

ART IN REVIEW

'Death of a Cameraman'

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Apexart

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Rudolf Steiner's "Pictures of Me Shooting Myself into a Picture," (1998) in "Death of a Cameraman" at Apexart.

291 Church Street, TriBeCa

Through Oct. 26

Almost 20 years old, Apexart is still one of most adventurous nonprofit spaces around. Its rotating program of group shows has brought hundreds of international curators and artists to the city. Its current show, "Death of a Cameraman," was conceived by a young Swiss art historian, Martin Waldmeier. He sent his proposal in cold. The gallery said yes. The show is great; a tight, timely little chiller.

It's built around a cellphone video, made during the uprisings in Syria in 2011, that captures the moment when the phone's user, while filming a sniper on a building, is spotted by the gunman, and shot, presumably dead. The video, on view in the gallery, was the subject of a multimedia piece by the Beirut artist Rabih Mroué in the International Center of Photography's recent triennial, and there's another by him here: a filmed re-enactment of the mortal event which turns it into political theater.

The tension between actual and fictional violence runs through the show. It's there in Harun Farocki's filmed exploration of the mechanics of long-distance airstrikes,

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and in photo-collage by the British artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin that restages, through editing, a mass killing in Iran. Hrair Sarkissian's 2008 pictures of public execution sites are all the more potent for being empty of people, letting our imaginations take over.

And staged photographs by the Swiss artist Rudolf Steiner — who fires bullets into black-box cameras, literally shooting images into existence — look as sinister as anything else in an exhibition that leaves questions in the air. To what degree do images create rather than record violence? Why do we become more passive the more images of violence we see? Why do so many New York galleries with resources far greater than those available to Apexart settle for doing so much less challenging work?

A version of this review appears in print on October 11, 2013, on page C26 of the New York edition with the headline: 'DEATH OF A CAMERAMAN'.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/11/arts/design/death-of-a-cameraman.html?_r=1&