

# Editorial

If you have opened this volume expecting to find images of war zones, bomb damage or soldiers fighting, then you will be disappointed. If you have opened this volume expecting to find a mirror in artworks of what you can find in the mainstream news media today about wars around the world, then you may also be disappointed. What you will find instead is discussion about how certain art practices produced by women artists have used photography and how they have changed or challenged photojournalism and media coverage in “*bringing a war home*”. As you read across these articles, you will also find different kinds of discussion about the role of photography as “*evidence*”, as carrying a “*truth*” value and a “*punctum*”, that decisive emotional hit, identified by Roland Barthes. You will also find attention given to how women artists react, see and think about those involved in conflicts and wars and how they wish to transform the ways in which women, in particular, are depicted or represented in those conflicts. In a media-saturated society, the artists discussed and the readings offered by the writers pay as much attention to the circulation of images as to new mediations of these representations and explore the spaces between text and image, meaning and interpretation. Conflicts about meaning arise in terms of representation in art criticism as much as in artworks about war and two essays in this volume address this problem. The representation of different wars in photography arises in the two artists whose works are presented as artists’ pages. Their original works have another presence as banners (Tanya Ury), as drawings and prints (Gail Bourgeois) and in their appropriation and use of photography, the reproduction of these works on the pages of this journal is additionally at one layer removed from their status as “*original*” works of art.

This volume with its small number of articles cannot cover all wars, Cold and hot, past or present, nor the practices of the many women artists who have addressed the subject of war in their works. There are unfortunately many conflicts in the world today and there are also many women artists who have made works addressing or considering the representations of these conflicts in the past and the present and the impact they have had on how we live and how we think about them. The artists discussed here avoid indulging in any nostalgic sense of the memory of wars, the horrors of genocide or Holocaust or the problems of life under oppressive regimes nor do they collude with any patriotic jingoism about past wars or their aftermath. Their works do not celebrate in any straightforward way the many acts of personal courage and bravery that it takes to survive a war as either a soldier or a civilian neither do their works only represent known heroes or heroines. Although these works do not provide immediate and pointed critiques of the political decisions or the politicians which led to wars, or the military who carried them out, in many senses and in different ways, these works are conscious of these agendas and name them. The idea of “*mobilizing memory*”, as expressed in the title of the show whose curators are interviewed is a key feature of the discussion throughout this volume: encouraging us to think through how we remember events and to re-examine the meanings we attribute to past events in the present. Prominent too, is the idea that we must pay attention to what is forgotten, vaguely remembered or not celebrated with regard to dominant narratives of war. All too frequently, this is the work of women.