

EXTRAORDINARY

ENHANCED TECHNIQUES



THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

RENDITIONS

ARTISTS TAKE ON TORTURE

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EXTRAORDINARY RENDITIONS

Since 9/11, the US empire has been embroiled in a “War on Terror” against Islamic fundamentalism. All sides in this “war” have used religious justification for the most heinous of crimes: mass killings of innocent civilians, torture of detainees, and summary executions. Fundamentalists of the three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – have rejected traditions of peace to wage “jihad” and “just war.” As citizen artists in an empire, we feel compelled to protest our government’s criminality and the failure of major religious, medical, and legal associations to speak out against these atrocities.

Decisions to torture detainees to elicit information came directly from George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and the Department of Justice. Lawyers from the DOJ’s Office of Legal Counsel provided memos rationalizing the use of torture. As a result, both the guilty and innocent suffered brutality and even death.

The Obama Administration has declared some “enhanced interrogation techniques,” such as waterboarding, to be torture but have offered a timid response to investigation and prosecution. The Convention Against Torture, ratified by the United States in 1994, has been ignored as if it were merely a political question rather than a legal mandate to be enforced.

The Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a recent survey on religious attitudes toward torture and found: (1) those most opposed to torture tend to be mainline Protestants or the non-religious; and (2) a majority of Evangelical Christians and Catholics believe that torture can be justified. Why do those who lay claim to a moral superiority tolerate such immoral acts?

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

During the Middle Ages, Christian adherents staged “passion plays” to re-enact the torture and public execution of Christ. In modern times, the Fathers and Brothers of the Catholic Maryknoll Order re-imagined the Stations of the Cross to highlight contemporary human suffering.

As visual artists, we are using the metaphor of the Stations to protest unlawful government and unholy religion in the War on Terror. By using a religious metaphor, we are seeking to provoke public debate and to press our failed religious and secular institutions to honor the spirit and letter of the law.

The ten artists in this exhibit have approached the subject in their own way and from their own religious perspective, using their own media.

STATION I

Jesus Is Condemned to Death

MICHAEL CONNORS

Politics has never been central to my work. But the issue of torture, initiated at the highest levels of the government, struck me as completely antithetical to my understanding of the role America should play as a civilized and inspirational culture to people around the world. Some things never change – like the miscalculations that governmental authorities always seem to make. So it concerns me when I hear things coming from the current Obama administration that advocate “looking forward” at the expense of “looking back” and learning from past mistakes.

Michael Connors is an artist and Associate Professor in the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Connors has been teaching since 1998 when he initiated the Digital Printmaking Center as an integral part of the UW-Madison Printmaking program. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally since 1979. In 1987, he was the first artist to exhibit computer-generated works in a Wisconsin Triennial.

Website: michaelconnors-art.com



Michael Connors, 2009
Archival inkjet print on rag paper, 20" x 30"

STATION II

Jesus Carries His Cross

JOHN HITCHCOCK

My current artwork consists of mythological hybrid creatures (buffalo, wolf, boar, deer, moose) and military weaponry (tanks and helicopters). It is based on my childhood memories and stories of growing up on indigenous lands in the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma, a wildlife refuge next to Fort Sill, the largest field artillery military base in North America. I explore notions of good, evil, death, and life cycles. My depictions of beasts, animals, and machines act as metaphors for human behavior and cycles of violence. My artwork is a response to intrusive behavior by humans towards nature and other human beings.

John Hitchcock is an Associate Professor of printmaking in the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Website: hybridpress.net



"Brutality Ghosts and the Angel of Death"

John Hitchcock, 2007
Drawing/screenprint, 60" x 44"

STATION III

Jesus Falls the First Time

MICHAEL DUFFY

As a boy, I endured years of Christian indoctrination from the nuns and priests of my Catholic parish. Despite the dementia of the Roman Catholic operation – the sadism, the guilt, the awaiting fires of hell – I encountered some good Christians. The Christian philosophy appealed to me. It is selfless and pacifist. It provides some recommendations for proper behavior: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not covet, etc. Its founder, Jesus H. Christ, was a revolutionary thinker. He stood with the oppressed against the oppressor. He said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” And this classic: “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.” And how ‘bout: “Love thine enemy as thyself?” And torn from today’s headlines: “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Good stuff.

But Christianity, as currently practiced in America, doesn’t seem to reflect the values of the Prince of Peace. A religion that takes the depiction of gruesome torture (Christ on the Cross) as its logo may be giving the game away. We have become very coarse and cruel of late, with the renditions and the enhanced techniques and the cowardly and karmically disastrous drone killings in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And Christ would have a lot to say about this.

Michael Duffy lives in Madison, Wisconsin. He is a graphic artist and web designer.

Website: GitmoJesus.com



"The Passion
of the
Detainee"

Michael Duffy,
2009
72" x 30"
paint on glass

STATION IV

Jesus Meets His Mother

COLM MCCARTHY

As a highly lapsed, but always uncertain, Irish Catholic boy, I was a little reluctant to take part in this project. I grew up steeped in this symbolism. In Ireland in the 1970s and '80s we were “up to our necks in priests.” There was no separation of church and state, and so the church’s influence was felt in all aspects of our society. It still is.

Even after all these years, and though I live on another continent, I could not escape the nagging feeling that this project might be somehow sacrilegious or distasteful, and so I chose two stations that I felt were “safe”: this piece and “Jesus Meets the Pious Women of Jerusalem.”

The latter became far from “safe” as soon as my brain starting whirring, but I think this piece has quite a traditional feel. I simply wanted to portray grief. The grief of an Iraqi mother, an Afghan mother, an American mother. Any mother. My mother’s grief at the death of my father, just a few months before. An inconsolable, almost animal-like howl of loss that I hope to never hear again but know sadly that I will.

“It’s not fair, is it?” she cried over and over again. And all I could say was, “No, Ma, it’s not fair.”

Hopelessness. Helplessness. Loss. Grief.

Colm McCarthy was born in Dublin, Ireland. He is a self-taught photographer and printmaker, specializing in photographic prints on non-traditional surfaces. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

Website: colmmccarthy.net



Colm McCarthy, 2009
Silver gelatin, acrylic & varnish on copper, 18" x 20"

STATION V

Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

MIGUEL A. PEÑA

Torture is defined as the act of inflicting excruciating pain, as punishment or revenge, in order to get a confession or information, or for sheer cruelty. Its meaning is interpreted differently due to religious background, political affiliation, or moral judgment. It is my belief that interrogation is necessary to gain intelligence, however I do not condone interrogation methods that are obvious acts of torture.

Miguel A. Peña was born in Corpus Christi, Texas. He received his BFA from Texas A & M University–Corpus Christi with an emphasis in printmaking. He is currently in his third and final year at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as an MFA printmaking candidate. His works include the use of acrylic paint in conjunction with water-based ink that is screenprinted on canvas.

Website: miguelpena.org



Miguel A. Peña, 2009
Screenprint, acrylic on canvas, 50" x 50"

STATION VI

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

MIKE KONOPACKI

Veronica was a woman of Jerusalem who, according to legend, gave Jesus her veil to wipe his face as he bore his cross to Calvary. Jesus returned it with his countenance miraculously imprinted on the fabric. In this depiction, the face imprinted on the fabric is of the Afghan taxi driver, Dilawar, an innocent man tortured and killed by US forces at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. The US Army listed the official cause of death as homicide.

Dilawar was the subject of the 2007 Academy Award winning documentary, *Taxi to the Dark Side*. His image is screenprinted onto a faded US flag encased in a shadow box adorned with digital prints on panel. The Latin scroll reads, “We Glorify Torture.”

Mike Konopacki is a political cartoonist and illustrator. His work appears in the Madison, Wisconsin weekly, The Captial Times. His labor cartoons are syndicated nationally by Huck/Konopacki Labor Cartoons. Mike’s co-worker, Gary Huck, is the cartoonist for the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). Mr. Huck currently has an installation at the Mattress Factory gallery in Pittsburgh entitled, “Jesus of Nazareth Crown O’ Thorns Ring Toss Game” (2009).

Mike is the illustrator of and a co-author with Howard Zinn, Paul Buhle, Kathy Wilkes, and David Wagner of the graphic history, A People’s History of American Empire.

Website: solidarity.com/hkcartoons



Screenprint on faded flag in shadow box with digital prints on canvas, 17" x 32"
Mike Konopacki, 2009

STATION VII

Jesus Falls the Second Time

MIGUEL A. PEÑA

Much like our country's ideological and political views, my paintings measure 50/50. Each piece began with a painted background and includes multiple screenprinted graphic elements commonly used to torture or bind victims. This application is followed by additional transparent layering of color to achieve space.

Miguel A. Peña is also the artist of Station V, "Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross." See pages 10-11.



Miguel A. Peña, 2009
Screenprint, acrylic on canvas, 50" x 50"

STATION VIII

**Jesus Meets the Pious
Women of Jerusalem**

COLM McCARTHY

Women.

Used by the U.S. as a weapon of sexual torture to “break” devout Muslim men.

See no evil. Speak no evil. Hear no evil.

Blind justice.

The already dead prisoner, hooked up to an I.V. and wheeled before his fellow inmates to give the illusion that their captors are trying to help him.

What does she whisper in his ear? Words of comfort? Threats? Or does she interrogate him? It doesn't matter. Her ears are bound. She cannot hear his response. Nor does she care to. Her mind is already made up.

Colm McCarthy is also the artist of Station IV, “Jesus Meets His Mother.” See pages 8-9.



Colm McCarthy, 2009
Silver gelatin, acrylic & varnish on copper, 18" x 20"

STATION IX

Jesus Falls the Third Time

LESTER DORÉ

As an ex-Catholic, a practicing Quaker, and a follower of Jesus the social revolutionary, the Stations of the Cross as inspiration for the secret torture carried out in the so-called “War on Terror” came naturally to me. I don’t like to explain everything in my pictures: I think it drains the piece of the possibility of it resonating with each viewer, allowing the form and content to be interpreted individually. Sometimes I don’t even know until later what some parts of a work mean. But this particular piece is a conflation of incidents and influences and opinions reflecting my views and beliefs about the culpability and inspiration for what took place in Abu Ghraib, the Gitmo detention camp, the prison at Bagram Air Base, and secret detention facilities around the world set up by the Bush administration – and still being used by the Obama administration, as far as I know – to use extraordinary and illegal methods of interrogation of those detained. I hope by creating this piece to keep from internalizing my feelings about what I have learned and to make some small attempt to shock Americans out of their complacency, isolation, and rationalization about how the US government uses our tax dollars.

Lester Doré is a Madison artist whose career in political art began in 1967 with the Chicago Seed, an antiwar underground newspaper. He’s been at it ever since. He earned an MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1991, worked as a graphic designer for the UW-Madison School of Nursing, and retired from wage slavery in 2006. He has since devoted much of his time to creating political art for display and activism, filling his sketchbooks, and printmaking. His series of peace hero posters have been seen in numerous marches and demonstrations, and were displayed at the Heartland Cafe and Gallery in Chicago, the 2007 FGC Gathering, and the Alaska Peace Center in Fairbanks. He produced a poker deck of the 55 Most Wanted Warhawks shortly after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. He has worked with the Oaxacan revolutionary art collective, ASARO, and curated a show of their work, ¡Oaxaca Resiste!, in 2008. He is a founding member of Art Surge, the Madison-based political art collective, which has launched shows in Madison and Chicago.

Website: wanderoo.net



Lester Doré, 2009
Mixed media, 24" x 16"

STATION X

Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

STEVE CHAPPELL

After the attack of September 11, 2001, the United States lost an opportunity to demonstrate to the entire world what a great nation it can be. Had we taken more time to collect our thoughts and sort through our emotions, we could have shown that, even under extreme circumstances, we can be humble and wise. Instead, the Bush Administration reduced our nation to the very thing our enemies despise: a greedy, imperialist superpower, willing to claim whatever it desires whatever the cost, even hundreds and thousands of innocent lives. We will suffer the effects of our hasty vengeance for many years to come.

The Bible, Proverbs 15:18, reads: “He that is slow to anger not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but appeases it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, unites those again that have fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.”

By breaking the rules of the Geneva Convention, the Bush Administration has raised our country to a whole new level of hypocrisy. Throughout Bush’s rule, prisoners have been tortured and murdered. The torture techniques used have not only been physical but psychological as well, challenging the captives’ cultural, spiritual, and sexual values. These techniques were carried out sadistically by government-sanctioned interrogators. No compassion. No empathy. Only contempt.

Torture by our government should be viewed as a crime against our nation. Our government’s actions and behavior reflect on all of us. If the people of the United States do not stand up and acknowledge this by bringing the perpetrators to justice, then we are accomplices. We must practice the democracy we preach and formally charge the Bush Administration for its crimes. That’s the least we owe to all the innocent people whose lives have been taken or thrust into chaos.

Steve Chappell lives in Madison, Wisconsin. His interest in printmaking began in the early 1980s while studying at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Wood block printmaking has always been his central focus, though more recently he has turned his attention to cartooning and book design.

Website: schappellstudio.com



Steve Chappell, 2009
Drawing/archival inkjet print, 12.5" x 18"

STATION XI

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

PAMELA CREMER

I was raised Catholic. I draw upon the symbolism of the Catholic Church in my work. Such is the case for my contribution to the Stations of the Cross Project, which I have entitled, “The Charm of Torture: Tears of Shame.”

CHARM: An action or formula thought to have magical power.

TORTURE: Excruciating physical or mental pain and agony.

TEARS: A profusion of salty liquid spilling from the eyes and wetting the cheeks, especially as an expression of emotion.

SHAME: A painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness, or disgrace.

Torture is meant to shame the victim and is a shameful act by the torturer and those ordering such acts.

Pamela Cremer is a glass artist and instructor at Madison Area Technical College in the Graphic Design Department. Pamela is owner of Pamdemoneum Studio in Monona, Wisconsin. She has exhibited her work in many locations throughout the Midwest.

Website: glass-girl.com



"The Charm of Torture: Tears of Shame"

Pamela Cremer, 2009
Slumped glass and woven copper wire, 36" x 60"

STATION XII

Jesus Dies on the Cross

MIKE KONOPACKI

The most iconic of the shocking Abu Ghraib prison photos is of an Iraqi standing on a ration box with a sandbag over his head and an old threadbare blanket covering his body. Electric wires are attached to his outstretched fingers. This photo and many others depicting torture and humiliation were exposed by “60 Minutes” and published in the *New Yorker* with an article by Seymour Hersh.

My painting mimics the Christian icons of the late Middle Ages that glorified the execution of Christ. Images of torture and death were used by the Church to evoke piety in the viewer and sympathy for the dying Savior. My Christ figure is depicted as a Byzantine icon, glorified with ornate robes, but the tortured “thieves” on each side resemble those of Medieval art.

In truth, the “man on the box” was not killed at Abu Ghraib, but many Iraqis – both guilty and innocent – were tortured and killed for the salvation of American Empire.

Mike Konopacki is also the artist of Station VI, “Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.” See pages 12-13.



Mike Konopacki , 2009
Acrylic on panel, 18.5" x 31"

STATION XIII

Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

QUINCY NERI

The following excerpt, published by *The New Yorker* on March 24, 2008, is from a letter written by US Army Reservist Sabrina Harman, 372nd Military Police Company, while serving at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq:

I can't get it out of my head. I walk down stairs after blowing the whistle and beating on the cells with an asp to find "the taxicab driver" handcuffed backwards to his window naked with his underwear over his head and face. He looked like Jesus Christ. At first I had to laugh so I went on and grabbed the camera and took a picture. One of the guys took my asp and started "poking" at his dick. Again I thought, okay that's funny then it hit me, that's a form of molestation. You can't do that. I took more pictures now to "record" what is going on. They started talking to this man and at first he was talking "I'm just a taxicab driver, I did nothing." He claims he'd never try to hurt US soldiers that he picked up the wrong people. Then he stopped talking. They turned the lights out and slammed the door and left him there while they went down to cell #4. This man had been so fucked that when they grabbed his foot through the cell bars he began screaming and crying. After praying to Allah he moans a constant short Ah, Ah every few seconds for the rest of the night. I don't know what they did to this guy. The first one remained handcuffed for maybe 1-2 hours until he started yelling for Allah. So they went back in and handcuffed him to the top bunk on either side of the bed while he stood on the side. He was there for a little over an hour when he started yelling again for Allah. Not many people know this shit goes on.

A military jury convicted Harman on six of seven counts for her role in the abuse of Iraqi inmates. She faced a maximum of five years in prison, though the prosecutors asked the jury to give her three years. Harman was sentenced to six months in prison and a bad conduct discharge.

Quincy Neri was raised in Crystal Lake, Illinois. She has been blowing glass for 14 years and teaching drawing/illustration for Madison Area Technical College. She earned her BFA degree from Alfred University in 1999 and her MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2005. Her work has been featured in Glass Quarterly. Quincy has exhibited internationally, including solo and group exhibitions in Canada and the United States.

Website: quincyneri.com



“With Such Ease”

Quincy Neri, 2009
Acrylic ink on arches, mica dust, 9' x 5'

STATION XIV

Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

LESTER DORÉ

The 14th Station of the Cross – The Entombment – has long been a popular subject in Christian art. The Old Masters rendered this subject in paintings, etchings, and sculptures for the Church or their wealthy ruling-class patrons. My version is dedicated to a young taxi driver named Dilawar. In 2002, American soldiers beat him to death during his extra-judicial detention at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

Chained to the ceiling of his cell for several days, he called upon God in his pain and desperation – as Jesus did from the Cross, according to the Gospels. Unfortunately, Dilawar’s name for God was Allah, and every time he called out the name of Allah he was struck again with a blow to the legs that the guards had been taught would not show marks and was admissible to use to control prisoners. The doctor who autopsied Dilawar listed the cause of death as homicide; the Army reported that he had died of natural causes.

Eventually, a military investigation was conducted and a few of the soldiers who had participated in the beatings were demoted or reprimanded and given honorable discharges. The one who openly admitted what he had done was tried, convicted, served a few months in the brig, and was also honorably discharged. The commander of the interrogation unit who authorized harsh techniques of “softening up” detainees received a promotion and a Bronze Star for valor for her service at Bagram. She went on to serve at Abu Ghraib during the time the infamous photos of detainee abuse were taken. She is still in the Army training interrogators.

Dilawar is survived by his wife and a daughter who was two years old at the time of his death. His story has been told in the documentary film, *Taxi to the Dark Side*.

Lester Doré is also the artist of Station IX, “Jesus Falls the Third Time.” See pages 18-19.



Lester Doré, 2009
Mixed media, 24" x 16"

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ARTISTS TAKE ON TORTURE

October 10 thru 24, 2009

COMMONWEALTH GALLERY
Madison Enterprise Center
100 S. BALDWIN STREET
MADISON

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