



Edmund Clark

War of Terror

Kathleen Palmer, Head of Art, introduces this thought-provoking exhibition which explores hidden experiences of state control during the 'Global War on Terror'

Highlights from five series of work by photographic artist Edmund Clark address the complex issues of security, secrecy, legality and ethics surrounding the state control measures taken by the UK and its allies to protect their citizens from the threat of international terrorism. Within the international scope of Clark's work, the show centres on the experiences of UK citizens and residents suspected but never convicted of terrorist-related activities, and on the involvement of the British government in the 'Global War on Terror'.

Imagery has been key in shaping our understanding of the 'War on Terror'. This war of ideologies has played out in our increasingly visual culture as a war of images and spectacle. A remarkable new work reflecting on this, *Orange Screen: War of Images*, opens the exhibition. The

colour orange became iconic through media images of the first detainees at Guantánamo Bay in 2002 wearing standard US prison-issue orange jumpsuits. Since 2014 this imagery has been referenced and inverted by ISIS propaganda videos showing their captives also wearing orange. In words framed against an orange background, Clark describes familiar and widely published photographs from the 'Global War on Terror'. In this way, Clark distances the images from their context and intended ideologies. These short texts trigger visual memories and frame the timeline of events running through the exhibition.

The first section of the exhibition features Clark's recent work *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* (2016), created in collaboration with Crofton Black, previously

a researcher for British human rights organisation Reprieve. Photographs, documents, graphic visualisations and a short film explore the processes behind 'extraordinary rendition', in which people suspected of terrorist-related activity were secretly detained and transferred without legal process to US custody for further detention and interrogation. Originally created in book form, the work presents a complex paper trail of evidence and photographs assembled over five years, evoking Black's investigation process and the network of offices, airfields, homes and interrogation sites connected to extraordinary rendition. Seemingly mundane locations photographed by Clark take on new significance as the bureaucracy reveals their connections with the rendition process.

Three interconnecting works inves-

tigate one of the most controversial elements of the international counter-terrorist response, exploring the systems of control and interrogation experienced by detainees at the US military detention facility in Guantánamo Bay. Photographs from Clark's award-winning series *Guantanamo: If The Light Goes Out* (2010) offer an uneasy contrast between the bleak, disorientating living spaces at Guantánamo and the homes of former British detainees who were released without charge. The images from the detention facility combine a sense of functionality, common to any living space, with an undercurrent of violence and coercion that reminds us of the underlying purpose of this environment.

Equally revealing, *Letters to Omar* (2010) reproduces censored correspondence made available to Clark by Omar Deghayes, a British former detainee at Guantánamo released without charge

in 2007. Cards and letters sent to him by people from around the world, most of them strangers, were scanned and redacted by military censors. When and in what form Omar received the correspondence was part of the control exercised over him. These fragmentary reproductions created by the bureaucratic processes of Guantánamo added to his sense of paranoia.

Omar's letters feature again as images in Clark's powerful audio-visual work, *Section 4 Part 20: One Day on a Saturday* (2012), produced with multimedia editor Anna Stevens. Voices are overlaid in stereo recounting official guidelines for daily detainee control and testimony from a detainee describing a very particular interrogation, raising notions of disorientation and complicity.

“There are a lot of complex issues surrounding the “War on Terror”.

My work seeks to explore and show these in new ways, including at a human level that we can all engage with.’ – Edmund Clark

In December 2011 and January 2012, Clark was given exclusive access to a suburban house in England in which ‘CE’, a British man suspected of involvement in terrorist-related activity, was living under the terms of a Home Office-enforced control order. This was a form of detention without trial, based on secret evidence. Clark's installation *Control Order House* (2013) at IWM presents nearly 500 photographs of the house in the order in which he took them. This visual strategy evokes the oppressive and restricted nature of CE's life in the house. Documents, architectural plans and two video sequences, on display for the first time, reveal further details of life under a control order.

Through the varied forms and scales used in the exhibition, Clark invokes an immersive and sensory engagement with the experiences of observation, detention and disorientation explored by his work. He confronts official constraints and censorship regarding access to the individuals involved and how they can be depicted, and questions the stereotypical portrayals of suspects. Setting images of everyday spaces and personal possessions together with administrative documents, he evokes the consequences for those living under state counter-terrorism measures.

War of Terror runs until 28 August 2017 at IWM London, curated by Kathleen Palmer and Hilary Roberts



‘Camp 6, Mobile force-feeding chair’ from the series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*. © Edmund Clark. Courtesy of Flowers Gallery London and New York