

For immediate release

WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Photographs of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath to Explore 165 Years of Armed Conflict through the Eyes of Photographers

Opens at the MFAH in November 2012; travels to the Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and the Brooklyn Museum

Houston—January 2012—In November 2012, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, will debut an unprecedented exhibition exploring the experience of war through the eyes of photographers. *WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Photographs of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath* includes nearly 500 objects, including photographs, books, magazines, albums and photographic equipment. The photographs were made by 284 photographers from 28 nations who have covered conflict on six continents over 165 years, from the Mexican-American War in 1846 through present-day conflicts. Organized by a curatorial team consisting of Anne Wilkes Tucker, Gus and Lyndall Wortham



Joe Rosenthal, American, 1911–2006. *Old Glory Goes Up on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima, February 23, 1945.* Gelatin silver print. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of the Kevin and Lesley Lilly Family, The Manfred Heiting Collection.
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Army Staff Sergeant Mark Grimshaw, American, born 1968. *First Cut, July 2004.* Inkjet print. Courtesy of the photographer. © Mark Grimshaw

Curator of Photography, Will Michels, photographer and Glassell School of Art instructor, and Natalie Zelt, MFAH curatorial assistant for photography, the exhibition will travel to the Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and the Brooklyn Museum. The exhibition is accompanied by a 600-page catalogue of the same title, with interviews and essays by the curators, contributing scholars and military historians.

The exhibition takes a critical look at the relationship between war and photography, exploring what types of photographs are, and are not, made, and by whom and for whom, during wartime. Rather than presenting a chronological survey of wartime photographs or a survey of “greatest hits,” the curators have identified types of photographs repeatedly made during the many phases of war—regardless of the size or cause of the conflict, the photographers’ or subjects’ culture or the era in which the pictures were made. The images in the exhibition will be organized according to the progression of war, from the acts that instigate armed conflict to

“the fight,” to victory and defeat, and images that memorialize a war, its combatants and its

victims. Both iconic and unknown images will be on view, taken by military photographers, commercial photographers (portrait and photojournalist), amateurs and artists.

“Photographs serve the public as a collective memory of the experience of war,” commented Tucker. “Yet most presentations that deal with the material are organized chronologically or focus on one photographer, or a specific war. We believe *WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY* is unique in its scope, exploring conflict and its consequences across the globe and over time, analyzing this complex and unrelenting phenomenon.”

The earliest works in the exhibition date from the first photographed conflict: the 1846–48 Mexican-American War. Other early examples include photographs from the Crimean War, including Roger Fenton’s iconic *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* (1855) and Felice Beato’s photograph of the devastated interior of Fort Taku in India during the Second Opium War (1860). Among the most recent images is a 2008 photograph of the Battle Company of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the remote Korengal Valley of Eastern Afghanistan by Tim Hetherington, who was killed in April 2011 while covering the civil war in Libya. While the exhibition is organized according to the phases of war, portraits of servicemen, military and political leaders and civilians are a consistent presence throughout the exhibition, including Yusuf Karsh’s classic image of Winston Churchill and the *Marlboro Marine* (2004), taken by embedded *Los Angeles Times* photographer Luis Sinco of soldier James Blake Miller after an assault in Fallujah (Iraq), published worldwide on the cover of 150 publications, and a 2005 Pulitzer Prize finalist.



Christophe Agou, French, born 1969.
Untitled (0569), from the series *Here is New York*, 2001. Inkjet print. The
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
gift of Eve France.
© Christophe Agou

The exhibition was initiated in 2002, when the museum acquired what is purported to be the first print made from Joe Rosenthal’s negative of *Old Glory Goes Up on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima* (1945). From this initial acquisition, the curators decided to organize an exhibition that would focus on war photography as a genre. During the evolution of the project, the museum acquired over a third of the prints in the exhibition. The curators have been joined on this ambitious project by an international advisory committee: Hilary V. Roberts, Head of Collections Management, Imperial War Museum Photograph Archive, London; Dr. John Stauffer, Chair of the History of American Civilization and Professor of English and African and African American Studies at Harvard University; Dr. William Sheldon Dudley, former director of Naval History for the U.S. Navy Department and retired director of the Naval Historical Center, D.C.; Jeffrey William Hunt, Director of the Texas Military Forces Museum in Austin; Dr. Xavia Karner, Chair, Sociology department at the University of Houston; and Captain Paul J. Matthews, founder and chairman of the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum in Houston. Dr. Bodo von Dewitz, Senior Chief Curator, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany, and Liam Kennedy, Director of the Clinton Institute for American Studies, University College, Dublin, also contributed essays to the catalogue.

The exhibition curators reviewed over one million photographs in 17 countries, locating pictures in archives, military libraries, museums, private collections, historical societies, news agencies and the personal files of photographers and service personnel, as well as at the annual photojournalism festivals: World Press Photo (Amsterdam) and Visa pour l' Image (Perpignan, France). In their appraisals, they sought images for the clarity of their observation as well as their capacity to make memorable and striking pictures that have lasting relevance. The pictures were made by some of the most celebrated conflict photographers, and many who remain anonymous. Almost every photographic process is included, ranging from daguerreotypes to inkjet prints, digital captures and cell-phone shots.

The exhibition opens at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, on view November 11, 2012–February 3, 2013. Following the Houston presentation, *WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY* travels to the Annenberg Space for Photography (Los Angeles, CA), March 3–May 26, 2013; the Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.), June 29–September 29, 2013; and the Brooklyn Museum, November 8, 2013–February 2, 2014. A symposium and additional events will take place opening weekend in Houston. In addition, related exhibitions will be presented throughout the city of Houston, including at the Houston Center for Photography (HCP), as well as collaborations with Houston Grand Opera and other community partners (to be announced). At the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles, the exhibit will include an original documentary film produced exclusively for the gallery's high-resolution 4K screens.

This exhibition is organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Major funding is provided by: Philip and Edith Leonian Foundation; The Annenberg Foundation; Mr. James Edward Maloney and Mr. Carey Chambers Maloney; The Trellis Fund; and Trust for Mutual Understanding. Additional generous support is provided by: Kelly Wirfel and John Holcomb.

MFAH Collections

Founded in 1900, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is among the ten largest art museums in the United States. Located in the heart of Houston's Museum District, the MFAH comprises two gallery buildings, a sculpture garden, library, theater and two art schools, with two house museums, for American and European decorative arts, nearby. The encyclopedic collection of the MFAH numbers some 63,000 works and embraces the art of antiquity to the present. The MFAH photography collection comprises 26,000 photographs.

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