

Frank Möller

## Peace Aesthetics, a Patchwork

ABSTRACT This patchwork-style article on peace aesthetics is based on the twin idea that it is possible to represent peace visually and that such representation can contribute to peace. Indeed, visual depictions of peace can be found across space and over time. However, they radically differ from one another and are not always easily recognizable as images of peace. In the article, I sketch different problems in connection with the visualization of peace, including challenges emanating from digitization, the relationship between image and imagination, and methodological issues in connection with visual representations of peace. I suggest that peace aesthetics, as a dissident practice, is both political and critical; it is inter-disciplinary and based on an episodic understanding of the relationship between images and peace. It combines empirical, theoretical and conceptual knowledge produced in the social sciences, art history and media and communication studies both with one another and with artistic practice. Ultimately, peace research is asked for, not only to analyze the images of others but also to produce own peace images so as to take advantage of the whole spectrum of peace potentialities inherent in visual culture.

\*\*\*

Frank Möller is a Senior Researcher at the Tampere Peace Research Institute, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Finland, and Co-convenor of the ECPR (European Consortium for Political Research) Standing Group on Politics and the Arts. He is the author, most recently, of *Peace Photography* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

Frank Möller

## Peace Aesthetics, a Patchwork

“Fear of aesthetics is the first sign of weakness.” – Fyodor Dostoyevsky<sup>1</sup>

“Imagine at least imagine” – Andrew Motion<sup>2</sup>

A patchwork is “work made up of pieces or fragments put together, esp. in an incongruous manner.”<sup>3</sup> What puts the following fragments together is the twin idea that it is possible to represent peace visually and that such representation can contribute to peace.<sup>4</sup> The image of the world produced in news media and photojournalism is, as Johan Galtung has recently put it, “a total[ly] biased picture of reality. The perception of reality in the public becomes overly negative.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, “[p]arts of the world ... have been distorted into clarity”<sup>6</sup> and visual images and interpretations thereof have contributed to such distortion. Our image of the world is a simplified and inadequate one, conditioned by representations of violence rather than peace while at the same time marked by both a simplified approach to peace reduced to – and visualised as – absence of physical violence and the equation of conflict with violence. However, while visual images routinely contribute to the perception of social reality as violent, they may also contribute to a change in perception. Visual images both illustrate pre-existing understandings of peace (of

---

<sup>1</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*. Translated by Oliver Ready (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 622.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Motion, *Peace Talks* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Volume II, p. 1526.

<sup>4</sup> See Stuart Allan, “Documenting War, Visualising Peace: towards Peace Photography,” in Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Jake Lynch and Robert A. Hackett, eds., *Expanding Peace Journalism: Comparative and Critical Approaches* (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 2011), pp. 147–167; Fred Ritchin, *Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary, and the Citizen* (New York: Aperture, 2013), pp. 122–141. In what follows, emphasis is on the first dimension of the twin idea as developed in more detail in Frank Möller, *Peace Photography* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) from which this article draws. My focus here and elsewhere is on photography but some thoughts on painting are included here as well.

<sup>5</sup> Galtung, as quoted in Ulrich Haagerup, “Academic who defined news principles says journalists are too negative. Exclusive: preoccupation with conflict fosters insecurity, populism and trust deficit, says Johan Galtung,” 19 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/johan-galtung-news-principles-journalists-too-negative>.

<sup>6</sup> John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 2. Many thanks to one of the referees for pointing this publication out to me.

which there are many) and shape – and potentially alter – our understanding of peace. We may look for illustrations of established notions of peace and we may search for images that challenge such established notions, thus influencing what we mean by peace. We may also refer to images in terms of peace that are not normally designated as peace images (conflict images, war images or aftermath images, all of which are established categories defining the production and dissemination of images) thus altering the discursive frame within which images are assessed and politics are negotiated, shifting emphasis from violence to peace. If we do so, we will learn a lot about peace and even more about our (socially constructed and, thus, changeable) habits of seeing – or not seeing – peace. Peace may exist although we do not see it or recognise what we see as peace. The failure to see peace reflects and contributes to an obsession with violence in both popular culture and peace research. Habits of seeing are never politically innocent as they contribute to the appearance of violence and war as “inevitable or legitimate, even when it is only a straightforward struggle for power and superiority.”<sup>7</sup> Searching for images of peace aims at undermining appearances of violence as inevitable or legitimate as an important step in our search for more peaceful social relations in our everyday lives and in world politics.

Presenting the above ideas as fragments is a heuristic device aiming to trick readers into reflection about the following questions: what connects the fragments with one another? What separates them from one another? And how do they relate to the umbrella ideas introduced above? The visualization of peace is not easy, not least because different understandings of peace always compete with one another, resulting in different visualizations of peace. Different “peaces”<sup>8</sup> require different forms of visualization. Suggesting a binding definition of peace and then looking for images with which to illustrate this definition is not the purpose of this essay. The definitional openness – one of John Law’s “techniques of deliberate imprecision”<sup>9</sup> – with which I address key terms of the essay is precisely meant to stimulate readers to reflect upon their own habits, including habits of seeing, when thinking about the connections between peace and images, rather than strictly following my thought patterns. Some of the fragments in what follows engage with concepts (peace, event, aftermath) while others discuss different genres of visual culture (photography, painting) and much more could be said about all of them, looking at them from a

---

<sup>7</sup> Roland Bleiker, “Why, then, is it so bright? Towards an aesthetics of peace at a time of war,” *Review of International Studies*, 29, No. 3 (2003), p. 387.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Dietrich, “Farewell to the One Peace,” *Peace Review*, 14, No. 1 (2002), p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Law, *After Method*, p. 3.

historical perspective or a gender perspective or an arts perspective, for example. All of them, however, address questions pertaining to peace through aesthetic approaches and such approaches necessitate interpretation, imagination and creativity on the part of the researcher and the reader.<sup>10</sup> The title of this contribution, then, refers to method rather than to aesthetics as a philosophical inquiry into the operation of sensuous perception or taste.

The use of the word “incongruous” in the dictionary entry that opened this article is, however, irritating. Are scholars not supposed to produce work that is systematic, coherent and consistent? Are the parts of our work, when put together, not expected to be in harmony with one another? Not necessarily because, as David Levi Strauss explains, to “be compelling, there must be tension in the work: if everything has been decided beforehand, there will be no tension and no compulsion to the work.”<sup>11</sup> This applies to works of art, with which Strauss is concerned, but it also applies, I want to suggest, to scholarly work. Tensions, ambiguities, juxtapositions, incongruities, gaps, voids and contradictions adequately capture the world as a messy place; its components are out-of-sync. To borrow a term used by Bernadette Buckley in a different context, they are “(con)fused,”<sup>12</sup> and this (con)fusion has to be captured both visually and analytically aiming not at reduction of complexity but at adequate representation and analysis of it as a condition for the possibility of adequate political responses to it. Presenting this confusion (and visualizations thereof) as a patchwork is a method “After Method,” Law’s “attempt to imagine what it might be to remake social science in ways better equipped to deal with mess, confusion and relative disorder.”<sup>13</sup> Like Law’s book, then, this article “is intended<sup>14</sup> – an opening not only of this special issue but also of wider reflections on the visualization of peace. Methodologically, even incompatible approaches, by definition out of harmony with one another, may, in a process of “self-reflectiveness” – i.e. conscious deliberation of what we actually do when applying a given method: to what extent and in what ways does the choice of a method influence

---

<sup>10</sup> Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Bleiker opposes aesthetic approaches to mimetic ones relying on the myth of the neutral, value-free and disinterested observer while ignoring individual researchers’ inevitable acts of interpretation. In mimetic approaches, researchers miraculously disappear from their own activities.

<sup>11</sup> David Levi Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics. Introduction by John Berger* (New York: Aperture, 2003), p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Bernadette Buckley, “The Workshop of Filthy Creation: or Do Not Be Alarmed, This Is Only a Test,” *Review of International Studies*, 35, No. 4 (2009), p. 836.

<sup>13</sup> Law, *After Method*, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

or even predetermine the results of our work? – help increase researchers’ awareness of the intricacies of their subject matter and prevent them from over simplification.<sup>15</sup> From out of harmony, there is only a small step to *dissonance* as a concept underlying both academic work and social practice. Dissonant work is work that disagrees (for example, with political discourse claiming that “there can be no peace,” that “peace cannot be represented visually” or that “visual representation does not contribute to peace”). Dissonant work is discordant and different, in any respect, or, in other words, a work that is both political and critical because it offers more than “the mere recognition of established opinion or the extrapolation from established versions of facticity.”<sup>16</sup> Such an approach, when applied to the visualization of peace, is inter-disciplinary, combining empirical, theoretical and conceptual knowledge produced in the social sciences, art history and media and communication studies both with one another and with artistic practice. This approach is not interested in deciding anything *beforehand*; it is not necessarily interested in deciding anything *at all*, either.<sup>17</sup> It is not afraid of aesthetics, and it is not afraid of weakness, if by weakness we mean the absence of knowledge claims supported by seemingly incontrovertible evidence. For example, it is not be interested in establishing causality among its fragments or between the fragments and the big underlying idea – peace. Even without causality, some form of connection likely exists, analysis of which tells us a lot about the operation of visual images in and on society.

Thus, I would suggest capitalizing on tensions and voids, bearing in mind Theodor Adorno’s reflections on *Lücken* (gaps) and his critique, challenging academic conventions, of explicit and seamless documentation of every step a writer takes.<sup>18</sup> Tensions and gaps serve as devices with which to trigger “a more complex response” on the part of readers than mere “acceptance or rejection”<sup>19</sup> and, thus, critical engagement. I would also propose understanding the relationship between visual representation and peace episodically, emphasizing synchronicity, rather than causally, emphasizing cause and effect. To say, for example, that a given photograph has caused

---

<sup>15</sup> Roland Bleiker, “Pluralist Methods for Visual Global Politics,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 43, No. 3 (2015), p. 872.

<sup>16</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, *War Crimes, Atrocity, and Justice* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> “Images change our gaze and the landscape of the possible if they are not anticipated by their meaning and do not anticipate their effects,” Jacques Rancière argues in *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated by Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009), p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 99–101.

<sup>19</sup> Strauss, *Between the Eyes*, p. 10.

peace means, among other things, that this photograph temporally preceded peace and that but for this photograph, peace would not have been accomplished.<sup>20</sup> While it may be possible empirically to show the existence of the first condition, the existence of the second one is much harder to establish not least because images never operate on actors in isolation and they operate on different actors differently. Images are always embedded in larger political, social and cultural configurations with which they interact and communicate and from which they derive meanings. These meanings are historically contingent. The episodic, on the other hand, places “events in a multilayered, concurrent, loosely structured arrangement.” In such an arrangement, Scenes A, B and C are thought together merely owing to their “placement either in space or time” and not because they are causally connected to one another.<sup>21</sup> Of course, they may be connected causally with one another but the absence of causality does not mean that they are unconnected. What *exactly* the connection between visual representation and peace looks like has to be established analytically, both conceptually and empirically. This is a task for visual peace research.

\* \* \*

*Look at it this way ...*

Peace as event or non-event

The episodic situates events in a loosely structured arrangement. Not everything that happens, however, qualifies as an event.<sup>22</sup> For example, event-ness, in political journalism, is often defined in terms of “[n]egativity [which] controls news flow, and therefore also politics and public debate. Apathy or fear is the result,” as Galtung notes.<sup>23</sup> Most basically, an event is “an occurrence of some importance.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, that event-ness is assigned to *negative* occurrences rather than to positive ones is a convention, a habit, embedded in journalism education, strengthened by

---

<sup>20</sup> For this understanding of causality, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 274.

<sup>22</sup> I am interested here in the event as constructed in photojournalistic discourses and practices and especially in the connection between the event and its various aftermaths as it appears in these discourses and practices. For more on my understanding of the event and its aftermath, see *Peace Photography*, especially chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>23</sup> See Haagerup, “Academic who defined news principles says journalists are too negative.”

<sup>24</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Vol. 1, p. 691.

repetition, becoming a habit. Event-ness is discursively constructed and social constructions always reflect wider political and cultural configurations within which they take place. For example, the current culture of fear, war and insecurity shapes which occurrence appears as an event in media and elsewhere just as occurrences designated as events contribute to the maintenance of this very culture.<sup>25</sup> In a culture dominated by visual images, it may be suggested that no occurrence becomes an event unless it is visually represented but only few visual images (and meanings assigned to them) are constructed in such a manner that they successfully transform an occurrence into an event. Such transformation may help raise awareness but, as photojournalists know, emphasis on the event may result in ignorance of causes and contexts, without which the event would not have come into being.<sup>26</sup> Such contexts may be visual ones, as has been argued, for example, in connection with the attacks of 11 September 2001: media “images of destruction ... come to us as part of a system of fixed meaning,” within which subsequent events are interpreted.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, events – like shocks – may wear off. What qualified as an event yesterday may be perceived as a mere occurrence – a non-event – today; tomorrow, it may escape from the agenda completely. In photojournalism, non-events tend to escape from representation; in amateur photography, they are the rule.

Peace agreements following massive or long-standing violence are political events; they are visually constructed as such and figure prominently in photojournalism. For example, visual representations of the Arusha Accords, following civil war and preceding genocide in Rwanda, are readily available on the Internet. Had Rwanda’s civil war ended “in a successful negotiated settlement,” as it should have done “[b]y almost all indicators,”<sup>28</sup> the Arusha Accords would be remembered as an event signifying success rather than failure of a peace process and images thereof would rightly have been referred to as images of peace. Now we know of course that the Arusha Accords failed; referring to images of the signing of the documents as photographs of peace would be rather cynical indeed. Furthermore, peace, like events and shocks, tends to wear off; it does not appear as an event if the violence it followed took place a long time ago. Being

---

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005) and Dora Apel, *War Culture and the Contest of Images* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> See Fred Ritchin, *In Our Own Image* (New York: Aperture, 1999), p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Terry Nardin and Daniel J. Sherman, “Introduction,” in Terry Nardin and Daniel J. Sherman, eds., *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 143.

taken-for-granted, it loses its event-ness – and its newsworthiness – and, appearing trivial, escapes from visual representation: what we do not see does not take place, or does it? Indeed, peace – some kind of peace – may even occur *during* large-scale organised violence when photojournalists relentlessly document acts of physical violence while ignoring that “mundane everyday actions on the quotidian level [may continue] in spaces dominated by physical violence.”<sup>29</sup> While being conditioned to some extent by the overall structures of violence within which they operate, peaceful everyday activities during violence resist the seeming omnipresence of violence and interrupt its dynamics, insisting on people’s own agency, challenging the notion that violence is the only or natural response to violence, and document the existence of “islands of peace.”<sup>30</sup> Such everyday peace can be photographed. At the same time, however, violence may occur during peace, in the margins of international relations<sup>31</sup> or in the centre where the absence of *physical* violence might – misleadingly – seem to indicate the presence of peace. Representations of violence may follow what James Elkins calls the “kitsch economy of perpetual inflation,”<sup>32</sup> which means that the representation of each event has to be stronger (i.e., more dramatic, more spectacular) than the preceding one in order to gain similar public attention, But how do you perpetually inflate the representation of peace in order to sustain public attention?

Photojournalism usually understands the event in terms of “war, conflict, or atrocity.”<sup>33</sup> This understanding reflects the assumption that photography is a privileged medium, superior to others, with regard to representations of war and violent conflict.<sup>34</sup> While photojournalistic representation prioritizes violence rather than peace, no one prevents us, as contributors to the social construction of reality, from defining *peace* as the main event which can be visually represented or anticipated – peace or peace as a potentiality. Aftermath photography,<sup>35</sup> for example, often displays a peace dimension that is rhetorically downplayed by referring to such

---

<sup>29</sup> See Frank Möller and David Shim, “Visions of Peace in International Relations,” *International Studies Perspectives*, published online 14 January 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky014>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. See also *Peace Photography*, chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> See Sílvia Roque, *Pós-Guerra? Percursos de violência nas margens das Relações Internacionais* (Coimbra: Edições Almedina, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> James Elkins, *What Photography Is* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 185.

<sup>33</sup> Debbie Lisle, “The Surprising Detritus of Leisure: Encountering the Late Photography of War,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, No. 5 (2011), p. 877.

<sup>34</sup> See Anne Wilkes Tucker and Will Michels with Natalie Zelt, *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Simon Baker and Shoair Mavlian, eds., *Conflict ▪ Time ▪ Photography* (London: Tate, 2014); Erina Duganne, “Photography after the Fact,” In Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne, eds., *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (Williamsburg: Williams College Museum of Art/Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 57–74; Lisle, “The Surprising Detritus of Leisure.”

photography as aftermath or late photography rather than as peace photography, thus connecting the aftermath with the preceding event which remains in the centre of photographic attention. Indeed, as John Roberts observes, such photography often transforms the event into the “event-as-aftermath” – a “space for the discursive reconstruction and extension of the event.”<sup>36</sup> The extension of the event, by visual or other means, is important because it shows that for many people the original event is not over once physical violence has stopped; it may continue, for example, as traumatic memories. During the aftermath, perceptions of the original event change just as do memories of the event. The aftermath is a process, not a moment; it can be represented visually. Likewise, the processes that led to what subsequently appears as event can be photographed. Both forms of visual representation, the one focussing on what came before, the other on what came after the event, have a peace dimension if they help understand causes and consequences of violent events.

Aftermath photography has, it seems, challenged photojournalism quite successfully. It cultivates new forms of representation and often capitalizes on ambivalence and unusual juxtapositions as vehicles with which to engage vision.<sup>37</sup> However, some degree of conformity can be identified, not only in photojournalism<sup>38</sup> but also in aftermath photography, which appears increasingly standardized, subscribing to “elegiac and mournful modes” and inviting “‘glacial’ contemplation” on the part of the spectators.<sup>39</sup> More importantly in the present context, aftermath photography often fails to make the step from the event-as-aftermath to what I would call the *aftermath-as-event*, understanding and representing the aftermath of violent conflict as both an event in its own right and a possible step towards peace.<sup>40</sup> The aftermath-as-event can be represented visually. However, such representation has to be different from depictions of the event-as-aftermath in order for it to avoid the pitfalls of aftermath photography, for example going constantly back to what was instead of visualizing paths to the future, fixing people as victims of their own tragic past devoid of agency or targeting too obviously the lucrative market for art photography. The Aftermath Project, a non-profit organization, suggests how this can be done. It is concerned with “what it takes for individuals to learn to live again, to rebuild destroyed lives and

---

<sup>36</sup> John Roberts, *Photography and Its Violations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 112.

<sup>37</sup> See Lisle, “The Surprising Detritus of Leisure.”

<sup>38</sup> See Ritchin, *Bending the Frame*, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Roberts, *Photography and Its Violations*, p. 110.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Möller, “From Aftermath to Peace: Reflections on a Photography of Peace,” *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations*, 31, No. 3 (2017), pp. 315–335, and *Peace Photography*, chapter 6.

homes, to restore civil societies, to address the lingering wounds of war while struggling to create new avenues for peace.”<sup>41</sup> While often returning to the original event, the stories go beyond the event. By understanding the aftermath of violent conflict as an event in its own right and a path to peace (or at least, to a more peaceful life), the project shows among other things people’s agency in designing their post-conflict lives. As always, mission statements should not be taken for granted<sup>42</sup> but interrogated in light of the work the project actually supports and publishes. Such interrogation is part of visual peace research.

\*\*\*

*Look at it this way ...*

From Rubens to Kossoff

Peter Paul Rubens’ 1629–1630 painting *Minerva protects Pax from Mars* (“Peace and War”) is a peace painting. The National Gallery explains that Rubens was what nowadays would be called an *activist*, an artist with a strong political message – a peace message – that he wanted to communicate through art, thereby exerting influence on political decision makers. Rubens was a peace activist and an artist. As envoy of Spain’s Philip IV, he presented this painting as a gift to England’s Charles I, hoping to help negotiate peace between Spain and England.<sup>43</sup> He failed politically but the painting remains one of the most famous depictions of peace in the history of western art. In a sense, then, Rubens did not fail.

Figure 1

---

<sup>41</sup> <http://theaftermathproject.org/story> (accessed 28 September 2017).

<sup>42</sup> The mission statement cited above continues as follows: “The Aftermath Project holds a yearly grant competition open to working photographers worldwide covering the aftermath of conflict. In addition, through partnerships with universities, photography institutions and non-profit organizations, the Project seeks to help broaden the public’s understanding of the true cost of war — and the real price of peace — through international traveling exhibitions and educational outreach in communities and schools.”

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/peter-paul-rubens-minerva-protects-pax-from-mars-peace-and-war> (accessed 27 September 2017).



Peter Paul Rubens, *Minerva protects Pax from Mars* ('Peace and War'), 1629–1630, Oil on canvas, 203,5x298cm (The National Gallery).

Separated from Rubens' work by 369 years, there is a modern re-working of this painting, Leon Kossoff's 1998 etching of the same title. "Kossoff's print," Anna Bright explains, "does not compete with Rubens's painting, nor does it seek to transcribe, copy or paraphrase it. Rather, it acknowledges the gulf that separates it from the pictorial culture of former times and reveals [Kossoff's] desire to find points of contact with his forerunner."<sup>44</sup> The gulf separating these two pictorial cultures from one another is obvious. However, juxtaposing these two paintings also shows that both artists, although cultivating different aesthetics, are interested in the same subject. They are in contact with one another *qua* peace painters; their subject is peace, not war: Minerva (the goddess of wisdom) protects Pax (the goddess of peace) and the overall scene of

---

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kossoff-minerva-protects-pax-from-mars-peace-and-war-1-p11700> (accessed 26 September 2017).

abundance from Mars (the god of war) and Alecto (the fury of war). Both Rubens and Kossoff prioritize peace rather than war as subjects of their paintings.

Figure 2



Leon Kossoff, *Minerva protects Pax from Mars ('Peace and War') (1)*, 1998, Etching on paper, 460x552mm, Tate.

Thus, while, as Oliver Richmond notes, "in art, aspirations for peace are often represented through depictions of war and violence,"<sup>45</sup> depictions of peace can be found across time and over space. Equally importantly, such depictions can be radically different from one another. The diversity and

---

<sup>45</sup> Oliver Richmond, *Peace in International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 2, referencing Rubens's painting as one of a few "notable exceptions."

multiformity of peace representations, historically contingent and context dependent, has to be acknowledged. What qualifies – or is socially-discursively constructed – as a depiction of peace in one context is not necessarily regarded as a representation of peace in other contexts. Likewise, different conceptions of peace compete with one another: negative and positive ones, broad and narrow ones, ones focussing on physical violence and others focussing on structural violence and so on, all of which can be represented. Peace can be subdivided in more specific categories: peace accords, peace processes, reconciliation, mediation, peace building, reconstruction and so on, all of which require specific, tailor-made forms of representation.

Tension emanating from both different interpretations of the same image and different representations of the same subject should not worry us; it can be fruitful and constructive, as long as it avoids claims to superiority. Furthermore, different ways of representing peace require different ways of seeing peace. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* is a necessary but not a sufficient reference point here.<sup>46</sup> Berger, in his 1972 classic, engaged with the operation of visual images and viewing practices in capitalist societies. While Berger was concerned with a critique of art criticism, I am concerned with a critique of peace research. Focusing on "the iconography of peace, messages of conciliation, peaceful proposals and alternatives, or the intercultural values featured in a given work [of art]"<sup>47</sup> may help de-marginalize the visual history of peace in western perception. Marginality always is the result of "unequal processes through which some (more or less successfully) marginalize others."<sup>48</sup> These processes cannot be thought of without the overall political and social constellations within which they take place. We still live in capitalist societies and their logics have entered the art and photography market as never before. It is for this reason that Berger's approach is still important, especially when connected with an explicit critique of violence.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>46</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).

<sup>47</sup> María Elena Díez Jorge and Francisco A. Muñoz Muñoz, "Uncovering the Virtues of Peace within Visual Culture: The Case for Nonviolence and Imperfect Peace in the Western Tradition," *Peace & Change: A Journal of Peace Research*, 41, No. 3 (2016), p. 331

<sup>48</sup> Nick Couldry, *Inside Culture: Re-imagining the Method of Cultural Studies* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2000), p. 106.

*Look at it this way ...*

Towards a photography of peace

Aspirations for peace are often represented through depictions of war and violence and this is true not only of art but of photojournalism too. Photojournalism frequently references peace negatively. More precisely, it refers to peace by showing its absence; it shows violence realistically – within the limits of photography – in order to support and substantiate claims to peace; and it engages photographically with violent situations in order for others to intervene in the conditions depicted with politically more efficient means.<sup>49</sup> While such photography is still necessary, it is equally necessary to demand of photography explicit visual references to peace. Fred Ritchin asks:

Why don't we have a more developed photography that explores in some depth the move from pain to its resolution, creating reference points for those striving to move forward, rather than continually searching for, and dwelling on, the cataclysm – reminding us of traumatic moments for the sake of the visceral shock?<sup>50</sup>

Ritchin continues by describing some projects that he considers peace photography projects but he does not systematically explore his important questions – “Is there a photography of peace?” and “of what would a photography of peace consist?”<sup>51</sup> – in light of peace theories and concepts developed in peace research. His work is what Nick Couldry calls “a particular reading of a particular text from within a particular institutional position”<sup>52</sup> and as long as it does not claim to be more, there is nothing wrong with it. Yet, much more can be done. Stuart Allan, for example, in his pioneering work “aims to secure the *conceptual space* necessary to explore [photography's] capacity to visualise peace.”<sup>53</sup> A concept is “an idea of a class of objects, a general notion.”<sup>54</sup> As such, concepts help us order and make sense of objects including such objects as photographs. Indeed, no single individual can grasp photography in its entirety, given the ever increasing number of photographs produced and disseminated in the digital age. Concepts also help us distinguish those photographs that we deem important from those that we consider irrelevant in a

---

<sup>49</sup> Möller, “From Aftermath to Peace,” p. 321.

<sup>50</sup> Ritchin, *Bending the Frame*, p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>52</sup> Couldry, *Inside Culture*, p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Allan, “Documenting war, visualising peace,” p. 149 (emphasis added).

<sup>54</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Volume I, p. 388.

given context. Indeed, thinking and writing about peace photography requires difficult choices derived from informed judgment regarding the question of what photographs qualify as peace photographs in contrast to those that do not. Allan, in his search of a photography of peace, emphasizes the

polysemic nature of war imagery. That is to say, the “meaning” of any one image is subject to a multiplicity of possible readings, with much depending upon the subjective positionalities brought to bear by the viewer in what is a complex process of negotiation. ... it is the subtly inchoate way in which images ostensibly invite certain readings over and above alternative ones that we need to foreground for exploration.<sup>55</sup>

In our search for peace images, then, we have to foreground for exploration those images that invite peaceful readings over and above violent alternatives. Some such images may emanate from rather violent circumstances. Meanings assigned to photographs, including socially shared ones, are contingent; what seemed to qualify as a war photograph some time ago may be re-interpreted as a peace photograph today (and vice versa). Debbie Lisle, for example, has analysed the body of photographs produced by the Naval Aviation Photography Unit (NAPU), put together by the U.S. Navy in the Second World War. Lisle, in her critical re-reading of what was intended as a propaganda tool supporting the U.S. war effort in the Pacific, reveals the extent to which these photographs, especially those that were unpublished at the time, inadvertently undermine the very cultural conventions they purported to propagate, including values attached to the core family and heteronormativity.<sup>56</sup> These photographs “were always present in the NAPU archive,”<sup>57</sup> awaiting re-interpretation. Archives, as John Roberts argues, “are structures of meaning in process.” They promise and indeed invite

a practice of counterproduction, of counterarchiving, of interruption and reordering of the event. Accordingly, we may say that the “singular event” consigned to the archive is *never late*, or is never subject to lateness, because it is always able, through a continuous process of symbolic construction and reconstruction, to *retemporalize* itself.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Allan, “Documenting war, visualising peace,” p. 162.

<sup>56</sup> Debbie Lisle, *Holidays In the Danger Zone: Entanglements of War and Tourism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), pp. 102–123.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, *Photography and Its Violations*, pp. 114–115 (italics in original).

Peace photographs may be found where we would least expect them, and one place to look for them is the archive where, in a process of discursive renegotiation, what used to be understood as war photographs may be re-designated as photographs of peace; such re-designations may then be shared with others who may agree (or not). However, peace photography may result not only from re-designations of meaning assigned to selected photographs. Visual peace research can do much more than analysing the photography of others in search of photographs of peace.

\* \* \*

*Look at it this way ...*

#### Appropriation as a method in peace research

Participatory photography projects and photo elicitation interviews have a long tradition in visual sociology and visual anthropology<sup>59</sup> and can be used fruitfully in visual peace research as well.<sup>60</sup> Visual peace researchers can also make their own photographs and they can *appropriate* the photography of others. Appropriation, in art, refers to “the practice of artists using pre-existing objects or images in their art with little transformation of the original.” Appropriation has a long history in art. It “raises questions of originality, authenticity and authorship, and belongs to the long modernist tradition of art that questions the nature or definition of art itself.”<sup>61</sup> When done by peace researchers rather than artists, appropriation has a different aim. It gives researchers the chance to single out for attention and analysis those aspects of an original photograph that they deem most relevant in light of their empirical and theoretical mission. Their interest in a given photograph can stem from Roland Barthes’s “punctum”<sup>62</sup> or from something else, for example, their specialist knowledge on war and peace which makes them see things, and look for things, other viewers may ignore. What researchers find relevant may be located in the center of the

---

<sup>59</sup> See Douglas Harper, *Visual Sociology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); David MacDougall, *Transcultural Cinema. Edited and with an introduction by Lucien Taylor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998).

<sup>60</sup> One recent example is Leena Vastapuu, *Liberia’s Women Veterans: War, Roles and Reintegration*. With illustrations by Emmi Nieminen (New York: Zed Books, 2018).

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/appropriation> (accessed 6 October 2017).

<sup>62</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 27. Barthes’s punctum refers to that element in a photograph that “pricks” and “bruises” the viewer (p. 27) and that “shoots out of [the scene depicted] like an arrow,” piercing the viewer (p. 26).

original photograph or in its margins. Appropriation enables the researcher to focus her attention on what appears, from the researcher's point of view, marginalized or insufficiently emphasized in the original, deserving more attention. It reflects a judgment made by the researcher on the basis of her expert knowledge and thus serves to emancipate, to some extent, the researcher from the choices of the photographer and the art critic, increasing the researcher's autonomy vis-à-vis the artwork. The reasons why the photographer took the picture are entirely irrelevant for the researcher; and the aspects the researcher finds most interesting do not have to be identical with what the photographer finds most interesting. Indeed, if these interests were identical, appropriation would be redundant.

I want to illustrate appropriation as a method in visual peace research with reference to the current work of the Irish photographer Richard Mosse.<sup>63</sup> In *Heat Maps*,<sup>64</sup> one of Mosse's recent photographic interventions in the ongoing European refugee politics, the photographer uses a camera that is capable of detecting "thermal radiation, including body heat." This extreme telephoto camera, "cut[ting] through atmospheric haze and see[ing] far beyond the human eye," detects a human body from 30.3 kilometres distance and identifies an individual from 6.3 kilometres.<sup>65</sup> This long-distance photography, usually used for military and surveillance purposes, results in images showing their object in grey shades, depending on the various grades of heat radiation of the environment. Among the objects chosen by the photographer are refugee camps in Greece, photographed in 2016 and 2017. Mosse's photographs are strikingly different from other photographs produced in connection with mass migration. They reveal, in the photographer's words, "another world," and they are "extremely aesthetic."<sup>66</sup> While the "aesthetic does not *need* to legitimate itself in relation to any presumed to be 'more real' realm of political science or international relations,"<sup>67</sup> exclusive focus on the aesthetic in Mosse's work would obscure both its underlying political impetus and its peace potentiality.

---

<sup>63</sup> What follows emanates from an ongoing research project on Richard Mosse's photography conducted by Rasmus Bellmer, Rune Saugmann and the author. See our paper "Migration, *Heat Maps*, and the Myth of Privacy," *International Journal for Arts and Politics*, 1, No. 1 (2018), pp. 74–86.

<sup>64</sup> *Heat Maps* was on show at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York City, from 2 February to 11 March 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Richard Mosse, "Transmigration of the Souls," print-out, disseminated at the exhibition *Heat Maps*, pp. 2–3 (see note above).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>67</sup> Buckley, "The Workshop of Filthy Creation," p. 838. The literature on the aestheticization of human suffering is substantial. See, for example, Mark Reinhardt, "Picturing Violence: Aesthetics and the Anxiety of Critique," in *Beautiful Suffering*, pp. 13–36.

Figure 3



Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece, 2016*. Digital c-print on metallic paper, 40 x 120 inches (print), 42¼ x 122 x 2 inches (framed). (Photograph: Frank Möller, March 2, 2017 at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York City; photograph taken and reproduced courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York City.)

Figure 3 is a photograph of a photograph; a photograph (by the author) of a photograph (by Richard Mosse) without any transformation of the original. If we now appropriate Mosse's photograph by zooming in photographically on selected details of the rather large original, we transform the original and make the details thus selected available for analysis from the point of view of peace research.

Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figures 4–7: Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece, 2016*. Digital c-print on metallic paper, 40 x 120 inches (print), 42¼ x 122 x 2 inches (framed). Details. (Photograph: Frank Möller, March 2, 2017 at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York City; photograph taken and reproduced courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York City.)

When I reassemble the details – the visual fragments – into a larger, imagined picture, I see continuation of everyday life in adverse circumstances (which I would not have seen had I selected different details for scrutiny or looked exclusively at the original panorama, overwhelmed by its richness). In refugee camps, people continue such everyday practices as, for example, eating, socialising and making their laundry. Of course they do, you might say, but this is not the impression standard forms of representing migration give me. My appropriations focus on the lived experience of ordinary people – people who refuse to be visually reduced to victims without own agency and who go about their business, hard as it may be, trying to maintain a somewhat normal life in adverse circumstances. They document what Simon Dell, in a different context, calls “the temporality of the everyday” rather than “the everyday overturned.”<sup>68</sup> In language introduced earlier in this contribution, the above photographs show what may appear as non-events (while photojournalism prefers to visualize events; it is not surprising, therefore, that standard photojournalistic representations of the politics of migration look strikingly different from Mosse’s). However, what to observers might seem to be a non-event may actually be an event for the people depicted: after the dangerous and often life-threatening trip to Europe, the possibility for routine, everyday life – a relatively peaceful everyday life without immediate danger – arguably is something of some importance for the people depicted in these images. The absence of life-threatening conditions is not only an event but also an ingredient of peace.

What some people experiences as peace may appear trivial to others, reflecting their different experiences and life stories; what some people experience as an event may appear as a mere occurrence to others, especially to distant observers who look at these photographs from the privileged and safe space of a gallery New York. It is exactly these people, however, that Mosse targets: the subjects depicted in his photography do not need a photographer to show them what it feels like to be a migrant; they know that from own experience. Despite alienation effects resulting from the specific technology used by Richard Mosse, the photographs also show what David MacDougall calls “the commonalities of being human.”<sup>69</sup> This is so despite – or because of – the fact that the subjects depicted appear unemotional, without pupils, stripped “from the body” and portrayed “as a mere biological trace.”<sup>70</sup> Showing the commonalities of being human has

---

<sup>68</sup> Simon Dell, “Mediation and Immediacy: The Press, the Popular Front in France, and the Spanish Civil War,” in Cynthia Young, ed., *The Mexican Suitcase: The Rediscovered Spanish Civil War Negatives of Capa, Chim, and Taro. Volume 1: The History*. New York: International Center of Photography/Göttingen: Steidl, 2010, p. 46.

<sup>69</sup> MacDougall, *Transcultural Cinema*, p. 246.

<sup>70</sup> Mosse, “Transmigration of the Souls,” p. 2.

always been a strength of photographic representation and Mosse takes full advantage of this strength. Once viewers recognise that, inevitably and undeniably, they have something in common with the people depicted (regardless of what separates them from one another), it will be more difficult for them to understand (people socially constructed as) migrants as Others or to securitize them,<sup>71</sup> or so the photographer and the appropriating peace researcher may hope.<sup>72</sup>

\* \* \*

*Look at it this way ...*

Counter-spaces in machine-machine culture

All of the above scenarios require – and cannot be thought of without – the interpretative and imaginative acts of human beings. However, it is arguable that many components of what we call digitization require a re-thinking of the human-machine relationship. It is indeed a feature of digitization and current (and future) trends in image making that human beings are increasingly replaced by machines – a trend that in future is likely to cover such creative spaces as the arts as well.<sup>73</sup> Machines *make* images, and machines *read* images; they decide for us what we see and how to interpret what we see. For example, satellites – remote seeing and sensing devices for distant observation<sup>74</sup> – produce images that appear objective because no human being seems to interfere. As David Shim notes, they “are apparently well-positioned to speak freely, operating outside of any sphere of (subjective) influence” thus appearing “to provide objective and transparent reflections of the world.”<sup>75</sup> Such appearance is highly political. Jane Blocker notes the power of what she calls “the invisible witness” when discussing satellite images: “the godlike invisibility of this witness lends it a legitimacy and authority that allow it to control in alarming

---

<sup>71</sup> For an early approach to visual desecuritization, see Frank Möller, “Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy,” *Security Dialogue*, 38, No. 2 (2007), special issue Securitization, Militarization and Visual Culture in the Worlds of post-9/11, edited by David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, pp. 179–196.

<sup>72</sup> In his new book, *The Castle* (London: Mack, 2018), Richard Mosse appropriates himself his own photographs by reproducing details from the large, panorama-style originals. Some of his photographs now resemble my above appropriations but the artist’s motivations underlying them may be different from mine.

<sup>73</sup> See Franklin Foer, “Facebook’s War on Free Will: How Technology Is Making Our Minds Redundant,” *Guardian*, 19 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/19/facebooks-war-on-free-will> (accessed 19 September 2017).

<sup>74</sup> See David Shim, “Remote Sensing Place: Satellite Images as Visual Spatial Imaginaries,” *Geoforum*, 51 (2014), pp. 152–160.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

ways what we understand 'the real' to be."<sup>76</sup> However, in future scenarios, Blocker's "invisible witness" appears not only as witness but simultaneously as judge (and perhaps also as executioner). Indeed, a familiar scenario such as the one described by the then US Secretary of State Colin Powell at the occasion of his address to the UN Security Council on 5 February 2003 seems anachronistic in light of recent technological developments. In connection with satellite images allegedly showing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Powell said that the "painstaking work of photo analysis takes experts with years and years of experience, poring for hours and hours over light tables."<sup>77</sup> In future, there will be no need for such experts any more as machines will decide in mere fragments of seconds not only what is to be seen in a given image but also what politics is adequate in light of what the machines assume the image to show. Autonomous machine-based decision making processes will soon replace the interpretative intervention of human beings who used to mediate between seeing and acting (but human imagination is still required when programming these machines). This may not necessarily be a bad thing entirely – after all, Powell's experts got it wrong. (And the eye witness Powell referred to in his speech, allegedly corroborating what seemed to be visual evidence, got it wrong, too.) As regards satellites, much still depends on the people deciding what the machines see and how individual satellite-generated images are put together so as to create the appearance of a single image when in fact what we see is a view composed of numerous individual images.<sup>78</sup> Satellite images, thus, are both pre-determined and post-processed, neither of which can be thought of as un-political. In a liberal, capitalist, digital order relying on algorithms to maintain itself – for example, by "algorithmic governance" producing and re-producing "articulations of threat, danger and insecurity"<sup>79</sup> – it would be naïve to assume that the main or sole purpose of such images is a search for peace.

The first step for visual peace researchers when trying to communicate to their audiences the merits *and* liabilities of digitization is to understand the limits of conventional, well-established analytical concepts or to develop such concepts further in light of what is required today. Indeed,

---

<sup>76</sup> Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. xvi.

<sup>77</sup> For the full text of Powell's speech, see <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/05/iraq.usa>.

<sup>78</sup> See Shim, "Remote Sensing Place," p. 159. Note that Richard Mosse's photographs discussed above are also composite images.

<sup>79</sup> Rune Saugmann Andersen, "Video, algorithms and security: How digital video platforms produce post-sovereign security articulations," *Security Dialogue*, 48, No. 4 (2017), p. 355.

“new visual mediation logics question” not only “security articulation[s],”<sup>80</sup> but also peace articulations and have therefore to be understood by those interested in such articulations. In other words, the visualization of peace requires profound understanding of the digital world. Photographer Trevor Paglen takes the above discussion to another level by arguing that “theoretical concepts we use to analyze visual culture are profoundly misleading when applied to the *machinic* landscape, producing distortions, vast blind spots, and wild misinterpretations.”<sup>81</sup> “Machinic landscapes” are characterized by the *machine-readability* of digital images; they are machine–machine landscapes, rather than human–human or human–machine ones. In other words, machines read and interpret digital images even in the absence of humans, and they do so permanently. However, not only do they see in our stead, they also *decide* for and instead of us.<sup>82</sup> Their decisions are often uncontested precisely because no human beings seem to have been involved. Paglen is right, I think, in arguing that the problematic issue here is not the lack of accuracy of such interpretations, which could perhaps be technically remedied. Rather, the problem is related to the seeming objectivity underlying machine-made decisions: “Because image operations function on an invisible plane and are not dependent on a human seeing-subject ... they are harder to recognize for what they are: immensely powerful levers of social regulation that serve specific race and class interests while presenting themselves as objective.”<sup>83</sup> The seeming objectivity of machine-generated and machine-read images removes such images (and the meanings assigned to them) from political debate and public scrutiny. Such procedure is anti-discursive, anti-democratic, and closely linked to hegemony understood as “a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships.” While ideology is obvious, hegemony often is not because it is accepted “as ‘normal reality’ or ‘commonsense’ by those in practice subordinated to it.”<sup>84</sup>

None of the above is, I would argue, adequately understood in peace research. Indeed, in light of these challenges, parts of the existing literature appear anachronistic: as shown above, the digital

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Saugmann shows that security articulations cannot be adequately understood and theorized without paying attention to algorithmically governed video platforms and their operating procedures.

<sup>81</sup> Trevor Paglen, “Invisible Images (Your Pictures are Looking at You),” *The New Inquiry*, 8 December 2016, <https://thenewinquiry.com/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you> (accessed 8 May 2017; emphasis added).

<sup>82</sup> See also Grégoire Chamayou, *Drone Theory*. Translated by Janet Lloyd (London: Penguin, 2015) and James Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2018).

<sup>83</sup> Paglen, “Invisible Images.”

<sup>84</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: FontanaPress, 1976), p. 145 (both quotations).

world is not just a variation of, but a substantial departure from, the analogue world.<sup>85</sup> The current order is a post-photographic one and attempts at analysis relying exclusively on the classics of photography studies appear insufficient or even misleading. However, the replacement of analogue forms of image production by digital forms is not total; even in digital worlds there still is space – counter-space – for maintaining or re-vitalizing photography’s crucial role if it succeeds in refusing being defined by the conditions within which it operates while at the same time exploiting the possibilities these conditions offer. In order to “revivify and reimagine” its role, photography can draw upon “the history of modernist culture under capitalism” that teaches us “that an experience of cultural subordination can also be a countervailing force for negation, liberation, and self-transformation.”<sup>86</sup> As the work of Adam Harvey and Julian Oliver, referenced by Paglen, shows, artists have begun to understand the challenges posed by digitization. While their “tactics cannot be generalized,”<sup>87</sup> they signify both the beginning of a critical appreciation of digitization and the emancipation from patterns of thought derived from the analogue world and human–human culture.

\* \* \*

*Look at it this way ...*

Image and imagination

What, finally, if none of the above ultimately mattered? W.J.T. Mitchell, following Leonardo, argues that “the invisible and the unseen has, paradoxically, a greater power to activate the power of imagination than a visible image.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, while a visible image has the power to activate imagination, an invisible one has an even greater power to do so: imagining peace cannot be limited to imaging peace. Indeed, as Roger Mac Ginty has shown in his work on post-peace accord

---

<sup>85</sup> See also Fred Ritchin, *After Photography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>86</sup> Roberts, *Photography and Its Violations*, pp. 111–112 (all quotations).

<sup>87</sup> Paglen, “Invisible Images.” These tactics include “makeup schemes to thwart facial recognition algorithms” and the development of “hyper-predatory machines intended to show the extent to which we are surrounded by sensing machines, and the kinds of intimate information they’re collecting all the time.” See also the artists’ websites: <https://ahprojects.com/projects> and <https://julianoliver.com/output>.

<sup>88</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 84.

situations, comparison between the real and the imagined peace or, in other words, between the implemented peace and the “positive peace as imagined by the inhabitants of the post-peace accord society” can help identify gaps and deficiencies in peace accords.<sup>89</sup> The arts and visual culture have been concerned for a long time with questions pertaining to imagination, visibility and invisibility. Photography makes visible that which, while existing in fact, cannot be seen by the human eye.<sup>90</sup> Photography also renders visible what, for political purposes, is hidden from view.<sup>91</sup> Camouflage aims to protect its objects from photographic detection<sup>92</sup> but even if it succeeds, these objects can still be imagined. What *cannot* be imagined, however, does not exist even as a potentiality and escapes from what is politically feasible. What is feasible is not only what already is but also what could be, given different political circumstances and political discourses. Imagination is the act of forming a *mental concept* of what is *not* actually present; it can be triggered not only by the absent but also by the invisible. Imagination “offers a *mode of encounter* which is in no way *less ‘real’* than that of other experiences, but which, put simply, constitutes another *order* of ‘reality.’”<sup>93</sup>

Thus, even if peace is absent in fact – either in its most basic, negative, understanding or in a more ambitious, positive, one – and therefore cannot be seen, it can still be formed mentally – imagined – as a concept and as a potentiality, inviting the simple thought that peace is possible. Barthes’s new punctum “*This will be and this has been*” – connected to time rather than detail – is then imaginatively linked not to death, as in Barthes,<sup>94</sup> but to peace. Peace, even if absent in fact, can be imagined as a principle possibly guiding future human interaction. Art often includes a utopian element beyond that which already exists. This utopian element can be capitalized on in order to expand the range of possible human activities. Mac Ginty, for example, claims that “peace demands utopian and lateral thinking”<sup>95</sup> and Nicholas Mirzoeff explicitly asks for “utopian

---

<sup>89</sup> Roger Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace: The Rejuvenation of Stalled Peace Processes and Peace Accords* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2006), p. 82.

<sup>90</sup> See Eadweard Muybridge’s pioneering time-lapse photography, referenced for example in Martin Kemp, *Seen / Unseen: Art, Science and Intuition from Leonardo to the Hubble Telescope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 302–304. See also Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013) and Elkins, *What Photography Is*, pp. 97–158.

<sup>91</sup> For example, Trevor Paglen, *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes. With an Essay by Rebecca Solnit* (New York: Aperture, 2010). See also Rune S. Andersen and Frank Möller, “Engaging the Limits of Visibility: Photography, Security and Surveillance,” *Security Dialogue*, 44, No. 3 (2013), pp. 203–221.

<sup>92</sup> Hanna Rose Shell, *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2012).

<sup>93</sup> Buckley, “The Workshop of Filthy Creation,” pp. 838–839.

<sup>94</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 96.

<sup>95</sup> Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace*, p. 24.

imagining" as "a necessary cultural response to the gloom-laden chorus that there is no alternative to the current doctrine of pre-emptive war and the politics of fear."<sup>96</sup> Thus, readers are invited to add fragments to the ones presented in this article, inspired by the contributions to this special issue, and to fill the void in Figure 8 with their own peace imaginations including fearless and utopian ones.<sup>97</sup>

Figure 8



Photograph: Frank Möller, 10 April 2017, Riga, Latvia.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>96</sup> Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 25.

<sup>97</sup> I gratefully acknowledge thoughtful comments by two anonymous reviewers for *Peace & Change* who, although seemingly puzzled by the structure of this piece, nevertheless constructively engaged with it. This is exemplary and greatly appreciated although I could not respond to all of their suggestions, given space limitations.

*The frequent use in this piece of "Look at it this way" is inspired by Andrew Motion's poem "A Tale from Hiroshima," published in Motion's Peace Talks (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), pp. 81–89.*