Apexart

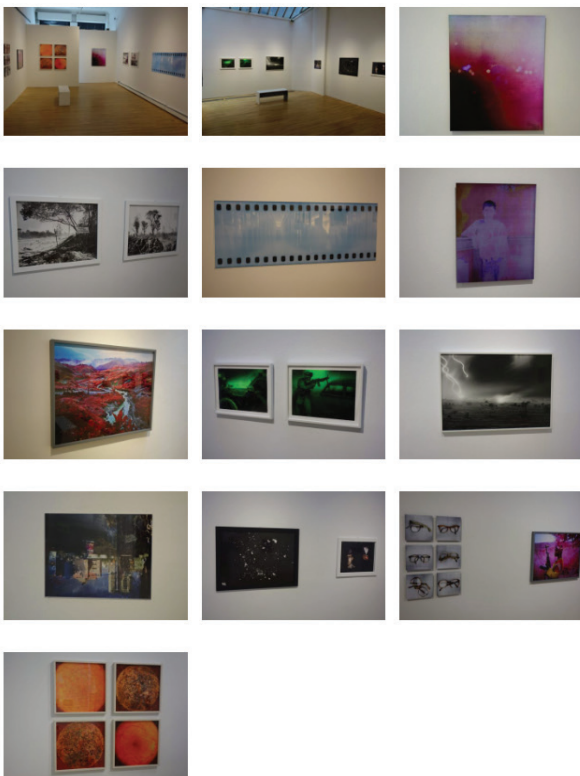
By Loring Knoblauch / In Galleries / July 10, 2018

JTF (just the facts): A group show containing 15 works by 11 photographers, variously framed and matted, and hung against white walls in the main gallery space. The show was organized by Rola Khayyat.

The following photographers have been included in the show, with the number of works on view, as well as dates, processes, and dimensions provided as background:

- Seba Kurtis: 2 digital c-prints, 2012, roughly 32×40 or 19×24 inches
- Jo Ratcliffe: 2 gelatin silver prints, 2009, each roughly 22×18 inches
- Rula Halawani: 1 digital c-print, 2016, roughly 71×26 inches
- Richard Mosse: 2 digital c-prints, 2012, 2015, 35×28 or 50×40 inches
- David Levinthal: 2 archival pigment prints, 2008, each 22×17 inches
- An-My Lê: 1 gelatin silver print, 2003-2004, roughly 38×27 inches
- Nilu Izadi: 1 camera obscura digital c-print, 2010, 21×17 inches
- Vartan Avakian: 1 archival print on fine art paper, 2015, roughly 33×25 inches
- Sebastiano Tomada Piccolomini: 1 digital c-print, 2012, 20×16 inches
- Ziyah Gafic: 1 set of 6 digital c-prints, 2010, each roughly 12×12 inches
- Allan deSouza: 1 set of 4 digital c-prints, 2009, each 22×22 inches

(Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: Most summer group shows of photography opt for sunny themes and fun loving topics, but *Light in Wartime* takes no such liberties. This show brings together a variety of fine art approaches to contemporary war photography, and while such pictures have often been defined by active images of battle, this smartly curated exhibit goes beyond those simplistic boundaries to consider alternate ways of thinking about how the nuanced truths of conflict can be represented.

Some of the artists included take an experiential approach to the wider environment of war, making images that reflect the way it feels to be on the ground. Richard Mosse used infrared film to document the jungle landscapes of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where rebel groups and government forces wrestle for dominance amid the surreal pink tones of the greenery. Rula Halawani crosses militarized Israeli checkpoints, where the damage caused by the X-rays turns her images of the bleak processing hallways into ghostly mazes. And Sebastiano Tomada Piccolomini makes portraits of Syrian rebels seen in the shadows of sheltered locations, holding the single possession they deem most essential (in this case, a pack of Gauloises). In all three of these approaches, there is a sense of tactile presence, and of the altered experience of reality that war creates.

Two photographers use re-creation as a way to get inside the visual vocabulary of war imagery. An-My Lê captures military exercises and reenactments in the California desert, where the war takes place on a stage set and soldiers take on various roles (including the enemy). And David Levinthal builds nighttime scenes of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan out of toys, the simulated green glow of night vision emulating the real life scenes we see on television. Both ask us to consider what typical images of war show us, and how we process (and react to) the controlled (and sometimes constructed) information they provide.

Many of the photographers in this show enter the scene after the action is over, looking closely at what is left behind. Jo Ratcliffe subtly traces the empty landscapes of the war in Angola, finding both presence (a pile of rocks that might mark a grave or battle) and absence. Nilu Izadi makes a haunting camera obscura image in the Barakat building in Beirut, using a sniper hole to project the modern scene in the streets onto the pockmarked wall inside. And Ziyah Gafic makes poignant still life images of the eyeglasses (mostly broken) collected from mass graves after the Balkan wars, the traces of humanity still vibrant amid the horrors of ethnic cleansing. All three investigate the durable power of visual evidence, and consider how time changes (and erodes) our understanding of those memories.

For a small show, *Light in Wartime* does a commendable job of providing alternate perspectives that surround the concept of war photography. It encourages us to think critically about the barrage of imagery we are exposed to, and to get beyond the headlines to the more personal stories that are normally swept up in the flurry of violent action. Thoughtful and tightly edited, it is a sampler that opens doors for further exploration, making it easily one of the best group shows of the summer season.

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