

Impact Case Study

UoA 34: Art and Design

Photography and the representation of conflict (Professor Paul Seawright and Donovan Wylie)

Wylie and Seawright's research extends longstanding commitment to researching art and conflict at Ulster. Their photographic work has enhanced public and national understanding of conflicts in which the United Kingdom has been directly involved. Much of this research extends conventional visual responses to conflict by mainstream media agencies and publications, expanding the field by enhancing the long-term documentation of conflict through the production of artworks. Using contemporary art-based contextual and methodological strategies of production and dissemination, the research has provided new material through which contemporary and historic conflict can be commemorated and interpreted in international museum collections, publications and exhibitions.

Ulster is recognized world leader in research of the representation of conflict. The Research Institute built upon persistent research in this area by establishing an Art, Conflict and Society research cluster following Seawright's appointment as Professor of Photography in January 2007. Donovan Wylie joined this research cluster in 2009, he is a member of the international photographic collective, Magnum Photos

This case study specifically concerns impact arising from photographic art and the representation of conflict. When he was first a lecturer at Ulster, Seawright's monograph *Inside Information* accompanied a major one person exhibition at the Photographers Gallery in London (1995) that brought together three bodies of work on the troubles in Northern Ireland, The concept of conflict documentation expanded through acquisition of this work for numerous national and international collections and inclusion of this work in major exhibitions including the Shanghai Art Museum, Millennium Monument Museum Beijing, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, The British Art Show 5, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb and How We Are at Tate Britain, Subsequent research produced photographic exhibitions and monographs on post-colonial Africa *Invisible Cities* (2007), *UXB* (2008) landscape photographs on the sites of buried but unexploded WWII bombs in Northern Italy and *Conflicting Account* (2009) a visual analysis of the conflicting use of language by the two communities in constructing accounts of the troubles. *Volunteer* (2011) extends that visual vocabulary interrogating recent conflicts through the landscape of military recruitment offices in the USA.

Donovan Wylie joined Ulster University in 2009, and shortly afterwards he produced the two volume edition *Maze*, commissioned by the Archive of Modern Conflict, London. Wylie was the only photographer granted official and unlimited access to the Maze Prison site, when the demolition of the prison began, symbolizing the end of the conflict in 2007. The book *Maze II* (2009) was published by Steidl International; shortlisted for the 2010 Deutsche Borse Photography Prize; exhibited at the Photographers Gallery London, Paris and Berlin reaching a quarter of million people, and extensive coverage in national and international press.. Scrapbook, co-authored by Timothy Pruce, was published in 2009 (Steidl). *Outposts / Kandahar Province* was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum in London and supported by the National Media Museum Fellowship in Photography. The photographs of Forward Operating Bases constructed in the Kandahar Province of Afghanistan constitute a unique historical representation of the conflict.

The body of research and activity constitutes a unique public record of these ephemeral, military and otherwise inaccessible military sites. Wylie's recent research has focused on the architecture of

conflict. Wylie and Seawright have made public the research process and contributed to public discourse through numerous presentations and public events reaching audiences from the visual arts, military, human rights, law, charities and NGOs. An important further aspect of dissemination has been the serialisation and publication in mainstream media sources in national and international press including a six-page feature in the Financial Times Magazine and reviews/features in The Daily Telegraph, Time Magazine, and BBC News online. Associated audio and visual material is also held in the IWM archive and is available for educational purposes. Amnesty International produced an education pack for schools in 2009 containing Seawright's Belfast works. Impact upon public understanding is demonstrated the featuring of Seawright as one of three photographers in the BBC Documentary War Photography and *Volunteer* was discussed on British Forces Radio and broadcast to troops worldwide (2011)

Works purchased for key public collections are evidence of how the work is regarded as a visual legacy of conflict representation and include: The UK Govt. Art Collection, The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Ulster Museum, Portland Art Museum, Imperial War Museum, Arts Council Collection, British Council, National Museum of Wales, Archive of Modern Conflict. London; National Media Museum, Bradford; Imperial War Museum, London; Whitworth Gallery, Manchester; Harry Ransom Centre, Austin, Texas; Museum of Contemporary Art MAXXI Rome.