

## Roundtable ‘Double Exposures, Double Takes’

Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier

*And you may be saying to yourself, at this point, you know, why is this guy standing on the box? What’s the point of standing on the box? And this is the risk we face in just looking at a picture and not looking behind the picture.<sup>1</sup>*

– Defense counsel Frank Spinner’s opening statements, Sabrina Harman Court-Martials, 12 May 2005, Fort Hood, Texas.

This roundtable discusses ‘perpetrator photography’, or rather the relation between the two terms, in a range of contexts. As a springboard for discussion, the participants (Rabiah Benlahbib, Wulandani Dirgantoro, Kobi Kabalek, Zuzanna Dziuban, Lovro Kralj and Tjebbe van Tijen), were sent a picture of one of the promotional posters for Swiss artists Jojakim Cortis and Adrian Sonderegger’s recent exhibition *Double Take* at C/O Amerika Haus in Berlin (16 March–1 June 2019).<sup>2</sup> Cortis and Sonderegger worked for several years on the project *Icons*, a series of faithfully reconstructed world-famous images of dramatic historical events (such as the 1937 Hindenburg disaster and the 9/11 terror attack on the Twin Towers), through detailed three-dimensional dioramas. The dioramas are photographed together with the artists’ tools and materials such as cardboard, plaster casts, glue, cotton wool and sand.

Last spring, I passed C/O Amerika Haus daily on my way to work, and every time I was struck by this poster that showed a restaging or reframing of the ‘Hooded Man’, a photo taken by Military Police Sergeant Ivan Frederick at Abu Ghraib. There is a vast body of images documenting the Iraq War, many of which come from ‘embedded journalism’ (as we now call the longtime interaction of army and media). Yet, for cultural theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff, ‘what [is] remarkable about this mass in retrospect [is] the lack of any truly remarkable images.’<sup>3</sup> In this line of reasoning, not even the videos of the staged toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Firdos Square (2003) and the fallen dictator’s execution (2006) stand out, since they are just ‘war

1 Quoted by Ryan Ashley Caldwell, *Fallgirls: Gender and the Framing of Torture at Abu Ghraib* (UK: Ashgate, 2012), p. 25.

2 Cortis & Sonderegger: *Double Take*, 16 March–1 June 2019, C/O Berlin.

3 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Watching Baghdad: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 67.





FIGURE 1. Promotional poster of Jojakim Cortis and Adrian Sonderegger's exhibition 'Double Take' at C/O Amerika Haus, Berlin, April 2019 © S. Benzaquen-Gautier.

images' that perform a well-known script, 'the American victory as an image'.<sup>4</sup> One may agree with Mirzoeff that 'the striking accomplishment of the saturation of images generated by the invasion [of Iraq] [...] was that images ceased to be the subject of substantive debate'.<sup>5</sup> Yet, there is one exception: a set of images that not only generated debate at the time, but also kept coming back into the public view, haunting the (Western) collective memory of the Iraq War. These are the Abu Ghraib pictures. Their grotesque violence and suggestive sexuality, the humiliated and suffering bodies of the prisoners, the gloating guards proudly posing next to inmates, the quasi-aesthetic power of these 'tableaux vivants' made these photos stick in our mind, as disturbing today as they were fifteen years ago when they were released to the public. The visual disjuncture that pervades these images, or, as writer Brooke Warner aptly puts it, 'the flashy smile and complete disregard of pain and torture [that] make each and every picture appear surreal, as if perpetrators superimposed photos from last summer's vacation onto a completely wretched scene',<sup>6</sup> might ex-

4 Mirzoeff, p. 77. There are two videos of Saddam Hussein's hanging: the official one, produced by the Iraqi government and meant to show a legal, orderly proceeding; an unofficial one, recorded on a cell phone and showing a far more chaotic execution.

5 Ibid., p. 68.

6 Brooke Warner, 'Abu Ghraib and a New Generation of Soldiers', in *Abu Ghraib: The Politics of Torture* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2004), pp. 65–86 (p. 76).

plain the powerful and long-lasting effect of these pictures. It reflects the nature of the Abu Ghraib site itself, its own disconnection (at least from the international conventions regulating the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war), the 'anomic absence of authority' in the prison,<sup>7</sup> and consequently the shifting relations among the military personnel, and between the guards and the inmates.

During the military investigation, Specialist Sabrina Harman (who also took photos of the 'Hooded Man') declared:

He [the Hooded Man] is nicknamed Gilligan. He was just standing on the MRE box, with the sandbag over his head for about an hour. I put the wire on his hands. I do not recall how. I was joking with him and told him if he fell he would get electrocuted. We were not hurting him. It was not anything that bad.<sup>8</sup>

Harman argued in her defense that some pictures she took were meant to document the abuses at the 'hard site' of Abu Ghraib. Indeed, her defense counsel Frank Spinner emphasized Harman's friendly relationship with some detainees, including 'Gilligan'. The whole thing of the Hooded Man was a joke, Spinner explained, and 'Gilligan' understood it. The lawyer also argued that the snapshot had captured only a single action, but then: 'How [did Gilligan] get on that box? What happened on that box? And what happened after he got off that box?'<sup>9</sup> One may dislike, disagree with, or dismiss Spinner's line of defense, but it is difficult to reject the idea that photos (any photos, but more particularly perpetrator photos) have to be situated within a chain of events, and not considered as isolated frames.

It was CBS News that first aired the Abu Ghraib pictures, calling them evidence of the 'immoral practices' of U.S. forces in Iraq (28 April 2004). A couple of days later, Seymour Hersh (the journalist who had exposed the My Lai massacre in Vietnam) published the article 'Torture in Abu Ghraib' in *The New Yorker* with more photos (30 April 2004).<sup>10</sup> After that, the pictures went global. However, for the American army and government, the scandal was not new. In the spring of 2004, military investigations against several 'rogue' elements among

7 Caldwell, p. 32.

8 United States v. Specialist Sabrina D. Harman, Army 20050597, Army Court of Criminal Appeals, filed on 30 June 2008.

9 Spinner, quoted by Caldwell, pp. 26-27.

10 Seymour Hersh, 'Torture in Abu Ghraib', *The New Yorker*, 30 April 2004, <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/10/torture-at-abu-ghraib>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

the Military Police were already under way. Sergeant Joseph Darby, one of the whistleblowers, had passed the incriminating photos to the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command in January 2004 (the abuse had taken place in the fall of 2003). Let us remind ourselves of the numbers here. According to sociologist Ryan Ashley Caldwell, co-expert witness for the defense of Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman, there were over 16,000 photos seized. Of these, 281 were used as exhibits in the court-martials.<sup>11</sup> At the time, cultural theorist André Gunthert underlined that the pictures had emerged in the public sphere in different ways: CBS and Hersh did not show exactly the same photos. Moreover, they framed the images with opposing narratives. For CBS, they were evidence of ‘isolated acts’ committed by rogue elements; for Hersh, they signaled a system-wide practice of abuse.<sup>12</sup> Different arguments have been advanced to explain Abu Ghraib, from the lack of proper training of the indicted guards to their personal relations and histories<sup>13</sup> to excessive violence in American popular culture. Yet, it was the narrative of ‘a few rogue soldiers, possibly encouraged by senior officers, [who] had abused prisoners but then had been exposed, tried and convicted’<sup>14</sup> that became (as in other cases of state-sanctioned violence against prisoners) the dominant one. Indeed, the theory of the ‘bad apples’ offered a convenient alternative to the possibility of a systemic application of ‘enhanced interrogation’ methods (the official term) under the Bush administration, the fallibility of a chain of command plagued by secrecy, procrastination, avoidance and denial, and the limitations of the investigation itself.

In many ways, Cortis and Sonderegger’s work is precisely about that. It proposes a series of frames, a reframing of frames, be they visual or narrative. As a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, it raises a number of questions. First of all, and perhaps the most obvious one in this context: What to show? The daily encounter with the exhibition’s promotional poster had a double effect on me. Some days, I thought that, as a passer-by, I did not wish to be confronted in this unsolicited way with such an image of torture and degradation, even if it was presented in a milder artistic form.

11 Spinner, quoted by Caldwell, p. 1.

12 André Gunthert, ‘Digital Imaging Goes to War: The Abu Ghraib Photographs’, *Photographies*, 1 (2008), 103–112 (p. 106).

13 Bruce Tucker and Sia Triantafyllos, ‘Lynndie England, Abu Ghraib and the New Imperialism’, *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 38 (2008), 83–100 (p. 87).

14 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Some days, though, I thought that the poster was at the right spot, a necessary reminder of the realities of war and the breaching of the 1949 Geneva Convention in numerous conflict theaters worldwide. Interestingly, the tension between these two reactions became the key debate at the symposium ‘Beyond trauma?’, which art historian Afonso Dias Ramos and myself co-organized in Berlin at the same period.<sup>15</sup> The discussion was a reaction to the images two participants had presented during their talks – or rather, to the presence of these images on screen for several minutes. One was the photo of little Alan Kurdi lying dead on the beach (in this case, the picture had not been taken by a perpetrator but by journalist Nilüfer Demir)<sup>16</sup>; the other was a photo of Gul Mudin, a young Afghan farmer killed and mutilated by American soldiers a few years ago (in this case, it was a trophy photograph taken by one of the soldiers, a member of the ‘Kill Team’).<sup>17</sup> For some participants, showing these offensive images was just gratuitous voyeurism – especially in the comfort of academic gatherings – and it was also potentially ‘traumatizing’. In their view, *ekphrasis* [the detailed description of a visual work] and the power of mental images could have done the job in a more effective and less unsettling way. On the other hand, some participants claimed that our failure to look at such pictures – here again, especially in the comfort of academic gatherings – weakened our position as responsible scholars and citizens. How are we supposed to understand the purposes these photos serve if we look away? Moreover, war is ugly and unbearable, and there is no need to sugarcoat this fact. Some people experience physical violence on a daily basis. Facing these images is thus the least we can do, even though the extent to which photography gives ‘us’, far-away bystanders, access to this kind of experience remains, unsurprisingly, a vexed issue.

At some point during the symposium, someone in the audience suggested that lecturers warn the audience at the start of their talk – like mainstream media do when they post articles with graphic content: ‘Scroll down at your own risk!’ – of the potentially disturbing

<sup>15</sup> The symposium ‘Beyond trauma? A trans-regional perspective on aesthetics and trauma’ took place at the Forum Transregionale Studien and the ICI Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin on 13–15 June 2019.

<sup>16</sup> See Nilüfer Demir, *Alan Kurdi*, 2015, <<http://100photos.time.com/photos/nilufer-demir-alan-kurdi>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

<sup>17</sup> See ‘Photo Gallery: The ‘Kill Team’ in Afghanistan’, *Der Spiegel*, 21 March 2011, <<https://www.spiegel.de/fotostrecke/photo-gallery-the-kill-team-in-afghanistan-fotostrecke-65981.html>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

images they would be showing. How to show? How not to show? How to show without showing? These questions point to another image I considered for the roundtable but eventually decided not to select. It belongs to the series of photographs taken by Lucas Jackson at the exhibition of 'Caesar's photos' at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in March 2015.<sup>18</sup> 'Caesar' was the codename of a military police photographer in Damascus. Between May 2011 and August 2013, he took pictures of the bodies of tortured civilians that were brought to the military hospital morgues before being buried in mass graves in rural areas. Syrian Army officers and soldiers used these pictures to prove that they had carried out the instructions, as part of the military police's internal procedures. Caesar and his friend 'Sami' (another codename) managed to leak about 55,000 photos out of Syria by downloading and transferring them to memory sticks. Later, both men were smuggled out of the country by the anti-government political group Syrian National Movement. Jackson's photo shows a woman visiting the exhibition at the United Nations. She stands in the foreground and looks at Caesar's photos, visibly shocked, as her body language (her hand on her mouth as if to stifle a gasp) clearly indicates.<sup>19</sup> While the woman is in focus, the images on display are blurred owing to the shallow depth of field. Jackson's image is one possible solution to this showing/not showing dilemma. Berlin-based artist Khaled Barakeh, one of the 'Beyond trauma?' symposium participants, chose another one for his work on Caesar's photos, *Relentless Images* (2018).<sup>20</sup> Because he found the images to be too degrading for the victims, Barakeh decided not to show them and instead hand-traced their metadata on strips of tape. These examples demonstrate that in spite of the recurrent (and somewhat clichéd) discourse on people's desensitization in today's image-saturated world, the limitation of what can and should be shown in the public space remains a highly contentious issue. This indeed is what cultural theorist Susie Linfield experienced after she showed several of Caesar's photos at a conference in Stockholm in 2018:

18 *Caesar's Photos: Inside Syrian Authorities' Prisons*, 10–20 March 2015, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

19 See Lucas Jackson, *A Woman Reacts as She Looks at a Gruesome Collection of Images*, 10 March 2015, <<https://pictures.reuters.com/archive/MIDEAST-CRISIS-SYRIA-UN-GM1EB3B0EJG01.html>> [accessed 10 October 2015].

20 See Khaled Barakeh, *The Untitled Images*, Artsy <<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/khaled-barakeh-the-untitled-images>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

During a break in the proceedings, a young woman approached me. She had been born in Sweden, but her parents were political refugees from Eritrea. She told me, with a smile and without anger, that presenting these photographs was an affront to those depicted in them. She asked if I would show the pictures if relatives of the prisoners were in the audience. While I acknowledged that this would cause great pain, I said I would. She accused me of exploiting and oppressing Syrians; I said it was Assad who did that.<sup>21</sup>

Who shows, who is allowed to show and to whom? One finds a substantial body of literature on colonial and ethnographic photography that discusses exploitation and power relations between the subject-photographer (generally a white man) and the object-photographed (the 'other', non-white or woman), and more recently the urge to 'decolonize' this photographic material.<sup>22</sup> The same goes for pictures taken by perpetrators. The potential symbolic violence of exposure – even for a good cause – might redouble the physical violence depicted in the images and thus re-victimize the victims. As researcher Joey Brooke Jakob reminds us in her analysis of the Abu Ghraib pictures as 'war trophy photography', 'when the photograph is itself the trophy, whereby a combative enemy is captured within the frame, the body comes to reflect a conquerable, inanimate object'.<sup>23</sup> Such objectification was at the core of the controversy about the exhibition *Facing Death* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1997.<sup>24</sup> The exhibition presented 22 pictures of inmates at the Khmer Rouge prison S.21. The detainees were photographed upon arrival, and the mug shot attached to their file.<sup>25</sup> In 1979, after the fall of the Pol Pot regime, S.21 was converted into a memorial site (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum), and a

21 Susie Linfield, 'Syria's Torture Photos: Witness to Atrocity', *The New York Review of Books*, 9 February 2019, <<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/02/09/syrias-torture-photos-witness-to-atrocity/>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

22 See, e.g., Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive', *History and Anthropology*, 21 (2010), 337–349; *Photography, Anthropology, and History: Expanding the Frame*, ed. by Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton (UK: Ashgate, 2009); Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011); Mark Sealey, *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time* (UK: Lawrence and Wishart, 2019).

23 Joey Brooke Jakob, 'Beyond Abu Ghraib: War Trophy Photography and Commemorative Violence', *Media, War & Conflict*, 10 (2017), 87–104 (p. 96).

24 *Facing Death*, 1997, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.

25 Current estimates by the UN-backed Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia put the number of S.21 victims over 18,000 for the period going from mid-1975 (when the Khmer Rouge political police started using the site as prison) to January 1979 (when the Democratic Kampuchea regime was overthrown).

thousand of these identification photos displayed on the wall as both evidence of Khmer Rouge crimes and in commemoration of the victims. In the mid-1990s, as there were talks about the possible closure of the museum, American photojournalists Doug Niven and Chris Riley offered to clean and index the negatives archived in a drawer at Tuol Sleng. In exchange for their work (the negatives were in a bad state), the Cambodian government granted them permission to print 100 photos and show them abroad. The MoMA's was not the first exhibition Niven and Riley organized in collaboration with institutions in North America, but it was the first one to take place in an art museum, which supplied so little information and emphasized the emotional dimension of the photos over their documentary function.

To some observers, *Facing Death* was a highly problematic, exploitative exhibition.<sup>26</sup> Would the MoMA have organized the exhibition in the same way if it had been about Holocaust victims? Why had the Cambodian-American community not been consulted? To what extent did the exhibition's aesthetic dramatization 'reinforce' the visual power of this bureaucratic recording of extermination? (After all, some critics had even referred to Diane Arbus in their review of *Facing Death*).<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the oft-quoted comparison by Susan Sontag of the S.21 photographs and Titian's painting *The Flaying of Marsyas* is enlightening.<sup>28</sup> We face, she writes, people who are 'forever looking at death, forever about to be murdered, forever wronged'.<sup>29</sup> While it explains the uneasiness of visitors, it clarifies neither the situation depicted in the pictures (arrest procedure, period of detention and torture) nor the function of photography in the Khmer Rouge apparatus of terror. Indeed, the viewer's situation vis-à-vis perpetrator images is often brought back to what Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch calls the 'monocular seeing that conflates the camera with a weapon'.<sup>30</sup> How deeply the perpetrator-photographer's gaze keeps pervading his/her

26 See, e.g., Nick Dunlop, *The Lost Executioner: The Story of Comrade Duch and the Khmer Rouge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009 [2005]); Lindsay French, 'Exhibiting Terror', in *Truth Claims, Representations and Human Rights*, ed. by Mark Bradley and Patrice Pero (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp. 131-155; Rachel Hughes, 'The Abject Artifacts of Memory: Photographs from Cambodia's Genocide', *Media, Culture & Society*, 25 (2003), 23-44.

27 Thomas Roma, 'Looking into the Face of our Worst Fears through Photographs', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 31 October 1997.

28 Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *The Flaying of Marsyas*, 1570-1576, oil on canvas, 212 cm x 207 cm, Archdiocesan Museum Kroměříž, Archbishopric Castle Kroměříž, Kroměříž.

29 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 61.

30 Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14 (2001), 5-37 (p. 23).

photos is of course a critical issue. Yet, the systematic assimilation of the perpetrator and viewer's positions overlooks the more complex web of relations between image and beholder and the numerous elements that shape these relations. First and foremost, the social life of the images themselves and the meanings they are ascribed as they migrate from one circle to another – legal, political, journalistic, humanitarian, commemorative, historiographical and artistic.

Let us return to the 'Hooded Man'. 'Gilligan' was first identified as Ali Shelal Qaissi. In 2006, Qaissi appeared on the front page of *The New York Times*, holding a photo of the 'Hooded Man'.<sup>31</sup> The guards at Abu Ghraib had nicknamed him 'clawman' because of his mutilated hand. Since Gilligan's hand on Frederick's picture looks damaged too, conclusions were easily drawn. Qaissi became a prisoner advocate and founded the Association of Former Victims of American Occupation Prisons in Baghdad. He put the image of the 'Hooded Man' on his business card. For human rights organizations, he was the ideal 'spokesperson to dramatize the growing evidence for abuse at Abu Ghraib and at other U.S. military prisons around the world'.<sup>32</sup> However, as journalist Errol Morris revealed, Qaissi was not 'Gilligan'. The 'real Hooded Man' (identified by Morris) did not want to be known. What is interesting in this story of mistaken identification is, as Morris stresses in his article, the gray zone that lies between the 'image as evidence' and the 'image as icon'. He explains:

1) Clawman claimed to be the man under the hood in the iconic photograph. This led to journalistic interest in him – no iconic photo: little or no journalistic interest; 2) that same photograph was taken as partial proof of Clawman's claim; and 3) lastly, that 'proof' was further cemented in the mind of *Times* readers with a new photograph. The photo of a man holding a photo of the man in the iconic photo created an associative link much stronger than mere words might have.<sup>33</sup>

What does it take to make an icon out of a perpetrator photo? England's thumbs-up pose got the dubious honor of being turned into a

31 Hassan M. Fattah, 'Symbol of Abu Ghraib Seeks to Spare Others his Nightmares', *The New York Times*, 11 March 2006, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/11/front%20page/world/symbol-of-abu-ghraib-seeks-to-spare-others-his-nightmare.html>> [accessed 16 October 2019].

32 Errol Morris, 'Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up?', *Opinionator*, *The New York Times*, 15 August 2007, <<https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/15/will-the-real-hooded-man-please-stand-up>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

33 Ibid.

meme ('doing a Lynndie'),<sup>34</sup> but it was the picture of the 'Hooded Man' which achieved iconic status at the global scale and featured, protean-like, in countless newspapers, books, documentary movies, exhibitions, posters, street graffiti and works of art, Cortis and Sonderegger's being one of the latest in a long line of artistic appropriations of the photograph. Why this one then?

It is clear that the best candidates for canonization were the simpler images (the hooded man, the leashed man, the prisoner threatened by dogs), those whose subject matter is easily identifiable and could best act as emblems (the martyr, the torturer and the victim), helplessness in the face of violence.<sup>35</sup>

The pointed hat, evoking simultaneously the Inquisition, the KKK, and Goya's imagery, as well as Gilligan's Jesus-like posture on the box might explain why the 'Hooded Man' became such a symbol. But as much as the making of an icon is a fascinating subject, the critical point that remains is what consequences such iconization has, especially in terms of the obfuscating function of the image-turned-icon and its relation to forms of blindness in society. Abu Ghraib was, and perhaps still is, a very American debate. 'I find myself in near despair writing this editorial because these images are the images of ourselves we have, at now unimaginable costs, either ignored or tragically embraced inside our own society for decades', journalist David Matlin writes.<sup>36</sup> Taking a more structural stance, cultural anthropologist Allen Feldman argues that what was at issue (in Abu Ghraib and more broadly in the context of the 'war on terror' in Iraq and elsewhere) was not 'the measure of torture's lawfulness or criminality but rather the institutionalization of its legal indeterminacy'.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, the Abu Ghraib pictures functioned as a kind of self-portrait thrown back at Americans, mirroring their compliance with the acts perpetrated in their name.

Interestingly, this issue of 'mirroring' had surfaced a couple of years before the Abu Ghraib scandal, although in a limited form, at the occasion of *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Contemporary Art*, the exhibition cu-

34 On the subject, see Stefka Hristova, 'Doing a Lynndie: Iconography of a Gesture', *Visual Anthropology*, 26 (2013), 430-443.

35 Gunthert, p. 108.

36 David Matlin, 'Abu Ghraib: The Surround', in *Abu Ghraib: The Politics of Torture* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2004), pp. 60-64 (p. 60).

37 Allen Feldman, *Archives of the Insensible: Of War, Photopolitics and Dead Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 186.

rated by Norman Kleeblatt at the Jewish Museum in New York (2002).<sup>38</sup> The first show ever to approach Holocaust memory not through the art of victims and survivors but through artistic representations of Nazis, it caused outrage even before it officially opened. Some reviewers praised Kleeblatt's attempt to breach the 'holy wall' surrounding the 'sacred terrain' of Holocaust memory,<sup>39</sup> but others criticized him for this idea of 'mirroring, as opposed to depicting evil, [which] implies that we are all capable of evil'.<sup>40</sup> The focus, in the *Mirroring Evil* debate, as well as the debate about the Abu Ghraib photos, on American (and Western) responses, however legitimate, generates a black hole. When do we hear the voices of the Iraqis? Furthermore, what is also absent in the discussion is the palimpsestic nature of Abu Ghraib itself. First, the 'hard site' was only one part of a bigger institution. Abu Ghraib was used as an Army Forward Operating Base with non-prison related troops and services. It is thus the complexity of the military system of occupation that is left unexplored. Then, going back in time, until October 2002 – that is, under Saddam Hussein – Abu Ghraib also operated as a prison, regularly denounced by Amnesty International for its treatment of inmates and weekly executions. Can this history of violence ever be recovered? How to make the invisible visible again when iconic images 'block' our view? Cortis and Sonderegger's reframing of such pictures is one possibility, as it stages the 'hypericon', or the 'image of image production', for the public view.<sup>41</sup> How does it work in the public space? What does the reemergence of perpetrator images in a variety of institutional settings and media generate in terms of gaze, embodiment and materiality? To what extent do aesthetics reshape contentious oppositions such as 'contamination' vs. redemption, or voyeurism vs. exposure? How do they articulate structural, state-sponsored and individual violence? What forms of memorialization and narrativization do they enable?

These were the questions the roundtable participants were asked to address. The roundtable is the outcome of my conversations with each of them over the past months. The initial idea was to propose to

38 *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Contemporary Art*, 13–30 June 2002, Jewish Museum, New York.

39 Eunice Lipton, 'Who Is Afraid of the Big Bad Adolf?', *The Guardian*, 21 March 2002, <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/mar/21/artsfeatures>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

40 Michael Kimmelman, 'Art Review: Evil, the Nazis and Shock Value', *The New York Times*, 10 March 2002, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/15/arts/art-review-evil-the-nazis-and-shock-value.html>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

41 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 34.

them to comment on several photos, but it became clear in the process that choosing a specific image and inviting the participants to bring other pictures, related to their research field, into dialogue with this image would generate a more complex perspective on ‘perpetrator photography’ and the linkages between visual representations across a variety of stories of violence, memory contexts and visual practices. Furthermore, since their *Icons* photo played such a central role in the roundtable, hearing Cortis and Sonderegger’s voices in the debate was important. The two artists kindly accepted to do a short interview for the special issue. Each roundtable participant contributed his/her own disciplinary approach to the discussion. Rabiaâ Benlahbib is the founder and director of Creative Court (The Hague), an NGO that develops art and educational projects dealing with memory, coexistence and reconciliation in post-conflict societies and displaced communities. What images can do to inform, mobilize and re-connect people is thus a major concern for her. Art historian Wulandani Dirgantoro researches the artistic representation of the 1965–1966 massacres in Indonesia. The visibility of the state-sponsored slaughtering of ‘communists’ and sympathizers remains a contentious issue in Indonesian society. Dirgantoro emphasizes the role art can play in a place where perpetrators still live in full impunity. Historian Lovro Kralj works on questions of state-building, nationalism and authoritarianism in twentieth century Europe. He discusses the ways in which pictures are used to articulate historical narratives with regard to Croatia and the Ustasha fascist regime. Cultural theorists Kobi Kabalek and Zuzanna Dziuban offer a thoughtful reflection on the position of the observer and its ethical implications. They suggest that the frame, which they call the ‘double “double take”’, is able to generate a different perspective on perpetrator images. Librarian, archivist and visual artist Tjebbe van Tijen specializes in dramatizing historical information with low and high-tech interfaces. His visual response to the roundtable is the cover of the issue. A critical comment on the remediation of the ‘Hooded Man’, it shows a camera icon with half-transparent border and, in the background, a reconstructed screenshot of an Internet image search with the terms ‘Hooded Man’.<sup>42</sup> These five contributions offer a range of interpretations of Cortis and Sonderegger’s promotional poster, and

42 Cover of the issue: Tjebbe van Tijen/Imaginary Museum Projects. See the website: *Imaginary Museum Projects* <<http://imaginarymuseum.org/>> [accessed 10 October 2019]. The first two rows of the cover are from the original screenshot, based on the image search. The other rows are a construct, carefully chosen from about thirty sources. All the images are databased.

thereby open a fruitful and extensive conversation about the relationship between 'perpetrator' and 'photography'.

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**Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier** is an art historian. She is currently ERC-Research Fellow at the 'Cultures of Occupation in Twentieth Century Asia' (COTCA) project, University of Nottingham (UK).