

apexart

2013-14 Unsolicited Program Proposal by
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On June 29, 2011, in the neighborhood of Karam Shami in Homs, Syria, a young man stands on the rooftop of a building. He uses his cell phone to document gunfire taking place in the streets below as his camera suddenly catches sight of a gunman on an adjacent balcony. For a brief instant, the cameraman and the gunman directly face each other. A single shot is fired. The camera falls, and with the cameraman's death, image and reality collapse into one.

In the wake of the Arab uprisings, the anonymous cameraman has emerged as a powerful new figure in the politics of representation. Not press photographers, not filmmakers, not artists, these courageous men and women document violence that surrounds them as a means to fight back, while at the same time carrying the biggest stakes in the telling of their story. In doing so, they create images that do not depict violence, but are visible manifestations of it; images that do not seek to create viewers, but witnesses. "Death of a Cameraman" revolves around a powerful moment in which the making of an image becomes a matter of life and death, with the camera functioning both as an extension of the eye and as a weapon.

The show will be anchored by the original video captured by the killed Syrian cameraman, shown alongside artists whose work sheds light on the space between the camera and eye and between documentary, documentarists, and the documented. Rabih Mroué's "Pixelated Revolution" investigates the phenomenon of death behind the camera. Based on original videos found on Youtube, Mroué has, amongst other things, produced large-scale enlargements of still frames with perpetrators on them, seeking the split-second moment of hope – and potential justice - when their faces can be seen and their actions recognized. Hrair Sarkissian's "Execution Squares" depict scenes of past violence in Syrian cities. Taken in 2008, the paradoxical absence of any signs of violence in these photographs not only references the invisible social and political history of such sites, but tragically sets the stage for the violent events taking place today. Sam Smith's object installation, "Untitled (Lenses)" explores the apparatus of the broken camera lens as a monument-like sculptural object, permitting a reading of the camera as a "prosthesis" of the eye. In Rudolf Steiner's series "Pictures of me, shooting myself into a picture", the artist fires a bullet at a camera, resulting in a puncture that generates the image.

The exhibition will be framed by selected amateur videos from Syria, including footage of crowds singing the song "Come on, Bashar" by Ibrahim Qoshush – a Syrian amateur poet killed for creating a voice for the uprising. His song (and its rhythmic, ecstatic recitals in daily and nightly protests throughout Syria) epitomizes the breakthrough of hope experienced in the early days of the uprising, yet it also translates the sense of courage and urgency that has fuelled the protester's desire to take a stake in – and shape – the events as they unfolded.