

Call for Papers: The Role of Visual Culture in War

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Radical History Review (RHR)

Issue #106: Taking Sides:

The Role of Visual Culture in War, Occupation and Resistance

The RHR solicits contributions for a special issue on visual culture in war, occupation and resistance. Artists have often taken sides in ideological conflicts and in actual conflagrations. In terms of visual culture and resistance, the literature and music of the South African struggle, the murals of Belfast and Derry in Ireland and the poetry of the many Latin American movements for change are relatively well documented. Less analysis is available on the role of artists on one side or another of recent conflicts. Wars of Liberation and popular revolts such as those in Angola, Algeria, Iran and the Basque Country spring to mind. Despite the scale and impact of the Vietnam War, little knowledge is available in terms of the role of visual culture in the mass mobilizations against both the French and US occupations.

Approaching five years into the occupation of Iraq and with numerous groups engaged in resistance, what form does visual culture play in demarcating opposing political positions? How have artists in colonized or oppressed nations viewed themselves and their work in terms of the largely western models that shape what is commonly defined as 'art' (the gallery, theater etc)? What has been the role of visual culture in support of imperialism or colonial expansion, as well as officially 'state sanctioned' cultural production?

The role of visual culture in conflict situations also prompts an examination of the implications of artistic 'neutrality'. Despite current global instability many artists and cultural producers, especially in the western artistic tradition, consider their work to be apolitical or neutral. Can artistic neutrality be said to exist in conflict situations, or is culture ultimately, in the words of Edward Said, "...a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another?" (Culture and Imperialism).

This issue of RHR is particularly interested in exploring these questions. Issues of interest include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- The role and impact of visual culture (visual art and photography, theater, film or graphic works) in anti-colonial and popular struggles in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Europe.
- Culture and de-colonization: The role of visual culture in reinventing/reclaiming a sense of self/nation in newly independent states.
- Shifts in visual culture in Eastern Europe (Poland/Soviet Union/former Yugoslavia, etc). How do politics and aesthetics relate in these emerging capitalist economies?
- Occupation and Collaboration: What strategies and roles have artists played either in opposition to, or in collaboration with, occupying, repressive forces?
- The role of visual culture in resistance and social movements in the United States, with a particular emphasis on the class struggle and the movements for asserting identities in the African American, Latino(a), Asian, Native American movements, as well as in support of broad forces such as anti war, disability rights, struggles for gender equality and acceptance.
- The role of visual culture in the service of imperialism and in the imposition of authoritarian and repressive regimes.
- Cultural policy in newly independent states and cultural policy in liberation movements aiming to establish power (ANC, PLO etc).
- Art and class in struggles for social transformation.
- New technologies and media in the service of liberation movements.
- Visual culture and war: How do artists responding to war compete with photography and documentary filmmaking? Are images of war so ubiquitous as to be redundant?
- Art versus Propaganda: How does visual culture retain power and how are partisan viewpoints articulated in an image/media-saturated world?

RHR solicits article proposals from scholars working in all historical periods and across all disciplines, including anthropology, art history/history, religious studies, media studies, sociology, philosophy, political science, gender, and cultural studies. Submissions are not restricted to traditional scholarly articles. We welcome short essays, documents, photo essays, art and illustrations, teaching resources, including syllabi, and reviews of books and exhibitions. Submissions are due by November 15, 2008 and should be submitted electronically, as an attachment, to hrh@igc.org with "Issue 106 submission" in the subject line. For artwork, please send images as high-resolution digital files (each image as a separate file). For preliminary e-mail inquiries, please include "Issue 106" in the subject line. Those articles selected for publication after the peer review process will be included in issue 106 of the [Radical History Review](#), scheduled to

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Submission Deadline: November 15, 2008

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