

Exhibition Proposal

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Title: *The Impossible Interior – Picturing the Results of War*

EXHIBITION STATEMENT:

On October 3rd, 2015 a hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan was destroyed.

Operated by the international medical aid group Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, also called Doctors Without Borders), the Kunduz Trauma Center had been clearly and repeatedly identified to US commanders on the ground and within the command structure. In the weeks and days before the attacks, a number of communications between the hospital staff and military officials had taken place.

The location and mission of the hospital were well known.

Yet between 2 and 3 a.m. on that October morning, the hospital suffered a series of devastating bombing raids laid down by a United States Air Force gunship. MSF medical staff and patients were burned alive, torn apart by shrapnel, and a number were shot from above as they attempted to flee the area.

Military forces on the ground and US officials – all the way up to President Obama – gave a range of explanations. The Afghan government asserted that Taliban fighters were holed up in the hospital. There have been several investigations conducted by the United States, international groups, and Doctors Without Borders. None of these studies can rationalize ***the impossible nature of the event.***

Ultimately, the attack was just a stark example of what happens in the so-called fog of war when military objectives intersect with human beings. In this kind of situation, of course, humanity always loses. When missing or mistaking a target means the innocent die, when a space meant to preserve and sustain life becomes a crematorium, we are confronted by impossibilities. Indeed, they must confront us. We have to be willing to see the results of our wars starkly and repeatedly, whether through a documentary lens or through the artist's translation. ***It is only through acknowledging our own complicity that we can gain the moral authority to question, restrain, and curtail all kinds of war*** (economic, racial, social, or any other sort).

I assert that ***conflict itself is a central, ongoing compulsion for humanity***. So often we return to worship power and death. This turns the romantic notion of love or sexual desire being our eternal idol (most famously pictured by the Rodin sculpture of the same name) on its head. The will to dominate, to take, to own, to control; these forces are the backbones of war and consumerism in the modern world. If we wonder how racism, nationalism, or classism still exist in the 21st century we should look no further than the fact that we manufacture consent for war crimes via the soft vices of food and drink and social media.

The fact is that ***religion is no longer the opiate of the masses; entertainment is***. We would rather be titillated and flattered by social media than be serious about the realities of inequality or oppression. We would rather have the latest gadget or binge the most current hit show than recognize the violence that follows the concentration of global wealth in the hands of a few dozen neo-oligarchs.

The works in this exhibition represent my on going attempt to picture the impossible spaces created by our collective unwillingness to constrain power, war, greed, consumerism, and ignorance – in ourselves and in society at large. I have crafted a series of paintings that manifest the impossible spaces our wars have created. In these works ***I attempt to make plain the foolishness of conflict, oppression, and war***.

My artworks are meant to depict spaces that should never have existed.

But they do.

Whether they will continue to be made is a question for each of us. We answer the question with our votes, our credit cards, our meals, and our entertainment.