Abstract

In this study, I use visual and material culture that addresses the contemporary war in Afghanistan to critically assess the ways in which national conflict history is envisioned. I focus in particular on cultural production related to the involvement of Australia and Canada in the conflict. I do so to question the ways in which Australia’s and Canada’s engagements with this particular conflict are visualized in relation to their official narratives, which posit their military activities in Afghanistan as undertaken in the name of security, peacekeeping, and rebuilding. Such a query is important, because it allows me to investigate which visualizations contribute to the history and narrative of national engagements with conflict, and which are ignored. Moreover, it allows me to ask how visual and material culture not only constitutes, but also legitimates national conflict narratives. And finally, it allows me to locate examples within this field of cultural production that renegotiate, contest, subvert, and resist state representations.

These lines of inquiry help to situate my study of visual and material culture by suggesting that such objects can act as lenses through which to address what Jon Stratton and Ien Ang describe as the “unstable, provisional and often jeopardous status of the national” (1996, 381). Following Stratton and Ang, I approach the concept of the “nation” as “a contested terrain between historically specific ‘cultures’ structured in relations of dominance and subordination to each other” (367). Using exhibitions and cultural objects produced post-9/11 in Australia and Canada (that is, after 11 September 2001), I analyze the visual and material culture of conflict within the “contested terrain” of national/ist narratives. The particular process of culture-making exemplified in exhibitions and cultural objects is crucial when it comes to advancing national/ist narratives, since as I argue throughout this study, it represents part of the larger historical transition from the state enlistment of cultural production in support of nation-building to the neoliberal mobilization of visual culture for the global marketplace (Denning 2003).
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I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Commander (ret.) Yvonne Hepditch and Captain (N) (ret.) Jim Cahill. Mom and Dad: I want to thank you both for the incredible amount of kindness, generosity, and patience you have shown me over the past four years while I obsessed over this project. While our views on the war in Afghanistan and Iraq often differ drastically, you each gave me plenty of time and space to explore my own thoughts and opinions.
I recently discovered an entry in my journal from 16 January 1991, the date of the aerial bombardment that began the initial conflict to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait during the first Gulf War.

I remember watching the images of the early stages of battle on the evening news as a family and having intense reactions of fear, anger, and confusion. With both of you serving as officers in the Canadian Naval Reserves, I acutely felt the possibility of loss that this military engagement represented. As a ten year old growing up in Newfoundland, I could not truly envision or comprehend the actual mechanics of war—a privilege allotted to my position as a distant observer of events unfolding through mass media—but I felt a definite emotional attachment even within this by-proxy position. Perhaps my critical explorations of the material culture of conflict cannot be directly anchored in my feelings toward transnational war as a fifth-grader, but I do credit you both for instilling in me a sense of perseverance, enthusiasm, and passion that has carried me through this (often difficult) process of getting my doctorate.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Cultural Objects, Conflict History, and Contested Terrains

“Art” has always been contested terrain.

— Nelson and Shiff 2003, 1.

Art is a very real form of engagement with/in the world, rather than an escape from it or, worse yet, some decorative extra, able to be marginalized at will by those who would seek to deny its force.

— Meskimmon 2011, 92.

As I was in the process of finalizing my work on this dissertation, an elite US-group of CIA paramilitary and Navy seals shot and killed Osama bin Laden in his home in Pakistan, as part of a raid dubbed “Operation Neptune Spear.” Bin Laden was commonly known as the head of Al Qaeda, a radical Islamist group credited with the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre buildings in New York City—making his assassination a key moment in defining the past decade of global military warfare. While US President Barack Obama acknowledged that bin Laden’s death “does not mark the end of our [military] effort,” Obama also assured the American people that “justice has been done” (Obama 2011). The specter of bin Laden has haunted global military efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq, yet his death will not bring about an immediate end to the wars that US-allied forces blamed him for instigating almost ten years ago. Bin Laden’s assassination has since sparked many debates that have the potential to disrupt Obama’s narrative, including those focused on its relationship to the role of torture in gathering the intelligence that led to the US action, the future of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the lack of visual evidence surrounding bin Laden’s death and subsequent burial at sea, and the legitimacy

I begin with this example because the latter two debates surrounding the death of bin Laden—the importance of visual documentation and the role of the nation-state within transnational conflict—have particular relevance to this dissertation. In this study, I use visual and material culture that addresses the contemporary war in Afghanistan to critically assess the ways in which national conflict history is envisioned. I focus in particular on cultural production related to the involvement of Australia and Canada in the conflict. I do so to question the ways in which Australia’s and Canada’s engagements with this particular conflict are visualized in relation to their official narratives, which posit their military activities in Afghanistan as undertaken in the name of security, peacekeeping, and rebuilding. Such a query is important, because it allows me to investigate which visualizations contribute to the history and narrative of national engagements with conflict, and which are ignored. Moreover, it allows me to ask how visual and material culture not only constitutes, but also legitimates national conflict narratives. And finally, it allows me to locate examples within this field of cultural production that renegotiate, contest, subvert, and resist state representations.

These lines of inquiry help to situate my study of visual and material culture by suggesting that such objects can act as lenses through which to address what Jon Stratton and Ien Ang describe as the “unstable, provisional and often jeopardous status of the national” (1996, 381). Following Stratton and Ang, I approach the concept of the “nation” as “a contested terrain between historically specific ‘cultures’ structured in relations of dominance and subordination to
each other” (367). Using exhibitions and cultural objects produced post-9/11 in Australia and Canada (that is, after 11 September 2001), I analyze the visual and material culture of conflict within the “contested terrain” of national/ist narratives. I use “national/ist” as a critical term not only to assert the constituted category of “nation” as a project of the liberal order but also to problematize the way in which the word “national” is often employed to uncritically describe nation-based narratives and cultural products (McKay 1998; 2000). The particular process of culture-making exemplified in exhibitions and cultural objects is crucial when it comes to advancing national/ist narratives, since as I argue throughout this study, it represents part of the larger historical transition from the state enlistment of cultural production in support of nation-building to the neoliberal mobilization of visual culture for the global marketplace (Denning 2003).

The contested terrains, here, revolve around the self-identification of both Australia and Canada as global peacekeepers, which forms the official conflict narrative and approach to foreign policy in both nations. Both Australia and Canada have participated in global strategies of peacekeeping since 1948 when the United Nations’ (UN) Security Council authorized the deployment of observers to monitor an Israel-Arab truce in the Middle East (Borda 2002; Londey 2006; United Nations 2011). In relation to the current war in Afghanistan, Australia and Canada both participate through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is organized by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The ISAF promotes the efforts of its troops

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1 Stratton and Ang build here on literature developed since the early 1980s, when scholars across the humanities and social sciences began questioning the “unstable, provisional” status of nation and the cultures associated with it. See in particular Anderson (1991), Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992), and Smith (1993; 2000; 2008).

2 For more on the conflation of the “national” with the “national/ist” see Jessup, Morton and Robertson (forthcoming), who critically assess the latter term in relation to visual and material cultural production in Canada.
as “engaged more in peacekeeping and reconstruction than in fighting” (BBC 2009). The UN, which regulates the activities of the ISAF, defines contemporary peacekeepers as those who are “called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law” (United Nations 2011).

Australia and Canada are tied to peacekeeping efforts through their respective involvement with the ISAF, and each country promotes its national conflict narrative in terms of peacekeeping. Since October 2008, the official government policy of Australian involvement in Afghanistan is not war or armed defense, but rather “mentoring,” which involves “reconstruction and security operations” (Australian Government Department of Defence 2010). According to Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Peacekeeping and other related peace operations are a vital element in Australia’s contribution to international peace and security. Australia therefore plays an active role in international discussions to reform and improve the UN peacekeeping system” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008). Since September 2005, Canada’s official policy regarding Afghanistan (as well as that regarding other areas of conflict) is “stabilization and reconstruction,” and the government formed the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) and the Global Peace and Security Program (GPSP) in order “to create basic structures for peace and security, and take on responsibilities that used to be internal affairs of the state” (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2011). As Veterans Affairs Canada states, Canada’s “active combat role in Afghanistan is a further evolution of our soldiers’ long-standing willingness to put their lives on the line to help others achieve peace and freedom—this time in a place where the active fighting continues” (Veterans’ Affairs Canada 2011a). For both Australia and Canada, participation in global military conflict is defined in terms
of security, peacekeeping, and rebuilding. In this study, I label such a conflict narrative and strategy “humane peacekeeping” to signify the focus on low-human casualty numbers, humanitarian efforts, human rights, and peace-rather-than-war actions that are promoted in the official narratives of Australia’s and Canada’s governments and militaries, and reported by the mainstream media.

In this dissertation, I organize my visual and material cultural objects to address three different types of national/ist conflict narratives, which I loosely define here as official, dominant, and counter. These categories are general and overlap, and there are moments of rupture in their visualizations that complicate each narrative. In the case of Australia and Canada, the constituted category of “nation” is a project of the liberal order, which entails competing narratives and critiques that are accommodated by the dominant group. A liberal hegemony is a negotiation based on the ability of a hegemonic block to incorporate, accommodate, marginalize and, when none of these work, silence alternative positions as an ongoing process of maintaining dominance. It is always operative in the present; that is, hegemony exists as a state of constant negotiation, and it is difficult to tell what narrative has not been still-born as a critique for the very reason that the hegemonic block works to contain and manage dissent (Constant and Ducharme 2009; Gramsci 1973; McKay 2005).

Narratives in this sense operate in a constantly shifting dialogic relationship to one another. A narrative that might appear to critique may simply serve to inoculate against critique at another level, or may be acknowledged and thus “disarmed,” or accommodated and thus managed. The state contains and manages dissent on an ongoing basis. By “state,” I am referring to the administrative, executive, judiciary, and military practices that constitute the work of state officials. In order to examine the “contested terrain” of the liberal nation-state, I use the three categories of narrative—official, dominant, and counter—as heuristic devices to guide my
discussion of the resulting “types” of visual and material culture and to illuminate what I argue are three distinct ways in which military conflict helps to visualize the nation-state. The identification of three narratives is my attempt to define and complicate the “state’s version of the military conflict.” Rather than offer one version of what the state’s version of military conflict is, I propose that official, dominant, and counter narratives help to provide a complex, contested, and multi-dimensional understanding of the state’s narrative of military conflict which, I argue, “state” and “society” (or officials, artists, and citizens alike) collaborate in constituting, legitimating, and resisting.

I use the term “official narratives” to refer to projections of national/ist military activities that directly produce and reproduce state accounts. In Australia and Canada, the government and military describe their activities in Afghanistan in terms of humane peacekeeping and situate them as part of international efforts to ensure global peace and security—among them, those advanced by the ISAF (Canadian Forces 2007; Horner, Londey, and Bou 2009; Londey 2004). To demonstrate the deployment of “official” national/ist conflict narratives, I examine paintings produced by Australian and Canadian artists through state-sponsored programs, specifically the Official War Artist Scheme (OWAS) in Australia and the Canadian Forces Artist Program (CFAP) in Canada.

I define “dominant narratives” similarly to official narratives, as accounts that do not question the state’s version of the military conflict. Like official narratives, dominant narratives define Australian and Canadian military activities as humane peacekeeping in the context of international efforts. However, I refer to dominant narratives as those that use visualizations of national/ist conflict history and that are not directly related to those produced by state or military organizations, even though they seemingly mirror official narratives. To examine dominant narratives within the contested terrains of nation-states, I focus on exhibitions of Afghan “war
“war rugs”—contemporary textiles that interweave battle imagery with conventional rug designs. These exhibitions are not funded by state organizations, but are hosted by dominant cultural institutions in Australia and Canada and thereby echo official national/ist conflict narratives. The “war rugs” exhibitions allow me to examine the ways in which objects produced outside Australia and Canada are subsumed into the dominant narratives of these two nation-states, which legitimate current Australian and Canadian foreign policies involving their respective military missions in Afghanistan.

I identify “counter narratives” as those which question and resist official and dominant national/ist conflict histories. Counter narratives provide opportunities to envision multiple other scenarios that can move beyond the narratives of the liberal state itself. As Ian McKay explains, “there is no ‘top’ and no ‘bottom’: there is a centre and a periphery, a liberal project and its ‘resistors’” (2000, 638). While the cultural objects I examine within this category utilize imagery from official and dominant narratives, I illuminate the ways in which such revisualizations offer different ways of thinking about the liberal nation-state and its involvement in transnational conflict that do not simply reify the official or dominant perspective. Counter narratives do not simply advance Australian and Canadian military activities in Afghanistan as humane peacekeeping, rather they problematize these activities by offering a critical recounting of them.

In order to locate these alternative visualizations of conflict, I examine artists’ exhibitions that address national/ist conflict history, but that are not sponsored by either official war artist program. The types of objects I analyze here in relation to counter national/ist conflict narratives include videos, knitted “landmines,” illuminated paintings, and cardboard placards. While these different objects do not advance a unified counter narrative—one that can be combined to identify a singular critique of the “official” and “dominant” accounts—I consider them and their exhibitions together because they can be seen as providing alternative points of view to the other
two types of narratives. In particular, the exhibitions I consider in this discussion contest both the actions of Australian and Canadian military units in Afghanistan and the involvement of national military units with international policing bodies, such as the ISAF.

All of the case studies I include in this dissertation are Australian and Canadian exhibitions that address each country’s military actions during the most recent conflict in Afghanistan. Although I interrogate the larger intersections of visual and material culture with Australian and Canadian military action, I use these two specific state contexts as my case studies because they have similar histories of national/ist narration—that is, both are settler, liberal nation-states that define their current military actions in Afghanistan in terms of peacekeeping. However, while I frame this study as a discussion involving case studies from Australia and Canada, I am not attempting to compare and contrast the two national/ist histories. Rather, I draw out the similarities in representations of Canadian and Australian military involvement in Afghanistan to explore the uses of visual and material culture in national/ist conflict narratives.

My study considers these representations of Australian and Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan within the context of neoliberal globalization—a “periodizing concept” that must be historically contextualized (Denning 2003, 24). Neoliberal globalization has typically been studied as a homogenizing process, which deregulates and privatizes capitalist markets in order to encourage global trade (Lash and Lury 2007). According to historian Michael Denning, “globalization is largely understood as a process, a circuit of the global flow of commodities and communications” (2003, 22). Yet such transnational flows of objects, people, and ideas occur in unequal ways globally, a process that anthropologist Arjun Appadurai identifies as relations of disjuncture (1990; 2001). In this study, I suggest that this current age of globalization also marks a moment in which global capitalism changes the way nation-states
exercise their sovereignty and highlights the ways in which the exchange of cultural commodities occurs in uneven ways on the ground (Paul, Ikenberry, and Hall 2003; Yúdice 2003).

**Affecting representations of the nation in conflict**

In this study, I use exhibitions of state-sponsored war artist paintings, Afghan “war rugs,” and independently-produced videos, knitted “landmines,” and cardboard placards as my primary case studies. I also use the objects within these shows to explore the ways in which exhibitions and objects advance national/ist narratives of conflict in Canada and Australia or, alternatively, the ways in which they challenge national/ist narratives. That is, the objects of visual and material culture I examine here (exhibitions and artworks) serve as primary evidence in my argument. This methodological approach is premised on the idea that cultural objects are inextricably linked to national policies and the politics of global military warfare, rather than occupying a space “above” these processes. Throughout this study, I provide close readings of objects and exhibitions in order to highlight the ways in which they participate more broadly in a culture of warfare and militarization.

This use of visual and material culture as evidence in the advancement and critique of conflict history supports many of George Yúdice’s arguments regarding the employment of culture as an expedient resource in neoliberal state policy-making. Specifically, he suggests that, since the 1980s, culture has increasingly become a resource for capital development and for “socio-political and economic amelioration” (2003, 9). This culturalization of the economy does not happen organically, but is carefully fostered through agreements on trade and property, laws controlling the movement of mental and manual labour and, I add to Yúdice’s suggestions, state policies relating to transnational conflict (17). As Yúdice argues, “the concept of resource absorbs and cancels out hitherto prevailing distinctions among high culture, anthropological, and mass
culture definitions” (4). According to Yúdice, then, the previous role of such cultural categories as “art” is contained within the ideological umbrella of culture-as-resource, which dissolves such categories in the deployment of culture to solve social, political, and economic problems. In other words, Yúdice suggests that historically established object categories such as art, artefact, and commodity no longer apply as markers of value.3 As the utility of culture supplants these divisions between objects, the conventional values associated with the categories collapse. This disintegration of object categories implies that “culture is no longer experienced, valued, or understood as transcendent” (12), but that such constituencies as governments, non-governmental organizations, and corporations mobilize and give value to cultural practices and products based on the economic, social, and political utility of those practices and products.

Yúdice examines cultural products—including those that can be categorized as art—as commodities that circulate globally based not on their content, but on their economic or political utility in a globalized capitalist market. While I agree with Yúdice’s analysis of culture-as-resource, I would suggest that he does not effectively examine the ways in which the content of such products still determines their import in the global economy. As sociologist Janet Wolff explains, for example, examining only the utility of objects results in a study that focuses “on the ways in which social process (ideas, events, institutions) ‘influences’ art, or on the ways in which ‘art’ is used in the social process” (1996, 708). That is, Yúdice’s claims promote a type of study that positions such a product as “art” as resulting from socio-political events and economic considerations, which ignores the ways in which the content of the product itself actually helps to determine social policy and effect political and economic decisions (Morton 2009).

3 This argument concerning the anthropological and art historical object categories is also discussed by Phillips and Steiner (1999). I examine these categories in greater detail in Chapter 4.
Building upon and adapting Yúdice’s theory of culture-as-resource, I develop an approach to analyzing cultural objects that seeks to address this gap in Yúdice’s argument. Rather than focusing solely on the utility of culture (as Yúdice does), I examine objects in terms of their content and the uneven ways in which their utility is mobilized within different environments and amongst different constituencies. Content is neither inherent to the object itself nor reflective of its conditions of production, but is, rather, inscribed upon it; as art historian Irit Rogoff articulates, “meaning is not excavated for, but rather, … takes place in the present” (2006, n.p.; italics in original text). Therefore, the content of objects is determined by the readings that people in a particular space and time bring to it. To account for this content, I develop a methodology that combines three different approaches to object interpretation: representation, performativity, and affect.

My suggestion to fold together representation, performativity, and affect is not, at base, a fundamental transformation of the way in which object content is understood; rather, it posits that the ways in which art historical studies discuss and recognize content-making is historically contingent on these three overlapping interpretative frameworks. Conventionally, the discipline of art history has studied artworks as representative objects. That is, as Donald Preziosi explains, “Whenever art history was professionalized, it took the problem of causality as its general area of concern, construing its objects of study—individual works of art, however defined—as evidential in nature. It was routinely guided by the hypothesis,” he points out, “that an artwork is reflective, emblematic, or generally representative of its original time, place, and circumstances of production” (Preziosi 1998, 7; emphasis in original). In other words, disciplinary art history has insisted that the meaning or content of artworks has been understood as embedded in the objects themselves, since such objects represent their historical conditions of production. I argue that the interpretative framework of representation has since been complicated by theories of non-
representation, such as performativity and affect, in an effort to understand the art object (and visual and material culture more broadly) as dynamic, active, and not inherently bound to its historical context.

Originating in the works of philosopher Judith Butler (1990), performativity describes an active interaction between people, objects, and spaces. In that interaction, people interpret and understand objects based on personal experiences and critical engagements, as well as the ways in which the objects are presented to them. According to this interpretative framework, the meanings of objects do not reside in the objects themselves, but are inscribed upon them by viewers based on subjectivity, location, and atmosphere. In this way, the same or similar objects can create different meanings for different people within different circumstances. By critically assessing the theory of performativity in relation to that of representation, I suggest that the meanings of visual and material cultural objects are always dynamic, rather than fixed by their original circumstances of production.

Expanding upon theories of representation and performativity, I also use theories of affect to incorporate into my approach the interpretation of art objects employed in the present moment, as a way of narrating what Lauren Berlant refers to as “the historical present” (2008). Theories of affect allow for the possibility of reading a viewer’s broad sensory experiences of objects within an art space. While theories of representation and performativity account for both the conscious processing of visual and material signs and the physical manifestation of interacting with these signs through subjective interventions, neither account for other sensory experiences of artworks outside the visual. Affect theory thereby contributes another dimension to the seeing-acting-knowing arrangement offered by the combination of representation and performativity by suggesting that feeling and emotions are also zones of critical engagement. As Marsha Meskimmon writes, “Art operates most powerfully in the registers of affect, imagination and
resonance and, because of this, it invites dialogue, acknowledges (even courts) the generative possibilities of multiple meanings, and converses readily in and through difference” (2011, 92).

My methodology brings the processes of representation, performativity, and affect—seeing, acting, knowing, feeling—into dialogue in order to explore how visual and material cultural objects might be understood. This approach is particularly relevant to my discussions of the visualizations of Australian and Canadian military narratives in the post-9/11 era. When the US administration named this era of global conflict the “War on Terror,” it waged a war against an affective concept—Terror. Affect therefore seems a particularly relevant analytical tool in my study, which examines the ways in which various visualizations of national/ist military efforts have actually become a means to police, control, and secure feelings about war.

The terrains of warfare

Contemporary warfare has been marked by discussions in mainstream media as well as in academia primarily by its deterritorialization. The War on Terror was initiated in Afghanistan, spread to Iraq, and most recently with bin Laden’s assassination, expanded to Pakistan. Additionally, arrests related to the War on Terror have occurred in a wide variety of locations, including Australia, Canada, the US, the UK, and Spain. The global War on Terror is presented as being waged against a deterritorialized and denationalized enemy force, the spread of terror through terrorism. The use of force in the name of this global war in such geographically disparate locales illuminates how warfare is no longer primarily used against or contained within states themselves: it is a war in Afghanistan and a war in Iraq, but a war on terror. As Hardt and Negri write, “the limits of war are rendered indeterminate, both spatially and temporally…..Such wars can potentially extend anywhere for any period of time” (2004, 14). Australia and Canada’s participation in contemporary warfare, specifically the War on Terror, occurs within and outside
of their geographic boundaries. As well, the rhetoric of the War on Terror justifies pre-emptive war, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which was legitimated by the US and its allies as preventing terror from striking (Brewer 2009; Lewis 2007). In the name of global security and freedom, and advanced as a moral obligation to guard universal human rights (which ignores the uneven value of human life under global capitalism), war can extend infinitely to respond to wherever “terror” is perceived as a threat to the world order. War is no longer bounded by the nation-state.

As war is perceived to be deterritorialized, a perceived “enemy” is no longer “a stable sovereign subject” (i.e. a nation-state), but rather becomes “an elusive and amorphous network that cannot be contained within boundaries” (Hardt and Negri 2008, 52). As the “stable sovereign subject” is shifting from the nation-state, Hardt and Negri propose that sovereign power is transplanted to a supra-national non-place, unregulated by the demands of one particular state or another. This global force, they suggest, does not eliminate the nation-state, but it does present a different global order than that arranged by the Treaty of Westphalia which, as David Harvey summarizes, “established for the first time in 1648 the principle that independent sovereign states, each recognizing their autonomy and territorial integrity, should co-exist in the capitalist world” (2000, 60). Identifying specifically the form of this new, deterritorialized and denationalized sovereign power has proven to be difficult—although it could be labelled a new “imperial sovereignty” (Hardt and Negri 2000).

However, while the War on Terror has particular deterritorializing aspects, the transitional narrative that presumes that the category of “nation” is no longer relevant is a misrepresentation. While the liberal nation-state changes under global military conflict and neoliberal globalization, it does not disappear. The categories “Australia” and “Canada” are not static, predetermined, or ahistorical, but are constantly changing in response to the internal and
external pressures of neoliberalism, effecting modifications that are particularly apparent in the historical present. Eric Hobsbawm questions the status of nation-states within a rapidly globalizing world by suggesting that “one general trend can be observed probably across most of the planet: the change in the position of the independent territorial state itself” (2007, 36). Similarly, Saskia Sassen asserts, “it is not the national state as such, in its totality, but particular components that are undergoing denationalization” (2006, 8). The project of the nation-state, then, adapts and is reconstituted based on the conditions and demands of a particular historical moment. Recognition of the contingent and dynamic nature of the nation-state thereby provides an important theoretical foundation from which to move beyond art historical analyzes that naturalize the “nation” as a category central to interpreting objects of art and culture.

In fact, the very aspects that mark the War on Terror as deterritorializing, including affect and national participation in international organizations such as NATO, are rooted in the space of the nation-state. In this way, contemporary war is not deterritorializing so much as it is an ideological projection of deterritorialization. Using the title “The War on Terror” to categorize the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and other transnational policing measures that have occurred within the territorial boundaries of a variety of nation-states, illuminates the importance of affect—terror—within contemporary global military conflict. However, “terror” is not the only affective concept that is mobilized in relation to these war efforts; an affect of care as an antidote to that of terror is particularly significant in relation to the promotion of Australia’s and Canada’s military efforts. The official conflict narratives of both Australia and Canada as humane peacekeeping, I argue, are premised on the affect of care, which is presented as a kindly and

4 Jessup, Morton and Robertson’s forthcoming edited volume, Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada addresses this shifting concept of the nation-state in relation to art historical analysis, paying particular attention to the ways in which this has advanced Canadian art history as a national/ist project.
generous effort to ensure global peace and security. Therefore, the political economy of affect is the basis by which Australia and Canada self-identify as liberal nation-states in relation to global military conflict. This identification of Australia and Canada through an affect of care functions to reinstate the boundaries of nation-states, rather than to deterritorialize them.

While affect can be interpreted as a deterritorializing process, the political economy of affect is uneven because only particular nation-states are allowed to be positioned as inhabiting specific affects. Deterritorializing through war, then, is not democratic; not every nation-state is permitted to inhabit an affect of care, as Australia and Canada do. In the historical present, Australia and Canada are relevant in relation to their self-definition as humane peacekeepers in the War on Terror. The ability of either country to situate its military activities through an affect of care and to participate in a multinational war effort, I argue, is directly related to its identity as a liberal nation-state. In the same way that an affect of care is posited as a remedy to the affect of terror, the proponents of the War on Terror present liberalism as the solution to the irrational, religious fundamentalism that is perceived by these proponents to bring about terrorism (Berman 2003; Huntington 1996). Liberalism is posited as encouraging democracy, and therefore, freedom for the citizens of liberal nation-states, whereas terrorism is positioned as the actions of irrational madmen who hate the liberal values of freedom and democracy and is fostered in nations with non-liberal political regimes (Mamdani 2004; Wilkinson 2006). The War on Terror, then, is waged by good liberal nation-states, which grounds this war in a particular time and space. The ability of Australia and Canada to locate their participation in the war through an affect of care is positively correlated with their identification as liberal nation-states.

Like the assertion of particular national affects, the participation of liberal nation-states in international organizations such as NATO operates both to reinstate the boundaries of liberal nation-states as well as to deterritorialize war efforts. Geographer Merje Kuus defines NATO’s
evolving transnational military alliance as cosmopolitan militarism, which is “the framing of a military alliance in terms of cosmopolitan spaces that transcend national borders and ideological blocks to unite the whole globe” (2009, 546). As Kuus writes,

Traditionally, militarism relies on nationalist geographical imaginaries. Historically, the spaces of empire, the West, or the Free World have also served to “ground” militarism. The current phase of NATO enlargement projects a different story. It is a story of the whole humanity and the whole global space gently guarded by beneficent NATO. The world's largest military alliance appears to have departed from the ideological framework of the Cold War era—in which NATO was an antidote to Soviet Communism—and to have become a magnetic center of international cooperation in spheres like peacekeeping, landmine destruction, and democracy building. There is no outside and no ideological enemy in this space; there are only different kinds and degrees of belonging to the inside. (546)

Kuus examines the “new” NATO as a globalizing, neoliberal entity that transcends the liberal nation-state in order to ensure global freedom and democracy. However, while NATO’s geographic space and mechanisms of legitimation are expanding to include the whole globe, the framework of NATO is not accessible to all nation-states equally. Certain states are permitted to become members, such as Canada, while others are included as partner countries, such as Australia, and others still are excluded from any membership at all. Therefore, while participation in international organizations such as NATO signal specific forms of deterrioralization occurring in the War on Terror, the boundaries and function of the nation-state are still present; cosmopolitan militarism demands that each nation-state participates as either an ally or enemy. And, not all nation-states are equally free to choose their labels as allies and enemies.

The recognition of current global military conflict as both deterrioralizing and reinstating the boundaries of the nation-state is illustrated specifically by participation of Australia and Canada in the War on Terror. While Australia and Canada are distinct, liberal nation-states, both participate in the war in Afghanistan through international organizations. As
settler, liberal nation-states that are part of the British Commonwealth, Australia and Canada have historically advanced their national/ist conflict narratives in similar ways (Carroll 2009; Horner, Londey, and Bou 2009; Londey 2004; Maloney 2008; Smith 1990). Yet, despite this similarity, Australian and Canadian conflict histories emerging in the post-9/11 era distinguish themselves within the global politics of transnational warfare. Although each country has played a role in the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the reactions of the governments of Australia and Canada to 9/11, and the subsequent US-led and British-supported invasion of Afghanistan, were different. Australia invoked the Australia New Zealand and United States (ANZUS) Treaty for the first time in its fifty year history (Howard 2001), and initially participated in Operation Enduring Freedom, the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, in 2008 Australia began to separate itself strategically from the actions of the second war campaign as questions increased regarding the justifications for the invasion of Iraq, including the claims that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the lack of success in stabilizing the country (Nizza 2008; O’Malley 2009). In 2008, Australia withdrew the majority of its troops from Iraq, but increased its troop numbers in Afghanistan, contributing to the UN-sanctioned and NATO-organized ISAF.

Although Canada has also been militarily involved in Afghanistan, the Canadian government did not participate in Operation Enduring Freedom. Rather, the Canadian military, entered into the conflict at a later stage and positioned itself as a peacekeeping, global middle-power. Despite the peacekeeping narrative that arose in conjunction with this involvement, which situates Canadian actions as unconnected with the aggressive armed military response of other states, Canada is a member of NATO and acted in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF, an extraterritorial policing unit. Canada has long produced and reproduced its foreign policy involving conflict in what I identify as humane peacekeeping (Carroll 2009; Maloney 2002, 2008;
Melady 2006; Razack 2004), which intersects with Canadian involvement in the ISAF and its efforts in support of civic construction for the betterment of Afghan people. Yet in order to establish a recognizable presence in the war effort in Afghanistan, the Canadian government and its military have promoted the distinct significance of their work in Afghanistan. For instance, the Canadian government recognized the importance of visually representing the state’s transnational military involvement most recently by a plan for Canadian Forces to build a mock Afghan village in the courtyard of the Canadian embassy in Washington. The plan was to simulate a conflict zone at this site several times during October 2009; the performance included the detonation of improvised explosive devices that would normally cause mass damage to the village and injuries to the Afghan civilians who live there. The dramatic re-enactment would finish with Canadian medics rushing in to save the wounded. The purpose of this scenario was to demonstrate the importance of the Canadian humanitarian war effort in Afghanistan. These performances were scheduled to coincide with a two-day conference hosted by the embassy that focussed on discussions of the war effort in Afghanistan between Canadian, American, and Afghan officials.

Although in the end the demonstrations were not realized, this diplomatic and military gesture was set to be performed by trained professionals, a dramatic rendition premised on the affects of terror, fear, care, and safety. With it, the Canadian government firmly asserted the importance of its role in the peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts that have dominated current global policies toward Afghanistan and Iraq. Located within this larger context (and referring back to the debates surrounding the event and outcome of the recent attack on bin Laden), this example illuminates the ways in which a state’s global military activities are sites to examine the

5 At the time of writing, no official reason has been advanced publicly as to why the plans for this performance were cancelled (Globe and Mail 2009a; 2009b).
“contested terrain” of the liberal nation-state itself, and to highlight how national conflict is located in, is produced by, and produces both territory and deterritorialization. Moreover, the visual and material culture of Australia and Canada at war are integral components to understanding these liberal nation-states in the historical present.

Defined in terms of cosmopolitan militarism, Australia’s and Canada’s recent conflict histories are inextricably linked to the military efforts of a number of other nation-states, as well as to the operations of several intergovernmental organizations. The ISAF, in particular, has asserted itself as a transnational and central organization orchestrating activities and manoeuvres in Afghanistan. The main mission of the ISAF is security, reconstruction and development, and governance. On its official website, the ISAF defines its mission using the language of peacekeeping and rebuilding rather than combat. It states,

In support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ISAF conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population. (ISAF 2011)

The language of security, peacekeeping, and rebuilding is of central importance to legitimating transnational conflict activities in Afghanistan. Security provides a vocabulary for engaging in extraterritorial policing, which relies on the naturalization of globalizing military tactics for public acceptance. As Giorgio Agamben writes, “While disciplinary power isolates and closes off territories, measures of security lead to an opening and globalisation. … [Such] measures of security can only function within a context of freedom, trade, and individual initiative” (2002,

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6 I discuss the naturalization of military tactics in relation to Agamben’s concept of the permanent state of exception in detail in Chapter 3.
When framed as a security measure, then, war is mutually constitutive with neoliberal globalization, and in order for a nation-state to legitimate itself within this global context, it must situate itself as a key actor on the global conflict stage.

Although a major withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan is scheduled for 2011, Canadian Forces will continue to participate in the ISAF, which trains the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. In Australia, there have been calls for a similar strategy. However, both Australia’s current Prime Minister and Chief of Defence deny that an immediate withdrawal is planned, and propose 2014 as a more appropriate date to start withdrawing Australian troops (Hall 2011). While the ways in which this particular conflict will continue to develop remain unclear, Australia’s and Canada’s roles within global politics are clearly linked with their involvement in such global military efforts.

The acceptance of infinitely expansive, deterritorialized warfare is dependent on a particular logic of global militarization within and beyond national spaces and publics. The ideological projection of warfare as deterritorializing promotes a global order where, as Kuus puts it, “there is no outside or no ideological enemy …; there are only different kinds and degrees of belonging to the inside” (2009, 546). This infinitely expansive, geographically indeterminate logic to war is naturalized through structures of militarization that produce a particular normative space, which “refers to a multifaceted social process by which military approaches to social problems gain elite and popular acceptance” (547). Militarization, then, is normalized not only through military institutions and conflict, but also through civilian structures such as visualizations, education, and the mainstream media; these areas operate as “the structures of legitimacy on which military force depends” (548; emphasis in original). Representations of Australian and Canadian military activities in war zones linked to the War on Terror, then, become particularly significant in relation to Australia and Canada’s participation in
contemporary war because they are part of the “structures of legitimacy” that help to produce and reproduce this shifting idea of militarization.

**Contested terrains of visualizing national/ist involvement in global military conflict**

This project analyzes visual and material culture in relation to Australia and Canada and global military conflict. It conceptualizes Australia and Canada as “contested terrains” to acknowledge the ways in which they re-envision themselves as liberal nation-states within the ideological projection of warfare as deterritorializing. This study analyzes such visualizations by examining the ways in which they simultaneously produce and resist national/ist conflict narratives. I have divided it into four chapters, each driven by a specific theme that elucidates the different ways in which visualizations of Australia and Canada at war engage with official, dominant, and counter narratives of national/ist military history. Each chapter examines exhibitions of visual and material culture produced in Australia and Canada between 2001 and 2011. In doing so, it illuminates the role of visual and material culture in determining each nation-state’s involvement in contemporary warfare.

Chapter 2 presents a detailed discussion of three interpretative frameworks that I see as essential to understanding the visual and material culture of conflict: representation, performativity, and affect. I anchor this theoretical analysis to the development of the Australian War Memorial and the Canadian War Museum in order to demonstrate the interrelation of these interpretative frameworks to the histories of liberalism, military conflict, and nation-building. The chapter consists of three sections: in the first, I study the history of representation within conventional museum practices; in the second, I analyze critical evaluations of this history, particularly through theories of performativity and a reassessment of representation as the main operative principle for interpreting and displaying objects of art and culture; and, in the third, I
focus on affect as a theory of non-representation that has been neglected in more recent critical re-evaluations of museum display.

Building upon the methodological and theoretical framework established in Chapter 2, I organize Chapter 3 as a case study analysis of two museum exhibitions that display works produced in state-sponsored artist programs: the Australian War Memorial (AWM) exhibition, Framing Conflict (2008-10), a touring exhibition of works by artists Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, and the Canadian War Museum (CWM) exhibition, A Brush with War (2010-1), a touring group exhibition of artworks. Both exhibitions are composed of paintings by contemporary artists who were embedded with military forces in Afghanistan through the Australian state-sponsored artist program, Official War Artist Scheme (OWAS), and the Canadian state-sponsored artist program, Canadian Forces Artist Program (CFAP), respectively. I examine the exhibitions in relation to official Australian and Canadian narratives of military participation in Afghanistan as humane, moral, and for peacekeeping purposes. To do this, I analyze the ways in which state-sponsored artists’s programs generate contemporary artworks both to document military actions and to provoke particular emotional responses in their viewers. I suggest throughout this chapter that such programs thereby utilize strategies intended to generate support, respectively, for Australian and Canadian state policies of warfare.

In Chapter 4, I focus on exhibitions of a particular cultural object type borne from conflict, Afghan “war rugs,” which Afghan refugees produce in camps located in Pakistan. The exhibitions of “war rugs” constitute significant case studies because museums in Australia and Canada have readily employed these objects to legitimate state military involvement in Afghanistan. This chapter examines the ways in which cultural objects produced physically and culturally “outside” of Australia and Canada can nevertheless be subsumed into specific and recognizable dominant narratives that then define that state’s conflict history. To demonstrate

In Chapter 5, I interrogate works that challenge and resist the official and dominant narratives outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, and instead offer counter narratives through alternative accounts. In this chapter, I look at exhibitions and objects that question the activities of national/ist military units, specifically in terms of the ways in which such activities depend on particular visual economies. As mainstream broadcast news coverage often reinforces Australian and Canadian state policies in its visual representations, many cultural producers have subverted such portrayals by challenging hegemonic depictions in their art practice. The works discussed in this chapter, which range from exhibitions of illuminated internet portraits, videos, knitted objects, and cardboard placards, support the Brechtian notion of making the familiar unfamiliar and making the unfamiliar familiar (Brecht 1964). Specifically, they employ Brecht’s strategy of situating everyday images, objects, or ideas in ways that defamiliarize or denaturalize conventional expectations in order to provoke new and alternative ways of thinking.

Taken together, these chapters critically assess the implications of visualizing national/ist narratives of warfare in the historical present. My study offers new ways of thinking about the ways in which visual and material culture operates as a social, political, and economic agent in constituting Australia and Canada as liberal nation-states in transnational conflict. This study is important because it investigates which visualizations contribute to national engagements with conflict and which are ignored. Moreover, it allows me to ask how visual and material culture not only constitutes, but also legitimates national conflict narratives. And finally, it allows me to locate examples within this field of cultural production that renegotiate, contest, subvert, and resist state representations. This approach is based upon the notion that these objects are
interconnected with the politics of global military warfare, rather than occupying a space separate from such processes. I offer this study as an entry-point into larger dialogues about the study of the role of cultural objects, the ongoing relevance of the liberal nation-state, and transnational military warfare.
Chapter 2
Affecting Engagements: Theories of Representation and Non-representation to Visualize the Nation in Conflict

...as cultural institutions [museums] aspire to a universalistic project of enshrining transcendent values, whether in art, science or history. But it should not be forgotten that they also purport to serve as a storehouse of their nations’ qualities.

— Zolberg 1996, 70.

Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made.

— Australian War Memorial Slogan, quoting Charles Bean 1948.

It had always been in the mind of many Australian soldiers that records and relics of their fighting would be preserved in some institutions in Australia, and to several of us it had seemed that a museum housing these would form the most natural, interesting, and inspiring memorial to those who fell.

—Bean 1948, 5.

The spirit of a country. The courage of its people.

— Canadian War Museum Slogan, 2005.

Art operates most powerfully in the registers of affect, imagination and resonance and, because of this, it invites dialogue, acknowledges (even courts) the generative possibilities of multiple meanings, and converses readily in and through difference.

— Meskimmon 2011, 92.

In this chapter, I focus on the critical history of exhibitionary practices in dominant cultural institutions, examining in particular the display of military history in Australia and Canada. In doing this, I analyze representation as the central mode within the museum’s space as well as of
its institutional rhetoric, which has been articulated primarily through the discipline of art history. My objective is to elucidate how disciplinary art history developed representation as a method, and how this development both constituted, and was constituted by, the formation of the modern liberal nation-state. My argument is predicated on the fact that the constitution of representation as an art historical trope is inextricably linked to liberalism as a totalizing philosophy (McKay 2000). To build this argument, I frame this chapter around an examination of the purposes and processes of representation as an art historical mode that serves particular socio-political goals—specifically, the production and reproduction of the liberal citizen within liberal capitalist modernity. Representation is, I contend, always an incomplete way of producing historical narratives because it denies those aspects of history that are incapable of being represented, including affectual engagements with historical events such as war.

Following current critical interest in affect (Brennan 2004; Clough 2007; Massumi 2002; Thrift 2007), I locate affectivity within the emergence of what has been called theories of non-representation, described by Sean Carter and Derek McCormack as “approaches that challenge the primacy of representation as the basis for thinking, knowing and politics” (2010, 103). I ask: how do theories of affect complicate or enhance our understanding of the relationship between cultural objects and national/ist narratives of war? While I argue that through representation museums deny affectual or emotive aspects of historical narratives, I am not suggesting they completely ignore particular non-representative elements in their exhibitionary practices. Rather, it is the evaluations, explanations, and critiques of museum exhibitions that have consistently

7 The space of the museum has been heavily influenced by a variety of different disciplines labelled the historical sciences, which includes anthropology, history, art history, biology, archaeology. These disciplines are not mutually exclusive from each other and have developed subjects and methodologies in tandem. While not denying or ignoring the influences of these other fields of knowledge, for my own interests in this project I focus mainly on the official disciplinary parameters of art history.
ignored the importance of affects, focusing simply on percepts, in composing the field of exhibitionary practices. That is, most art historical examinations into the aesthetic, social, and political aspects of displays concentrate mainly on what is visually presented, in what arrangement, and to what purpose. Representation, as the fundamental operative principle, consists of arranging and classifying objects into an orderly, meaningful narrative, with analyses excavating and interpreting these hidden meanings (Foucault 1973; Yúdice 2003). This process, I suggest, ignores a crucial element in how knowledge is produced, which includes non-representative principles. This parochial mode of knowledge production privileges percepts over affects, vision over senses, understanding over feeling, and thought over embodiment.

The problems and parameters of representation within museum practice and art history have been re-evaluated since the late twentieth century. Critical interventions into conventional display techniques of cultural institutions occurred through the New Museology (Message 2006; Vergo 1989). Art history has also been critically reassessed through interventions that question the value systems that define the discipline as well as through the development of different fields of study that seek to move beyond disciplinary boundaries, such as visual and material culture studies (Dikovitskaya 2005; Mitchell 1995; Mirzoeff 1998, 1999; Rogoff 1998, 2003) and cultural studies (Bennett 1992; Denning 2004; Johnson 1986-7; Stratton and Ang 1996). Many of these critiques have unpacked the politics of representation, and attempted to move beyond conventional museum binaries—such as production/consumption, display/reception, submission/resistance—in order to unravel the complicated network of subjectivities involved in creating knowledge and meaning. In doing this, the critical revisions scholars have offered have located the museum as a site where politics and ideas are created, not simply reflected; that is, they have made the museums apparent as a site not of representation, but of possibility, a place in
which, as Irit Rogoff asserts, “meaning is not excavated for, but rather, … takes place in the present” (Rogoff 2006, n.p.; emphasis in original).

Critical studies of the museum have also unpacked the patriarchal history of the art canon and of representation as the exhibitionary practice of this history. In addition to deconstructing, such critical work has offered possible alternatives to understanding meanings produced within the museum space through object display. The new ways of seeing that have resulted from such critical revisions locate knowledge production, not in the objects as representative of one particular universal narrative, but in interpretation, as variable and as generated by the subjectivities of audience members encountering objects in exhibition at different times, in various places, and under varying circumstances. The analysis of performance, I suggest, has been particularly effective in rethinking the processes of representation in the museum space (Rogoff 2002; Yúdice 2003). I argue, however, that although these critical revisions shift emphasis from representation, there is still a scholarly gap in the study of how embodied, affectual experiences contribute to knowledge production. This affective transaction goes beyond performance. Performance signifies the repetition of an action in order to sway thought; I suggest that, through affect, the opposite can also be true: the feeling can generate the desire to act and function in a particular way. Within this chapter, I seek to build upon these critical revisions to generate a way of thinking and feeling about meaning that incorporates affect and theories of non-representation.

This chapter is a critical history of how museum exhibitions generate meaning in relation to the installation of liberalism as the totalizing philosophy in Australia and Canada in the twentieth century. Specifically, I interrogate the importance of visualizing war and national/ist military activities to the production and reproduction of particular narratives of nation. I anchor my theoretical analysis in the official institutionalization of military history through the history
and installation of national/ist war museums. In so doing, I use national/ist war museums as a lens to study the unfolding of liberalism as a commonsense narrative. To this end I examine three main elements: first, I study the history of representation within conventional museum practices; second, I analyze critical evaluations of this history and the reassessment of representation as the main operative principle of knowledge production; and third, I focus on affect as a theory of non-representation that has been neglected in such critical re-evaluations. By outlining the possibilities and limitations of both theories of representation and non-representation, I intend to illustrate a more thorough and complete history of the visualization of military history and national/ist narratives within globalization.

**Theory of representation: A history of museums and liberalism**

In this section, I present a critical history of representation, particularly of military history, by examining the mutually constitutive relationship between museums as dominant cultural institutions and liberalism as the politico-economic logic of the national projects of Australia and Canada. I focus on the rhetoric and space of exhibitions of official narratives of national/ist war history as inextricably linked to the development of liberalism in both Australia and Canada. By rhetoric and space of the museum, I am referring to both the physical arrangement and verbal articulation of cultural objects through museological practices and art historical discourse. Representation functions as the rhetorical and spatial organization that gives shape to the intersections between exhibitions and liberalism. Anchored in the post-Enlightenment Kantian notion of the reasoned, self-possessed individual, representation operates as a static and dominant mode of understanding the process of meaning-making of cultural objects. In this chapter, I ask: What is represented? By whom? To whom? To what end? My objective is to explore the complex social, political, and historical network of ways through which the nation is represented and
visualized in official and dominant narratives of military history. In particular, I consider contemporary national/ist narratives of Australian and Canadian conflict and the relationship of these narratives to global discourses that advance freedom, security, and democracy as products of humane, moral, and peacekeeping military tactics.

Both Australia and Canada have national histories that are heavily connected to reports and representations of warfare, particularly those from World War I. Occurring soon after the birth of both nations as independent dominions within the British Commonwealth, the Great War of 1914-1918 became an integral moment for Australia and Canada to prove themselves as dominant, worthy, and distinct from the other units in the Empire (Barris 2007; Bean 1924, 1933, 1948; McKenna and Ward 2007; Reed 2004). While Australia and Canada remained dominions within the larger British Empire, they federalized in 1867 and 1901, respectively. The war provided a moment for each dominion to establish itself as an identifiable and superior polity within the larger British Empire, and both Australia and Canada established national founding military myths based on their respective participation in the conflict.

While Australia and Canada did not gain sovereign control of their foreign policies, including acts of war, until the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931—it was adopted that year by Canada, and eleven years later, in 1942, by Australia—the formation of the Imperial War Cabinet in 1917 provided equal representations from dominions of the Empire to participate in executive decisions regarding Imperial actions of war (Drummond 2006). Additionally in this year, Resolution IX was passed, which encouraged that constitutional relations of the Empire be changed so that the self-government of the dominions would extend from domestic affairs to include control over their own foreign policies and external relations (Intergovernmental Affairs 2010; MacLaren 2006; White and Hussey 1966). With dominions and colonies contributing identifiable and credited fighting units to the Imperial war effort, the Great War provided an
opportunity for each former colony to direct its military activities and succeed on its own terms, thereby proving that it was worthy of the constitutional changes that were effecting its new status as an independent nation within the larger Empire.

A state’s ability to make and dictate its own participation in war, that is to monopolize legitimate violence internal and external to the boundaries of the state, is a central component in defining and identifying the nation within liberalism. While both Australia and Canada federalized as semi-autonomous polities prior to 1914, it was during the Great War that each country came of age (Barris 2007; Bean 1924, 1948). Their formations as semi-autonomous polities, however, were plagued with the ambivalence of being subject to and sovereign from the British monarchy. That is, the development of each as a liberal nation-state was influenced both by conditions distinct to each geopolitical site and by maintaining a distinct and recognizable British heritage. As settler nations and as large expanses of territory that needed to be governed as cohesive units, both Australia and Canada developed as liberal projects, heavily influenced by the British colonial system. However, each system of liberalism developed under different historical conditions—and, thus, developed differently. “Canada’s” liberal order was, therefore, different from “Australia’s,” and from those of other nations, such as the US or Britain, because of the historical circumstances of its development in Canada, as those who sought to establish a liberal hegemony dealt with the particular historical circumstances of nineteenth-century northern North America (Constant and Ducharme 2009; McKay 2000).

The liberal order, as it developed as part of the projects of “Australia” and “Canada” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was dependent on a fundamental “belief in the epistemological and ontological primacy of the category ‘individual’” (McKay 2000, 623). This individual was posited as more real or primary than human society and its institutions, rendering the state as lacking any “finality of its own; it is the individual, whose rights were predicated on
self-possession and property, whose purposes, knowledges, and practices truly existed, and whose ‘interests’ were ‘obvious’” (624). In this formation, the principle role of the liberal state was to protect the rights of the individual (McKay 1992, xiii).

Although the individual was the core tenet of liberal ideology, three elements structured liberal thought: liberty, equality, and property. Ian McKay outlines these:

**Liberty**: for the *individual*, defined within liberalism not as a living human being but as the free-standing adult male who, within his private sphere, should be free to regulate his own activities without interference from the state. **Equality**: but only for such *individuals*, defined by their free-standing independence, who enjoy formal equality before the law (but not equality when it comes to their social conditions). **Property**: in many respects, the most fundamental principle of all, and the foundation of all the others: it is by holding property that the *individual* sustains his claim to recognition. (2005, 59; emphases in original)

This triumvirate, arranged as a hierarchy of principles, in practice, normally situates property at the top and equality at the bottom; as McKay explains, liberalism grants a “prior ontological and epistemological status to ‘the individual’—the human being who is the ‘proprietor’ of him- or herself, and whose freedom should be limited only by voluntary obligations to others or God, and by the rules necessary to obtain the equal freedom of other individuals” (2000, 623). Insofar as it foregrounds the property and freedom of the individual, liberalism also sacrifices equality when it impedes these other two principles (Ducharme and Constant 2009, 9). This organization, which was premised on the concept of the individual, clearly defined who could be categorized as an individual under the liberal order framework. These standards, based on the notion of property, particularly property of the self, established not only who was included within liberal individualism, but also who was carefully excluded from this category. The liberal individual, then, was not an actual entity; rather it was an abstraction that “each [person] might, if purified and rationalized, aspire to become” (McKay 2000, 625). Therefore, while the aspiration of
becoming an individual was available to some, in the implementation of classical liberalism in nineteenth-century Canada and twentieth-century Australia, it was not attainable by most.

As the political form of modernity, liberalism was inextricably linked to notions of change, progress, and growth. An important point to make here is to differentiate liberalism from democracy. While liberalism was bound to notions of modernity, as the cultural experience of rapid progress and change, and to capitalism, as the mode of production centred on wage-labour, it was not necessarily bound to democracy. Liberalism was conceived as “the absence of restraints preventing the individual from doing what he wants,” while democracy was “how governments are chosen and to whom they must respond” (McKay 1992, xiii). As McKay writes, originally democracy (or “mob rule”) was seen as undesirable to the politics of liberalism because it could endanger the rights of individual freedoms (xiii). Therefore, the installation of liberal rule involved consent of the governed: “An effective governing class must create (and keep creating over and over again) consent to its rule among large numbers of people” (xiv). The liberal order frameworks within Australia and Canada, then, were not (and are not) co-terminus with democracy, although they were positioned in that way in order to give liberalism a moral edge of representing “the people”; rather liberalism in Australia and Canada were totalizing philosophies that valued the rights of the Individual above all else.

The Western, liberal museum acquired its modern form during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a point in history in which the relationship between culture and government was shifting.\(^8\) Art and culture were no longer used to display the power of an

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\(^8\) I associate the concept, Western, with the socio-political logic of liberalism in order to illuminate the historical connections between these notions and, as a term, I use Western as a historical, not geographical, construct, and with an understanding of it as product of liberalism as a totalizing philosophy. While I use it, I do not do so uncritically, but to situate it within my larger critical history of liberalism and museums. With its use I seek to problematize the notion of the West as a classification, homogenized image, standard of comparison, and criteria of evaluation.
almighty sovereign to his subjects—what Jürgen Habermas labelled the “representative publicness” of the lord or sovereign (1989, 9)—but were now being employed in the creation and maintenance of new social and political realms. As the authority of governing was moved from the sole sovereign to the people (albeit, within the liberal order, a very small, elite section of the public), culture was targeted as an object of government that needed to be regulated and transformed (Bennett 1995, 19). What was deemed high art and culture was of particular interest as it was believed to have the capacity to “so transform the inner lives of the population as to alter their forms of behaviour and life” (20). In this way, museums, as cultural institutions, were enlisted as a vehicle of government to educate, civilize, and regulate the population as a whole.

The older formation of the museum changed to address three major issues. First, according to Tony Bennett (1995), the institution shifted from private to public access; second, objects were ordered in such a way as to educate viewers; and third, the space was adapted to function so as to make visitors part of the display. These transformations, which reflected the political rationality of the new public museum, were enacted to make power visible; that is, to make the public internal, rather than external, to the processes of government (22). For Foucault (1977) the asylum, clinic, and prison were part of a disciplinary structure that left the public external—witnesses—to the process of power; in the creation of the museum as a public institution, the space was used to discipline the public by making it complicit in the institutional

The West is then a historical term indicating the power to shape policy and representations—processes that reify ideological divisions between the non-West and West, Global South and Global North, developed and developing contexts as if these were simply geographical distinctions (Hall 1992).

While I discuss this shift of the museum from private to public space as a seamless move, there were in fact several stages in the groups of people granted access. First, bourgeois men took hold of the space. Then the museum was opened to other classes of male visitors. Eventually, women were allowed in the space, mainly as they were seen as a civilizing influence, particularly on the brutish male working classes. See Bennett (1995, 25-33).
articulations of power and knowledge relations. Thus, the reorganization of the museum as a public space was inextricably bound to the establishment of liberalism. The museum provided a visual and spatial narrative of this political development, a place where the liberal ideology of possessive individualism and its principles of property, liberty, and equality could be legitimated and constituted in new forms.

The central component to the exhibition practices of the museum and the methodology of art history has been representation. Representation refers to the system of classification and arrangement that gives meaning to the objects on display. Since the birth of the modern museum in the eighteenth century, simultaneous to the development of the liberal nation-state, representation and museum display have been shaped and guided by the development of a variety of new academic disciplines. These new fields were labelled the historical sciences or, in their application to the field of museum studies, the exhibitionary disciplines. These new academic areas—anthropology, history, art history, biology, archaeology—provided a focused, intellectualized rhetoric to govern the spaces of representation. Additionally, the space of the museum provided an arena in which the theories and ideas of these new disciplines could be developed, tested, and implemented. According to Bennett, “museums functioned as ‘laboratories’ for these disciplines, providing the contexts in which the new pasts they organised could become thinkable and perceptible as new realities in the fields of thought and vision” (2004, 2). Art history—along with other historical sciences, such as anthropology, history, biology, and geology—served as a verbal articulation to help legitimate and further constitute imperial and national/ist ventures.

10 The development of the public museum was closely related as well to the creation of other public institutions of the time, such as World’s Fairs and department stores, which were other public spaces that made people internal to the processes of power and knowledge relations. For further discussion, see Bennett (1995).
These spaces of representation functioned as sites where the inclusion and exclusion of objects (and, therefore, their specific histories) visualized the character of the nation-state and, by extension, its citizens. As Donald Preziosi writes, “The evolution of the modern nation-state was enabled by the cumulative formation of a series of cultural institutions which pragmatically allowed national mythologies, and the very myth of the nation-state as such, to be vividly imagined and effectively embodied” (2006, 71). These emerging liberal nation-states attempted to identify and preserve their recent pasts by memorializing their own formations as part of the process of “‘nationing’ their populations,” which was perceived as integral to further development (Bennett 1995, 76). The rhetoric of the museum space—drawing upon and contributing to the theories of the historical sciences—posited national materials as the outcome and culmination of a single, universal narrative (77). This amalgamation of universal and national histories, according to Gail Bederman, identified the European modern nation-state—and by extension its citizens, particularly middle-class men—not only as the rightful heirs of civilization, but also its agents (1995, 22).  

11 The task of reforming or educating an uncivilized and unruly public—both in the imperial metropole and colonial peripheral—was originally carried out by middle-class women. In the nineteenth century, educated liberal women arranged philanthropic organizations and took on the role of “helping” marginalized groups as an extension of their domestic duties. These women-run voluntary organizations served, as Mary Ryan writes, “to reform individuals and institutions” (1983, 169). These responsibilities enabled women to move into the public sphere, thus challenging the dominant ideas of separate spheres and “true womanhood.” However, these forays into the public sphere, according to Lori Ginzberg (1990), were confined to appropriate domains of female authority—such as morality, education, and culture—and supported the liberal capitalist order. Yet the fact that women were allowed such responsibility elucidates the abstraction of the notion of the liberal individual. While in theory women as a group were excluded from definition as self-possessed individuals within liberalism because they were perceived as being tied to motherhood, in practice these rules were flexible when it benefitted the liberal order framework—such as empowering women through the responsibility for cultural and moral development. Partly, this gender-transgression was permissible because cultural or moral health was not seen to be of great value within the liberal capitalist order. As Bennett writes in his discussion of how culture was brought within the province of government, “the exercise of such surveillance and control need not be thought of as any different in principle, when applied to the
connected nation and citizen by identifying them at once as the embodied subject with inherited traits of the past. Situating the history of liberal nations as the centre of history itself helped define the liberal nation, with the individual male citizen at the very heart of this knowledge, power, and development.  

The emergence of museums in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided new sites for war trophies, which, like museums themselves, could embody nationalist agendas (Rankin 2006, 49). The development of museums dedicated specifically to the display of war-related artifacts developed later, becoming prominent during and immediately after World War I. This war, in particular, spurred devotion to the memorializing the activities of war because it was promoted as a moment when the nation’s “sacrifices”—measured in causality numbers, rationing, and financial cost—were considered significantly high: “war museums and collections of battle cultural or moral well being of the population, from its application to the field of cultural health” (1995, 18). Therefore, as cultural and moral health became a measure of the nation’s health, education in the name of cultural or moral reform was institutionalized and no longer trusted to female philanthropists; rather, the educated liberal man came to occupy the elite cultural domain. See Kathleen D. McCarthy (1990; 1991).

12 This production of knowledge was not a task available to all. The people empowered to make new cultural meanings were those recognized as enlightened, rational individuals as gauged within liberalism. The fundamental principle of the individual as he who was, above and beyond all else, self-possessed carefully distinguished those who had access to power and to the production of knowledge. Women (who were tied to the idea of motherhood), workers (who were perceived as uneducated and prone to collective action such as strikes and conspiracies that challenged liberal individualism), and racialized minorities (who were seen to be deficient people, imprisoned by their pre-modern communist societies) were all equally marked as liberal others and denied recognition as liberal individuals due to their perceived inability to be truly self-possessed (McKay 2000, 626-7). These same social groups were excluded from the processes of reframing elite art and culture within institutions for new social and political purposes, a task that fell upon the educated, liberal male. As museums became sites for the regulation and education of a mass public, the principles established to reframe objects and space for these new purposes were set up by the very people who benefitted most from the liberal order.
trophies were a way to affirm that the war had been of value” (50). In Australia and Canada, as well as other dominions in the British Commonwealth during the early twentieth century, the shaping of the nation occurred simultaneously to each maintaining a strong relationship to Britain and British culture. During this time period, which was particularly defined by the World War I, both Australia and Canada developed powerful founding myths. These inextricably linked the character of each nation to military activities. For Canada, the 1917 Battle at Vimy Ridge functioned as the “birth of Canadian nationalism” (Nersessian 2007), specifically for Anglophone Canada. Australia had a similar founding myth in the Battle of Gallipoli.

For Australia, the April 25, 1915 landing at Gallipoli became a national/ist event so revered that the moment was perceived as having forged a decidedly Australian sense of self, labeled ANZAC, which stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Official journalist of the war during World War I, founder of the Australian War Memorial (AWM), and official Australian historian, Charles Bean writes in his definitive history of the Gallipoli military activities,
Anzac now belongs to the past, and during the war all energy was concentrated on the future; but the influence of the Gallipoli Campaign upon the national life of Australia and New Zealand had been far too deep to fade. Though the expeditionary forces of the two Dominions were only in their infancy, and afterwards fought with success in greater and more costly battles, no campaign is so identified with them as this. In no unreal sense, it was on the 25th of April, 1915, that the consciousness of Australian nationhood was born. (1924, 910)

Bean acknowledges the relation of Australia as a dominion within the larger Empire, nodding to the importance of recognition within the larger imperial organization; yet, the activities and subsequent spirit associated with the Gallipoli campaign is perceived to give Australia, as well as New Zealand (although to a lesser extent in the eyes of the Australian historian), a particular national self-hood. After Gallipoli, ANZAC took the form of a specifically Australian strength of spirit that paralleled the strong actions of Australian military during the Gallipoli landing; this ANZAC spirit is still used to describe the actions of Australian military personnel.

Given the generation of such mythologies of war, it is not surprising, then, that both Australia and Canada established the formal collection and display of war artifacts during the war by developing official museum collections and spaces dedicated to military history. These spaces sought to represent national/ist participation in military activities in order to map each as a nation-state. In 1916, Canada established a war records office, which was housed in the Canadian Public Archives building in Ottawa until the 1930s (Rankin 2006, 53-6). Arthur Donghyt was appointed Controller of War Trophies in 1917 (56). The collection moved to the War Trophies Building, opened beside the Public Archives, in 1924, and twenty-five years later, in 1941, the Canadian War Museum was established in the Public Archives building (56). Canada’s collection of
national war memorabilia was housed there until May 2005, when the new Canadian War Museum (CWM) opened on the LeBreton Flats, just west of the Parliament Buildings.\(^{15}\)

While he was in London in 1916, official Australian war correspondent Bean learned that the Canadians had asked for custody of their own forces’ artifacts rather than letting them go to the British War Office. Bean urged several senior Australian Imperial Force (AIF) personnel to make a similar request on behalf of Australia relics (Inglis 1985, 99). As he writes in the *ANZAC Bulletin*, the official newspaper of the AIF,

> The Australian record of the war ought to be as interesting as any one of those in Europe or America. At least, the organisation which has been established to collect and preserve it is, as far as is known, the most complete of those which have been gradually established by any British state during the war. Canada gave us great help in starting it, but we have gone beyond her. (Bean 1917)

Thereafter, military records of the AIF were transferred to the care of Major John L. Treloar, who organized the Australian War Records Section of the AIF in a London office starting in July 1917 (Bean 1933, xxv). In 1920, Treloar was subsequently appointed director of the Australian War Museum (xxv), which opened in 1922 in the Eastern Annex of the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne (Australian War Museum 1922). This space was moved to Sydney in 1925 where it remained for a decade (Inglis 1985, 103). Under the watchful eye of Bean, its strongest

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\(^{15}\) LeBreton Flats has a controversial history. It was one of the first industrialized areas in the Ottawa region, with a mix of timber industry, rail yards, and worker housing. On April 19, 1962, the residents of this area received a notice from the newly formed National Capital Commission (NCC), a crown corporation formed by Parliament in 1959 to administer the federally owned lands in Canada’s National Capital Region, that the land was being expropriated. The structures of the LeBreton Flats were demolished in order to improve the region surrounding the Parliament Building. This area remained vacant until the construction of the Canadian War Museum began. This history of the area is very controversial, yet is unwritten in official histories of the site listed in the publicity releases for the museum itself or by the NCC, the organizing body responsible for the area. See, NCC Watch; CBC 2005a; McClelland 2009; National Capital Commission 2008; and Jenkins 1996. For a detailed analysis of the architectural components of the Canadian War Museum, see Rukszto (2008).
proponent, the Australian War Memorial was officially opened in Canberra, the nation’s capital, on Armistice Day 1941.\textsuperscript{16}

The materials collected to represent a national/ist history were a mix of military artifacts and art arranged to signify an authentic and heroic narrative of a new nation within a powerful Empire. Both the Canadian War Records Office and the Australian War Records Section put calls out to their respective servicemen for donations of military souvenirs and memorabilia, and Treloar in particular was keen to collect the monthly war diaries kept by each military unit (Conde 2007). In this way, official exhibitions of military objects in Australia and Canada sought to “mobilise a discourse of authenticity to persuade visitors that encountering ‘real’ objects of war such as bullet casings, shrapnel and exploded bombshells” is better than simply seeing them depicted in paintings or newspapers, or on television (Lisle 2006, 844).

In addition to actual military relics from the war, both Australian and Canadian collections included art created by artists done in the field.\textsuperscript{17} In Canada, a programme for war photographers and artists began during the first world war under the patronage of Sir Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook (Roman 2001, 5). Called the Canadian War Memorial Fund, this programme began in 1916 and ended shortly after the conclusion of World War I. The works commissioned under this initiative were exhibited transnationally and are currently located in the collections of the Canadian War Museum, the National Gallery of Canada, and in the Senate. In Australia, the Official War Art Scheme began during WWI and was modeled on the programs recently established in Britain and Canada (Australian War Memorial 2010). During WWI, the

\textsuperscript{16} A detailed description of the processes of building the Australian Memorial is provided in Inglis (1985).

\textsuperscript{17} The production and exhibition of official war art in Australia and Canada is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
Australian High Commission selected serving officers to act as official war correspondents with Charles Bean as adviser; Bean later selected five more artists to document the war through the Australian War Records Section. During WWII, Bean, who had established the AWM during the interwar years, appointed artists through this institution, while the military appointed their own artists through the Australian Military History Section. Bean in particular was interested in including artworks by soldiers in official military exhibitions of Australia’s participation in the Great War. In his original proposal to establish the Australian War Museum, he wanted an entire room dedicated to the works of Will Dyson, an Australian cartoonist and journalist working in London at the outbreak of the war. Bean, who had appointed Dyson as the first Australian official war artist, disliked the staged quality of most British photographs; he felt that Dyson produced the most truthful depictions of war. In Bean’s opinion, only the works of Dyson truly conveyed the terror and horror of war.

Cultural objects associated with war, then, became part of the materiality of the nation, represented to citizens in order to constitute a visual national character as well as to civilize and modernize national subjects. According to Elizabeth Mansfield, “art history enters into the service of nationalism” by confirming the value of artworks that contribute to “the robust health of a nation, for artworks by their very nature are marks of cultural abundance” (2007, 3). While the

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18 There were other smaller subsets of the military that appointed artists during the second World War, including the Royal Australian Air Force, the Royal Australian Navy Historical Records Section, and the Allied Works Council. These works produced through these schemes were later donated to the collection of the AWM, For more information, see Australian War Memorial (n.d.d).

19 Will Dyson, along with George Lambert, still occupies a strong place in the Australian imaginary of military conflict. His works are mounted throughout the Australian War Memorial.

20 The power and legacy of Charles Bean in the mythmaking of Australian conflict history and its representation is indicated by the 2010 docudrama, Charles Bean’s Great War, which has the tagline “the greatest war correspondent in WW1 reporting to you from the frontline.”
notion that “the very nature” of artworks reflect “cultural abundance” is debatable, this perception of art goes to the very formation of art history as a discipline in the nineteenth century. The display of cultural products, then, was visually represented through the museum space, and verbally articulated through art history. “Art objects of all kinds,” according to Preziosi, “came to have the status of historical documents in the dual sense that (1) each was presumed to provide significant, often unique and, on occasion, profoundly revealing evidence for the character of an age, nation, person, or people; and that (2) their appearance was the resultant product of a historical milieu, however narrowly or broadly framed” (1998, 13; emphasis in original).

Artworks and cultural objects were naturalized as historical documents that were believed to directly represent specific historical or national characteristics. This process masked the selective inclusions of works in an official canon and ignored the exclusions of other works based on historically constructed social categories, such as gender, race, and class.

Immediately after World War I, the representation of war artifacts, and an official national/ist space in which to display them, was inextricably linked to the visualization of both Australia and Canada as sovereign from and subject to British Imperialism. That is, the collection and display of distinct military activities tied to these dominions enabled them to inhabit a limbic space as, on the one hand, recognizable and distinct entities and, on the other, senior members of the British Commonwealth. The combination of war artifacts and art created a specific visual landscape of the war that could be experienced vicariously by the newly identified and federated nations (Bennett 1995). At the centre of this representation was the individual soldier, who shouldered the burdens of the expectations and hopes of both nation and Empire. For example, the idealized figure of the digger (Australian slang for soldier that is still used today) and the heroic Canadian soldier, who was venerated by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Vimy Ridge, could be made present to visitors of the authentic museum space—a space that created a
cultural essence tied to nation which could be learned by all good Australian and Canadian citizens. This soldier, as the idealized liberal individual, helped create a specific narrative of war that established itself as an objective history of right and wrong, good and evil.21

The national and imperial symbol of the soldier not only embodied and imagined national self-hood, but also represented a culmination of civilization. This liberal individual, self-possessed and separate from other persons and the natural world (McKay 1992, xii), was perceived as a rational being, able to study objectivity the subjects of inquiry—objects, people, societies, war. The soldier’s, and by extension the nation’s, participation in the war, then, could be assessed as worthy or unworthy, good or bad by those who were perceived as having the reasoned and rational ability to effectively assess the situation. This disembodied theory of knowledge required the Individual as a theorist who could separate facts from values, a way of viewing the entire world “as a collection of distinct and separate facts and events” (McKay 1992, xii).22

With the representation of war artefacts and the heroic soldier, Australia and Canada created specific narratives of their involvement in war and by extension, their identities as warring nations as part of the broader Commonwealth. The objects included in such war displays were arranged to provide comforting narratives of commemoration and education, with clearly demarcated good and bad, right and wrong, hero and villain binaries. As Debbie Lisle articulates, “this process is clearly evident in the war exhibition’s imperative command: ‘you must learn the

21 Not all soldiers would have fit into this category of idealized liberal individual. Certainly, this ideal referenced white male individuals. The histories of women and people of colour, including Indigenous peoples, were marginalized in official and dominant national/ist war narratives.

22 Offering a critique of this nineteenth-century notion, Anne McClintock refers to this idea of consuming the progression of history from a point of privileged invisibility as “panoptical time” (1995, 37), a position only available to those identified to be at the culmination of civilization.
lessons of war” (2006, 843). These “lessons of war” promoted a victorious and patriotic narrative composed of events perceived and cast starkly in terms of their effect on the nation—good or bad. These narratives were created with the character of the selfless soldier, the ideal citizen, at the centre—heroic, patriotic, and willing to die for his ideals. As a rational individual who knew right from wrong, good from evil, this idealized citizen/soldier was able to be objective about history and objects that represented that history. Therefore, the war fought in his name and recorded for his people was a good war because he said so.

**Theories of non-representation: Performativity**

Representation as the guiding methodology to the rhetoric and space of cultural institutions has been challenged by innovations occurring inside and outside museums. In this section, I examine the shift away from the view of representation as the central exhibitionary practice. Curators and museum professionals have sought to correct the modernist, universal narratives of spaces of representation through a professional response dubbed the New Museology (Vergo 1989; Karp and Levine 1991; Karp, Kramer, and Levine 1992; Message 2006). As Lisle writes, these efforts work to replace “the didactic ethos of museums established during the Victorian era with more reflexive and multicultural approaches … museum ‘experts’ no longer disseminate knowledge to eager masses awaiting enlightenment, they facilitate the active learning of diverse visitor groups” (2006, 849). These new museum techniques are not top-down processes of knowledge creation; rather, they attempt to account for the different subjectivity of viewers in bringing meaning to the objects on display.

These changes in museum practice are mutually constitutive with shifts in academic thought, which involve the critical re-evaluation of conventional academic disciplines, as well as the development of new fields of study, including visual and material culture studies, and cultural
studies. In order to understand how the “active learning” of visitors within a museum space occurs, representation—the presentation of objects that are perceived to have inherent, universal meaning—has been replaced by performance as the central mode of meaning-making within the gallery (Rogoff 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003). With this approach, there is a movement from the conventional view of meaning as static representation determined by the objects or curator, to recognition of meaning as the result of a dynamic process that involves constantly changing audiences. Most significantly, I suggest, performance engages with knowledge production not as distanced critical thought, but as embodied criticality. This shift from representation to performance is not truly a transformation of how meaning is produced; rather, it is a change in how meaning-making is discussed and recognized.

The concept of performance as a mode of knowledge production is not confined to the museum space; as George Yúdice articulates, the social imperative to perform, or performative force, involves “the processes by which identities and the entities of social reality are constituted by repeated approximations of models (i.e., the normative) as well as by those ‘remainders’ (constitutive exclusions) that fall short” (31). Premised on the notion that there is no inherent form of culture, this theory suggests that specific cultural behaviours are normalized due to performative force, or the social imperative to perform, which is understood and experienced differently in different societies. This notion clearly opposes the assumption of a Western viewpoint. The difference, Yúdice highlights, is not the product of a “national” character, but results from “a different field of force generated by differently arranged relationships among

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23 Using the notion of performativity as the postmodern episteme helps account for the processes through which alter- and counter-hegemonic readings are produced. By failing to accurately perform the norm, whether through conscious resistance or not, one enacts strategies of dissention. These alternative performative forces are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.
institutions of the state and civil society, the judiciary, the police, schools, and universities, the media, consumer markets, and so on” (43).

This idea that there is no “inherent form of culture,” as Yúdice suggests, is central to the reformulation of museum practice away from representation as its central methodology. The interest in culture as an area of study is rooted in the mid-twentieth century focus on the changing perception of culture within everyday life. Before this, culture was defined within a modernist binary that associated cultural productions with “high,” elite culture. According to Michael Denning, the modernist idea of culture functioned as two separate, yet related, definitions. The first was the literary concept of culture, discussed by writers such as Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot, where it was associated with the humanistic notion of arts and letters. The second referred to the anthropological concept of culture, which was associated with a whole way of life as shown through societal customs and morals (Denning 2004, 77). These modernist ideas of culture located cultural productions in opposition to industrial productions and commodities. Denning writes,

Thus, culture, one might say, emerges only under capitalism. Though there appears to be culture in precapitalist societies, the concept is invented … to name those places where the commodity does not yet rule: the arts, leisure, and unproductive luxury consumption of revenues by accumulators; and the ways of life of so-called primitive peoples. The world dominated by capital – the working day, the labor process, the factory and office, machines and technology, and science itself—[was] thus outside of culture. (2004, 79)

This idea of culture as, on the one hand, the arts of modern societies and, on the other hand, customs of pre-modern societies was central to the formation of art history as a discipline. With the shifting concept of culture in the mid-twentieth century, this definition was challenged and rejected, opening up new areas of study that had previously been ignored.
This transition occurred, according to Denning, when “everyone discovered that culture had been produced like Ford’s cars; the masses had culture and culture had a mass … this mass culture was part of the wealth of nations, an engine of what those intoxicated by the new discovery called a ‘postindustrial’ society” (2004, 1). This shift has come to be identified as the cultural turn in the humanities and social sciences. As Denning explains, this interest in mass culture developed as a combination of two polarities that were at the centre of identifying modern culture: culture as entirely manipulative industrial product and culture as entirely authentic cultural creation (100). Along with collapsing the binary of modernist culture, a postmodern approach to culture meant recognizing “socially constructed categories that have something to do with the reproduction of race, class, and gender hierarchies and the policing of the boundaries of modernism” (Kelley 1992, 1402). Recognition of the historical construction of social categories provided a framework to question the hierarchical binaries—as markers of value and makers of the canon—naturalized within disciplinary art history. Denning extends this discussion of social categories:

If the theories of the social construction of cultural value give us a decoder of cultural hierarchies, boundaries, and canons, they remind us that no cultural form is fixed in the hierarchy: as Bourdieu argues, “the very meaning and value of a cultural object varies according to the system of objects in which it is placed.” It is less plausible to orchestrate cultural studies around those relationship terms: high and low, mass and elite, popular and polite. (2004, 112; quotation Bourdieu 1984, 88)

For studies in visual and material culture, the expansion of the definition of culture meant a rejection of the object categories of art history, and a way to articulate the problems with the art canon, which was premised on inclusions and exclusions that sought to promote ideas of the modern, liberal nation-state and its gendered, raced, and classed hierarchies. With new recognition of the importance of culture within the cultural turn, culture “is currently seen as a
cause of—rather than merely a reflection of or response to—social, political, and economic processes” (Dikovitskaya 2005, 1).

Research beginning in the 1970s that questioned the perception of the inherent value of artworks within the writing of the history of art was part of the processes of revising the concept of culture, and by extension cultural objects. Feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial studies have thoroughly questioned the specific exclusions of the art canon, denaturalizing artworks as inherently evidential of objective historical realities. A wide range of writers, including Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1982; 1989 and 1996 respectively), Rosi Braidotti (1994), Rosemary Betterton (1996), Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner (1999), and Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth Phillips (2006) highlight the historical biases of art and its history through unacknowledged binaries such as high/low culture, male/female, white/non-white, art/craft, West/non-West. As well, writers such as Gayatri Spivak (1988) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2000) question the power dynamics inherent to the very process of writing history, and in doing so, critique the historical power/knowledge position of the West.

Such revision generates a vocabulary to deconstruct the liberal arts canon and to reject the very category of “art” itself, identifying it as a hierarchical category that depends on its own dominance over other categories for definition. Phillips and Steiner (1999) discuss the development of disparate object categories—art, artifact, and commodity—that have framed value systems within the history of art.24 George Marcus questions the canon at the centre of art history, asserting that this canon is “about the constitution of authority and tradition in social groups” (1992, 103). Such critical revisions challenge the history of art and have denaturalized

24 These conventional art historical and anthropological object categories are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.
the creation and proliferation of the art canon. Meaning is no longer thought to be inherently and naturally associated with particular objects, and objects are no longer perceived as having “immanent meanings that can be investigated, exposed and made obvious;” rather, “meanings take place as events unfold” (Rogoff 2003, n.p.; emphasis in original).

Museum evaluations now recognize catering to audience, that is, they understand the role of audience in formatting museum displays. For example, currently the AWM caters to four specific demographics when developing a museum exhibition. As former AWM curator Claire Baddeley explains,

> Within the war memorial, a number of years ago, they commissioned a big audience segmentation study to find out what appealed to their visitors, how they could best convey the information about the exhibition to their visitors. There were sort of four types of people that would come to the war memorial to see an exhibition. So when the relevant curator is developing the exhibition proposal, they also have to consider with the exhibition which of these particular groups it will best appeal to. (2009)

With AWM’s realization of the importance of specific audiences to museum attendance in its reassessment of how meaning is produced, these four groups dictated the conditions and representations that were organized in the gallery space. Although it could be argued that audience has always been a consideration in the arrangement of objects within spaces of

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25 In the fall of 2009, during my time researching at the AWM, I was denied access to archival documents relating to the production and display of exhibitions that occurred during the last 30 years. This restriction of access to archival documents produced within the last 30 years was dictated by the Department of Defence and Veteran’s Affairs, which administers the memorial. The information I gathered regarding these specific institutional policies came from an interview I conducted with former AWM curator, Claire Baddeley. She couldn’t recall the specifics of the four groups, although she did offer her vague memories of the titles of these groups—knowledge seekers, pleasure seekers, information seekers, pleasure bonders.
representation, it is the recognition of the influence and importance of audiences as diverse and as part of the knowledge production process that is significant.

Rogoff identifies this transition as a shift from a position of critique to one of criticality. This idea challenges the concept of art as having inherent meaning—a concept that was central to the modernist ideas at the very heart of disciplinary art history—and examines how meanings are constituted within different spaces at different times. As part of this process, Rogoff suggests, observers must situate themselves as objects of study in order to elucidate their own role in the production of knowledge. As she states,

Instead of “criticism” being an act of judgement addressed to a clear cut object of criticism, we now recognize not just our own imbrication in the object or the cultural moment but also the performative nature of any action or stance we might be taking in relation to it. Now we think of all of these practices as linked in a complex process of knowledge production instead of the earlier separation into creativity and criticism, production and application. (Rogoff 2006a, n.p.)

To understand the production of knowledge in this way is to recognize the important roles of time, place, and audience, and the ways in which meaning is constituted. This approach addresses the importance of visuality and the specificity of different scopic regimes that form the very centre of visual culture. In highlighting the importance of the relationship between viewers and space over that of viewers and objects, Rogoff stresses the significance of the location and time, as “different audiences in different cultural circumstances” produce different knowledges (2004, n.p.).

As Marsha Meskimmon writes, “theory is not transparently applied to mute objects by disembodied, knowing subjects, but emerges from the positioning activities of knowledge producers” (2003, 4). Rogoff’s theory of embodied criticality promotes movement away from distanced critique—conventionally adopted by scholars as “critical distance”—to a new state of
analysis, which she terms smuggling. Smuggling, according to Rogoff, allows engagement with “the performative nature of culture, with meanings that take place as events unfold,” and shifts critiques away “from notions of immanent meanings that can be investigated, exposed and made obvious” (2003, n.p.; emphasis in original). This new state of critique—alternatively called an embodied criticality and smuggling—acknowledges the duality of object and subject and seeks to unite them in order to recognize that any critique cannot occur outside the lived experience of the person critiquing:

Criticality is then a recognition that we may be fully armed with theoretical knowledge, we may be capable of the most sophisticated modes of analysis, but we nevertheless are also living out the very conditions we are trying to analyse and come to terms with. Therefore, criticality is a state of duality in which one is at one and the same time, both empowered and disempowered, knowing and unknowing … . So it would seem that criticality is in itself a mode of embodiment, a state from which one cannot exit or gain a critical distance but which rather marries our knowledge and our experience in ways that are not complimentary. (n.p.)

This approach seeks to unbound the realms of object and subject in order to bring together “that being studied and those doing the studying, in an indelible way” (n.p.). The idea of embodied criticality enables analysis that moves beyond static representation into dynamic performance. It accounts for constantly shifting dialogues between infinite subjectivities and interpretations, as well as historical conditions of exhibition production and consumption. According to Rogoff, “when something called ‘art’ becomes an open interconnective field, then the potential to engage within it as a form of cultural participation rather than as a form of either reification, of representation, or of contemplative edification, comes into being” (2004, n.p.).

To view the production of knowledge in cultural institutions in this way is to recognize the important roles of time, place, and audience. The production of meaning can no longer be
viewed as an authoritative process of cultural representation by a curator within a cultural institution, but rather should be seen as a collective, dynamic negotiation of various elements guided by their respective performative forces. Rogoff labels this process collective performativity, stating that “meaning is never produced in isolation or through isolating processes but rather through intricate webs of connectedness” (2004, n.p.). It is an approach that attempts to decentralize power from the representation of the curator and cultural institution to the collective performativity of a constantly changing audience.

**Theories of non-representation: Affect**

The revisions to exhibitionary practices that have occurred in disciplinary art history, as well as in the fields of cultural studies and visual and material culture studies, have repositioned the meanings of cultural objects as represented and understood to be performed. While such revisions are valuable contributions in assessing how meaning is made through engagements with cultural objects, I also believe performance theory is incomplete as a critical response to representation because it privileges the realm of thought against that of feeling, and this works to limit the interpretations and meanings available for consideration. Nonetheless, I would argue that representation and performance theories also provide the basis for a potentially fruitful approach to understanding the processes of meaning-making when used in conjunction with each other and with affect theory As Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison put it, questions should be framed “in terms of body-brain-culture assemblages in our intimate and prosaic entanglements with the object world” (2006, 334). Theories of affect provide a way to include the third member, body, of this triad of “body-brain-culture.”

Interest in affect has greatly increased in the post–9/11 era, particularly in relation to geopolitics and culture. The US-led wars waged in response to this event and in the name of...
guarding against “terror”—an affectual concept in itself—provide a focal point around which affect studies can be focussed. The attacks of 9/11 are not the first or most severe geopolitical events to have political and military resonance. However, in a manner unique to its historical moment, it brought these two into a new relationship; as Sean Carter and Derek P. McCormack point out, “the affective logics of 9/11 became linked with the moral and geopolitical imperatives of intervention in such a way that the intensity of the first came to work, at least for a time, as the inviolable support for the apparent necessity of the latter” (2010, 105). The study of affect was heavily influenced by the 1995 publication of two works: Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank’s “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold” and Brian Massumi’s “The Autonomy of Affect” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 5). Since that time, many works have questioned affect as a mode of being in and understanding of the world, although as Melissa Greg and Gregory J. Seigworth note, there is “no single, generalizable theory of affect” because there are as many theories as “diverse and singularly delineated as their own particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds” (2010, 2-3).

Within this multitude of varying approaches to affect, some of which are outlined by Greg and Seigworth (2010), Patricia Tincento Clough (2007), and Anderson and Harrison (2006), I use affect to challenge the “residual cultural Cartesianism” (Thrift 2004, 54) that disconnects emotions from critical thought and social and political realities. That is, I situate affect as part of an approach to understanding the production of meanings through engagements with cultural objects that results from the dialogue between feelings-thoughts-circumstances. Building upon

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Although theories of affect have been criticized for being as incapable of setting strict parameters or carefully defining affect as a theory and methodology, Gregg and Seigworth, argue in contrast that, drawing upon Brian Massumi (2002), “approaches to affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway rather than position taken” (2010, 4).
Giles Deleuze’s concept of the “encountered sign” to describe the sign that is felt rather than recognized through cognition (Deleuze 1972), Jill Bennett suggests that “sensation is not an end unto itself, but [that] feeling is a catalyst for critical inquiry or deep thought” (2005, 7).

My theory of affect, then, does not undermine thinking; rather, “affectivity is part of the moving grounds from which thinking … emerges and is cultivated” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 106). Theories of affect work in conjunction with theories of representation and performance, by complicating the processes by which we understand the self in the world. As Massumi writes in relation to the conventional denial of the importance of affect and the senses,

> These were practices of “reading” or “decoding” counter to the dominant ideological scheme of things. The body was seen to be centrally involved in these everyday practices of resistance. But this thoroughly mediated body could only be a “discursive” body: one with signifying gestures. If properly “performed,” they may also unmake sense by scrambling significations already in place. Make and unmake sense as they might, they don’t sense. (2002, 2)

Through affect, I situate the formation of meanings and identities as not simply reflecting “dominant ideological schemes,” but also constituting, and possibly resisting, them. In this way, I use affect—“viscerally intense processes that provide the conditions of emergence for ideological and/or discursive formations” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 118)—to incorporate movement and flux, rather than stasis and permanence, in my discussions of visualizing national/ist narratives of global military conflict, as both meanings and subjects are constantly in a state of becoming through their encounters with and within the world.

Using a combination of two concepts involving the non-representational—performance and affect—complicates the process of subject formation. As Nigel Thrift writes, “subjectivity [forms] as lines or fields of concernful and affecting interaction taking place in time. These lines and fields are not individual subjects. Rather, they are mimetic soups, waxing and waning
territories of interest and desire, usually produced semiconsciously through proprioception” (2008, 85). In this, affect “arises in the midst of inbetween-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1). Following Massumi, I argue that identities cannot be ontological, but must be ontogenetic: “they must be equal to emergence” (2002, 8). Rather than an ontology of self, object, and category, affect enables a way in which to account for meaning and identity as states of constantly becoming, of movement, and of process.

Affect is related to emotions and feelings, but is not the same as either of these. According to Carter and McCormack, affect can be understood as “a kind of turbulent background field of relational intensity, irreducible to and not containable by any single subject or body” (2010, 107). Feeling and emotion connect to affect through sensing: “feeling can be understood as the registering of intensity in a sensing body before that intensity is recognized as a distinct emotion” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 107-8). In this way, affects are pre-personal, which means that they are not “individuated like people and things” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 108; Deleuze 1986). Emotion is the felt, recognized, and expressed form of affect—expressed through gestures and language as such things as fear, hope, and anger. As Deborah Thien states, “affect is the how of emotion” (2005, 451). With this, affect “is like an atmosphere, in which lots is going on, even if it is not yet visible, tangible or sensible” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 108). This division of affectivity into three elements is meant to broadly explain the components of the process rather than to demarcate set parameters of each concept; as Carter and McCormack explain, “affectivity is the ongoing passage between affect, feeling and emotion, in which at various points for instance affect is felt but not expressed, or where the expression of emotion flows back into the distributed fields of affects” (108).

My approach to understanding and using affect, then, combines the pre-personal and personal sensory experiences as elements that contribute to developing meanings and
subjectivities, with representative elements. In my examinations of different case studies that contribute to producing and reproducing national/ist narratives of contemporary conflict, I look at theories of representation and non-representation in order to build a more comprehensive study, one that involves the complexities and intricacies in constituting and legitimating, and possibly challenging and resisting, state narratives of national/ist military history. This approach helps determine two distinct but interrelated elements that operate in a consideration of this national/ist narrative: how the meanings of objects are determined, and how people assess their identity in relation to these objects.

I argue that thinking about and through affect is particularly significant in the present historical moment of a decade-long war being waged against “terror.” The current military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are driven by a logic of threat and fear. Massumi describes this situation as a politics of preemption: a threat that has become virtual and predicted, rather than real and actualized, which enables military engagement to the threat of danger, driven by fear (2007, 2002). In a world of virtual threats, “the fears and anxieties of which potential futures are generative is crucial to understanding how the logics of intervention are reorganized in the present around efforts to engage with threats that have not yet materialized” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 106). This affective logic creates a climate of conflict unlimited: “the potential for peace amended to become a perpetual state of undeclared war” (Massumi 2007, n.p.). This situation, referred to as the “state of emergency” by Walter Benjamin (1989) and

27 The fear and dangers of possible threats have real and present implications. At the time of writing, a man at Toronto’s Pearson International Airport had recently been arrested for allegedly planning to join a terrorist group. Mohamed Hersi was taken into custody under charges of terrorism for allegedly attempting to fly to Somalia to join an al-Qaida linked group. RCMP investigator Keith Finn states, “There was nothing in the investigation that would suggest a direct threat to Canadians within Canada. However, the issue of radicalization and people from Canada travelling overseas and receiving that kind of further indoctrination and training remains a concern for the RCMP and our partners as far as national security is concerned” (Loriggio 2011).
“permanent state of exception” by Giorgio Agamben (2005; 2000), depends on affect to trigger support and action in defense of a self-perpetuating system of conflict.

In the current war in Afghanistan, as well as in Iraq, affect is not simply an undercurrent, an unrecognized process that determines thoughts and feelings; rather affect is a central target to creating and maintaining military conflicts. The perceived constant threat of terror, driven by fear, translates into military actions in the name of security. This secure world order requires neoliberal globalization as its organizing principle. As Agamben states,

While disciplinary power isolates and closes off territories, measures of security lead to an opening and globalization; while the law wants to prevent and prescribe, security wants to intervene in ongoing processes to direct them. In a word, discipline wants to produce order, while security wants to guide disorder. (2002, n.p.)

This desire for security, while operating on a global scale, functions in support of a national/ist discourse. The national/ist morale—or will to fight—is a central component of the war on terror. This morale functions as central to gaining domestic support for the war in countries such as Australia and Canada, as well as the US, and to destroying the will to fight of combatants in perceived “enemy” sites.

In Australia and Canada, this “will to fight” in Afghanistan is framed in terms of humane and peacekeeping missions, and both nations are involved in the NATO-organized International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which seeks to foster security, reconstruction and development, and governance in the region (ISAF 2011). Part of the affective logics of Australian and Canadian engagements in warfare, then, is inextricably linked to morality and helping narratives. This burden of Western civilization has a long history within imperial actions and is rooted in the political encounters between different cultures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; these encounters are anchored by juxtapositions of good/bad and hero/victim/villain
(Mamdani 2004). The representations of participation refer to these broad peacekeeping narratives in order to create and maintain the sense of national/ist conflict used as moral mission, which is rooted in the sense of the liberal citizen and nation as inherently good.

The representations of the Australian and Canadian actions of the current global military wars in Afghanistan, then, are integral to building and maintaining the affective logics of conflict and the patriotic will to fight. Violence and actions of war are nothing if not affective; they are felt even if it is not emotional. As Carter and McCormack write, “the very nature of violence, and the manner in which it is conducted, is organized at least in part to work through the affective logics of mediated spaces, whether this is through tactics of ‘shock and awe’ or suicide bombing” (2010, 106). The space of museums, along with other mediated and mediating spaces such as TV, newspapers, films, and websites visualize narratives of national/ist warfare that produce and reproduce the affective logics of fear, terror, and security.

Affect is an essential element that has been deployed by exhibitions to produce and reproduce the liberal citizen and nation-state, particularly in relation to military history and war. It is an experience that communicates a sense of feeling with, rather than just thinking about, that truly creates the patriotic citizen who is willing to fight for and, in times of war, die for (or at the very least support the death of others) in the name of the rights granted and guaranteed by the liberal nation. The visualizations of official narratives of national/ist military history are effective because they not only provide a site to think through the history, but also enable viewers to feel that history, to embody it; citizens cannot just think things are a certain way in order to be fully committed to liberal nationalism, but must also feel them to be “true.” Including such theories of knowledge production as performativity and affectivity is essential to understanding how the nation-as-project is produced and reproduced through visual and material culture, particularly in relation to war and military history.
Chapter 3

Securing the Perimeter: Art, Nation, and Official War Artist Programs

Amid the drifting war narratives that populate cultural and political environments, the problem remains: tracking the production and politics of truth specific to the war, its legitimacy and its orchestrators.

— Balan 2010, 146.

The photograph is not merely a visual image awaiting interpretation; it is itself actively interpreting, sometimes forcibly so.

— Butler 2009, 71.

In this chapter, I examine representations of the war in Afghanistan produced by artists on commission with Australian and Canadian state-sponsored war art programs. These war art programs—the Official War Artist Scheme (OWAS) in Australia and the Canadian Forces Artist Program (CFAP) in Canada—send artists to conflict zones to portray Australian and Canadian military activities. OWAS began in 1999 while CFAP originated in 2001, each the most recent incarnation of the state-sponsorship of war art in Australia and Canada that began in the early twentieth century. In order to examine contemporary representations of war produced through Australian and Canadian state-sponsored war art programs, I focus on two exhibitions, which toured nationally and were seen mainly by domestic audiences: Framing Conflict (2008-10), organized by the Australian War Memorial (AWM), and A Brush with War (2010-1), organized by the Canadian War Museum (CWM).

I analyze these two exhibitions in relation to “official narratives,” which refer to projections of national/ist military activities that directly produce and reproduce state accounts.
The official narratives of Australia and Canada define the respective participation of each country in Afghanistan as humane, moral, and for peacekeeping. As I outline in Chapter 1, Australian and Canadian contemporary conflict narratives are premised on an affect of care, which is presented as a kindly and generous effort to ensure global peace and security and to combat terror. The self-identification of their military actions as humane peacekeeping helps Australia and Canada reinstate their national boundaries within ideological projections of war as deterritorialized. The ability of both countries to situate their military participation in these terms, that is as an affect of care through humane peacekeeping, is dependent on their identification as liberal nation-states. Proponents of the War on Terror present liberalism as the solution to what they perceive as the irrational, religious fundamentalism at the heart of terrorism (Berman 2003; Huntington 1996). Liberalism is posited as encouraging democracy and, therefore, the freedom of citizens of liberal nation-states, whereas terrorism is identified at once with a-liberal political regimes and irrational madmen who hate “liberal freedom and democracy” (Mamdani 2004; Wilkinson 2006). I use exhibitions of works created through state-sponsored art programs to address the ways in which these representations constitute and legitimate official narratives of conflict in Australia and Canada in the context of an expanding military-industrial complex, the War on Terror, and a rhetoric of global freedom, democracy, and security.

I divide this chapter into three sections that examine how exhibitions of works commissioned by the OWAS and CFAP reproduce official Australian and Canadian conflict narratives. First, I focus on how and why contemporary representations of war produced through the OWAS and CFAP are positioned as art, rather than as documents or artifacts. Second, I analyze how representations of war in these two exhibitions function affectually for viewers, both in the museum space and at the level of national self-identification within global military conflicts, to constitute and legitimate support of Australia’s and Canada’s official narratives of
contemporary warfare. Finally, I study the ways in which the production and exhibition of visualizations of warfare through the OWAS and CFAP help to normalize conflict and warfare through the bodies and perspectives of soldiers. Taken together, these sections interrogate the ways which exhibitions of state-sponsored art programs operate in relation to Australia’s and Canada’s official narratives of an affect of care and of their respective military actions as undertaken for humane, moral and peacekeeping purposes.

The two exhibitions I deal with, the Australian War Memorial’s Framing Conflict (2009-10) and the Canadian War Museum’s Brushes with War (2010-11), are the most recent exhibitions of war art arranged by either institution, and both of them were travelling shows. For the most part, both exhibitions consisted of paintings of Australian and Canadian troops performing the everyday activities expected of their posts and of unofficial portraits of specific military personnel. The works deal exclusively with the actions of soldiers in war zones, rather than with the war itself. In this way, the works circumvent overt engagement with the war in Afghanistan and the debates surrounding national involvement in it. None of the works included in the exhibitions portray fighting, bombing, or heroic military battles—conflict activities that might immediately and easily define a war zone; rather, the OWAS and CFAP images included in Framing Conflict and A Brush with War foreground the Australian and Canadian people behind the military campaign and personalize the daily tasks and rituals of war life. The compositions of many of the works centralize the perspective of Australian and Canadian military personnel and thus provided exhibition-goers with the soldiers’ perspectives of specific activities on the ground. In this way, the works in the two shows not only represented Australian and Canadian military

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28 The two exhibitions were the most recent at the time of research. There is a more recent exhibition of works by Australian contemporary war artist, Shaun Gladwell, entitled Double Field—Afghanistan, which was mounted at the AWM in 2010.
activities in Afghanistan but also provided a vicarious experience of them to distanced Australian and Canadian exhibition-goers, at least as the experience was understood by the artists portraying it.

Framing Conflict: Iraq and Afghanistan was a solo exhibition of commissioned war art by artist-duo Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, who were commissioned by the OWAS to travel to Afghanistan and the Middle East in 2008. Arranged by AWM curator Warwick Heywood, the exhibition toured to a number of cities and cultural institutions in Australia from 2008 to 2010. I focus primarily on one of its installations, which was held in Nowra, where it was hosted by the Fleet Air Arm Museum. This large facility, located at the HMAS Albatross naval base, is managed by the Royal Australian Navy and deals with the history of Naval Aviation (Royal Australian Navy 2009). It is designed as an airplane hangar, with a large central space filled with aircrafts, helicopters, and other aviation-related materials. Framing Conflict was mounted in a small side room adjacent to the main space, located in the area of the museum called the Federation Wing.²⁹ A sign reading “Art Gallery” was taped to the door leading to the exhibition, thereby temporarily demarcating the materials in the room as distinct from those found elsewhere in the museum. The separation of the works produced by Green and Brown from other war artifacts in the museum through their arrangement in a connected, but differentiated space relates to the desire to identify their work as art.

The Art Gallery containing the exhibition was a large, light-coloured square room. The introductory didactic panel that greeted visitors entering the exhibition outlined the aims of the artists’ works: “Brown and Green’s works of art record the activities and experiences of the

²⁹ According to this panel, the Federation Wing opened in late 2000 to mark the centenary anniversary of the Australian Federation.
Australian troops. They are contemplative works that reveal new and strange configurations of landscape, culture, and technology. The artists consider these works contemporary extensions of the historical and artistic traditions of travel to, and conflict within, exotic lands.” The paintings were worked in oil on linen in a naturalistic style and hung on the walls in a straight line around the perimeter of the room (fig. 1).

Figure 1: Installation photograph of Framing Conflict, Fleet Air Arm Museum, Nowra, 2009 (photograph by author).

The exhibition materials were reorganized slightly for each exhibition space to which the show travelled. As a result, there were various versions of the show, some including photographs. The Nowra exhibition consisted of a series of paintings based on photographs that Green and Brown took during their time as OWAS artists in Afghanistan and the Middle East (Heywood 2008; 2009a).

The Canadian exhibition, A Brush with War: Military Art from Korea to Afghanistan, is composed of 64 artworks arranged in the order of the various military campaigns referenced in
the show’s title. Organized by Canadian War Museum curator Laura Brandon, the exhibition opened at the McMichael Art Gallery in Kleinburg in 2009 and has toured nationally since, including engagements at the War Museum, the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, and the Military Museum in Calgary. Financed in large part by the Canadian Beaverbrook Foundation, this exhibition is divided into four main historical sections: “A Legacy of War Art: Military Art in Transition, 1946-1967,” “Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Program (CAFACP): Phase One, 1968-1991,” “Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Program (CAFCAP): Phase Two and Beyond, 1992-2000,” and “A New Art Program: Canadian Forces Artists Program (CFAP), 2001-2008.” For my purposes in this chapter, I focus on the works in the latter section; however, I would argue that the framework of the exhibition provides a historical precedent and artistic heritage to museum visitors by arranging the works in the chronological order offered by the military campaigns within which they were produced, and in so doing, by providing a context within which to read the contemporary section. In other words, contemporary war art is positioned in the exhibition as the most recent articulation of the conflicts that came before.

As opposed to Framing Conflict, which represented only the most recent in Australian war art, A Brush with War situated its artworks in a historical progression through a series of wars and the different incarnations of Canada’s national war artist programs. The inclusion of many different artists (approximately 45 in all) resulted in a selection of works in a range of both styles and subject matter. Describing the contemporary section of CFAP art, the accompanying catalogue stated, “CFAP artists have captured the experiences of Canadian military personnel deployed in Canada and overseas, most notably in and around Afghanistan…. Increasingly, works from conflict zones reflect artists’ personal responses to the heightened dangers facing military and civilian personnel in zones of conflict” (Brandon with Ogden 2009, 51). At the Beaverbrook Gallery, where A Brush With War was hosted in 2009, the contemporary art was
located in a different gallery from that containing the historical art. The contemporary works were mounted for the most part along the walls of a large square room, with additional works hung on either side of several small walls situated in the centre of the space.

Both exhibitions—Framing Conflict and A Brush With War—displayed state-sponsored works to their respective national audiences. Using the paintings included in the two shows, I question how works produced and exhibited through official war art programs participate in Australia’s and Canada’s official narratives of involvement in the war in Afghanistan. It would be easy, and much too simplistic, to say that the works produced by these programs result in an obvious, unchallenged official and national/ist narrative of conflict. Instead, I would argue that the types of images produced are mediated by the interests and intents of a group of actors—including program officers, military handlers, artists, curators, and audience members—all of whom complicate the visualization of warfare represented in the exhibitions.

The art of representing warfare

The desire to categorize works produced through official war artist programs as fine art is apparent in the rhetoric surrounding their display, particularly that of work produced and exhibited as part of the OWAS and CFAP. Identifying cultural objects as artworks, rather than as documents or artifacts, relates both to the ways in which they are perceived as having been produced and the manner in which they are interpreted within the exhibition space. The framing of works attached to official war artist programs as art plays a particularly relevant role in their relationship to narratives of warfare that reconfigure national/ist boundaries.

Although the histories of both the OWAS and CFAP are tied to photojournalism, the organizers of the programs, the military, the curators, and the artists themselves emphasize the importance of the works as art and of the objects as artists’ representations. As Heywood puts it,
“[the work produced by OWAS artists] sort of conveys an aesthetic and sensory experience of the war that isn’t captured in other modes of journalism or representation” (Heywood 2009b). The concept of civilian artists being brought to an area of military activities, with no ties to the military beyond their commissions, situates the artists and their art as operating outside of the military-industrial machine. This disconnection of the artists and their production from the military effectively works to prevent critiques that could easily identify them as complicit in the military campaign. In this context, art is perceived as a medium through which the activities of Australia’s and Canada’s militaries can be conveyed to museum audiences by what appears to be outside observers free from the constraints of either militaries’ objectives.

Emphasis on the separation of artistic intent and the resulting images from military goals is of central importance to the framing of the art produced through OWAS and CFAP. While each of the programs, particularly OWAS, also sponsors official war photographers to travel to war zones, the resulting photographs are not intended for display to domestic audiences, but rather are archived as historical documents. The artworks produced through the official war art programs, in contrast, are commissioned specifically to be displayed to the public and are promoted as works of art. So, while the exhibition of Green and Brown’s works travelled to places identified with military history (including, in 2010, the Special Exhibitions Gallery of the Australian War Memorial), the paintings were also shown at art galleries that had no direct association with visualizing conflict history, the exhibition debuting at the Ian Potter Museum of Art in Melbourne.

30 While this is the case in terms of the OWAS and CFAP, the works of war photographers clearly cross the line into art practice in other venues. For example, “SOUTH: WAR, the exhibition held at the Australian Centre of Photography in Melbourne in 2009, featured works by a group of Australian war photographers who had been embedded in a number of conflicts in different parts of the world. Many of these photographers had been officially commissioned through the AWM.
in 2008. Writing about the opening at the Potter Museum of Art, Heywood makes these perceived distinctions clear:

It was a different context to a generic audience here [at the AWM]. It was completely different and I wanted to launch the exhibition down there [in Melbourne] to probably give myself some freedom. So it was never planned to be launched here. And that probably allowed the work to be an art exhibition and not just sort of a description of what was going on in the works. … Some of the objectives we wanted to get out of it was to show that the commission wasn’t propaganda, that it is part of the art world. (Heywood 2009b)

This emphasis on artistic interpretation is a common theme in framing Green and Brown’s works, as well as that of other artists who have received war artist commissions. But, why is a distinction made between the perceived intentions of photojournalists and artists, especially when most of the commissioned artists produced their images based on photographs taken while “on tour”?

I argue there are three main, interrelated reasons why representations of war produced through the OWAS and CFAP are consistently positioned within the category, art. First, the works are seen as contributing to Australia and Canada’s cultural wealth. They are perceived as artistic renderings; that is, treatments that document war activities from the interpretive position of the artist. The government and military encourage or, at very least accommodate such representations, Heywood argues, because “they want to give a perspective of what’s going on rather than people making assumptions through the media or whatever else” (Heywood 2009b). Although this suggests that a military perspective is mediated by an artistic one, emphasis on the idea that art is produced through the OWAS and CFAP does not distance the work from official Australian and Canadian conflict history. Rather, the intersection of military activity and art
practice situates the works within a well-established artistic tradition that portrays military engagements as part of the cultural wealth and power of nations.  

The desire to firmly locate the works in a rich national/ist tradition of art and culture is made explicit in the exhibitions. For example, in Framing Conflict, there are three large-scale paintings that have the descriptive, “history painting,” in their titles. Traditionally, history painting has been regarded as the most important of the genres in Western painting—a fact made apparent to exhibition-goers in this case. Not only is the genre identified by name in the titles of works in the show, it is also explained in one of the exhibition’s didactic panels: “The titles for the three largest paintings directly refer to history painting—a traditional genre that focused on mythological, biblical, historical, and military subjects…. By making reference to this heritage, Green and Brown locate the scenes they represent within broad histories of conflict, global travel, and cultural interaction that have been pictured throughout the history of art” (2009a).

In History Painting: Market, Torin Kowt, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan (fig. 2), Green and Brown also make reference to the conventions of history painting in the work’s composition.

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31 In Australia, George Lambert (1873-1830) and Will Dyson (1880-1938) are the main artists cited as contributing to this legacy, while in Canada, it is Arthur Lismer (1886-1965), David Milne (1882-1953), and Molly Lamb Bobak (1922-).
The painting is large (121 x 121 cm), and displays a complex figure composition, narrative theme, and historical subject—all elements of history painting as an art historical genre (Green and Seddon 2000). In History Painting, these elements are employed by Green and Brown to portray a choreographed interaction between Australian troops and Afghan civilians in a make-shift market. (These interactions between Australian soldiers and Afghan civilians are choreographed for security reasons. Only particular Afghan civilians are allowed within the perimeter of the base, and all interactions are carefully monitored.) All of the action in the work occurs on a Cartesian axis: the line created by the base of the jagged mountains bisects the picture plane horizontally, while the rapid foreshortening of the seated Afghan sellers and their colourful...
mats at the centre of the composition creates a strong intersecting axis that bisects the picture vertically. A standing Afghan man dressed in white stares out at the viewer from the middle ground; his face—the only one clearly visible in the painting—is located at the intersection point of the horizontal and vertical axes. The standing figures, of which there are many in the painting, reinforce this vertically. And, while the scene contains activity—the soldiers casually guard the perimeter, sales are made between Australian soldiers and Afghan sellers, an Australian soldier is interviewed by a plains-clothed cameraman and boom-mike operator—the figures are posed at rest and create a series of vertical accents that reinforce the stability of the basic composition.

There is only one figure that is not at rest in the painting, the soldier at the left who walks as though “out of the frame.” Otherwise, the figures are inactive, the scene quiet. “History” in this instance is pictured as something other than the significant, the singular, and the dramatic; even in the context of what might be seen by Australian exhibition-goers as an exotic locale, it speaks instead of the typical, the uneventful, and the everyday.

Green and Brown were very aware of the art historical genre to which they were referring in this work, their unconventional interpretation of the genre indicative of their facility with its characteristic vocabulary. Brown is quoted to this effect on the didactic panel that accompanied the painting: “we were thinking particularly of nineteenth-century Orientalist paintings, French paintings, in ‘the exotic East,’” he explains, “We’re sort of channelling the history of art.” And this “channelling” is evident, but they reference the history of art to different effect than that apparent in the genres of art to which they refer. In conventional history paintings, for example, the most prominent figure is normally the story’s protagonist—more often than not in images in war, portrayed as a heroic figure. Green and Brown’s placement of an Afghan civilian as the

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32 An example of this type of painting is Antoine Jean-Groys’ *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Stricken* (1804). This work portrays a uniformed Napoleon in the origin, or central, point of the
central figure, an un-heroic figure looking out at the viewer from the middle ground, is unconventional in this respect. The anonymous Afghan man is centred in the composition. This figure, placed in the middle distance, works in relation to the figure in the left foreground with his back to us, to create rapid recession into depth and, with it, a strong perspectival line.

Linked to the Afghan figure in this way, the soldier in the left foreground works on a number of levels to establish the relationship of the viewers to the painting. Not only does his relationship to the middle-ground figure signal the intercultural interaction characteristic of the histories of both conflict and global travel, like the middle-ground figure, he is not individualized; although he is close enough to the viewer that, were he pictured turned around, his face would be visible, his back is turned. He is identifiable only as an Australian soldier, but in that sense, a person with whom the viewer would presumably identify. In fact, this point of identification has been strengthened by having the soldier’s back to the viewer; stripped of individuality, he is a generalized “Australian soldier.” He is not heroized or made prominent in such a way that he is read as any more important or central to the "action" of the painting than any other figure. Yet, standing prominently in the foreground of the scene, quietly watching, he is the immediate object of viewer attention insofar as he “too” is Australian. His is the frame of reference through which the market, as an example of the Australian experience of Afghanistan, is seen.33

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Cartesian axis, flanked by Middle Eastern men in various stages of dress. Aside from Napoleon and several of his aides, the faces of the other figures in the painting are hidden and therefore these figures remain depersonalized.

33 Other elements in this history painting that are unconventional interpretations of the genre include the figure walking out of the frame and the depiction of such an unremarkable scene as a significant historical event. As well, the figure of the Australian soldier who appears to be walking out of the picture frame on the left-hand side of painting is unusual if seen in terms of the conventions of history painting. Anomalous to the scene, he focuses on activities seemingly “outside the frame” and, quite literally, has his back to the central action of the painting in a manner characteristic of photojournalism, where the immediacy of a scene (and, presumably, its
Although they are re-interpreting many of the conventions of the genre of history painting, Green and Brown, by calling upon this rich art tradition, are locating Australian military activities within a specific history that ties together art and war to assert the nation’s cultural and military strength. When works such as History Painting are exhibited to the public, national military efforts are presented as both a reflection of activity and an acknowledgement that such activity is worthy of being documented in the culturally elite form of fine art. It is a form of representation that connects the perceived wealth and character of the nation to the art of war (Preziosi 1998, 13); artworks are naturalized as historical documents that are believed to directly represent specific historical or national characteristics. These works bolster the nation-state not only on the basis of what they depict—a nation’s strong military effort—but also through the form in which this effort is depicted—that of fine art. According to Elizabeth Mansfield, “art history enters into the service of nationalism” by confirming the value of artworks that contribute to “the robust health of a nation, for artworks by their very nature are marks of cultural abundance” (2007, 3).

I just discussed the first reason works produced through official war arts programs are framed as fine art, which is to contribute to the cultural wealth of the nation. A second reason works produced through the OWAS and CFAP are posited as art objects has to do with the need of many of the artists to occupy an ambiguous position in relation to the politics of military warfare. The assertion that their work is fine art, as opposed to photo-documentation, is often

production) is often signaled by such inclusions. In this context, reference to photojournalistic composition—a contemporary, even ubiquitous, form of representing war—contemporizes, albeit perhaps unintentionally, the genre of history painting within which the artists see themselves working.
reinforced by the artists themselves. Part of the reason for this assertion stems from the ambivalence that many official artists claim to feel about the military and, in particular, current national military involvements in Afghanistan and, in Australia, the Middle East as well. CFAP artist Scott Waters’ painting, *Sgt. Collette* (fig. 3), illuminates the conflicted feelings many artists feel toward military efforts in Afghanistan.

![Image of Scott Waters, Sgt. Collette, 2007. Oil and acrylic on panel. 2 panels, 77.3cm x 61cm and 77.4cm x 60.8cm. Collection of Scott Waters (image from A Brush with War, exhibition catalogue).](image)

Composed of two parts placed side-by-side, this painting focuses on the face of the Sergeant, and includes a textual explanation that describes his thoughts as well as those of the artist. Shown in

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34 The desire to assert that the work operates as a particular type of object (art rather than photograph) demonstrates that artists and curators, as well as those who organize official war programs, understand that “art” is, in fact, not a neutral category.

35 Other works by Waters included in *A Brush with War* consistently reveal the artist’s ambivalence toward war. A former infantry soldier and self-described war buff who often feels
camouflaged battle fatigues, the sergeant is staring directly out of the frame to make eye contact with the viewer, although his eyes are cast in the deep shadow of the helmet perched low on his head, the strong tonal contrast suggesting the intense sunlight and bleached landscape of his location. The background is nondescript plywood which, along with his fatigues, suggests that the sergeant is being pictured in a combat zone where such material is common.36

At the same time that the plywood background establishes a sense of place in the work, it also serves to flatten the image, visually “pushing” the plane of the canvas forward so that, despite the figure positioned seemingly in front of the plywood, the painting functions on one plane, if also as something of a diptych, one half to be read against and in relation to the other. In this case the other half of the diptych consists of text explaining both the sergeant’s and the artist’s fears that the work will be read as advancing military objectives. It reads, “Sgt. Collette worried this depiction might become propaganda for the Department of National Defense. If he dies, will I paint this image over to avoid such a possibility?” Waters’ rethinking of the purposes of the piece in light of the sergeant’s concerns reveals the slippage between art and propaganda; that is, while these two categories are often conceptualized as completely distinct and autonomous from each other, the sergeant’s and artist’s concern over this possible slippage between the two highlights how linked art and propaganda can be.

the draw to “be part of the terrifying war machine” (Waters 2011), Waters’ works include paintings that block out pieces of military armaments with thick, bright pink paint because “part of the reason why the weapons sections are left blank [is] because I always want to paint them … I still have a visceral enjoyment of seeing and holding them … I’ve felt it important to either flatten [them] or leave [them] negative to confront my own desires in the painting” (Waters quoted in Brandon with Ogden 2009, 60).

36 As a type of building material, plywood is suggestive of the transient nature of the infrastructures and activities of war. It is inexpensive and versatile, and light enough to be easily transported. Many of the temporary structures built in conflict areas include plywood sheeting.
Although Waters questions his role in representing Colette and the problems with the representation becoming propaganda for the Department of National Defense, Waters’ responds to the problem in painterly terms, and thereby reaffirms the work as a work of art. His first reaction to avoiding propaganda is “to paint this image over” in “a topical tan but surely not a melodramatic black or burgundy.” Waters’ preference of tan, topical in the sense that it relates to camouflage and military shades, rather than “melodramatic” darker tones is made in reference to the evocative and affective qualities of colours; if Colette was to die in Afghanistan and Waters was to paint over his likeness in order to avoid art becoming propaganda, the selection of colour becomes an important choice in determining the nature of this edit. Additionally, Waters further reaffirms the fine art value of the piece by offering alternative scenarios to painting over and destroying the work. He wonders whether he will “retire it” from public viewing and “occasionally peek at it.” His potential unwillingness to destroy or alter the depiction speaks to the perceived value of the artwork, that it should be protected and saved. Waters’ further query as to whether looking upon the work in a different time and space “allows for time travel” maintains the art historical convention that fine art is presumed to be fully representative of its production context. The combination of the close-up of the sergeant’s face and the explanatory text personalizes the sergeant and artist to the viewer, and reveals an intimate portrait of both as subjects of fine art.

Although some official artists are in the military, such as Canadian graphic novelist David Collier, or have been, like Canadian painter Waters, most of the contemporary artists commissioned by the OWAS and CFAP are not and have never been enlisted. In fact, artists participating in both programs express opinions of the war ranging from political apathy to political ambivalence to political opposition. CFAP artist Karen Bailey stated in relation to her works, “I don’t promote war. I’m not interested in it at all” (Bailey 2011). Discussing his 2007
participation in CFAP to record the activities of Canadian Forces’ Operation CALUMET on the Sinai Peninsula, photographer Allan Ball questioned his participation in documenting, and potentially normalizing, military activities (Ball 2009). OWAS artists Green and Brown explicitly stated that they “opposed the Iraq ‘misadventure’ and are ‘implacably anti-war’” (Matchett 2009), yet produced artworks that focused on these subjects while being financially supported and physically protected by the military whose actions they opposed.

For artists who occupy an ambiguous political position in relation to Australian and Canadian war activities, art functions as a distancing agent, a mode of cultural production that mediates what is being represented and the perception of those who represent. Whether politically apathetic, ambivalent, or oppositional to the actual military activities in which they are embedded, all of the artists I have mentioned participated fully in either the OWAS and CFAP artist programs, which aim “to capture the daily operations, personnel, and spirit” of Australian and Canadian military activities (Department of National Defence 2009a; see also Australian War Memorial 2011). In asserting their works as art, rather than historical documentation, the artists involved use artistic interpretation and representation to distance themselves from the realities of what is being represented, that is to say, warfare and its specific politics. Art, then, is framed as a category separate from the politics and policies of Australia and Canada and their involvements in contemporary conflicts.

I have just discussed two reasons why representations of war produced through the OWAS and CFAP are consistently identified as fine art: the state is able to claim a cultural

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37 Although Ball was not an artist in Afghanistan, I feel his political ambivalence to his role as official military artist is relevant here because of his commission occurring at a time when the discourse surrounding all military activities was inextricably linked to the global military efforts tied to the war on terror after 9/11.
history that is rich in both art and war, and the artists are able to function within the military program without having to overtly participate or comment on the government policies informing it. The third reason works produced through state-sponsored program are framed as art is to create an apparent distance between the production of official war art and the state’s politics of war, and therefore, to guard the images against accusations that they are propaganda. Art objects are perceived as occupying a social space distinct from the policies and politics of the state and military, which may be why the interpretations and representations of war activities by artists who are ambivalent toward Australian and Canadian war efforts are welcomed by the OWAS and CFAP. The works produced by artists who both agree and disagree are viewed to be personal and truthful representations of national/ist military actions because they are seemingly produced by outside observers, who have no specific political agenda to promote.

Additionally, by exploiting the idea that artworks stand outside the demands of government and military objectives, institutions organizing and hosting exhibitions of official war art are able to accommodate works that may be critical of the war effort. Hal Foster has noted that museums have actually begun to include critical works both to position themselves as tolerant and to stymie critiques: “new site-specific work often seems a museum event in which the institution imports critique,” he points out, “whether as a show of tolerance or for the purpose of inoculation (against a critique undertaken by the institution, in the institution)” (1996, 191). Leaving its own institutional practices intact, the museum is thus able to perform a particular level of universality

38 The perception of art as an autonomous object and category of cultural production that is distinct from reality denies the role of visual culture in producing or reproducing politics, a view of art that lingers from the Kantian philosophy that art is separate or distinct from other life operations. Although sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) thoroughly unpacks this positing of the category of art as a transcendental concept, both the institutions and the artists rely on this conservative category, albeit in different formulations, to situate the artworks in a “space” above and beyond the politics of national/ist engagements with global military conflicts.
through new cultural inclusions that seem to be critical, but do not actually challenge the
dominant order. Insofar as seemingly subordinate, oppositional, or even subversive positions are
contained within the museum space as an apparent site of debate and dialogue, the institution
contains critique, controlling the terms under which critical response takes place, and thereby
lessoning their potential impact.

In doing so, “contained critique” also works to protect the war art programs and the
institutions that display their works from accusation that they are participating in propaganda, a
central concern in relation to national/ist histories and documenting warfare. The disconnection
between artists’ works and military directives is reinforced by assertions from the artists
themselves that no constraints were placed on the production of the art. When artists outline the
mandate of the OWAS and CFAP, they emphasize the lack of restrictions or constraints placed on
the artist working on official commissions (Green and Brown 2009b). While official
photojournalists with the OWAS are given specific objectives and must turn over all photographs
to the Australian War Memorial at the end of their commissions (Hobbs 2009), commissioned
artists are not given guidelines as to what is or is not expected to be recorded, and only selected
and previously agreed upon artworks are destined for the War Memorial holdings or for the
CFAP archives. They are free to exhibit any other work produced as they see fit, which reinforces
the idea that artworks produced through the OWAS or CFAP are independent of military control.

Institutional authorities, such as museum curators and government officials, support these
claims. As Heywood states, “[the OWAS] doesn’t have any sort of propaganda element to it …
I’ve always seen it as being sort of open and freeing” (2009b). John MacFarlene, current
directorate of the History and Heritage, the branch of the Canadian Department of National
Defence that organizes the CFAP, echoed Heywood’s sentiment by highlighting how few
directives or constraints are placed on visual artists (or on writers, actors, dancers, and musicians)
selected by the program (MacFarlene 2011). The freedom of expression the artist enjoys serves to promote the idea that the resulting images are not dictated by the military’s interests or political negotiations, and situates the art completed under OWAS or CFAP sponsorship as outside of or, at very least, unhindered by official political intentions. These claims, therefore, attempt to present the works as relatively “truthful” renditions of contemporary military activities.

Although neither the OWAS nor CFAP explicitly impinge upon the artistic freedom of the artists they commission, the spatial parameters of what war artists have access to viewing, said to be dictated by security measures, nonetheless delineate the possibilities for representation. As philosopher Judith Butler explains,

> although restricting how or what we see is not exactly the same as dictating a storyline, it is a way of interpreting in advance what will and will not be included in the field of perception. The very action of the war, its practices and its effects, are meant to be established by the perspective that the Department of Defense orchestrates and permits, thereby illustrating the orchestral power of the state to ratify what will be called reality: the extent of what is perceived to exist. (2009, 66)

While there were no specific directives concerning what could or could not be represented—nor what was desired—the structural and institutional parameters that dictated the space and physical barriers of movement firmly established what could be viewed and thus represented by official war artists. While some art was produced when artists went off the base or “outside the wire”—such as the photographs of Afghanistan exhibited in CFAP artist Adrian Stimson’s show, Holding

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39 MacFarlene made this comment while moderating the afternoon panel of War Art Now at the Canadian War Museum in February 2011. This statement was supported by the artists and writers participating in the panel, including William MacDonnell, Karen Bailey, and Sharon McKay.
Our Breath (2010)—most representations of official Australian and Canadian war art depict the activities of troops on the base in their day-to-day lives.40

Additionally, the task of representing military activities through a commission with the OWAS or CFAP is identified as a moral responsibility. As OWAS artist Brown puts it, “Now, also, in the context of that commission there are certain issues, you know, that you take on because you feel that there is respect due to the troops and to the situation and so on. So the only constraints, I suppose, would be your own artistic decision about what you will and won’t do” (Green and Brown 2009b). The act of commemorating war activities in a recognizably respectful manner is particularly important for OWAS participants, because unlike the OWAS which purports to emphasize the artist’s freedom, the very mandate of the Australian War Memorial, where commissioned works are housed, is to commemorate and present war on behalf of soldiers and their families. Certainly, Green and Brown considered this audience during their OWAS commission:

So [what we had access to during our time with the military] was not really a constraint, but it is an aspect of what we did because we knew it was not just an art audience that we were dealing with, but, rather, a broad audience. So I suppose, in terms of our choices, that probably affected what we did, but it wasn’t really a constraint. It was more to do with calibrating. (Green and Brown 2009b)

Although the production of works is framed as unconnected from the politics of warfare, the exhibition of the art is viewed as being interlinked with the politics and desires of museum, gallery, and memorial audiences. While, as art, the work is framed as having been produced free from military constraints, artists are aware of the AWM audience’s expectations that the work will respectively humanize soldiers and, by extension, the experience of war.

40 Stimson writes about his experience in a journal format in Blackflash (2010).
Within the official war art programs of Australia and Canada, categorization of the works produced by artists as fine art enables the works to function publicly as apolitical representations of current military activities in war zones, which allows the artists to separate their participation in state-sponsored art programs from the policies of the government and military, and Australia and Canada to claim a cultural history rich in art production. These programs and the works and exhibitions generated by them, however, are inextricably interwoven with the politics of contemporary warfare and the role of Australia and Canada within global military conflicts. As official visualizations of Australia and Canada at war, official war art becomes central to the current and future conceptions of national/ist war history. In the present moment, these works also contribute to the larger framework of material and visual culture that helps to demystify and normalize war, and to produce and reproduce justifications for national/ist engagements in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq using a simplistic neoliberal narrative of freedom and security.

**The affective logics of representing national/ist conflict**

It is not solely representation—that which is seen and replicated in recognizable form—that dictates how military efforts are visualized as official narratives of national/ist military activities. War, in itself, is a powerful arena that often evokes emotional reactions by its very nature; it brings to mind ideas of destruction, chaos, violence, fear, death. As Sean Carter and Derek McCormack explain, visual depictions of conflict contribute to an “affective logics of mediated spaces” (2010, 107). For Australia and Canada, the “affective logics” of visual representations legitimate and constitute a conflict narrative in terms of an affect of care by defining military participation as humane, moral, and for peacekeeping. The affective logic occurs not only in relation to the location of Australia and Canada within global military conflict associated with the War on Terror, but also in the transaction between viewers and visual representations of war.
within the museum space. Cultural objects that are framed within Australia’s and Canada’s official narratives of war, such as exhibitions of state-sponsored war art, are important in an examination of the ways in which affect functions on both the micro and macro levels of global capitalism.

As I mention in Chapter 2, representation is a dialogic process that generates different meanings depending on the relationships between object, viewers, space, and time; a visual image does not have one interpretation that can be conveyed to viewers regardless of the context within which they view it. In addition, the meaning of visual objects is informed by the affective logics of cultural products. In other words, representations of war also powerfully evoke reactions and feelings that affect the ways in which works are perceived. Indeed, I suggest that it is the power to generate both collective feelings and personal reactions that makes a particular artwork memorable and historically significant. I also suggest that it is not without purpose that official images of warfare function at an affectual level; while affect and its transmission as emotion to an audience cannot be controlled absolutely, the organization and arrangement of both the OWAS and CFAP lend themselves to creating situations and circumstances that enable artists to create particular types of images evocative of emotional responses that are sympathetic to Australia’s and Canada’s official conflict narratives. Distinct, but not separate from representation, affectivity is an integral element to understanding how visual representations of warfare operate within a national/ist discourse of global military conflicts.

What has been termed the “affective turn” in the humanities and social sciences has begun to highlight “how phenomenon including emotion, mood, feeling, affect and passion participate in social, cultural, economic, and political life” (Carter and McCormack 2010, 103). This critical focus on affectivity is part of the increased interest in what can be termed “non-representational theories” (Thrift 2008), which challenge the primacy of representation as the
method through which images are understood to produce and reproduce meaning in the world. What I suggest is that critical engagement with the images produced under the OWAS and CFAP through both representation (as I have in the previous section) and affect (as I do in this section) complicates and deepens understanding of how images of military activities in war zones operate in relation to official narratives of national/ist conflict history.

By examining official visualizations in terms of the affective logic of warfare, I question how affect is used as a strategy to build support for Australian and Canadian military efforts. Ben Anderson examines the affective geographies of morale and popular support, questioning how aerial bombardments and “vertical geographies of bombing from the sky” are key contemporary strategies in breaking down enemy combatants by causing “affective harm and damage that disrupt habitual perception” (2010, 219-20). His focus is on “how a ‘version’ of these named collective affects [which break down the morale or ‘will to fight’ of the enemy] have been cultivated at the intersections of think tanks, the US military, and military journals” (224). My intention is not to repeat his study here, but to address another element in the strategies of affective warfare. I question particular affective visualizations that are designed not to break down the enemy but to build up support from the homefront and among political allies for such efforts. That is, I examine visual representations that are framed within Australia’s and Canada’s liberal order narratives of an affect of care. The agents in this process are not only the people actively invested in the military-industrial complex who devise strategies to build and retain support from a national citizenry, but also those sometimes unwitting participants, in this case official war artists, who are part of the extended cultural sphere of the liberal nation-state, which advances its interests in capitalist development through military invasions.

In the War on Terror, the political economy of affect is a central component in justifying and defining the ways in which liberal nation-states self-identity. While Australia and Canada
inhabit an affect of care, the US promotes a national affect of freedom. For example, current US involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq is framed as ensuring global freedom through aggressive military activity. Therefore, visualizations of US actions are perceived as echoing these sentiments. This presumption is rooted in the history of how war efforts have been depicted, with the US representing triumphal actions that match its perceived identity as aggressive and dominant. In relation to contemporary warfare, US military activities often serve as a litmus test by which the actions of other countries are measured. This perception is promulgated in popular press discussions of how different national/ist military activities are depicted in art:

The archetypical American image of modern war is surely Raising the Flag at Iwo Jiwa [sic], Joe Rosenthal’s triumphal photograph of five USmarines [sic] and a US navy corpsman raising the Stars and Stripes on Iwo Jima’s Mount Suribachi on February 23, 1943. If there is an Australian approach to recording the nation at war, it is the reverse: a commemoration of ordinary people doing the best job they can in environments that are the stuff of nightmares. (Matchett 2009)

In this quotation from one of Australia’s major newspapers, Australian military efforts are juxtaposed with those of the US in order to posit Australia’s as less aggressive and bombastic. In this construction, Australia’s affect of care through humane peacekeeping is enacted through seemingly “ordinary” Australians, not the extra-ordinary “heroes” of Iwo Jima fame. The sense of Australian service and the representation of that service are juxtaposed with the perceived imperialism of the US military in order to illuminate by contrast the strength-of-spirit and unassuming, “everyman” essence of the Australian. So depictions of the war by artists commissioned through state-sponsored programs are framed within the larger context of Australian military actions as campaigns conducted by ordinary citizens who embody Australia’s strength of spirit.
The perception of Australia and Canada as non-aggressive is reproduced in part through visualizations of their respective military activities, not least of which are those provided through official war artist programs. In this way, the ethics and principles of liberal logic—which includes identification with national affects of care in relation to global military conflict—are so embedded in the collective imaginary of both Australian and Canadian citizens that artists’ participation in reifying liberalism is invisible. That is, although OWAS and CFAP artists explicitly state their opposition to Australia’s and Canada’s military activities, they create artworks that help constitute and legitimate the official conflict narrative. While artists explicitly focus on the framing and light and rendering of their images, there is awareness, at least for some, of their engagement with the official narratives of Australia and Canada. As Green states of his and Brown’s time spent interacting with the Australian military forces, “We came away with incredible respect for the men and women we met, a deep admiration for the low-key laconicism and sense of service which is the Anzac ethos. The people we saw were the direct descendants of Lambert’s lighthorseman” (quoted in Matchett 2009). The ANZAC ethos that Green refers to is the central national/ist military mythology of Australia. ANZAC (which stands for Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) is framed as a specifically Australian strength of spirit demonstrated by Australian soldiers during the 1915 Gallipoli landing; this ANZAC spirit is still used to describe the actions of Australian military personnel. The desire to communicate “the Anzac ethos” and portray the role of citizen-soldiers who embody this ANZAC ethos forms the central component of the current Australian narrative of conflict history.

Visualizations of national/ist military activities not only represent the activities themselves, but also communicate affective qualities that evoke particular emotional connections between viewers and the military personnel depicted. I argue that these connections, which are present in both OWAS and CFAP works, build support for such efforts, and define these efforts
in terms of a national affect of care. The war effort, then, becomes support for the troops, if not the war. In this way, the affective register operates to produce and reproduce individual and collective attachments to the human side of warfare, and helps portray the paradoxical concept of human-centered—or humane—warfare as being central to Australian and Canadian military actions.

The affective register in relation to emotive responses and human-centred warfare is evident in the large number of military portraits in both Framing Conflict and A Brush with War. A well-worn genre in the history of war art, portraiture benefits from the widespread assumption that the face, in particular, reveals the essence of a person. For Australia and Canada, the affect of care that defines military action is communicated to citizens through the humanizing portraits of soldiers, which translates representation and conveys the concept of care through the emotional response of the viewer. This type of representation of military actions parallels the official narratives of Australia and Canada in relation to their contemporary military activities in war zones as caring through humane peacekeeping carried out by citizen-soldiers.

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41 The phrase “Support Our Troops” has become a ubiquitous pro-war slogan in Canada and Australia, as well as in the US and UK. The focus on supporting those who fight the war is a way in which critiques of the war, often made from the political Left, are stymied: any critique becomes a criticism of the brave citizens who fight as soldiers in the war, rather than a critique of the circumstances of the war itself. As William Deresiewicz points out in an opinion piece in the New York Times, the phrase “Support Our Troops” played “on a justified collective desire to avoid repeating the mistake of the Vietnam era, when hatred of the conflict spilled over into hostility toward the people who were fighting it. Now the logic was inverted; supporting the troops, we were given to understand, meant that you had to support the war. In fact, that’s all it seemed to mean. The ploy was a bait and switch, an act of emotional blackmail. If you opposed the war or questioned the way it was conducted, you undermined our troops” (2011). The phrase and ideology of “Support Our Troops,” then, functions as a pro-war slogan disguised as something else, something more caring and personal because it focuses attention on the human and personal aspect of military action, rather than the politics of state policies toward warfare.
In many official war art commissions, portraits are created to reproduce an affect of care by representing soldiers as caring, ordinary (rather than extra-ordinary) people in casual poses. A case in point is Green and Brown’s portrait of Dr. Jeff Brock, a surgeon in the Australian Defense Force (ADF), whom they picture full length in an unassuming, relaxed attitude (fig. 4).

Figure 4: Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, *Portrait, Dr. Jeff Brock, AME Surgeon, Kandahar, 2007.* Oil on linen. 31cm x 31cm. Collection of Charles Green and Lyndell Brown (photograph by author).

A portrait of the doctor in the field, it is divided into panels that suggest Brock is being seen through a window that separates the viewer from the scene. He is thus isolated from the observer, pictured in an intimate, introspective moment to which the viewer is nonetheless privy. Brock is depicted seated in the door of a Blackhawk helicopter, its interior visible behind him, his gaze cast into the distance. Tanned, wrinkled, but still youthful, his face and short grey hair convey life
experience and authority. He is seated on the edge of the helicopter with his right foot touching the ground and his left foot dangling above it. His shoulders are hunched slightly forward and he clasps his hands loosely in front of him, revealing a large silver watch on his right wrist. While dressed in a military uniform with what appears to be medical equipment strapped to his right upper leg in the same manner one might wear a weapon, Brock is identified as an AME surgeon by both the title of the portrait and the patch on his left arm. AME, which stands for Aeromedical Evacuation, is a specialized medical transportation unit with which the Australian military work in Afghanistan.42 “Coalition Dustoff,” which is printed on the patch, refers to a team that Green describes as consisting of doctors who "are embedded in an American unit and fly around in Black Hawks rescuing both coalition military and Taliban from battlefields” (Green 2008). The term “dust-off” is actually an acronym for “Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces” (Rampage 2010).43

In exhibition, Green and Brown’s portrait of Brock suggests the personal involvement and individual effort demanded of warfare, particularly of those who are involved in medical service rather than in the military conflict. The depiction is not sensational or revealing of the intensities of battle; rather it has a quiet, almost serene quality. The age of the subject denotes knowledge and efficiency; he is a paternalistic caregiver. It is a depiction that conveys approachability, familiarity, and safety, which works to establish an emotional connection and

42 In fact, all ADF AME activities are provided by a private company called Aspen Medical. Aspen Medical supports the ADF activities by providing “the AME team, equipment, consumables and pharmaceuticals, but also the aircraft, the aircrew, all aviation fuel, runway lighting to enable 24 hour operations, and accommodation, travel and meals” (Aspen Medical 2010). Therefore, although the AME is, in theory, acting under the Australian military, it is actually a private company based in Australia, with branches in the US and the UK.

43 Dust-off is also listed as an acronym for “Dedicated Unstinting Service To Our Fighting Forces” (Australian War Memorial n.d.a.).
level of comfort between the military and Australian museum-goers. Rather than portraying this soldier and, by extension his actions, as heroic, extra-ordinary and larger-than-life, Green and Brown show him as an unassuming person who could be any Australian citizen, however much the context of the work defines Brock as doctor involved in the Australian military. In this portrait, Brock personifies the actions and intents of Australian military efforts in relation to an affect of care.

Significantly, when a detail of the work was reproduced on the cover of the catalogue to the show (fig. 5), it was the lower half of the portrait that was chosen for reproduction.

Figure 5: Framing Conflict exhibition catalogue cover, Detail from Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, Portrait, Dr. Jeff Brock, AME Surgeon, Kandahar, 2007.

The fact is telling. Lacking the individualizing elements of the portrait, the cover image suggests the anonymous soldier—the generalized type, representative on another level of the people in Australia's military. In this sense, it is also significant that this “nationalized figure” is represented, not in action or conflict, but quietly seated. The theme, “framing conflict,” then, positions the Australian experience of war as reflective of a national character that is unassuming, quiet, and gentle. While the portrait of Brock on the cover of the exhibition catalogue is not
initially individualized, it is personalized to embody the Australian sense of self and nation as caring and non-aggressive. This character is introduced as anonymous, an Australian any-body and every-body, and a figure of Australian spirit that is indicative and representative of all Australian citizens, and with whom viewers are supposed to relate.

The use of the bodies of soldiers to embody the activities of war and national self-identification of particular characteristics is also employed by CFAP artist Gertrude Kearns, whose personalized, but not quite individualized, portraits evoke an affective connection between military personnel and museum-goers. In What They Gave (fig. 6), Kearns portrays three injured soldiers, rendering each anonymous in order to foreground their vulnerability as individuals in a war zone.

Figure 6: Gertrude Kearns, What They Gave, 2006. Ink, acrylic, and crayon on 4-ply board. 3 panels, each 152cm x 102 cm. Collection of Gertrude Kearns (images from A Brush with War, exhibition catalogue).

The paintings—of Private William Salikin, Corporal Jeffrey Bailey, and Master Corporal Paul Franklin—are based on photographs Kearns took a day after a suicide-bomb attack (Brandon with Ogden 2009, 66). What They Gave depicts three injured Canadian soldiers lying in hospital beds, wrapped in bandages, and hooked up to various machines. The soldiers’ faces are not visible,
obscured by hospital equipment or cast in dark shadows. The bodies of the soldiers are covered in bandages and blankets, although their skin is marked with slashing brushstrokes of blue, red, and yellow, which illuminate the injuries they have sustained. The composition of the three paintings is tightly framed around each solider, creating an intimate relationship between their bodies and the museum-goer, who is located as if in the hospital room peering at each man from the side or foot of the bed. A seemingly physical proximity is established that works to generate emotional intimacy between the Canadian viewer and what is in this instance the injured, vulnerable Canadian soldier; it is closeness that works to create empathy and compassion.

In *What They Gave*, Kearns exploits the formal qualities of the painting to convey action, violence, and turmoil, as much to communicate her response to war as to characterize the conflict itself. While the action in the paintings is static—wounded soldiers lying unconscious—the strident colours and emphatic brushstrokes lend these works drama. In short, she has abandoned controlled naturalism to convey an emotional response to the people she is depicting. She may be documenting a specific military event—the severe injuries of three Canadian soldiers as a result of an Afghan suicide bomber—but she is also recording her emotional response to this event as it was embodied in the three soldiers. “It can be easier to present a platform, take a position, the less you experience,” she said later in recalling her time in Afghanistan, “But the real taste of fear, uncertainty, danger, bravery, atrocity is a burden which must be wrestled with” (Kearns as quoted in Brandon with Ogden 2009, 66). The mixture of brash colours and slashing brushstrokes communicates these feelings of “fear, uncertainty, danger, bravery, atrocity” in

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44 Kearns uses this same style in her most well-know painting of war, *Somalia #2, Without Conscious* (1996). This work portrays Mater Corporal Clayton Matchee of the Canadian Airborne Regime torturing a Somali teenager inside a Canadian compound in 1993. Kearns’ painting caused a lot of controversy when angry Veterans’ groups protested its inclusion in the newly opened Canadian War Museum (CBC 2005).
relation to an embodied war. And this articulation of emotion helps viewers to actively engage, rather than passively read, the narrative referenced in the painting.

The combination of representation and affect that is articulated in Kearns’ *What They Gave* enables museum-viewers not only to *see* the painting, but to *feel* the activity of the scene and its emotional content. The soldiers, and by extension their actions as part of the military in Afghanistan, are framed sympathetically. Although their faces are invisible, they are humanized and personalized as vulnerable people who represent the human cost of war, the title of the piece, *What They Gave*, making the point explicitly. What these soldiers have “given” is their health and well-being, which they sacrificed in order to participate in the Canada’s military’s peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan. The rendering of the soldiers’ injuries as representative and affective—resonating with Kearns’ feelings as well as those of the museum-viewer—lends this piece particular emotional import. The painting contributes explicitly to the emotional side of war and violence, and articulates empathy for those willing to risk their health and safety for the war effort on the side of “good,” which is part of Canada’s official narrative of war.

Works of this nature relay events through images that are clearly represented as well as affectively visualized, which helps to build domestic support for national/ist conflict efforts. Australian and Canadian viewers of such works not only understand the particular realities and actions of military warfare, but also feel and embody elements of it. That is, the works operate in exhibition in relation to affect at both the macro level (that is, at the level of Australian and Canadian affects of care within the global conflict narrative) and the micro level (the level of viewer engagement with representations of warfare). Audience response to the paintings is guided, in part, by the particular national/ist discourse generated by the conflict; yet images such as the portrait of Dr. Jeff Brock and the paintings of three injured Canadian soldiers move beyond conscious engagement with it. They shift into a deeper belief system that allows domestic citizens
geographically distanced from the realities of warfare to identify with national/ist military actions in conflict zones.

**A permanent state of warfare**

Representations of Australian and Canadian military activities in Afghanistan are communicated to domestic citizens geographically distanced through war at both representative and affectual levels. By creating images of soldiers within conflict zones, exhibitions of works produced through state-sponsored war art programs contribute to a visual landscape of national/ist activities that normalize conflict and warfare. Giorgio Agamben, expanding on the writing of Carl Schmitt, describes a scenario whereby military actions of the state are extended indefinitely and are able to diminish the rights of citizens (2005). In order to justify this process, the state must normalize this warring situation with official visual representations associating military actions with everyday experience. This normalization of global military conflict as inherent to the perceived natural order in relation to national and global development is inextricably linked to the principles of neoliberal globalization and the extension of the military-industrial complex.

Neoliberalism, in particular, is the prerequisite politico-economic logic for the transnational expansion of war; as Giorgio Agamben writes, “measures of security can only function within a context of freedom of traffic, trade, and individual initiative” (2002, n.p.). Neoliberal policies of conflict connect extraterritorial military activities to the militarization of national spaces to ensure the security of the internal and external order (Harvey 2003). As Gerald Raunig writes, “A tendency to the permanent state of war, no longer between sovereign nation-states, but in the global context and permeating the nation-states, replaces the procedure of the declaration of war with transnational police measures” (2007, 243). The nation-state, then, must define itself in relation to policies of transnational conflict. Merje Kuus discusses the concept of
cosmopolitan militarism as part of “the normalization of military institutions through narratives of global cooperation” (2009, 545). State-sponsored war art that represents the activities of Australian and Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan helps to promote both nations’ role in the War on Terror, which seeks to address perceived threats to global security and to encourage the spread of the liberalism.

In this arrangement, the bodies of soldiers depicted in conflict images, and those of the artists who generate those images, are directly related to processes of neoliberal globalization. David Harvey describes the body and globalization as operating at “the opposite ends of a spectrum we might use to understand social and political life” (2000, 15). He argues for the need to connect micro and macro elements to understand the workings of societies. By looking at the embodiment of conflict in bodies visually depicted and physically transferred through the works and artists involved in official war artist programs, I argue that soldiers are the marked agents of globalization. That is, military personnel become the bodies through which neoliberalism is acted out, the agents that connect Australian and Canadian domestic state policies to violence outside of their geographic borders.

The bodies of military personnel are also used as the vehicle through which military activities are viewed. That is, many of the works in Framing Conflict and A Brush with War portray military activities through the eyes of troops in Afghanistan. This viewpoint enables Australian and Canadian museum-goers to experience the activities of war from a distance, and aligns the perspective of viewers with that of military personnel. This arrangement normalizes the activities of war, humanizing the experience of conflict by presenting it from an individual’s perspective. In Green and Brown’s View from Chinook, Helmand Province, Afghanistan (fig. 7), for example, a distant visual of barren Afghan terrain is framed by the outline of a Chinook
helicopter, a viewpoint that corresponds with what the Australian soldier steering the vehicle appears to be seeing.

Figure 7: Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, View from Chinook, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2007. Oil on linen. 31 cm x 31 cm. Collection of Charles Green and Lyndell Brown (photograph by author).

To show that this perspective is reflective of the viewpoint of an Australian soldier, a piece of the helmet worn by the pilot is visible in the rearview mirror, an image that would be visible only to someone sitting in the cockpit. In this composition, the museum audience's perspective is at one with the pilot's perspective and, presumably, at another level, with his point of view.

A similar perspective is offered by other works in Framing Conflict, including Market Camp Holland, Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan (fig. 8).
Figure 8: Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, *Market Camp Holland, Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 2007. Oil on linen. 31cm x 31cm. Collection of Charles Green and Lyndell Brown (photograph by author).

This work portrays a choreographed interaction between Australian military and Afghan locals in the market, an interaction that appears relaxed, despite the presence of firearms. The composition of the painting resembles a personal photograph or casual tourist shot, with the action slightly off-centre and the head and shoulders of a soldier seemingly cropped by the top left-hand corner of the frame. The soldiers and Afghan traders are hunched together in a tight circle. None of the faces of the people in the painting are clearly visible to the viewer; faces are outside of the frame, placed in shadow, or turned away from the audience. The discussion between the seated Afghan rug trader and the kneeling Australian soldier holding a gun is the only activity in the painting, one removed from the viewer, psychologically if not visually, by the soldier whose broad back is
placed on the centre, vertical axis of the work. Strong horizontal bands of sand and gravel in the fore- and backgrounds, and of green, patterned fabric in the middle-ground intersect this vertical to establish a stable composition that reinforces the scene’s lack of drama. The figures are grouped together in the middle ground, the viewer looking upon the interaction from the foreground, visually separated by a band of grey gravel from the mat where the group sits. It is a picture of a quiet conversation of which the viewer is not a part. Nonetheless, the viewer looks down on the scene as though standing on the periphery, a perspective indicated by the red peg in the right foreground, the top of which is visible. It is a perspective shared by that of the headless soldier in the left background who, also standing, looks down upon the conversation as well. In other words, the viewer embodies the position and perspective of an Australian soldier standing on the periphery of the conversation, observing the interaction.

In A Brush with War, CFAP artist Allan Harding McKay’s piece, *Armoured Fighting Vehicle* (2002) (fig. 9), also represents activities from the viewpoint of military personnel, which allows museum-goers to embody this perspective of military activities.
Figure 9: Allan Harding McKay, *Armoured Fighting Vehicle*, 2002. Mixed media on paper. 62.3cm x 81 cm. Department of National Defence Collection (image from A Brush with War, exhibition catalogue).

Combining a digital photograph with an overlay of hot paraffin wax that has been mixed with varnish, charcoal, and chalk, this image is part of a larger narrative that depicts a drive around a military base in Kandahar, near Tarnak Farm, where four Canadian soldiers were killed and eight were injured by US “friendly fire” in the same year this piece was made (Brandon with Ogden 2009, 57). McKay’s piece reveals the perspective of the gunner, mounted on top of the vehicle, scanning the dusty environment in order to secure the claimed territory that is the military base. This perspective, which firmly locates the viewpoint of the soldier as central, is similar in style and intent to Green and Brown’s painting *View from Chinook, Helmand Province, Afghanistan* (fig. 7). Both artworks define combat in Afghanistan solely through the eyes of military personnel.
and provide Australian and Canadian museum audiences with a vicarious experience of military actions.

The alignment of perspective in these works by Green and Brown and McKay works to create empathy for the Australian or Canadian soldier. Such images force the museum viewer to see the activities of warfare from the soldier’s physical perspective, which also promotes empathic identification at a psychological and emotional level. This alignment of perspectives helps to normalize war as an everyday experience. This normalization occurs through the production of globally recognized visuals of warfare that centre on the “ordinary person” in the role of soldier in order to naturalize and humanize military activities and perspectives, as demonstrated in such works as Green and Brown’s Dr. Jeff Brock, AME Surgeon, Kandahar (fig. 4), Kearns’s What They Gave (fig. 6), and McKay’s Armoured Fighting Vehicle (fig. 9). The images produced through contemporary Australian and Canadian war artist programs articulate the humane dimensions of military occupation and warfare in order to contribute to national/ist narratives of humane peacekeeping. In the process of normalizing warfare as an inherent part of national and global security, the role of the soldier becomes simply another job within capitalism. The depiction of soldiers as everyday people working a job—citizens with whom non-military citizens can empathize—makes these cultural objects essential to constituting and legitimating the role of national/ist military endeavours within global conflict, and encouraging the support of a national/ist citizen for such endeavours.

In addition to humanizing the role of soldiers in order to cement and normalize military activities in relation to capitalism, the images of visual artists from the OWAS and CFAP delineate the conflict zones as areas that are suffering without Australian and Canadian humanitarian interventions. This makes the national/ist actions in those areas part of a moral obligation. In particular, the works of Australian artists Green and Brown in the Framing Conflict
exhibition engage with the concept of space and development. In their artist statement for the exhibit, Green and Brown write, “Our paintings exist in relation to photography: they consciously exhibit and flaunt their nature as transcripts. We were looking for landscapes of globalization and entropy [during our commission with OWAS]. We thought this is what it must be like, and it was” (Green and Brown 2007).

The concept of entropy, or “the inexorable decay of the built environment” (Heywood 2009a, 14), is central to Green and Brown’s works. Many of the artists’ paintings show the sprawls of a built military environment within what would appear to the Australian viewer to be a harsh and barren landscape.

![Figure 10: Charles Green and Lyndell Brown, History Painting: Outpost, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2008. Oil on linen. 121cm x 121cm. Collection of Charles Green and Lyndell Brown (photograph by author).](image-url)
Similar to Green and Brown’s painting *View from Chinook, Helmand Province, Afghanistan* (fig. 7), *History Painting, Outpost, Helmand Province* depicts the viewpoint of the soldier flying the helicopter. This composition aligns the perspective of the Australian troop operating the vehicle, whose hand is visible in the lower left-hand corner of the painting, with that of the viewer in an Australian museum, who is cast, vicariously, as a passenger in the chopper. The view from the window, for both soldier and viewer, is of a monochromatic and barren environment, seemingly void of life beyond that established by the military. This military presence is felt in the view from the vehicle, the colourful military containers to the centre-right of the painting, and the military barracks shown on the left. According to the didactic panel that accompanies the work, it is

a view through the windshield of an Australian Chinook helicopter, looking out onto a hostile landscape of rubble, huts, and shipping containers. The work focuses on the extreme and alien environment in which Australian troops in Afghanistan live and work. It is characterized by vast distances, high temperatures, alienating landscapes, and intense battles. (Heywood 2008).

The didactic panel description of the environment as a “hostile” and “alien” landscape that houses “rubble, huts” and “intense battles” supports Green and Brown’s discussion of the painting as portraying entropy. The portrayal of landscapes defined as decaying through the notion of entropy promotes the idea of Afghanistan as a desolate nation that is vacant of modern technology and infrastructure, materials that can be brought into the country through foreign, including Australian, involvement. The reality of communities of people living there and the occupation of their land by military invaders is supplanted by a narrative of help and necessity—of “development.” Indeed, these works visualize Afghanistan as an empty space that needs to be controlled not only to ensure global security, but also to benefit from domestic capitalist development. Such depictions parallel the official government and military rhetoric of Australia, and help produce and reproduce such narratives through their visualization.
The artworks produced by the OWAS and CFAP contribute to humanizing and normalizing current national/ist military activities in Afghanistan as well as Iraq. These visualizations participate in reifying the permanent state of exception as the “New Normalcy” through images of soldiers as seemingly ordinary people actively contributing to capitalist development and global security, and the space of Afghanistan as an empty, desolate environment that needs to be controlled.45 Such portrayals make the circumstances of war seem inherent to the politics of neoliberal globalization and the policies of national and international organizations, which use the language of humaneness, peacekeeping, and security to deploy them. The visualizations of Australian and Canadian “official narratives” of conflict history through official war artist programs, then, project the current history of war not as a triumphant, monumental venture, but rather as part of a national/ist effort to ensure domestic security and global freedom.

45 The use of military tactics to control everyday behaviours, spaces of consumption, and civilian life have been normalized as essential to conditions of national and global security, a state of being that former US Vice-President Dick Cheney identified in October 2001 as “the new normalcy” (Conner 2008, 12).
Chapter 4
Engendering Meanings: Incorporating Cultural Objects into National/ist Narratives

Definitions of art, artifact and commodity typically occur at interstitial nodes—sites of negotiation and exchange where objects must continually be reevaluated according to regional criteria and local definitions. At each point in its movement through space and time, an object has the potential to shift from one category to another and, in so doing, slide along the slippery line that divides art from artifact from commodity.


I want to examine a shift from questions about representation—how the female body should be represented—to the question of subjectivity—what it means to inhabit that body: from the problem of looking (distance) to the problem of embodiment (touch).


Yes, the Made in Afghanistan may sound aggressive, but remember it's a tribal weaver in Afghanistan—he's hardly making a political statement. It's folk art and it ought to be considered as such.

—Duncan Blair, Ritchies Auctioneers, Toronto; quoted by Aulakh 2008.

In this chapter, I examine Afghan “war rugs” and their inclusion in two exhibitions that address current Australian and Canadian military engagements: the 2003 Australian War Memorial exhibition, War Without Boundaries: Australia and the “War Against Terrorism,” and the 2008 Textile Museum of Canada show, The Battleground Project. Afghan war rugs have been produced since 1979, when the Soviet military invaded Afghanistan, and are textiles that display symbols of battle and war in the place of those conventionally used to pattern such rugs. These
rugs were produced in South Asia by Afghan weavers; the fact raises questions about their inclusion in War Without Boundaries and The Battleground Project. This chapter explores how and why cultural objects produced outside the geographical and cultural borders of Australia and Canada came to be included in the national/ist conflict narrative of the country at the centre of each exhibition.

As I explain in Chapter 1, dominant narratives are visualizations of national/ist conflict history not directly produced by state or military organizations, even though they may support official narratives. Like the official narratives of conflict history in Australia and Canada, the dominant narratives dealing with Australia’s and Canada’s military actions in Afghanistan do so in terms of peacekeeping and an affect of care. This affect is how the intent behind the military activity is characterized: a humanitarian effort to combat terror and to bring global peace and security through humane means. Australia’s and Canada’s representations of their respective military actions as both peacekeeping and caring helps the two countries to reconstitute their national boundaries within ideological projections of war as deterritorialized. Their ability to situate their military participation in these terms—that is, as activity presenting an affect of care through humane peacekeeping—is dependent on their self-identification as liberal nation-states. Liberalism is posited as encouraging democracy and, therefore, the “freedom,” vaguely defined, of citizens of liberal nation-states. The displays of Afghan war rugs in War Without Boundaries and Battleground reveals how such cultural objects can be deployed in terms of the dominant narratives of conflict in Australia and Canada in the context of an expanding military-industrial complex, the War on Terror, and a rhetoric of global freedom, democracy, and security.

The affect of care that is central to both Australia’s and Canada’s narratives of global military participation has been constructed in each case as a national/ist response to the global war waged against the affect of terror. However, in the same way that the affect of care responds
to the affect of terror, it is also reflective of an affect of trauma and pain. In other words, in the
same way that care is projected to solve terror through peacekeeping, it is also posited as helping,
through the same peacekeeping actions, those who have been traumatized and hurt by enactments
of terror. Perceived to be representing the lived experience and effects of war, Afghan war rugs,
then, inhabit an affect of trauma. The affects of terror and trauma parallel the divide identified by
anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani as good Muslims and bad Muslims (2004). In the so-called
War on Terror, bad Muslims are framed as those whose religious fundamentalism prohibits their
acceptance of the liberal values of freedom and democracy, and who are willing to enact aimless
violence and harm. Good Muslims are those—most often women and children—who are
victimized by the perceived irrational violence of bad Muslims. In this triangulation of affects—
care, terror, and trauma—care and trauma are aligned, in that both are opposed to terror; the
activities associated with an affect of care are directed to people perceived to be producing these
rugs and inhabiting an affect of trauma. The alliance of the affects of care and trauma brings
together the Australian and Canadian narratives of conflict and the perceived narratives in Afghan
war rugs. Particularly, the affinity of affects enables a specific empathic resonance in Australian
and Canadian viewers. The conflation of these two narratives and affects is what I explore in this
chapter.

The identification of Afghan war rugs primarily as craft objects is a central reason that
these objects are of interest to non-Afghan collectors, but it is also the reason they are
incorporated into the dominant narratives of conflict projected by Australia and Canada. While
Afghan war rugs are identified mainly as craft, and therefore tactile and material objects, in
museum spaces they are hung on the walls, as if they are only visual objects to be appreciated
from a distance. Nevertheless, despite the presentation of these rugs in visual terms, both displays
of and literature about Afghan war rugs consistently emphasize their materiality—their
conventional identification as material, rather than visual, culture. That emphasis lies in the observation that the juxtaposition of craft and war in such rugs is unexpected (Bonyhady 2003; Dhamija 2003). The idea that the craft object and its imagery are at odds stems from what the category of craft has represented within the histories of art and anthropology. Craft has conventionally been framed as apolitical, domestic, traditional, and female (Newdigate 1995; Parker and Pollock 1982; Parker 1989); craft objects, and by extension their makers, are not expected to express contemporary social, political, and economic conditions, especially war. The traditional craft/art binaries of apolitical/political, domestic/public, traditional/modern, female/male, and symbolic/representational have generated interest in these objects, and it is the perceived “craft-half” of these binaries that enable the deployment of Afghan war rugs in Australian and Canadian political contexts. As craft objects, therefore as objects associated with female producers (although they are, in fact, produced by Afghan men, women, and children), Afghan war rugs are perceived by Western audiences as having been produced by “good” Muslims, those with whom Australia and Canada are aligning themselves in the War Against Terror.

To examine how and why Afghan war rugs are integrated into the dominant narratives of Australia and Canada, this chapter is divided into four sections. First, I present the history of Afghan war rugs themselves, in order to explore some of the radical changes to their patterns and designs. Second, I examine War Without Boundaries and Battleground in relation to their inclusion of Afghan war rugs. In the third and fourth sections, I study the two ways in which Afghan war rugs were arranged in the exhibitions—as cultural souvenirs and as skillfully woven testimonials—in order to analyze how such objects are integrated into the conflict histories of Australia and Canada. Taken together, these sections illuminate how and why Afghan war rugs
function within the context of Australian and Canadian dominant narratives of global military conflict.

**Context and content of Afghan “war rugs”**

The production of Afghan war rugs dates to 1979, when Soviet troops first invaded Afghanistan, and continues today into the US-led and NATO-supported “War on Terror,” most recently rebranded as the “Overseas Contingency Operation.” Although produced since 1979, Afghan war rugs have become increasingly popular since 2001, when Afghanistan once again became a site of global conflict. Most commonly made in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, Afghan war rugs travel outside of Afghanistan through NGOs; in the hands of diplomats, visitors, and military personnel; through local “middlemen” who find the war rugs in markets and sell them to larger speciality companies, or more rarely, collectors who travel to Afghanistan looking specifically for them (Hardy 2010; Lendon 2003, 17). While many of these people buy the rugs as personal souvenir objects, many resell them, a transaction that has been simplified by the internet. Online shopping sites, such as ebay, offer the rugs to anyone with computer access and a credit card, although availability has decreased in the last few years as demand has increased and production has diminished. Since 2004, a number of Facebook profiles and websites devoted specifically to Afghan war rugs have popped up, among them warrugs.com, which is both an online shopping site and web blog, and rugsofwar.wordpress.com, a blog that offers extensive images and interpretations of the textiles.

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46 Nigel Lendon, co-curator of “The Rugs of War” and central figure in the study and exhibition of Afghan “war rugs,” made a trip to Afghanistan in 2007 to locate these objects. Lendon is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.
The study and circulation of these cultural objects is dominated by a small, predominantly male, group of collectors, curators, and researchers. Central to this group is Nigel Lendon, co-curator of the exhibition, The Rugs of War, creator and administrator of the blog rugsofwar.wordpress.com, and co-investigator at the Australian National University (ANU) of a government-funded research initiative devoted to the study of Afghanistan war art. Other key members are Tim Bonyhady, Lendon’s collaborator on The Rugs of War exhibition and ANU research project; Kevin Sudeith, the New York-based owner and operator of warrugs.com; Robert Fyke, rug collector and co-curator of Made in Afghanistan: Rugs and Resistance, and Max Allen, co-founder of the Textile Museum of Canada and curator of The Battleground Project. These collectors, curators, and researchers are geographically and culturally removed from the actual producers of Afghan war rugs. Their main point of contact in collecting and researching the rugs is through middle-men, each other, and internet sites. This lack of contact between producers and collectors is indicative of the process of distancing that occurs in the exhibition and interpretation of Afghan war rugs. In the present historical moment, these men are the central cultural authorities who have interpreted, sold, owned, exhibited, and venerated such objects, predominantly in the Australian and Canadian contexts but also, I would argue, globally.

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47 This project on Afghanistan war art is funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Grant.

48 While the artists, curators, and researchers I mention here dominate the collection and exhibition patterns of Afghan “war rugs” since 2001, other people in various locations have worked on texts and exhibitions dealing with such rugs. See for example US curator Ariel Zeitlin Cook’s exhibition, Weavings of War: Fabrics of Memory (2004-7); Italian researcher Enrico Mascelloni’s books, Beyond the East: Extreme Representations in Oriental Rugs (2006) and War Rugs: The Nightmare of Modernism (2009), and US curator Jane Przybysz’s exhibition, Woven Witness: Afghan War Rugs (2007). For a discussion of how individual collectors can establish an authoritative canon for what may be seen as idiosyncratic objects, see Christopher Steiner’s examination of Giovanni Franco Scanzi and his collection of carved wooden slingshots from the Ivory Coast (1996, 215).
Afghan war rugs combine the weaving methods and formal styles of conventional Afghan rugs with unexpected images of war, such as artillery, tanks, helicopters, and military personnel.\(^4^9\) Conventional Afghan rugs vary in appearance depending on the region of Afghanistan in which they are produced, but generally, Afghan rugs are made of wool coloured with natural rather than synthetic dyes. The rugs have a short, tight weave, and are usually rectangular in shape. Used as wall hangings or floor coverings, they commonly include guard, or outside, borders along all four edges consisting of a repeating geometric pattern that is flat and two-dimensional in design. The central, inner design can involve many different types of motifs, among the most common the pai phil, a hexagonal or octagon shape, called the imprint of the elephant (fig. 11), or an enclosed garden with repeating patterns of trees and birds (fig. 12; Dhamija 2003, 13).\(^5^0\)

\(^4^9\) Tim Bonyhady presents a history of the production of Afghan “war rugs” in “Out of Afghanistan,” in The Rugs of War, ed. Tim Bonyhady and Nigel Lendon (Canberra: Australian National University, 2003), 4-18.

\(^5^0\) For further information on designs of conventional Afghan rugs see Coen and Duncan (1978), Ford (1992), Hull and Luczyc-Wyrowska (2000).
Figure 11: Afghan rug, pre-1910. 192 cm x 150 cm. Wool coloured with natural dyes. Collection of Knights Antiques UK, image courtesy of Jozan Magazine (no. 91045).

Figure 12: Afghan rug, mid-twentieth century. 82 cm x 61 cm. Wool. Collection of S.H. Sarouk, image courtesy of Jozan Magazine (no. 97776).
Prior to the Soviet invasion of 1979, conventional Afghan rugs were made in domestic spaces by Afghan women, often those from the Baluch tribe in Northern Afghanistan; however, after the Soviet invasion many Afghan rugs were being produced in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan by women, men, and children (Bonyhady 2003, 8). The increased presence of foreign personnel opened new market opportunities for rug selling, which created a different type of demand; rather than producing rugs for personal, domestic use, rugmakers were creating rugs to be sold as souvenir objects to foreign consumers. To meet the new demand for souvenir-type objects, Afghan rugmakers began producing rugs incorporating images that referenced the contemporary political situation in Afghanistan: weapons of war, Soviet and Afghan soldiers, maps, and significant heads of state. In doing so, they responded in an immediate way to the demand among potential buyers for mementos of their stays in Afghanistan. Analyzing nineteenth-century Native North American tourist and souvenir production, Ruth Phillips describes the ensuing purchase of such commodities as the next stage in an ongoing transcultural process, one that reveals both the “static and dynamic aspects of these object exchanges” (1998, 10). “On the one hand,” she explains with reference to her nineteenth-century case study, the exchanges themselves encouraged the fixing of iconographic and generic types: good ‘product recognition’ favored static, simplistic imagery. On the other hand, the exchanges themselves were inherently dynamic, continually destabilizing the stereotypes by stimulating new appropriative acts that threatened, in turn, to blur the outlines of otherness that defined each of the parties involved. (10)

Like tourist commodities in nineteenth-century North American, Afghan war rugs function in two distinct yet interrelated ways. They are objects that fulfill a market demand for souvenirs by “speaking” directly to the purchaser’s experience and desires and they are also, in their evident representation of shifts in market demand as Afghan makers understand and negotiate them, objects that register the maker’s experience and creative agency.
In creating objects that address the experiences of both maker and buyer, Afghan rugmakers build upon the conventions of Afghan rug designs. The war rugs meet the buyer’s expectations of a conventional—perceived “traditional”—Afghan textile in their style, format and formal qualities, while at the same time integrating images of armaments that mark the rug as a “contemporary” cultural product. So, an early twenty-first century rug now in the collection of the Textile Museum of Canada (fig. 13) contains elements of conventional Afghan rug patterns: outside, guard frame with repeating pattern, and inner design with intricate flat, abstract shapes.


51 In this mutually constitutive relationship, understanding of the traditional in relation to the contemporary (or vice versa) operates in the same way—and with the same attendant associations and values—as did concepts of the traditional and the modern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Ardery (1998), Bendix (1997), Keil (1978), Kelley (1992), Jessup (2001), McKay (2001), and Phillips and Steiner (1999).
At the same time, the central and guard patterns consist of guns, planes, and tanks (fig. 14), rather than the conventional Afghan rug motifs of flowers, animals, and geometric shapes.

Figure 14: Detail of lower right-hand corner, Afghan war rug, 2001-2007. L 153 cm x W 112 cm. Collection of the Textile Museum of Canada, Gift of Max Allen (T2008.1.46).

In the guard border, the word “TANKS” also appears—although in reverse because the rugs are woven from behind. (In this instance, a non-English-speaking weaver was most likely copying the word from an English text or another Afghan rug.) In the corner of the central panel, motifs representing an armoured vehicle with rocket launchers and a red helicopter appear, the chopper positioned as though above the vehicle. The design is very similar to that of rugs of conventional design (see, for example, fig. 12), with the central panel as a mirrored image along the horizontal axis of the rug, surrounded by the repeating pattern of the guard border; however, this rug is classified as an Afghan “war rug” because of the motifs of war woven in it.

Other styles of Afghan war rugs replace the central repetitive patterns of conventional Afghan rugs with pictorial designs. However, while integrating new designs and images, Afghan producers of war rugs maintain the conventional aspects of Afghan rugs through shape, size, materials, and form. In this way, contemporary and traditional (with all their attendant meanings and associations) are believed to be presented side by side for the buyer. It is this perception of
Afghan war rugs as simultaneously contemporary and traditional that enables these material objects to operate as cultural souvenirs and testimonials for non-Afghan buyers and museum-goers. Some examples of this type of Afghan war rug incorporate maps, recognizable buildings from around the world, and portraits of rulers, while others incorporate dates or war slogans, some from the recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Another early twenty-first-century rug in the collection of the Textile Museum (fig. 15), for example, depicts a map of Afghanistan overlaid with tanks, grenades, helicopters, and injured civilians.


In this instance, while the central panel is still read as two-dimensional, the mirrored patterns seen in other rugs have been replaced by pictorial elements that suggest a narrative structure. The title of the piece, written “Islamic Republic [sic] of Afghanistan” in the top left-hand corner, and the
map of Afghanistan indicate the geographic setting of current global military conflict and the supposed production context of the rug. The armaments that surround and occupy space on the map demonstrate the circumstances of war. The three Afghan men, differentiated from military personnel by their clothing—turbans and civilian tunics—and one Afghan child are all missing limbs, injuries that, when read in conjunction with the armament motifs, mark the devastation of war on the bodies of the Afghan people. In other words, this Afghan war rug substitutes conventional Afghan rug patterns and design to reference the human casualties of thirty years of conflict in Afghanistan.

The “narrative” woven into the rug in this instance is not linear; instead, a selection of images otherwise disparate in meaning and scale are brought together so as to be read loosely in relation to one another. The resulting narrative is generated by makers, buyers, and gallery visitors who are aware of events in Afghanistan and are able to relate the images in the rugs to specific objects, people, and places—images that relate to one another and so create narrative meaning within the frame of the rug. The meaning is expanded through the further identification, by non-Afghan buyers and gallery visitors, of the rug as a craft object, with its perceived associations with Afghan women. This association of craft object and Afghan female producer functions to locate the meaning of the Afghan war rug as an autobiographical or testimonial narrative of the experience of warfare; the makers of such “craft objects” are perceived as by nature incapable of artistic or creative intent. In other words, the narrative meaning interpreted in the rugs by non-Afghan buyers and gallery viewers is perceived as a testimonial precisely because (in what the non-Afghan viewers’ see as a primitive manner) the rugs “tell a story.” So an Afghan war rug that highlights the injuries of Afghan civilians is read in

52 To view a selection of Afghan war rugs, see rugsofwar.blogspot.com and warrugs.com.
a particular way; it is perceived not as a political statement of the disasters of war, but rather, the
personal reflection of an Afghan woman’s experience of warfare, an experience that is then
extended and homogenized to stand for the experience of all Afghans. 53

Images woven into Afghan war rugs refer not only to the experiences of conflict within
Afghanistan, but also to perceptions of events occurring outside of the country that connect to the
war in Afghanistan. In a rug now in the collection of Kevin Sudeith (fig. 16) the images on the
rug illustrate the events on 9/11 and the subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan. Not only
does it refer to a specific event—like many war rugs after 9/11, to the planes hitting the World
Trade Towers—it does so by picturing the event as a scene in the central panel.

53 For an example of such a conceptualization, see Duncan Blair’s comment about the intent of
the abstract Afghan producer above page 106.
Two planes on either side of the rug are depicted flying into the World Trade Towers. The non-directional pattern of Afghan rugs has been changed to a directionalized image with a “bottom,” “top,” and “sides.” Therefore, the planes appear “on either side” of a panel that is now a directionalized picture. As well, in this rug the perception of depth has been radically increased; however, depth still functions in relation to the surface, to the dictates placed on rendering the image by the technical aspects of rug-making. The relationship between pictorial depth and weaving skills is key to the ways in which Afghan war rugs are perceived by Western audiences. The rugs retain their identification as craft objects, although acknowledged as skilfully woven,
even as they expand the conventions of craft into what the non-Afghan audience would see as “uncraftlike” domains.

The images in the rug connect the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the US-led response; they are framed as the cause and effect of the war in Afghanistan. The rug’s imagery develops narrative action by including the explosions in each tower, the dark outlines of two people jumping from windows of the left tower, and a helicopter flying above. The event seemingly “played out” in synchronic time in the panel is clarified by the use of text: the date of the attack appears in the top left-hand corner, the planes hitting each tower are captioned—“Impact American Flight 11” and “Second Impact United Flight-175—and the phrase “The terrors we-in-the-America Afghanistan [sic]” is woven in the top right corner to identify the perpetrators of the attack as terrorists who had come to the United States of America from Afghanistan. However, not only does the rug, *11 September [sic] 2001*, narrate the 9/11 attacks in New York City, it also includes reference to the subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan in response. A fighter jet taking off from the flight deck of an aircraft carrier is located at what is now the “base” of the rug, below the left tower. A missile being launched on the right-side of the rug is identified as such by the woven word, “Misle [sic],” beside it. The flight deck with “USA” prominently woven onto it and, behind the towers, a map of Afghanistan labelled with the word “Afghanistan,” identify the two main countries involved in the war. The countries are also highlighted by a banner composed of the US and Afghanistan flags, at the centre of which a dove

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54 I was able to decipher the meaning of the phrase that appears in the rug from another rug with very similar iconography and text.

55 The text written above “Afghanistan” is indecipherable. The top line looks like “MEITGULS” and the middle line looks like “UZBK.” While UZBK may refer to Uzbekistan, which borders Afghanistan to the south, I cannot understand the significance of these two lines of text in the rug.
of peace indicates the solidarity of the two countries in opposing the events of 9/11 and in supporting the mission to catch the perceived perpetrators.

The rugs with multiple frames (see, for example, fig. 17) tell a longer story of how the attacks on the WTC in New York were used by the US as justification for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Figure 17: War Against Terrorist, Afghan war rug, early 21st century, L 83 cm x W 63 cm, collection of the Textile Museum of Canada, Gift of Max Allen (L2008.315) (image from Textile Museum of Canada website).

For example, War Against Terrorist, titled for the banner that divides the rug into two halves, documents the perceived cause and effect of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. The panel
above the banner is devoted to a scene of a plane hitting one of the World Trade Centre Towers and, in the panel below, tanks, war planes and helicopters, armed soldiers, and maps of Afghanistan and Iraq are clearly depicted, along with two dates: “11:9:01,” which is the date of the attacks on the WTC, and “19:3:03,” which is the date of the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq. Other text in the rug is used to label a soldier in the lower right-hand corner of the rug and to identify armaments of war; B-52 and F-16 name the fighter jets just below the banner and “scred misiale [sic]” (perhaps a misspelling or short-hand of “scud missile”) identifies a weapon common during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.56 “Afghanistan [sic]” and “Iraq War” are woven into the respective maps of Afghanistan and Iraq to demonstrate the geographies of the invasions. The map of Afghanistan also includes a labelled depiction of “Torabora [sic],” the mountain range where the alleged organizer of the attacks on the World Trade Center, Osama bin Laden, was thought to be hiding after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.57

The production of Afghan war rugs such as these occurred during the changing social, political, and economic circumstances of the last thirty years in Afghanistan. The Soviet and US-led military invasions, the need for people displaced by wars to find new and different livelihoods, the desire for Afghan rugmakers to respond to their experiences of war, the increased presence of non-Afghans in Afghanistan, and the elevated global demand for Afghan cultural souvenirs are all factors that have contributed to development of the textiles now referred to as Afghan “war rugs.” Indeed, the term “war rugs” is now commonly used by collectors, curators, and scholars to identify these objects, and it is one I have adopted as well, although I place the

56 The text “scred misiale” may also refer to Sacred Defense Week, which is the title given to the week beginning on September 22 that marks the anniversary of the 1980 Iraq declaration of war on Iran.

term “war rugs” in quotation marks in order to identify the label as empty and nondescriptive. The term was invented as a category to describe the material, aesthetics, and subject matter of a wide variety of objects which might otherwise remain unrelated. Is the relationship the common period of production within war time? Or perhaps it refers to the images relating to battle that many but not all of them depict? Or maybe to the perceived ambiguity of their narrative meanings—of whether the rugs are pro-war or anti-war, a question Allen asks in both the exhibition panels and the publications surrounding his show, The Battleground Project (Fitzpatrick 2008)? To have representational value and content, the term Afghan “war rugs” needs to be clarified through cultural, historical, and political contextualization. Additionally, by questioning the term “war rugs,” I also aim to illuminate the danger of categorizing cultural products. Categorization can subsume objects from one category to another within the modernist art canon. Individual works are then in danger of being transformed into examples of genres, as Susan Buck-Morss writes, which in the case of “political art” or “war art” effectively subordinates the specificity of each work’s political content to the generalized qualities of the category (2003, 70). This reduction of possible meanings into one ambiguous label then fails to accommodate the complexities involved in the politics and culture of conflict. Thus, certain meanings are mobilized in ways that legitimate and support dominant national/ist narratives, while other meanings and their political motivations are silenced.

The ability of collectors, curators, and researchers to “speak for” those who produce Afghan war rugs is linked to the conventional identification of these objects as craft objects within the art historical and anthropological hierarchy of art, craft, and commodity. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner have challenged the production of universal meanings derived through conventional object categories by recognising the fluidity of boundaries and the increasing demand for reevaluation according to what they call “regional criteria and local definitions”
These “regional criteria and local definitions” need to be examined in both the production and exhibition contexts. In the exhibitions, War Without Boundaries and Battleground, for example, the curators identify Afghan war rugs as crafts, and as such, bearers of specific social and economic associations. Conventionally, the category of craft has been associated with feminine, domestic, and apolitical spaces, which are presumptions about maker and intent that also suggest craft producers speak through biography rather than artistic creativity (Newdigate 1995; Parker and Pollock 1982; Parker 1989). Craft has been thought of as a product of dexterous ability, a skill located outside the realm of rational thought and representative of the separation of mind and body, male and female (Buckley 1989; Jeffries 2001a, 2001b; Pajączkowska 2001; Rowley 1999; Sharrad and Collett 2004). By framing Afghan war rugs in terms of a “thoughtless” production process, collectors, curators, and researchers have been able, in publications and exhibitions, to seamlessly reposition and repoliticize Afghan war rugs.

Although Afghan war rugs have been identified primarily as craft objects and, hence, as examples of material culture, they are often exhibited in a manner that prioritizes their visual qualities. The visual arrangement of objects conventionally defined as tactile points to the inadequacy of static object categories in describing cultural products. Their display provides a particularly relevant case study through which to examine the gendered, racialized, classed, and nationalized dimensions of this object category. The visual presentation of rugs, however, is not

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58 I discuss the identification of Afghan war rugs as craft objects in greater detail later in this chapter.

59 The categorization and hierarchy created through these three object groupings—art, craft, and commodity—have been an entry point for many art historical revisions recognizing and challenging capitalist systems of value. Cultural producers, as well, have addressed these groupings within their own work to destabilize such categories. In particular, Canadian artist Ann Newdigate presents an interesting example of this type of work. Her work, Look at it this way (1987), is composed of seven large-size tapestry panels that simulate brush strokes. From a distance, these wall hanging appear to be paintings, while upon closer inspection they reveal
mutually exclusive of their classification as crafts. As art historian W.J.T. Mitchell puts it, “there are no visual media. All media are mixed media, with varying ratios of sense and sign types” (2002, 170). Therefore, in conventional discussions and displays of Afghan war rugs, the rugs’ presentation does not negate their association with the category of craft; the identity of the rugs primarily as tactile, domestic products is still central to their representation and interpretation. In these conventional studies, I see the framing of these objects as reliant on discourses that seek to categorize material objects in particular ways and that deny the complexity of the “social life” of such cultural products.  

In the following sections, I examine how Afghan war rugs were incorporated into dominant narratives of Australian and Canadian conflict history by exploring the ways in which Afghan war rugs have been discussed and displayed in the two exhibitions, War Without Boundaries: Australia and the “War Against Terror” (2003) at the Australia War Memorial, and The Battleground Project (2008) at the Textile Museum of Canada. These shows are examples of the dominant strategies employed in framing Afghan war rugs as either cultural souvenirs or testimonials. Before I address the specific strategies employed by each exhibition, in the next section I provide a general overview of the installations of War Without Boundaries and Battleground. The two exhibitions and the display strategies they employed illuminate how and why Afghan war rugs were mobilized within exhibitions that deal with Australian and Canadian involvement in global military conflict.

themselves to be textiles. She explains that she gave the works “two titles to address the assumptions of viewers from both the high and low spheres of art, and at the same time to acknowledge the dissonant dialogue of two of my own voices” (Newdigate 1995, 178). Works such as Newdigate’s participate in the ongoing interrogation of art historical and museological object categories, and the assumptions of value that underpin them.

60 For discussion of the object as having a “biography,” see Arjun Appadurai (1988).
Exhibiting Afghan “war rugs”

In the exhibitions, War Without Boundaries: Australia and the “War Against Terror” (2003) and The Battleground Project (2008), Afghan war rugs were situated within the specific context of Australia’s and Canada’s involvements in contemporary global military conflict. The exhibits presented the military activities in Afghanistan as humane and necessary to global security and freedom. The rugs were positioned as part of a visual and cultural landscape of Afghanistan and offered an imagined tour of Afghan life and experience to museum-goers. In War Without Boundaries, the rugs were installed so as to provide an imagined tour that paralleled the military tour of Australian soldiers, while in Battleground, the rugs offered an imagined tour of the war in Afghanistan as if through Afghan eyes. To use the rugs in these ways, each exhibition employed one of the two most common strategies for exhibiting Afghan war rugs; they represented the objects as either cultural souvenirs or skilfully woven testimonials. The inclusion of Afghan war rugs in the two exhibitions I examine here allows me to address the ways in which objects produced outside Australia and Canada are subsumed into the dominant narratives of these two liberal nation-states, where they legitimate Australian and Canadian foreign policies involving their respective military missions in Afghanistan.

Both exhibitions—War Without Boundaries and The Battleground Project—combined historical and contemporary cultural objects. Mounted at the Australian War Memorial from March to August 2003, War Without Boundaries was a mixed-media exhibition composed of a variety of objects drawn from different collections at the Memorial (Baddeley 2009). The materials in the exhibition included Afghan war rugs, an Australian army Special Air Service (SAS) uniform, a diffused sea mine, paintings by Australian artists (including works completed by official war artist Peter Churcher and well-known Australian artist George Gittoes), covers of newspapers reporting the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre (including the New York Times,
Israeli Post, and Russian Pravda), maps, photographs, and non-alcoholic beer containers. Curator Claire Baddeley linked these disparate objects through their perceived relation to the current conflict in Afghanistan and categorized them in one of the four main sections that comprised the exhibit. The first provided historical context, the second dealt with the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, the third focussed on Australian military activities in Afghanistan, and the fourth posed questions for the future. Baddeley’s selection of objects was based upon the question, “how do the works…relate to the particular conflict that Australia’s involved in” (Baddeley 2009)?

Similar to War Without Boundaries, the Battleground Project united different types of visual and material culture according to their perceived relation to contemporary conflict in Afghanistan. Mounted at the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto from April 2008 to January 2009 and curated by museum co-founder Max Allen, Battleground was composed of three displays divided by object type: “The Kandahar Journals of Richard Johnson,” “Patches: Military Uniform Insignia,” and “Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan.” The first display consisted of drawings rendered by Richard Johnson, a National Post correspondent, while on assignment at a Canadian military base in Afghanistan in 2007. The second display, “Patches,” presented a wide array of military patches from a variety of nations, times periods, and wars. The third display was composed of Afghan war rugs. Presenting over 120 rugs mounted as wall hangings, this section of Battleground consisted of eleven thematic parts based on the iconography of the rugs: “Looming Disaster,” “Crossfire,” “Maps of Identity,” “A Garden of Weapons,” “Cities—Real and Imagined,” “Symbolic Animals,” “Landmines,” “Troop Movements,” “Minarets,” “Western Perspectives,” “Heroic Portraits,” and “Paghman Victory Arch.” Using the theme of conflict to bring together and organize different types of cultural objects, both War Without Boundaries and
Battleground provided an interpretative lens to museum-goers and diminished the possibility of alternative readings of the shows.

In other words, both War Without Boundaries and Battleground narrowed the focus of viewer attention by placing Australia and Canada, respectively, at the centre of the histories of contemporary conflict. The interpretative lens of the museum-goer, then, was focussed not only through the theme of contemporary conflict but, more specifically, through Australian or Canadian involvement in contemporary conflict. To accomplish this, the objects on display were presented as related to narratives of peacekeeping and care, which echo the official conflict narratives of Australia and Canada. However, War Without Boundaries presented all the cultural objects in the show as examples of materials used, bought, and seen by Australian troops, while Battleground presented the different materials as indicative, within the context of Canadian peacekeeping, of the producers’ perspective. For the displays of Afghan war rugs, which were produced outside the geographic and cultural boundaries of Australia and Canada, the national/ist themes of the exhibitions established specific contexts through which all the objects were interpreted. These contexts, I argue, permitted the Afghan war rugs to be read through and within Australian and Canadian official conflict narratives. In this way, Afghan war rugs, as well as the other materials included in both exhibitions, were subsumed by national/ist conflict narratives of peacekeeping and security, which aligned their representations with Australia’s and Canada’s military efforts.

In War Without Boundaries and Battleground, an affinity of Afghan representations with Australian and Canadian dominant conflict narratives was achieved through display strategies that presented the Afghan war rugs as either souvenirs or testimonials. The extent to which either exhibit identified the rugs as such varied, depending on the purposes of the exhibit as well as the mandates of the cultural institution in which the exhibits were held. The mandate of the
Australian War Memorial, where War Without Boundaries was mounted, is “to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society” (AWM n.d.b.); significantly, the Afghan war rugs installed in its galleries were interpreted primarily as cultural souvenirs of “the Australian experience of war.” On the other hand, the Textile Museum of Canada, which mounted Battleground, “promotes an understanding of human identity through textiles” (TMC 2009). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Afghan war rugs included in the Textile Museum’s exhibition were displayed primarily as representations of war that might facilitate such an “understanding of human identity,” particularly as that understanding of identity was ostensibly represented by Afghan producers testifying to their lived experience of warfare through woven representations. Neither display strategy was exclusive to either exhibition; that is, each exhibition included elements of both exhibitionary tactics, representing the works to different degrees as either cultural souvenirs or testimonials. However, I focus on War Without Boundaries to examine Afghan war rugs presented as cultural souvenirs and Battleground to explore them as testimonials because these characterizations reveal how each installation subsumed Afghan material culture into the dominant narratives of Australian or Canadian involvement in the war in Afghanistan as part of the global War on Terror.

The exhibitionary strategies of presenting Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs or testimonials are not unique to War Without Boundaries and Battleground. Other exhibits—including The Rugs of War (2003) at the Australian National University in Canberra, Made in Afghanistan: Rugs and Resistance, 1979-2005 (2006) at the Nickle Arts Museum in Calgary, and Unravelling the Yarns: War Rugs and Soldiers (2011) at the Military Museums in Calgary—utilized these framing strategies. These other exhibitions, which were curated by members of the small group of war rug “experts” mentioned earlier in this chapter, reinforce the authority of this
group by circulating Afghan war rugs around the world, as well as by promoting particular interpretations of them in presentations to the public. The specific display strategies employed by War Without Boundaries and Battleground, explored in the next two sections, are examples of the tactics of display encouraged by the group of scholars who have dominated the studies of Afghan war rugs. Battleground serves as an example of how the exhibition of Afghan war rug “testimonials” form part of a Canadian conflict narrative, and War Without Boundaries forms a case study of how Afghan war rugs are displayed as cultural souvenirs and situated as Australian material culture. These display tactics mobilize representation and affect to encourage Australian and Canadian museum-goers to interpret and react in particular ways that reproduce the official conflict narrative of each country.

**Tactical displays: Textile testimonials and the experience of war**

The inclusion and arrangement of objects in The Battleground Project demonstrates how Afghan war rugs were incorporated into a dominant narrative of Canadian conflict history. Battleground is an example of one of the two most common strategies used in exhibiting Afghan war rugs: framing them as skilfully woven testimonials of Afghan experience. Curator Max Allen used the rugs as a way to provide Canadian museum-goers an imagined tour of the war in Afghanistan through Afghan eyes. That is, the rugs were presented simultaneously as examples of the visual and cultural landscape of Afghanistan and as materials that legitimated the official state and military narrative of Canadian activities in Afghanistan as humane and necessary to global security and freedom. Through the inclusion of Afghan war rugs in The Battleground Project, Afghan war rugs were mobilized within the exhibition to reproduce dominant narratives of Canadian involvement in global military conflict.
The three small displays within Battleground were connected by the theme of warfare, but only one, The Kandahar Journals of Richard Johnson, identified a producer and an identifiable point of view. This display consisted of drawings the National Post correspondent made while on assignment at a Canadian military base in Afghanistan in 2007. The drawings, many of them pencil sketches, were originally included in Johnson’s National Post online word and image diary, entitled “Postings from Afghanistan: A Kandahar Journal.” Most of the pictures included in the exhibit were either portraits or depictions of the activities of the Canadian military personnel with whom Johnson was embedded. Framed and mounted in a straight line along a hallway, Johnson’s drawings were the first objects the museum-viewer encountered in the Battleground exhibition.

![Figure 18: Richard Johnson, Rooftop, 2007. Pencil on paper (image from Textile Museum of Canada website).](image)

Not only did Johnson’s representations mirror publicly circulated images of Canadian military efforts, thus making them immediately recognizable to museum audiences, but they originally appeared in the mainstream media through print and online editions of the National Post.

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61 Johnson’s original writings and drawings completed in his correspondence with the National Post are online at http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/kandaharjournal/default.aspx.
According to the pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition, Johnson’s “pictorial reports” recorded “military life and the relationship between Afghans and Canadians” (TMC 2008). Thus, the drawings were situated as the Canadian artist’s “reports”—his interpretative renderings of the events and scenes he witnessed while in Afghanistan, a subject immediately recognizable to museum goers as involving Canada’s current military efforts in Afghanistan.

While the drawings were identified with a particular artist and set of circumstances, the other two displays in Battleground contained objects that were not credited to a particular producer, and instead, were situated to reveal cultural reactions to war. The display Patches: Military Uniform Insignia included a mixture of official patches, which depicted both the slogans and imagery associated with specific military units and unofficial, or “off-duty” patches, which reflected the personal desires and opinions of the people who commissioned them. The patches, presented in a series of glass display cases, were located in a small room at the end of the hallway lined with Johnson’s drawings. Arranged according to the particular military actions for which they were made, or the nation associated with the military actions represented, the patches were included in Battleground mainly because Allen, the curator, saw war armaments as “a key image-source for the Afghan weavers” which, he argued “can be seen in the war rugs exhibited in Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan” (TMC 2008).
To make the connections between the images on the patches and those on the rugs clearer, several display cases of patches were placed throughout the section devoted to Afghan war rugs (fig. 19).^62

The display of Afghan war rugs occupied an entire gallery space on the floor above the displays of drawings and patches. Presented as wall hangings in a series of linked rooms with blue walls, Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan included over 120 rugs arranged in eleven thematic parts based on the iconography of the rugs. Like the patches, none of the rugs were

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^62^ The study of military patches has increased in the last few years; the demand from collectors is also increasing, as is the availability of patches for sale. One of the more interesting projects to develop out of this increased interest in military patches is Trevor Paglen’s illustrated book, *I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have To Be Destroyed By Me* (2010). Paglen investigates patches that represent secret U.S. government projects, such as classified weapons and intelligence operations.
attributed to an identified maker; as Allen states in his curatorial essay for this exhibit, the rugs function as “eloquent anonymous documents of catastrophe” (Allen 2008). The anonymity of the producers included in The Battleground Project, particularly the Afghan war rugs, is important to acknowledge because this process has been a key technique in the silencing of producers. In the exhibition, Allen did not present production context for the rugs beyond associating them with anonymous Afghan producers, thereby reinforcing the images and narratives of the rugs as representation of a homogenized Afghan experience. Allen also did not offer a discussion of the changing conditions of production that occurred in the last thirty years, but the identification of the rugs as craft objects in the exhibition reinforced the conventional associations of craft as produced by women (they are not—at least not exclusively). The anonymity of the producers of Afghan war rugs further contributed to the notion of the abstract Afghan, because it erased the interpretative possibility of the producer’s personal agency and creativity in the depictions on each rug. Such an erasure facilitated the incorporation of these works into a dominant narrative of Canadian military involvement because there was no one to counter such interpretations.

The war rugs on display were associated with a narrative of contemporary conflict, but a narrative perceived as a passively creative, autobiographical response rather than an actively creative, interpretative response to the experiences of war. While Johnson’s drawings were presented as one person’s artistic rendering of what he encountered, the rugs were interpreted as a collective response by an entire culture defined only in relation to the consuming experience of war. Because neither the anonymous rugmakers nor the category of craft in which the rugs were placed have been conventionally recognized as artistic, and therefore neither creative nor interpretative, the images woven into these objects were assumed to be direct representations; that is, as I discuss earlier, the rugs were understood as testimonials of anonymous Afghans that communicate the traumatic experience of war unmediated by creativity. Trauma, then, was
perceived to be the main affect underlying the production and reception of the Afghan war rugs on display in the exhibition. By aligning the affect of trauma, which was representative of the culture and people of Afghanistan, and the affect of care, which was representative of the ethos of the Canadian military and, by extension, Canadians, the curator was able to present a cohesiveness that extended beyond the general theme of conflict. And although the exhibition created an alliance of the two affects of trauma and care, there was an uneven relationship between the active and passive currents. The dominant narrative was that of Canadian military activities and its active expression through Johnson’s works because these representations were the most immediately identifiable and relatable by the museum-goers, and the first they would encounter within Battleground. The Afghan experience of war and its passive testimony perceived to be represented in the Afghan war rugs became supplementary to that dominant Canadian narrative.

In the exhibition, Afghan war rugs were subsumed into Canadian conflict history by mobilizing a political economy of affect that posited Canada’s affect of care as the solution and cure for Afghanistan’s affect of trauma. With Canada’s affect of care, the country brought caring solutions for the affect of terror, by using humane peacekeeping tactics to resolve conflict and to bring about global security, freedom, and democracy. Canada’s affective tactics of care not only fight that of terror, but also “care” for those harmed by the enactment of terror, such as Afghan civilians. In this way, the affects of care and trauma are aligned, in that each are opposed to the affect of terror. Afghan war rugs, displayed as the products of innocent Afghan civilians, particularly women, were employed as material evidence of the Afghan desire for Australia’s and Canada’s “caring” military missions in Afghanistan. The alliance of the affects of care and trauma illuminate the context within which Battleground presented Canadian narratives of conflict and the presumed narratives in Afghan war rugs as a singular, unified narrative.
The display of war rugs in Battleground was arranged into thematic displays based on types of images and omitting any context about their sale and circulation, revealing a focus more on the iconography of the rugs as representative of Afghan experience than on their sale and circulation as cultural souvenirs, or their production as art objects. The result framed the rugs as a visual history of conflict in Afghanistan. The show placed value on the experience of Afghan rug makers, and their rendering of that experience, by fostering the perception that the Afghan war rugs were direct results of the production context. The perception of Afghanistan as a state and culture of total warfare became the defining feature of the individual and collective selves of its people, and “the very harshness of such places has vouched for the creative works made within them” (Ardery 1998, 1). Similar to the conventional positing of work by folk artists, Afghan war rugs were presumed to be the product of a class of people, internal to the nation, who are removed from the constraints and formal training of modern art practice and without interpretative or creative agency (Ardery 1998; Morton 2009). In the Battleground display, the rugs were assumed to be objects that depict war, but not as in the way an artist renders her or his feelings toward an event or series of events. These objects were not perceived in a similar manner as a work like Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937), which is commonly interpreted as the artist’s abstraction of the tragedies of war and the suffering it inflicts on civilians. Rather, the images in the rugs were interpreted as a reflection of the experiences of war by anonymous persons, who know no other way of life and have no other means to communicate it but through a “traditional” skill set. Within this framing, the viewers do not learn how the rug makers themselves cultivated their role in presenting warfare images to distanced consumers and participated in the capitalist systems that demand and value certain depictions.

Because the curator presented the images on the rugs as personal and cultural reflections of war, unmediated by artistic interpretation, the Afghan war rugs became testimonials of a
people and culture only in terms of the experience of warfare. Afghan war rugs, then, were believed to provide a direct window into the history and current life of Afghans for Canadian viewers in the museum. For example, the guest book that accompanied the exhibition contains this comment, dated 2 May 2008: “How sad … that such an ancient craft has no other subject to portray … no more beauty to reflect … no more hope for the future … no more dreams … only a cry of help to the void” (Battleground Guestbook). Here, the experience of warfare was perceived to have been fully translated into the images on the material objects, experiences that were fully and directly communicated to a distant audience. Afghan war rugs offered a kind of “aesthetic shortcut” based not on what they looked like, but what they were perceived to represent (Ardery 1998, 2). If Afghan war rugs were perceived by the curator to offer “a cry for help,” he also perceived the Canadian audience as empathic viewers who would be sympathetic to such a cry. Museum-goers were able to inhabit the feelings of trauma of the war through their experience of the images (perceived to be unmediated representations of war) as well as to occupy a space of care that presented a solution to cries for help through national/ist military efforts of humane peacekeeping.

The comment I cite here is representative of the comments in the guestbook as a whole, which contains expressions that include, “The rugs are beautiful work. Too bad it has to be a history of war these people had to go thru and still are”; “This is way too sad. Over and over and over woven into the culture”; “The exhibition shows the destruction of a culture; their art work now used to depict a war torn life and/or what cities’ scapes throughout the world look like and how to ‘terrorize’ there? The handiwork is technically beautifully done”; “What gets to me most is the creativity [sic] outlet of these people (who I guess are war victims in a sense). Creativity is like hope…it stays with us”; “A thought-provoking exhibition with emotional impact. The three-dimensional texture of the rugs really helped to make the situation in Afghanistan more real in my mind. The rugs became concrete expressions of the Afghan experience, interwoven with cultural myths and urgent messages”; and “How sad that their beautiful rugs have taken on this imagery.” All of these comments are from the Battleground Guestbook, Textile Museum of Canada Library, Max Allen’s collection of exhibition research material. I would like to thank Max Allen for making this material available to me.
The inclusion and arrangement of Afghan war rugs in Battleground resulted in an emotional ownership by Canadian museum-goers. The rugs, here, were considered framed snapshots of a culture altered and defined solely by a history of conflict. The focus of the organization of Afghan war rugs as biographical representations of Afghan experience was the sadness response of the audience, a response that reacts to the perception of warfare invading all aspects of cultural life of everyday Afghan people. It is particularly sad, comments showed, that war was the dominant experience of Afghan women, who were credited in this exhibition with having produced these objects despite the fact that published research discusses the role of men and children in weaving these textiles (Bonyhady 2003, 13). This sadness response was marked in the comments in the guest book. A commenter from 23 May 2008 remarked, “This is very moving, makes many emotions at once. I feel sorry for all the everyday people caught up in such cruel social cultures.” Another stated, “We must all learn to get along. War is hell. We must become a group that is unified by PEACE.” The testimonial presentation of the rugs lent itself to emotional ownership of the experience of conflict, because the audience felt for and with the producers of the rugs, presumably sharing, and ultimately subsuming, the sadness of the direct experience of warfare.

The problem with such testimonial representation, where meaning or experience is directly communicated between maker and viewer, is it presumes that such objects register the true experience of conflict, violence, and trauma. Moreover, it invites a wider audience to partake directly in this experience in some way. Jill Bennett, following Bertolt Brecht, describes the process of colonizing experience as “crude empathy,” “a feeling for another based on the assimilation of the other’s experience to the self” (2005, 10). With crude empathy for that which is represented, experience is felt vicariously, rather than virtually. This over-identification, however, actually marks a fundamental lack of affinity. In an inversion of the early war cry by
former-US president George W. Bush, the arrangements of these exhibitions seek to be with, rather than against, “us.” The Afghan war rugs within this Canadian exhibition were framed in order to provoke a political and emotional affinity in the museum viewers, enacting a personal connection of conflict and trauma that supplants the actual lived experience of the maker. This remapping of one history over that of another is part of the history of museums—as well as liberalism—whereby all narratives are subsumed and renegotiated in terms of the dominant culture or nation.

Recognizing the potential in the testimonial qualities of the war rugs is not inherently a problem; these textiles can be studied in terms of trauma and traumatic memory. Through testimonial, viewers can bear witness, “to reexternalize the event” and, in so doing, “the empathic other is the continuation of the self” (Brison 2002, 152). In this way, the memories of war featured on the rugs can become select representations of both personal and collective experience, united together in this exhibition to form individual, yet cohesive, visions of warfare. In situating Afghan war rugs as testimonials, Battleground presents opportunities for viewers to humanize and personalize war campaign narratives often discussed generally in news media. This presentation has potential to provoke museum visitors to rethink their own experience with war as voyeurs, from a distance. The memories of war by Afghan rug makers can therefore shift the perceptions and memories of war of non-Afghan visitors to the exhibition (Cahill 2009, 230-1).

While the productive possibility of the testimonial aspects of the rugs is present in the display, I suggest these possibilities are negated because collective expression of the war rugs is subsumed by a national/ist narrative which prioritizes the experience of the viewers over that of the producers.

The theory behind the presentation of Afghan war rugs within each of these exhibitions was determined in part by the space in which it takes place. The cultural institutions that hosted
the exhibits each boast a specific mandate and focus that must be replicated in its displays. For the Textile Museum of Canada, where Battleground was displayed, the museum’s vision, to “promote an understanding of human identity through textiles” (TMC 2009), guides it to emphasize social and cultural identity as an extension of the rugs themselves. The museum’s emphasis on textile production and the perception that the textiles reveal truths about the producer provides clues for revealing the processes behind the Battleground’s focus on specific aspects of the war rugs. Its organization and presentation reflected a much more conventional art historical approach to the objects than that of the Australian War Memorial; the styles and patterns common to this type of medium (that is, Afghan war rugs) were first traced and then the alterations of these conventions then highlighted through a broad analysis of social context, that is, the social context of general warfare, which was the absolute and only context taken into account.

The exhibitionary strategy that arranged Afghan war rugs as skillfully woven testimonials has been employed by other exhibits, such as the Rugs of War and Made in Afghanistan. Co-curated by Nigel Lendon and Tim Bonyhady, the Rugs of War exhibit (2003) was displayed in the Art Gallery at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. Developed as part of Fusion (a festival series of exhibitions, performances, and workshops held at ANU), this exhibition focused solely on Afghan war rugs as “an initial attempt to explain these rugs” (Bonyhady et al. 2003, 1). This display gained its focus through the perception that rug iconography refers to the suffering of the Afghan people, an iconography that has constituted “the worlds’ richest tradition of war art of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries” (1). It thus examined the textiles as cultural objects that directly represented the experience of warfare to viewers.

The Made in Afghanistan display encourages an interpretation of Afghan war rugs as directly reflective and communicative of an Afghan experience of war. In doing so, the display
was intended to show how “the rapid development of new Afghan war rugs’ designs following the US occupation, their increasing realism, and altered perspectives suggest the influence of CNN and the Internet” (Hardy 2006, 3). Curated by Michele Hardy with rugs loaned from the collection of Robert Fyke, this display was mounted at the Nickle Arts Museum at the University of Calgary in 2006. The curator shaped the exhibition in acknowledgement that the rugs may offer “an avenue for the expression of counter discourses, even subversive discourses” (7), a recognition of the politicality of the producers that was ignored in most other exhibitions. However, both The Rugs of War and Made in Afghanistan situated Afghan war rugs as objects that provided a clear and unmediated look into the life and experiences of the Afghan people, and used conventional art historical methodologies to “read into” the meanings embedded in the objects, a technique that parallels that used in Battleground.

In Battleground, the experience of conflict and its subsequent trauma were perceived to be so fully represented by the Afghan war rugs that they could be experienced in turn by the viewers. This process is particularly relevant in relation to a discourse of nationalism—whereby political and experiential affinities are supposedly produced by disparate, yet politically aligned, groups of people through their shared experience. The empathic and sympathetic reactions of TMC museum-goers subsumed the possibilities of a multitude of interpretations of meanings of the Afghan war rugs into one in which the museum audience is central; it was their feelings of how the experience of war must be and their feelings of the need to help and care for those in war zones that became the central interpretative and narrative context. At the level of the political economy of affect, the Canadian affect of care enveloped the affect of trauma, whereby care presented the ability to feel both the effects of the problem and the responsibility of the solution.

In Battleground, Allen presented Afghan war rugs primarily as craft objects, which were associated with particular characteristics that could be renegotiated. This presentation enabled
him to recontextualize the rugs solely in the context of Canadianized perspectives of war and Canada’s dominant narrative of military involvement in Afghanistan within an affect of care through humane peacekeeping.

Tactical displays: Cultural souvenirs and military tours

Building upon my discussion of displaying Afghan war rugs as skillfully woven testimonials in Battleground, this section examines their arrangement as cultural souvenirs in War Without Boundaries. While acknowledging the artistry of juxtaposing craft object and war images and the testimony of an Afghan experience of war (as had been the primary focus in Battleground), Afghan war rugs in War Without Boundaries were highlighted mainly as examples of material objects purchased by Australian military personnel in Afghanistan. As “exotic collectibles,” Afghan war rugs were perceived as granting Australian soldiers and museum-goers “imagined access to a world of different, often constituted as an enhancement of the new owner’s knowledge, power, or wealth” (Phillips and Steiner 1999, 3). In War Without Boundaries, the presentation of Afghan war rugs in the museum space offered a cultural tour by Australian museum-goers that paralleled, or even substituted for, a military tour by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan. By framing Afghan war rugs in terms of the Australian experience of Afghanistan, War Without Boundaries centralized the dominant narrative of contemporary Australian conflict and repositioned the cultural objects in relation to this narrative.

As War Without Boundaries curator Baddeley explained, all objects included in the exhibition were framed by the question, “how do the works produced by a particular artist relate to the particular conflict that Australia’s involved in” (Baddeley 2009)? The exhibition opened within a year and a half of the invasion of Afghanistan and a day after the invasion of Iraq, which as historian Peter Londey noted in the Memorial’s official publication, represented a
“considerable challenge for the Memorial. Not only does it need to maintain the Memorial’s neutrality in a politically contentious area, but there has also been little time to collect exhibition material to represent activities of Australians over the last year-and-a-half” (2003, 8). In an attempt to “maintain the Memorial’s neutrality,” Baddeley plotted the “politically contentious” objects as part of a simplified timeline of the past, present, and future of Australian military response to the conflict in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Baddeley’s organization of War Without Boundaries into four sections—history of Afghanistan and the Middle East, 9/11 attacks, Australian military involvement in Afghanistan, and projections for the future—presented a historical narrative in which Australia and its military fixed problems of the past and provided solutions for the future. All the materials included in the displays were arranged in relation to this narrative: objects provided a context that spoke to the perception of Afghanistan and Iraq’s violent history, and therefore justified Australian military involvement in the region, or that outlined the activities and experiences of Australian military personnel currently in Afghanistan. Afghan war rugs were especially significant in the exhibition because they bridged these two categories: Afghan voices that told of a specific cultural history (past and present) of violence and war, and examples of objects seen and bought by Australian soldiers while on military tour.

In War Without Boundaries, the curator could only frame Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs of Australian military experience in Afghanistan if the rugs were perceived as skillfully woven testimonials. The rugs were used as examples of cultural context and provided material evidence of the history of the Central Asian conflict through the belief that their iconography enabled insight into Afghan life. In this context, Afghan life was defined solely as the experience of warfare and conflict. Similar to the display of Afghan war rugs in Battleground, the Australian display presented the images of the rugs as direct communications of the personal and collective Afghan experience of war unmitigated by artistic and creative interpretation. However, War
Without Boundaries extended this position by claiming the objects as part of an Australian military experience. As Baddeley states, the rugs provided the “cultural context” to the war in Afghanistan and needed to be included in the exhibition because “they are being sold and bought as souvenirs now by Australian troops” (2009). Because the curator presented the war rugs as evidence of “authentic” Afghan perspectives of war, they provided a way for Australians to take a piece of Afghan life—physically for the soldiers and conceptually for the museum-goers—as part of their own experience of Afghanistan. Exhibited alongside items such as nonalcoholic beer cans, the Afghan war rugs were visually connected to their purchase and ownership by servicemen and servicewomen and formed, therefore, part of the material culture of Australian conflict history. In this way, these craft objects operated as historical artifacts and cultural souvenirs, and contributed to the visual landscape of Australian military personnel engaged in the war in Afghanistan.

War Without Boundaries was not the only exhibition to frame Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs that contributed to the national/ist experience of war. Mounted at the Founders Gallery in the Military Museums in Calgary, Unravelling the Yarns (2010) also represented Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs. Curated by Michele Hardy with Sgt Chris Mavin, this exhibit featured rugs from Robert Fyke’s collection and the collections of the Nickle Arts Museum as well as artifacts from Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry Museum and Archives (Military Museums 2010). The Afghan war rugs were mounted on the wall alongside artillery and ammunitions, and the purpose of the display was to show “the development of war rugs in the context of Canadian soldiers’ experiences in Afghanistan” (JOZAN 2010). In this exhibit, Afghan war rugs were war artifacts that provided the context and landscape of Canadian military experience in Afghanistan and, therefore, operated as cultural souvenirs for a domestic Canadian audience.
Positing Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs enabled the curators of War Without Boundaries, as well as Unravelling the Yarns, to create what John Urry labels imaginative tours, providing museum-goers with the perception of consuming culture without leaving home (2002). The Australia War Memorial display of Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs contributed to an experience of Afghanistan that is arranged and presented for the benefit of Australian audiences. The viewer within the museum space, then, was posited as having “the imaginative pleasure of consumption, in particular objects associated with other places, peoples, and realities” (Coffey 2009, 286). In this way, the experience and knowledge of the Australian audience was the focal point, the central narrative around which the material culture and experiences of conflict must fit. While the perceived goal would seem to be to offer war memorial visitors with a sense of the cultural experience of everyday Afghan people and Afghanistan culture, the actual intention of War Without Boundaries related more to the reflection of the visitors’ own value system. The tourist’s neocolonial search, Julie Harrison explains, was for “the authentic self rather than the authentic Other” (2003, 34). War Without Boundaries reframed Afghan war rugs to present a narrative of warfare that would be recognizable, palatable, and personally relevant to an Australian museum-going public, and therefore, bolstered Australia’s dominant narrative of conflict.

For citizens of those Western nation-states engaged in military conflict strategies employed by the US-led mission in Afghanistan, the ability to intimately know while at the same time be distanced from an othered culture was particularly significant. Beginning in 2002 with the war in Afghanistan, the strategy of invading national/ist military forces has followed nineteenth-century German military theorist Claude von Clausewitz and his concept of the “fog of war,” which suggests the importance of knowing the capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses of the adversary in order to use them to one’s own advantage (2006). The sense of embodied
knowledge, gained by getting to know the enemy through prolonged research and contact, was coupled with the ability to attack and fight from a greater distance than ever before through virtual bombing. As well, the vast media coverage reporting and visualizing the war enabled larger groups of people geographically disconnected from the conflict of Afghanistan to experience the war both from a distance and in real time. The established sense of intimate distance contributed to the ease with which Afghan material culture evident of Afghan experience was assimilated into the dominant narrative of Australian conflict history.\textsuperscript{64}

The desire to have direct experience of an othered culture, in this case the perceived culture of Afghanistan, through citizen contact with its visual and material culture was not unique to this exhibition and its presentation. Homogenizing and placing a culture on display can be seen in indigenous public history villages in Australia and Canada, sites that sociologist Valda Blundell describes as creating “forms of international mass pleasure travel that provide tourists with opportunities to experience cultural attractions and the cultural distinctiveness of the area they visit” (2002, 38). Because War Without Boundaries at the war memorial brought the contact zone to people, rather than people having to go out to find it, the exhibition became a tourist zone. Anthropologist Paolo Favero labels this process “coffee table globalism” (2007), which is the development of culture as a conventional commodity that is available through the global flows of information.

\textsuperscript{64}The concept of intimate distance as I use it here is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. The term, intimate distance, was originally coined by Rosemary Betterton in her book \textit{An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists, and the Body} (1996). In this book, Betterton outlines intimate distance as the relationship of the women depicted in representations by the female artists, which narrows the conventional gendered distance between male artists and female object. I use this phrase here to employ the nuanced nature of the term in relation to Betterton’s analysis of art by and of women, and my reference to military tactics here.
The curator’s ability to represent Afghan war rugs as a single, unified example of war was dependent on the host culture’s received notion of othered, non-Western cultures as static, ahistorical, and homogenous, and Western cultures as dynamic and progressive. In this allochronistic relation, which anthropologist Johannes Fabian labels the “denial of coevalness” (1983), Western cultures were able to read into and understand, and therefore civilize and save, non-Western peoples through examining their customs and artifacts from a critical distance; this process was premised on the conventional viewpoint that specific people have inherent skills associated with economic and cultural capital necessary to interpret and enjoy specific representational forms (Favero 2007). Historically located in colonial conquests and imperial civilizing missions, this experience was mutually constitutive with the experience of liberal modernity: the consumption of difference, internal and external to the geopolitical borders of the nation-state, is the defining modern experience of liberal individuals. However, as Susan Sontag elaborates, it is not simply the consumption of difference, but the consumption of difference in relation to war: “being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience” (2003, 18).

The narrative of travel and tourist consumption was central to the arrangement of Afghan war rugs in War Without Boundaries, and contributed to the perception that the exhibit offered visitors a window into Australian soldiers’ military tours in Afghanistan. The movement through the space by museum-goers mimicked the physical travel of soldiers, and this imaginative tour resulted in the experience of engaging with culturally relevant materials that added up to a perceived understanding of that culture. This narrative of travel in the exhibitions’ arrangement paralleled the virtual travel of information about Afghan war rugs and the system by which most of these rugs are bought and sold outside of Afghanistan, the physical travel of military personnel from both Australia and Canadian to Afghanistan, the movements of Afghan refugees from their
homes to Pakistan refugee camps (where the majority of these contemporary rugs are produced), and the actual movement of these rugs to their final destinations in the homes of collectors or the spaces of Australian and Canadian exhibitions. These narratives of movement—travel through imaginative, virtual, and physical means—were juxtaposed with the fixed, atemporal narrative of Afghan culture, which was positioned as a culture of warfare that knows no other way.

In tourism, whether travel is characterized as imaginative, virtual, or physical, movement is only one half of the issue. As Mike Crang articulates, “tourism works as an interplay of movement and fixity, absence and presence” (2006, 49). Those who do not move, then, are as essential to the tourist network as those who do. In the case of War Without Boundaries, Afghan war rugs represented stasis through the atemporality of Afghan culture and, in particular, those members of it who are thought to be similarly static—the women and children left to stay at home while the men were gone to war. While there was an acknowledgement of a stylistic shift in the making of rugs, from conventional patterns and benign themes to figurative images of warfare, this transition was situated as a reflection of changed circumstances due to the imposition of outside forces. The progression of the iconography on the war rugs was framed not as self-imposed, but as a reaction to outside forces. Therefore the changes were not considered representative of those who actively participated in modernity or capitalist development, which thrives on progress and change, and active responses to market demands, but were seen as thoughtless responses to external forces. Through this, the Afghan culture on display through the rugs was perceived not as changing its essence, but as reacting to and being subsumed by the experience of conflict and war.

In addition to representing cultural stasis, the Afghan war rugs exhibited a markedly gendered experience of war. Conventionally, the labour of war is demarcated along gender lines; men travel to fight the battles, while women remain behind to guard the home. These rugs, then,
acted as material evidence for the life that was left behind in the wake of warfare by those vulnerable people, women and children, who did not move. In this way, women became the holders of the culture, making the domestic-home space as analogous to the cultural-home space of the nation. This gendered notion of war and home can be traced back in popular culture at least to Homer’s *Odyssey*, where Odysseus’ faithful wife Penelope waits for twenty years for his return from fighting in the Trojan War, spending her days weaving a textile and nights unweaving that same garment, never progressing or changing, simply passing time.

The gendered identity of the keeper of the hearth of home, family, culture, and nation has been studied extensively, particularly in relation to nineteenth-century domesticity and gendered expectations of the “angel in the house” (Parker and Pollock 1982; Pollock 1988; Parker 1989; Hogan and Bradstock 1998; Parker and Pollock 1987; Pollock 1999). While in War Without Boundaries there was acknowledgement that these rugs are being produced by people in refugee camps, and therefore represent the physical movement of a population, there is still a sense of fixity—both physical and cultural—of the women who remained at home while the men travelled to fight. This stasis positioned women as recipients—not producers—of culture, and situated the material objects credited to them as reflecting these larger processes. In this sense, the gendered history of craft production lingered throughout this exhibition. As I mention earlier in this chapter, the category of craft carries with it connotations of feminine, domestic, and apolitical spaces. Within War Without Boundaries, the framing of Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs disconnected these cultural objects from actively participating in the global military complex. That is, Afghan war rugs were positioned as being made as part of the domestic economy, which
was perceived to be outside or separate from global capitalism, and the only acceptable realm for
female producers, who were posited as incapable of participating as liberal citizens.\textsuperscript{65}

The concept of home and embodied space, conventionally associated with a feminized
economy, created a sense of place that connects the foreign to the domestic, and universalized the
local into a national and global commodity. As Marsha Meskimmon writes, the connections of
the local with the national and global through patterns of circulation and exchange are “intrinsic
to the very definition of an ‘economy’, a structure that links the visceral micro-politics of home
and body to the macro-political activities characteristic of the nation-state and, latterly, global
networks of exchange” (2011, 66). In this way, the production of Afghan war rugs was
understood as separated from the ebbs and flows of the liberal economy, and instead represented
the personal interests and motivations of their makers. The depictions of war woven into the rugs,
then, became more easily framed as individual and collective experiences of the devastation of
war, rather than politicized images operating for sale or protesting military invasions in
Afghanistan, which could criticize Australian and Canadian participation.\textsuperscript{66}

The gendered dimension apparent in the display of Afghan war rugs in War Without
Boundaries further contributed to the conflict narrative of the war in Afghanistan as “the good
war,” in opposition to the war in Iraq. Within the good war in Afghanistan, there was a further
dislocation that distinguished between those Afghans who need to be fought and eliminated, and
those who need to be saved. Colonial history has long drawn the divisions of colonial women

\textsuperscript{65} In his book *Transforming Modernity* (1993), Néstor García Canclini critiques the conventional
perception of craft, or artisanal products, as disconnected from capitalist markets.

\textsuperscript{66} As I mentioned earlier, the arrangement of the exhibition Rugs and Resistance held at the
Nickle Arts Gallery does entertain the possibilities of political subversions. Here, I am mainly
referring to the organization of the two main case studies of this chapter, War Without
Boundaries and Battleground.
suffering and victimized at the hands of violent, uncivilized colonial men. This historical concept of “white men” saving “brown women” from “brown men,” which is integral to the “white man’s burden,” has been critically examined in works by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987) and Sherene Razack (2007), who describes wars waged in this name as “savage wars of peace” (2004). The split of good versus evil along the lines of racialized gender infiltrated the discourse of the invasion of Afghanistan since the beginning of the most recent war. In November 2001, then-U.S. First Lady Laura Bush’s public radio address claimed the recent invasion was being celebrated by Afghan women and children, and that the fight against terrorism was also “a fight for the rights and dignity of women” (as quoted by VOA News 2005; Hunt 2006, 52). The Afghan war rugs in War Without Boundaries were associated with good Afghans, mainly women, who needed to be saved and championed by the invading soldiers. In claiming national/ist ownership over the material culture that represented this moral division, War Without Boundaries reproduced the narrative of Australian military endeavours as saving the most vulnerable, good populations of war, and removing and punishing the bad in the name of freedom and democracy.

Locating Afghan war rugs as cultural souvenirs or skillfully woven testimonials, strategies associated with distinct social and economic characteristics, united the viewpoints of the Afghan producers and the dominant narratives of Australian and Canadian military efforts. The presumed intersection of Afghan perspectives with Australian and Canadian narratives, then, gave support to the morality of the international military mission in Afghanistan as peacekeeping and humane. In producing and reproducing this dominant narrative through a particular theoretical positioning of Afghan war rugs in War Without Boundaries and Battleground, Australian and Canadian collectors, curators, scholars, and viewers were permitted to congratulate themselves on altruistic intentions while participating—unknowingly or not—in
uncritically justifying the continued war in Afghanistan. Such visualizations of Australian and Canadian conflict narratives rely on a discourse of liberal humanism and human rights that espouses the equal value of all human life as a moral stance assessed through ethics and justice. Philosopher Antonio Gramsci labels this philanthropic process “the means to good will” (1985, 25), whereby those in power grant restrained opportunities to others as a gesture to reify their own goodness and humanity. In this way, War Without Boundaries and Battleground framed Afghan war rugs within a dominant narrative of Australian and Canadian national/ist military activities that produced and reproduced the official state narrative of each nation within current global conflict. These exhibitions, then, functioned as extensions of national/ist public relations campaigns, not unlike the Human Terrain Strategy mobilized by the US military, a campaign that has been criticized as a tactic “to win the hearts and minds” of the public to gain support for an unjust war (Human Terrain 2011), and that has provided the model for the Canadian military’s White Situational Awareness Program.  

Afghan war rugs are now being employed as tools for development within the larger goals of corporate globalization, through their deliberate production and circulation. In 2010, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and the Interior Ministry in Afghanistan discussed awarding a $7 million contract to a private New Jersey-based company to begin developing Afghan carpets, including those with designs of war, for a wider and larger international audience (Shachtman 2010). The implementation of development plans in a consideration of Afghan war rugs is just the

67 The Human Terrain Strategy (HTS) is an American military program designed to embed sociologists and anthropologists in active military units stationed in conflict zones in order to gather cultural information that would help with military activities. Opposed by the American Anthropology Association as an unethical endeavour, HTS began in 2003 and continues today. A documentary on HTS, Human Terrain (2010), examines the conflict over this program. More recently, the Canadian military has developed a similar program called the White Situational Awareness Program in 2008. For more information on this Canadian model, see The National (2008); Hodge (2008).
latest deployment of what George Yúdice labels culture-as-resource (2003) to describe how cultural objects are utilized within the global economy. These changes in production will surely affect the future exhibition of Afghan war rugs within Australian and Canadian exhibitions that engage with national/ist military engagements; however, what these changes will actually be remains to be seen.
Chapter 5

Humane Terrain: Questioning Dominant National/ist Military Narratives

Although we are all constantly bombarded by the messages and meanings of culture and the media, we are not merely passive receivers or consumers. We constantly make new meanings out of our cultural world, resist the dominant messages, and discover new modes of social expression. We do not isolate ourselves from the social world of dominant culture but neither do we simply acquiesce to its powers. Rather, from inside the dominant culture we create not only alternative subcultures but, more importantly, new collective networks of expression.

— Hardt and Negri 2004, 263.

Art that is consistent with the expectations and perceptual framework of its viewers, somehow predictable (or at least expected) in its place and time, has certain impacts, and the description of these is a part of art criticism. The impact of art that is not consistent with the viewer’s expectations may elicit other quite different aesthetic responses. The element of surprise can heighten pleasure and create subtle anxieties.


The question to be asked of artistic practice is, can there be an art of resistance against those forces that push us ever further into the instrumentalisation and devaluation of life?


The previous two chapters examine exhibitions of visual and material culture that engaged with official and dominant national/ist narratives of contemporary military conflict. Although in my analyses of these works I suggest ways these official and dominant narratives could be read against themselves, I argue in Chapters 3 and 4 that the intent of these exhibitions was to produce and reproduce histories of war—histories that uncritically echo the Australian and Canadian government and military narratives. These narratives—which assume each country’s global
military activities is guided by humane and moral peacekeeping—have been reproduced in many different visualizations of national/ist engagement with the war in Afghanistan. In this chapter, I look at exhibitions and objects by five artists—Barb Hunt, Allyson Mitchell, Tobey C. Anderson, Parvaneh Radmard, and Zanny Begg—that resist official and dominant narratives in order to question the activities of national/ist military units and the visualization of those activities. Visual representations in mainstream broadcast news coverage often uncritically reinforce the Australian and Canadian states’ policies. The artists I discuss in this chapter subvert such portrayals by challenging these hegemonic depictions in their own art practices. This chapter focuses on art that, by negotiating mainstream portrayals of Australian and Canadian military participation in the current invasion of Afghanistan, offers counter-narratives.

In this chapter, I use the category of counter-narratives as a heuristic device to examine works that contest and redefine the liberal nation-state. These works challenge the nation-state in ways that are absent from official and dominant visualizations of Australian and Canadian government and military policies. The category of counter-narratives becomes an aid for uncovering the complexity of defining the “state’s version of the military conflict.” The works I classify as counter-narratives do not simply advance Australian and Canadian military activities in Afghanistan as humane peacekeeping, as official representations do; rather, they problematize these activities by critically recounting them. To address alternative visualizations of conflict, I examine artists’ exhibitions and objects that address national/ist conflict history, but are not sponsored by either official war artist program. I use works by a variety of Australian and Canadian artists to investigate how counter-narratives envision multiple scenarios that can move beyond the narratives of liberal state itself.

The five artists I discuss in this chapter produce works that range in media, style, and background, yet all of them have two main things in common: they address global military
conflict through focussing on the body, and they reframe images from mainstream media representations of military activities. David Harvey describes the body and globalization as operating at “the opposite ends of a spectrum we might use to understand social and political life” (2000, 15). He argues for the need to connect micro and macro elements to understand the workings of societies. The works I examine here critique the connections between the embodiment of conflict in bodies of military personnel and citizens (micro level) and the role of military conflict in global capitalism (macro level). That is, Hunt, Mitchell, Anderson, Radmard, and Begg generate works that situate the body and embodiment as central to the analysis of the logic of military conquest, the bodies that carry this out, and the participation of citizens as implicated within this process.

As well, the works I examine in this chapter all reframe images from mainstream representations of Australian and Canadian military narratives by placing them in new contexts and asking new questions of them. These actions follow the Brechtian notion of making the familiar unfamiliar and making the unfamiliar familiar (Brecht 1964). By recontextualizing such images, the works by the artists I discuss here complicate the official military narratives. While these artists all reframe mainstream media images of war, not all of them intend to situate their works as politicized anti-war statements. I argue, however, that through their re-use of expected war images in unexpected ways, their works offer possibilities to envision counter-narratives to official and dominant visualizations of national/ist military histories. That is, these works resituate the visual and material culture of official and dominant narratives in order “to alter the viewers’ angle of vision” of such narratives, as Ruth Phillips articulates in relation to Aboriginal interventions into settler histories (2003, 298).

The different works I examine in this chapter function as interventionist art. They illuminate the importance of surprise and disruption/interruption in making the familiar
unfamiliar, and thus encourage critical thinking about that which has become normalized as common sense. As Suzanne Lacy writes,

“Interventionist art” is art that takes place outside of an expected place and time. Art that does not make a predictable appearance. And it may or may not be consistent with the viewer’s idea of worth, appropriateness, and/or significance. (Lacy 1999, 70)

James C. Scott describes the public elucidation of counter-hegemonic narratives as disclosing “hidden transcripts,” whereby the performance—or social agreement—between dominant and subordinate groups disrupts mainstream history (1990, 14). I am interested in examining artworks and exhibitions that use the visual language of the dominant culture without legitimating the official or dominant narrative. Scott calls this intervention a rupture, which is a form of resistance that does not seek to affirm, legitimize, or feel the need to protect itself from the reactionary power of the dominant public transcript (1990).

The notion that art can have any real social impact or can take on a political or activist role is often questioned. However, by highlighting the reactions of public and civic government and liberal cultural institutions in my discussion of the work of Australian artist Zanny Begg, I explore the effects that art can generate within the social and political realms. Art that engages with politics is not simply another artistic category, that of “political art,” a label that strips it of any or all political import. As Carol Becker writes,

What artists do changes with historical contexts and cultural settings. It evolves and devolves and then reemerges in unimaginable ways. Adorno knew that art could not completely solve social dilemmas, but he believed it could bear witness to them, and save the honour of the species by magnificently articulating its concerns and its distress, and in so doing, pointing a finger in the direction of change. (1999, 66)
Becker’s idea of bearing witness brings the artist into the socio-historical equation in a way that interventionist/Brechtian art could potentially seem to stand above or outside. Becker’s understanding of Adorno’s view brings our attention to the self-reflexivity of critical artistic practice, a reflexivity that indicates art has transformative potential.

Participation has been key to legitimating official and dominant narratives of war. Both Derek Gregory (2008) and Elizabeth Losh (2005) discuss how cultural knowledge and video war games are used in a strategy to indoctrinate the public (broadly defined) with the idea that they are participants and witnesses to warfare in the theatre of battle. While the works I examine here do not necessarily challenge the concept of the nation-state, they do, I argue, question the defining myths around it. Most importantly, the five artists in whose work I anchor my argument in this chapter address participatory citizenship and historical presence within the current historical moment. The works of Barb Hunt, Allyson Mitchell, Tobey C. Anderson, Parvaneh Radmard, and Zanny Begg illuminate the boundaries and limits of the official or dominant national/ist narratives in the same mode as those visualizations that reinforce such narratives, but in ways that force critical reflections. Their work thus draws attention to the production and reproduction of national/ist military narratives and encourages people to participate as critical citizens.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first deals with feminizing critical engagements with military history, the second with personalizing the losses of humane warfare, and the third with exhibiting protest in the public space. This organization accounts for ignored histories and marginalized perspectives, and thus illustrates how cultural producers can read the official or dominant narrative against itself. The aspects that I highlight here—the masculinist culture of warfare, the realities of death, and the voicing of political dissent—are silenced, denied, or villified viewpoints within the patriotic and moralistic discourse surrounding the wars in
Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, I argue, they are nonetheless perspectives of the global military-industrial complex and the role of national/ist military activities within it that are crucial to identify if we are to develop new and better ways of understanding the how and why of warfare.

**Feminizing critical engagements with military histories**

To question official and dominant visualizations of warfare, two artists, Canadians Barb Hunt and Allyson Mitchell, use a strategy that juxtaposes unexpected elements. This juxtaposition denaturalizes and re-envisioned conventional perceptions of national/ist engagements with global military conflict. Hunt and Mitchell apply conventionally feminine styles and colours to the subject of warfare and militarization, a subject traditionally dominated by narratives that centralize masculine involvement. The textiles both artists use help them to visualize conflict and the military in new ways and “to alter the viewers’ angle of vision” (Phillips 2003, 298).68 The strategy of using textiles, which are conventionally associated with the feminine, to challenge acts and armaments of war, which are conventionally associated with the masculine, is not new. For example, in the 1980s, textiles were used as a tool for activism during the protests outside the Greenham Common Air Force Base in England. Kirsty Robertson notes the effectiveness of textile work in the service of activism: “The very feminine qualities that were used to dismiss textiles as art forms,” she points out, “were ironically reversed to demonstrate the peaceful nature of the protests versus the brutality of (masculine) police oppression and the wider politics that had brought the threat of nuclear war” (2011, 185). Subverting conventional gender roles and

68 The combination of textiles and militarization is quite widespread in relation to craftivism, or the use of conventional craft objects within activist activities. Some well-known works by artists who have worked with these materials include Barbara Todd’s *Security Blankets* (1992-ongoing) and Marianne Jorgensen’s *Tank Cosy* (2006). A recent collection of essays, *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art* (2011), addresses different material cultural products in relation to the concept of craftivism.
dynamics, Roberston says, generates new and different questions to be asked of war and the national/ist narratives that represent it.

The success of the juxtaposition of textiles with war history draws upon conventional perceptions of female and male domains. However, rather than simply reifying conventional feminine and masculine qualities, artists who use this binary in their work subvert these staid categories by blurring the boundaries between them. Such works do not uncritically support textiles as female and war as male, but instead strategically draw upon the expectations of male and female, provoking viewers to unlearn their perceptions of what these categories mean (Irigaray 1985; Spivak 1999). This kind of intervention ruptures central/peripheral identities or groups. The subversion and synthesis of conventionally gendered domains become the means for addressing the individual and collective identity of citizens and bodies associated with national/ist narratives of militarization and war.

In a solo exhibition, entitled Toll, at the Rooms Provincial Art Gallery in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canadian artist Barb Hunt included a number of different textile pieces that juxtaposed conventionally feminine fabric, colours, and design with masculine subject matter and form (also fabric, colour, and design). The works in Toll invited viewers, who are geographically separated from the everyday, lived experience of conflict zones, to confront their own relation to and complicity in Canadian military activities, particularly activities that are undertaken in the name of freedom and security for global citizens. Examples of the works included antipersonnel (2001-10), a sculptural work composed of purple and pink knitted objects patterned after current landmines (fig. 20), and incarnate (2001-4), a used military uniform whose camouflaged designs were outlined with bright pink thread (figs 21 and 22).
Figure 20: Barb Hunt, *antipersonnel*, 2001-10 (image from artist’s website).

Figure 21: Barb Hunt, *incarnate*, 2001-4 (image from artist’s website).
Figure 22: Barb Hunt, Detail of *incarnate*, 2001-4 (image from artist’s website).

In the exhibition catalogue, curator Bruce Johnson articulates the two components of Hunt’s juxtaposition: “Applying female skills conventionally focused on creating functional, even protective objects (woven, stitched or knitted clothing, quilts, etc.) to male-oriented worlds of military conflict and national aggression is a powerful subversion” (Johnson 2010, 6). The subversion is a result of the unexpected coupling of feminized labour and output in the masculinized realm of conflict and warfare. Another work from the exhibition illuminates this juxtaposition of “female skills” and “male-oriented worlds of military conflict and national aggression.” In *the old lie* (2007-2010), Hunt used worn military fatigues as the outline of a world map (fig. 23). The rendering of the world through soldiers’ uniforms establishes a connection between masculinist military tactics and a planetary consciousness of conquest and control.
Figure 23: Barb Hunt, *the old lie*, 2007-10 (image from artist’s website).

By using the fabric of the body, a medium most often relegated to the domestic, feminized sphere, Hunt’s work highlights the vulnerability (not control) of military personnel in wars across the world.

A self-identified pacifist, Hunt explains the purposes of the juxtaposition of femininized labour and masculinized conflict narratives in her Toll works:

> Although I use domestic practices in this work, I am experimenting with intentionally rough craftsmanship and forms, as a way of depicting the brutality of war. This is contrasted with other works of careful, obsessive sewing that are about the fragility and beauty of the human body. My interest in camouflage uniforms deals more directly with the body itself, with actual specific individuals, as their bodily presence can be seen on the fabrics, in stains and signs of wear. In this work, I am trying to balance the cruelty of war and my empathy for the soldier. (quoted in Johnson 2010, 44)

In Toll, Hunt used an assortment of textile techniques and styles to address the “bodily presence” of the military. Using the slow and exacting process of knitting and sewing, Hunt was able to reveal the neglected elements within national/ist conflict narratives—the tactility and fragility of
the body. These displays altered visualizations of common tools in the contemporary rhetoric of war, such as camouflaged uniforms and landmines, and illuminated the expectations of such military tools by presenting them in unexpected ways.

Hunt’s combination of feminine and masculine rhetoric negotiate the same strategy being used in current military projects. The military, particularly that of the US and Canada, has been attempting to feminize its battle tactics by implementing techniques of embodied knowledge. In projects such as The Human Terrain System in the US and White Situational Awareness Teams in Canada (discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation), military units assert the need to know the enemy “up close.” This desire for intimate, embodied knowledge, often propagated as an attempt to foster cultural sensitivity, is integrated into more conventional military strategies of conquest. Hunt’s use of the fabric of worn military uniforms, however, and her mapping of the trails of conquest pose a different relationship between intimacy and distance. Camouflage uniforms and the camouflaged body are commonly used in visualizations of military warfare; for example, the exhibition Camouflage (2009) at the Canadian War Museum (CWM) included patterned camouflage jackets and encouraged visitors to try them on in front of various conflict backdrops. However, this form of embodiment reinforces the dominant narrative of warfare, uncritically encouraging citizens to read themselves into national/ist narratives of warfare, and normalizing the rhetoric of militarization. Hunt’s work makes this familiar relationship unfamiliar. She questions the logic of masculine/ist military conquest, the bodies that carry this out, and the participation of citizens as implicated within this process.

Additionally, Hunt’s works transcend the primacy of vision conventionally privileged within museums. Although viewers could not actually touch the objects on display with their hands, the tactile nature of the pieces was clear. Film theorist Laura Marks describes this interplay of sensory experience as haptic visuality (2002), which refers to the act of viewing that
draws upon other sense experience, particularly touch. With haptic visuality, the eyes become organs of touch. Through haptic visuality, Hunt’s pieces blurred the boundaries of sight and touch, us and them, which turns the distanced experience of viewing warfare narratives into a possible moment of embodiment and personal interaction with the tools and uniforms of military conflict. Hunt’s implementation of haptic visuality is not the same as presented by the uniforms in the CWM’s Camouflage exhibition. For example, in antipersonnel, participatory militarism is treated as a central aspect of the cultural turn of modern war. Rather than a disconnected narrative of conflict zones removed from the exhibition site of the museum, Hunt’s works in Toll created a situation where viewers could re-envision the spaces of conflict and their relationship to them. By drawing the viewer into participating through gendered form, texture, and colour, Hunt encouraged rethinking and questioning. By sewing a grenade in soft, pink fabric, Hunt invites the viewer to reconsider whether even a soft and pink grenade affects or evokes a feeling of security—the ostensible goal of war.

Another artist who uses the interplay between conventional notions of feminine/masculine, seeing/touching is Allyson Mitchell. In Mitchell’s short film Afghanimation (2008), an Afghan “war rug” is the visual centrepiece in the artist’s examination of the relationship between the Canadian military and media in relation to the current war in Afghanistan. The film was displayed in the Project Room of the Union Gallery at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario in 2008. It formed part of Mitchell’s exhibition Brain Child, an installation composed of female ceramic figures “whose genius sized brains outsize their bonnets” (Brain Child pamphlet 2008). The figures comprising the work were lined up in

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69 Since its debut at the Union Gallery, this video has been shown in other venues as well, including the group exhibition War at a Distance (2009) at Gallery TPW in Toronto and Fierce: Canadian Women Exhibit Video Art (2010) at the McMaster Art Gallery in London. Also,
circular patterns on the floor heading toward a large purple and pink knitted brain suspended from the ceiling over a white podium. The purpose of *Brain Child*, curator Jocelyn Purdie wrote, was to pay “homage to handi work made largely by women and [to rescue/correct] infantilized and diminutive representations of feminized bodies and intellect” (*Brain Child* pamphlet 2008).

Displayed in a small project room off the main gallery, *Afghanimation* (figs 24 and 25) was shown on a flat-screen TV mounted on the wall. The entire space of the project room—walls, ceiling, and floor—was covered with textiles, including hooked rugs, crocheted blankets, and knitted pillows (fig. 24).

![Afghanimation](image)

**Figure 24**: Allyson Mitchell, Installation photograph of *Afghanimation*, 2008. Union Gallery, Kingston (image from *Brain Child* exhibition pamphlet).

*Afghanimation* has been shown at several film festivals around North America and the United Kingdom.
The didactic panel mounted at the entrance of the project room tells gallery-goers that the textiles form a kind of landscape in which to view the film:

in a reconstruction of a contemporary menstrual hut, complete with afghan-covered walls, comfy cushions, and hooked rugs, Mitchell pays tribute to Canadian artist and filmmaker Joyce Weiland’s *Rat Life and Diet in North America* film. Mitchell weaves a critique of military and media relations and Canadian complacency in obscuring the facts about Afghanistan in her film *Afghanimation*. Mitchell uses crocheted afghans to gradually expose and then conceal a traditional Afghani war rug, which depicts the image of a woman kneeling with a stringed instrument, framed by grenades and tanks, to suggest a process of camouflage and obfuscation. (Union Gallery 2008)

Mitchell’s work draws upon the historical precedence of Joyce Weiland’s *Rat Life and Diet* (1968), which uses the journey of two gerbils escaping their feline captors by moving to Canada to critique US-Canada relations. The camouflaging of an Afghan war rug comments on the nature of the mainstream media’s coverage of Canadian military activities in Afghanistan. Mitchell’s six-minute video begins with an image of an Afghan “war rug” depicting a young girl sitting and playing a stringed instrument, possibly an Afghan panchthar, with two grenades in the upper corners and two tanks in the lower corners. This rug was exhibited in The Battleground Project at the Textile Museum of Canada and borrowed from curator Max Allen for use in this piece.

70 For a detailed analysis of this work by Weiland, see Holmes (2007).

71 The Afghan war rug that Mitchell used in her film was from the exhibition Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan (2008) and was loaned to her by curator Max Allen. For more information about this exhibition, please see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
The “war rug” is hung on a wall decorated with a colourful crocheted rug. Throughout the video, Mitchell appears and carefully crochets over the Afghan war rug until it completely disappears. At the end, she covers the entire wall with Canadian newspapers. Intermittently throughout the video, words flash onto the screen, phrases such as, “anonymous weavers international audience,” “conventional ammunition appetite for mementos,” “cozy military press relations,” and “canadians don’t know what the canadian military is doing in afghanistan.”

Mitchell appropriates the image of the Afghan war rug to repoliticize it as part of a critique. The use of such a crafted object—an object that is conventionally categorized as feminine, domestic, and apolitical (Parker 1982; Parker and Pollock 1989)—feminizes the discussion of war, revisualizes the ways in which military history can be presented, and asserts
the possibilities of textiles objects as political objects. As Anthea Black and Nicole Burish write, the perceptions of such object types,

as old-fashioned or traditional has now been eschewed in favor of crafting as a strategy to examine and challenge contemporary issues. Rather than viewing craft as preindustrial, current craftivist practices are situated within the challenges of urbanity, globalization and capitalism in a postindustrial, technology-saturated world. (2011, 205)

Arguments around textile production often become caught in “unsettling a binary opposition between public and private—or more accurately, public space and domestic space—that has largely been made redundant by the consuming politics of neoliberalism” (Robertson 2011, 192).

More specifically to my argument, the opposition between public and private is also made redundant by the consuming politics of participatory militarism.

**Personalizing the losses of humane warfare**

The mobilization of citizens to fight in the name of country and freedom is often framed as patriotic service in which people are willing to give their lives for a just cause. As Mahmood Mamdani explains, a historical shift occurred during the French Revolution whereby armies became composed not of mercenaries, but of patriots “who killed for a cause, inspired by national sentiment—what we have come to recognize as the civic religion of nationalism” (2004, 3).

However, Mamdani complicates and nuances this concept; building upon Hegel, who wrote that in a citizens’ army, “man was willing to die for a cause of greater value to him than life itself,” Mamdani adds that a truer statement would include, “and man is also willing to kill for such a cause” (2004, 3–4; italics in original).

Mainstream media representations of war must adhere to government policies that balance denying casualties that may hurt morale and damage public support of the war, with
acknowledging and revering those who have fought and died in the name of national/ist sentiments. The desire to mask the human cost of war has manifested in government policies designed to hide visual images of fallen military personnel from the public. For example, in 2006 Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Conservative government instituted a media ban on the reporting of the return of dead soldiers and filming or photographing the flag-draped coffins (CBC 2006), which mirrored a similar ban set in place in 1991 by then-US President George H.W. Bush’s administration. Harper’s media ban was quickly reversed in the face of protests from journalists, opposition Members of Parliament, and the public (Tremonti 2009); in the US, President Barack Obama overturned the previous media ban in 2009 (Kerley and Heussner 2009). Now, in both Canada and the US, a middle ground, or compromise, has been established: while the media is not forbidden to report the return and funerals of fallen soldiers, the families of the dead have to agree to the coverage.

While the media’s ability to depict military funeral processions has been restricted, the sight of official military portraits of fallen soldiers is a familiar sight in Australian and Canadian print, TV, and internet media. These portraits have been the main type of visualization in the acknowledgement of fallen soldiers by the media, state, and military. The portraits of military personnel appear consistently in state and military press releases, in mass media discussions, and in official and unofficial artists’ works. Portraits are important because of society’s belief that the face reveals the essence of a person, aspects of the individual that are often hidden or left unrevealed. As Richard Rushton writes, “Ultimately, the face is an instrument whose primary purpose is that of communicating; we cannot dissociate the face of the sender from the system of meaning implied by that face’s messages being sent to a receiver” (2002, 221; italics in original). The portrait is perceived to allow viewers intimate access to the sitter’s character, thoughts, and feelings. In military portraits, the character of those depicted is determined primarily by their
association with the military, dictated by the military dress she or he is wearing and the context in which the image is shown. The association of the military context and perceived insight to personal character by the viewer makes portraits an ideal representation of the military and its activities, because it personalizes soldiers as individuals, and diminishes the fears of a dehumanizing military machine. The desire to evoke a sense of empathy and identification with military personnel through portraits makes this type of representation common in relation to depictions of the military.

Representations of military portraits are often shown singularly or in small groups, depending on the event. Unlike the images of mass graves marked by crosses and poppy fields that flourished in representations of the first and second World Wars, portraits of fallen soldiers now appear singularly or in small groups, and immediately after death. Such representations temporarily and visually disconnects each loss from the other, and does not mark the collective national loss in the current war in Afghanistan. As well, unlike the graves of World War casualties that permanently mark the landscape, the portraits of fallen soldiers that appear in media visualizations are impermanent representations in the collective imagination of the human tragedy of war. To bridge this disconnect between the representation of individual loss and the reality of mass loss, contemporary artists engaging with the visualization of national/ist narratives of conflict have adapted and recontextualized these portraits.

In KIA_CA_Afghanistan (2006-7), Tobey C. Anderson reworked portraits of individual fallen soldiers that appeared in the mainstream media to negotiate and highlight different possible conflict narratives (fig. 26). For this piece, which appeared in an exhibition of his work at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in Kingston, Ontario, Anderson created a series of portraits using fluorescent paint that illuminates the images in a darkened space. According to curator Jan Allen, the portraits were of “the 44 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat killed in action in the war in
Afghanistan by early 2007, when concerns about exit strategies from the Afghan mission entered public debate” (AEAC 2008).

Figure 26: Tobey C. Anderson, Installation photo of KIA_CA_Afghanistan, 2006-7. Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston (image from Agnes Etherington Art Centre website).

The haunting fluorescent glow of the portraits was intended to “mimic the screen glow of the electronic systems through which mass-media accounts of the war and otherwise suppressed effects and information circulate. These same systems, specifically the World Wide Web, provide the source images” (exhibition wall didactic 2009). The pictures used in this project were taken from the media and internet; “using the language of the media as a tool and influenced by night vision technology, Anderson exposes the cultural vacuum surrounding the ‘War on Terror’” (Anderson 2011). In addition to reworking military and media images, Anderson also refers to military tropes in the title for the work. The title of the piece—KIA_CA_Afghanistan—draws upon military terms to communicate that a Canadian soldier was killed while serving the military
in Afghanistan: “KIA” refers to “killed in action” and “CA” signifies “Canadian,” while “Afghanistan” notes the place. This project is ongoing, and in its most recent exhibition, Souvenirs/Remembrances (2011) at the Art Gallery of the University of Sherbrooke, the number of portraits of dead Canadians has increased to 154.\(^{72}\)

The piece is part of a larger series entitled *The New American Century Project*, which Anderson began in 2004 inspired by the “War on Terror” (Anderson 2011). As a Vietnam-era defector to Canada, Anderson feels he has a vested interest in the current war (Anderson 2011). The idea for the project is based upon the Project for the New American Century, a Washington, DC, think tank that proposes a strategy for US global domination (AEAC 2008; Kristol 2006). Anderson wants to address “the gaps between the images of war seen through the media and the actual war itself” (Anderson 2011). By creating a collective of portraits of Canadians who have died in Afghanistan, Anderson intended *KIA_CA_Afghanistan* to question the experience of “the loss of family and innocence, the loss of power, and of faith, but most importantly, the loss of humanity. This reclassification of the dead and wounded is not an attempt to memorialize as in the pictorial halls of fame, but to commemorate the personal pain and collective loss” (Anderson 2011).

I argue in Chapter 3 that the Australian and Canadian states encourage the production and public circulation of portraits of military personnel to humanize and personalize a narrative of war, a narrative that the government hopes will naturalize warfare as a permanent state of exception in the fight for freedom and peace. Anderson’s work uses the image-language characteristic of this neoliberal tactic, yet reframes it by bringing these images together, marking

\(^{72}\) At the time of writing, 159 Canadians (155 soldiers, 1 diplomat, 2 aid workers, and 1 journalist) have died in Afghanistan since 2002. Australia has lost 23 personnel during its participation in the war in Afghanistan.
the actual death toll as a reality of war. In contrast, pictures of fallen soldiers are issued as individual portraits when released by the government, or they are temporally and visually separated from one another when they are reproduced in the mainstream media. In *KIA_CA_Afghanistan*, Anderson gathers all these independent units to form a whole that tracks the running to-date tally of human losses, clearly linking the cause of those losses to national/ist sentiment, that is, fighting on behalf of “Canada.” Anderson’s work accounts for the collective scale of national/ist war endeavours of its citizen-participants and questions what we (other citizens) are doing for this collective.

With *KIA_CA_Afghanistan*, Anderson illuminates the limit of the official and dominant narratives that individualize those who are willing to fight and die for country. Initially, this artwork functions much like war memorials and monuments that list the names of all the fallen from past war. However, rather than being a complete list set in the past, Anderson’s piece is ongoing and the list continues to grow with the continued war effort. The sheer size and lack of finality of *KIA_CA_Afghanistan* make this work an effective rethinking of the human losses of war.

Other artists have employed techniques similar to Anderson’s. For example, Parvaneh Radmard’s *Canadian Heroes* (2009) (figs 27 and 28), which is aesthetically similar to Anderson’s *

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73 Drawn and painted (i.e., conventionally artistic) portraits of fallen soldiers has become common in contemporary war remembrance. In Canada, artist Joanne Tod has created *Oh Canada: A Lament*, in which images every Canadian fallen soldier are painted on on 5” x 6” birch panels. Exhibited in 2011 at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum at Hamilton International Airport, *Oh Canada* intersperses these portraits with disjointed segments of a red maple leaf. According to Tod, this work signifies the fractures of a nation because of “a misguided war, for loss of life with little to show for it, for political manipulations against the public will” (Whyte 2010). Another Canadian artist, Stephen C. Gaebel, is working on a project, with the permission of the Government of Canada, to paint 18” x 24” oil portraits of all fallen Canadian soldiers from Afghanistan, which are given as gifts to the soldiers’ families. Begun in 2007, *The Fallen Canadian Soldier Project* takes its subjects from the officially released
piece, places portraits of all fallen Canadian soldiers together as a collective. Exhibited in Red Head Gallery in Toronto, Ontario, in February 2009, this exhibition was “a visual meditation on duty, humanity and sacrifice” and intended to show a “personal response to national and international attitudes towards war and the price of war—the lives of hundreds of young soldiers” (Akimbo 2009). *Canadian Heroes* was an installation of hanging photographs of dead Canadian peacekeepers as a backdrop to a floor arrangement of red tulips, one for each dead soldier, placed in the shape of a maple leaf.

According to Gaebel, “Though these are the same photos that appear in the newspapers and on tv, many who’ve view [sic] them comment that the paintings have taken on a new dimension, that they have become more than just a copy of the photos” (2010). Each portrait includes the name of the soldier in bold print at the top of the frame and the quotation “We will Remember. Nous Nous Souviendrons.” American artist Michael Reagan has created a similar project entitled *Fallen Heroes Project*. Families in Canada, the US, and Britain contact Reagan with a photo and biography of a soldier, and the artist creates original portraits which he provides “free of charge to military families that have lost a military family member related to the war on terror” (Reagan 2011). While all these portraits are based on photographs of soldiers, there is a sense in all of these works that the artistically rendered depictions can capture more of an essence of the person. In the words of Gaebel, “If I could put my finger on what makes the difference between the photos and the paintings, it would be something like this, I suppose. At some point with these portraits, the act of painting goes beyond the draftsmanship of getting eyes in proportion and the right shape of the mouth. As I grow more familiar with the face in the photo, and as they begin to come alive in the paint, the features begin to speak. In an odd kind of way, there’s a conversation that develops, an honest and intimate dialogue that has a way of reaching deep into the soul. Somehow, I think, this conversation becomes part of the painting, and in turn becomes part of the conversation the viewer has with the portrait as well” (2010).
Figure 27: Parvaneh Radmard, Installation photo of *Canadian Heroes*, 2009. Redhead Gallery, Toronto (image from artist’s website).

Figure 28: Parvaneh Radmard, Installation photo of *Canadian Heroes*, 2009. Redhead Gallery, Toronto (image from artist’s website).
To frame her work, Radmard used a quotation from Iranian poet Aref Ghazvini, written for the youth who fought for democracy in early twentieth-century Persia: “From the blood of young soldiers/Tulips have blossomed” (Akimbo 2009). Radmard connected the deaths of each soldier with the possibility of new growth and developments, symbolized by the tulip. While Radmard’s piece is more conventionally reverent and funerary than Anderson’s, using flowers to mark and remember the dead, the effects of both artworks are similar. Radmard takes her images from the official releases and media coverage of fallen soldiers and unites these disjointed events to reveal “the price of war.” As well, like Anderson’s work, Radmard’s piece denied the individualization of the mainstream images of fallen soldiers, where the audience typically sees these images one at a time, never as a group to visually mark the whole of domestic loss.

**Exhibiting protest in public space**

In 2004, Australian artist Zanny Begg applied to and was accepted by curator Adnan Begic to participate in a project called [out of gallery], jointly organized by the Blacktown Arts Centre and the University of Western Sydney. Begg proposed a work called *Checkpoint* (fig. 29), which was a series of ten life-size cutouts of American soldiers wearing standard-coloured camouflage uniforms holding large guns accompanied by the slogan “Checkpoint for Weapons of Mass Distraction.”
Figure 29: Zanny Begg, Installation photograph of Checkpoint, 2004. Blacktown. (image from artist’s website).

Her intention was to place these cutouts around the city of Blacktown in unexpected places, such as churches, schools, and houses, “to highlight the contradictions in the political rhetoric surrounding the war” (Ihlein 2004).

Begg selected unexpected locations to place her artworks around Blacktown to echo the problems with military logic revealed in recent activity of the war in Iraq. As Begg states,

I wanted to show how absurd this rhetoric [of the war on terror] can be—a school accused of being a hiding place for weapons of mass destruction—but also how pertinent—schools in Iraq were destroyed for this very accusation …. The aim is to place the checkpoints in surprising places to highlight how the conflict in Iraq returns unexpectedly and confronts us as we shop/commute/work. (Ihlein 2004)
Begg’s work uses recognizable images from the visual landscape of war and places them in a different context, a domestic situation for viewers whose experience of warfare is distanced. In so doing, Begg intended Checkpoint to recontextualize and repoliticize the everyday experience of conflict and to force passive viewers to physically confront particular realities of war zones.

Begg’s intentions for this piece, however, were altered during the installation. On November 23, after placing five of her Checkpoint cutouts around town, Begg was confronted by a Community Law Enforcement Official and was told to remove all of her “illegal signs.” When Begg defended her work, explaining that she was part of an art show, the official stated, “It’s too political. It’s totally inappropriate in the climate of terrorism” (quoted in Gelber 2006, 202). Subsequently, Begg was removed from the show, her works were confiscated, she was fined, federal counter-terrorism authorities were called, other works that had been commissioned for the [out of gallery] show were cancelled or moved to another suburb, and Blacktown mayor Leo Kelly publicly stated, “This sort of thing in the name of art is not going to go on in our city” (quoted in Dixon 2004, 8). Begg feels she never received an adequate explanation from the City’s council, the gallery’s board, or the exhibition’s curator about the motivation for censoring her work (Ihlein 2004). After this political turmoil in Blacktown, Begg was invited to show her works at Mori Gallery in Sydney. In January 2005, Begg installed Checkpoint, which expanded the number of her original works for [out of gallery] to 100 and included some of the camouflage fatigues in fluorescent colours (fig. 30).

74 Gelber refers to the counter-terrorism agents, and also mentions that although Blacktown City Council officials threatened to contact federal counter-terrorism authorities, there is no record of such a complaint being lodged and Begg was never contacted by such authorities (Gelber 2004, 202, 215).
Figure 30: Zanny Begg, Installation photograph of *Checkpoint*, 2006. Mori Gallery, Sydney (image from artist’s website).

The large number of cutouts and bright colours created a physically and visually inescapable landscape of conflict in the small gallery space. The exhibition closed at the end of February 2005, and a year later, in early 2006, Begg gave all 100 checkpoint cutouts to interested artists, activists, and members of the public. On September 11, 2006, on the fifth anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York—the catalyst for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—Begg’s checkpoints began to appear en masse throughout Sydney “as a collective reminder that there are many people who question the war on terrorism” (Begg 2006a; Begg 2006b; Begg 2006c).

Begg enabled an unusual civic participation by giving away her works. They appeared in other sites because other citizens felt able to use them to connect with her narrative. These connections are part of Begg’s reframing of participation as critique and protest. Furthermore,
these actions reframe the concepts of artistic creation, authority, and property. The subsequent civic and institutional censorship of Begg’s work illuminates the intersections of art and politics, two spheres that are still too often treated as autonomous. This disconnection between art and politics is conventionally perceived in two general ways: art that engages with politics reduces its artistic value, and politics represented through art reduce its political efficacy. As Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson write, art, politics, and activism are involved in “a highly complex history of production, performance, circulation, and scholarship that have not allowed for easy categorization of ‘activist art’ within political movements or within the discipline of art history (or any other discipline for that matter)” (2011, 1). Checkpoint occupied a liminal space, rejected by the art institutions due to the unexpected political reactions—a context that conventional art institutions are unprepared to deal with. The placement of Begg’s work outside the gallery space, the marker of the category of art, further blurred the boundaries of the work as conventional art practice.

The Blacktown art institution’s inability or unwillingness to engage productively with the civic protest of Begg’s work rejected not only Begg’s work for its politics, but also Begg as an artist. Her interest in producing work explicitly inspired by something other than the artist’s creativity is read as making a political statement, which is perceived as reducing the ability to commit and produce art in its purest sense. For example, Charles Green and Lyndell Brown,

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75 Boris Groys (1990) discusses the historical relationship between art and politics in relation to mass media images of war and terrorism, and examines art as both a representation and a critique of that representation.

76 The question of the disconnect between art and politics has long plagued studies of the arts of resistance. However, one only need to look at the very public case of artist Steve Kurtz, a member of the Critical Art Ensemble, and his legal issues in the America of post-9/11 Homeland Security to see the inextricable links between these two realms. For more information on Kurtz, see Strange Culture (DVD, 2008); Hashemi and Graham (2005); Hirsch (2005); and Gere (2005).
professors at the University of Melbourne and artists who worked with the Official Artist Program through the Australian War Memorial, taught Begg while she attended university and were aware of her more recent artworks. When discussing Begg’s efficacy as a war artist, they argued,

Green: Having someone like Zanny go into a war zone to do war art isn’t that useful. What do they get out of it? Not much.

Brown: It’s probably easier for her to do that stuff here, anyway, the anti-war stuff.

....

Green: If I’m a curator I won’t send somebody like Zanny into an Australian War Memorial or war situation because I figure I wouldn’t get anything that interesting out of her. Because what you want, what you hope for as a curator, is to provoke something that takes advantage of a situation . . . And you want to get some sense that the artist is going to actually be able, in terms of their practice, to take advantage of the situation they’re in, in a way that will reflect the situation they’ve been in. (Green and Brown 2009b)

Green and Brown identify Begg and her work as only derivative of the work actual artists do. They perceive her as producing “anti-war stuff,” which is driven solely by her politics rather than more appropriate artistic inspirations. Green and Brown’s questioning of what it means to be embedded in a war zone in fact miss the point of Begg’s work: she rethinks the boundaries of a war zone by embedding the checkpoint in everyday life and space in Australia.

The various critics of Begg view an association of art with politics as diminishing not only the artistic elements of such work, but also its political impact. Historically, museums and the discipline of art had the ability as liberal cultural institutions to subsume the multiplicity of counter- or alter-politics of artworks, as Susan Buck-Morss articulates, by becoming simply slotted into another category within the Modernist canon, that of “political art” (2003, 70). That
is, there is a perceived danger that political art will be co-opted by liberal cultural institutions and art history until it is void of any political import because “the institutionalized canon of the work of political artists threatens to become just another art genre” (Buck-Morss 1997, 15). However, while Begg was working within the institutional structures, first of the Blacktown Arts Centre and then of the Mori Gallery, she was able to renegotiate the boundaries both of inside and outside the museum space, and of art and politics. While Begg is participating in a longer tradition of artists using unexpected objects and spaces to question official policies and politics, her work Checkpoint and the controversy that surrounded it, in particular, elucidates the ability of art to affect, if not political change, then political action and re-action in the climate of the War on Terror.

Although Begg was working within the institutional structures of the gallery system, her intention was to place her works outside the museum space. This desire to interact with the public in different and unexpected ways helped her engage with the concept of participatory citizenship. Artworks in public spaces, Kym Pruesse writes, imply quite different ways for viewers to interact:

They are not in gallery settings, not signed by the artists, not for sale, and do not have arrows pointing to them screaming “this is art!” That is part of their magic: they come into our lives by circumstance, accidentally encountered without brackets. Often we pass right by them; other times they penetrate the surface of our consciousness, puzzling our day, or surprising our routine. (Pruesse 1999, 9)

For Pruesse, a public space lends artworks a particular ambiguity that allows artists to better mobilize their politics; without the conventional validation of set parameters of walled cultural institutions, public artworks can operate in both a covert and a free manner. Their politics can thus surface without questions of “But is it art?” and “If so, can it be political?” In the sense
implied by Scott and his concept of counter-narratives disclosing “hidden transcripts” (1990), Begg’s work ruptured the ideological designation of appropriate places and spaces and modes for art and for politics. This is precisely why it elicited the reassertion of ideological boundaries, first by the mayor and then later by the citizens who reclaimed the right of art and politics in everyday space by everyday people.

Begg’s *Checkpoints* illuminates the new conditions of warfare within the current state of global military conflict. The boundaries of the liberal nation-state, in this case Australia, are blurred; the state must define itself within a developing global context. The enemy is no longer external to the bounded, homogenous citizenry of the nation. Within this current global situation

[a] tendency to a permanent state of war, no longer between sovereign nation-states, but in the global context and permeating the nation-states, replaces the procedure of the declaration of war with transnational police measures. This results in the increasing confusion of internal affairs and foreign policy targets of war. Where the “enemy” was previously perceived as an external one, now there is a blending of this external “enemy” and a new “dangerous class” within the nation-state. The process of blurring of the enemy and the targets of war results in an ominous progress in the development of the erosion of democracy: since 9/11 all forms of dissidence are subject to an explosive increase in denunciations and repression. (Raunig 2007, 243)

Civic authorities located Begg and her works outside the appropriate behaviours of citizenship, denying her voice as a legitimate oppositional expression. By claiming that her work was “too political. It’s totally inappropriate in the climate of terrorism,” guardians of the civilized state outlined acceptable ways to express dissent. The reaction of civic authorities elucidate the complications of art in relation to politics.

The example of Begg and *Checkpoint* emphasizes the friction caused by the contested terrains over national/ist narratives. The nation can no longer be studied as a sovereign body
because the state can no longer be said to enact control through discipline and governance over its population—although it may try through censorship laws, as was the case with Begg. In the case of Australia, the constituted category of “nation” is a project of the liberal order, which entails competing narratives and critiques that are accommodated by the dominant group. A liberal hegemony is a negotiation based on the ability of a hegemonic block to incorporate, accommodate, marginalize, and when none of these work, silence alternative positions as an ongoing process of maintaining dominance. Unable to renegotiate the politics of Begg’s work into the liberal hegemony, civic authorities attempted to silence Begg’s project. However, Begg’s willingness to give away her property—the central tenet of liberalism—helped her to enact a political resistance that moved beyond the works themselves. Begg’s action of giving away her art and the subsequent actions of others’ use of it were the means through which she was able to overcome neoliberal censorship. As well, such a release of property invited wider communities of participation for those who wanted to create alternative ways of exploring the naturalization of official and dominant narratives of national/ist warfare.

When Begg distributed her checkpoints among 100 artists, activists, and interested members of the public, the work took on new meaning. It formed alter-communities—what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri identify as the multitude (1999; 2004). The multitude defines a network of people that can work together to produce new opportunities and alternatives to Empire: “an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can all work and live in the common” (Hardt and Negri 2004, xiv). In the case of Checkpoint, a new subjectivity, a multitude, grew together in resistance to the silencing of alter-narratives of national/ist conflict history and reintroduced Begg’s work in new and public ways on September 11, 2006. When the 100 artists, activists, and interested members of the public who received the checkpoints
resituated *Checkpoint* in and around Sydney on the fifth anniversary of the WTC attacks, they
gave Begg’s work new life. With this action, this artistic and political network revisualized the
spaces and borders of war and, in the process, opened up new spaces of discussion on the
multiple ways in which to participate in the “War on Terror.” As citizens of Australia, they
refused to be subsumed by and repoliticized according to the interests of appropriate liberal
contexts.

The example of Begg’s *Checkpoint* demonstrates that art cannot be disconnected from
politics or politics from art. Furthermore, it reveals how re-visualizations of mainstream images
of war can develop new and alternative ways of envisioning the boundaries of conflict zones and
participatory citizenship. As Stephen Flusty outlines in his discussion of Zapatista dolls, the
willingness of new communities to mobilize and distribute visual and material culture for
political purposes offers “one of a number of unconventional methods that transport and translate
[what could be interpreted as] the uprising into the larger world” (2006, 197). The creation of a
community dedicated to demanding space for such alter- or counter-narratives highlights the
possibilities of building political networks and creating movements for change. As Negri states,
“the advantage of resistance lies in the fact that it lives inside being and can appropriate the tiniest
morsel of being as it waits to invest it in its entirety” (Negri 2011, 95).

Taken together, the works by Hunt, Mitchell, Anderson, Padmard, and Begg that I
examine in this chapter create “counter-narratives” that question and resist official and dominant
national/ist conflict histories. These narratives provide opportunities to envision multiple other
scenarios that can move beyond the narratives of liberal state itself; as Ian McKay explains,
“there is no ‘top’ and no ‘bottom’: there is a centre and a periphery, a liberal project and its
‘resistors’” (2000, 638). While the artworks I discuss utilize imagery from official and dominant narratives, they apply such revisualizations to offer different ways of thinking about the liberal nation-state and its involvement in transnational conflict that do not simply reify the official or dominant perspective. By illuminating the boundaries and limits of official or dominant narratives of Australian and Canadian conflict history, the artworks in this chapter draw attention to and force critical reflection of the logic of military conquest in global capitalism and the participation of citizens as implicated in this process.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

The State, as Alain Badiou has shown, is not founded on a social bond, of which it would be the expression, but rather on the dissolution, the unbinding it prohibits. For the State, therefore, what is important is never the singularity as such, but only its inclusion in some identity, what-ever identity (but the possibility of the whatever itself being taken up with-out an identity is a threat the State cannot come to terms with). … Whatever singularity, which wants to appropriate belonging itself, its own being-in-language, and thus rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is the principal enemy of the State. Wherever these singularities peacefully demonstrate their being in common there will be a Tiananmen, and, sooner or later, the tanks will appear.


Affect theory … is also a new phase in understanding ideology: delineating the subject and the world, a mood, a structure of feeling that articulates the personal and the impersonal by symbolizing them in all kinds of zone. To study affect is always to embark on serious referential (not causal) speculation, since one is always having to radiate guesses about an overdetermined and striking here that seems to have forced one’s sensorium to focus in a particular way.

— Berlant 2011.

Throughout this study, I use objects of art and culture to question the contested and ambivalent formations of military conflict, specifically in relation to the ongoing cultural politics of Australian and Canadian state-formation post-9/11. I use cultural objects to question the contested terrains of Australia and Canada as liberal nation-states, and the ways in which representations of their involvements in global military conflict reproduces or resists Australian and Canadian self-definition within the post-911 climate of militarization and neoliberal globalization. My central argument is that the production, circulation, exhibition, and reception of cultural objects do not
occupy a “space” above social processes, but are inextricably linked to the policies and politics of
the liberal nation-state and to global military conflict. In short, I use objects of art and culture
throughout this thesis as entry-points to historicize and denaturalize the neoliberal narratives of
conflict in the current era of globalization.

In the decade since 9/11, Afghanistan is one of the primary sites around which objects of
art and culture are produced and circulated in terms of Australian and Canadian conflict
narratives. The overarching narrative of Australian and Canadian conflict history that I focus on
throughout this dissertation is one that reproduces each country’s military involvement in
Afghanistan in terms of humane, moral, and peacekeeping acts, which I have labeled “humane
peacekeeping.” Espoused by Australian and Canadian government and military officials, as well
as visualizations and media that reproduce these claims, humane peacekeeping conveys a focus
on low-human casualty numbers, humanitarian efforts, human rights, and peace—rather than
activities of war.

Both Australia and Canada legitimate their current narratives of humane peacekeeping by
drawing upon specific historical moments and events, using them as illustrations of the long-
standing “essence” of their national characters. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 2, Australia
links its current military involvement with the ANZAC spirit said to have materialized during the
WWI Gallipolli campaign, while Canada idealizes the heroism of its troops during the WWI
Battle at Vimy Ridge. These historical moments were institutionalized and naturalized as part of
each country’s official conflict narrative in tandem with the formation of national war museums
as constituted by, and deeply constitutive of, the development of liberalism as the dominant
politicoeconomic logic in Australia and Canada. In the last decade, Gallipolli and Vimy are
perceived to be significant historical moments around which the noble national spirits of both
Australia and Canada, respectively, are anchored in the present historical moment. The official
national/ist narratives situate Australia’s and Canada’s current military activities as a rational and inevitable culmination of the noble history of each liberal nation-state.

However, while museum exhibitions are able to visualize Australia and Canada in terms of peacekeeping through interpreting and centralizing past events, this negotiation does not explain why channeling their histories in this particular way is significant and important. The past decade that began with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 and continued with the subsequent US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, has been defined by the US administration as the “War on Terror,” a label adopted by many different governments, media outlets, and publics worldwide. This declared war against an affect—terror—mobilized a number of liberal nation-states around the world to redefine themselves in relation to the affective logics of war. The affective logics of war created a political economy of affect in which all liberal nation-states had to define themselves. In the political economy of affect, Australia and Canada located their military efforts within an affect of care, which is presented as a kindly and generous effort to establish peace and security, by establishing their military activities within the War on Terror as humane peacekeeping. Their identification with an affect of care was further legitimating this narrative by emphasizing the military history of Australian and Canadian as a series of noble, moral acts. The political economy of affect, then, is the basis through which Australia and Canada institute their importance as liberal nation-states in relation to global military conflict as well as neoliberal globalization.

However, just as culture does not occupy a space above economics or politics, neither do affects. Affects, too, are produced by culture and polity economy. In the political economy of affect that developed post-9/11, then, the affect of care becomes a cultural resource by which Australia and Canada achieve global recognition. As I discuss in Chapter 3, artworks and exhibitions produced through official state-sponsored art programs constitute and legitimate
Australia and Canada’s military activities in relation to an affect of care. Both Framing Conflict, which exhibits work produced through Official War Artist Scheme (OWAS) in Australia, and A Brush with War, which displays artworks produced through Canadian Forces Artist Program (CFAP) in Canada, focus on conveying the activities of military personnel by personalizing and humanizing such activities as caring. Visualizations of national/ist military activities in the paintings that comprise each of these exhibitions not only represent the activities themselves, but also communicate affective qualities that evoke particular emotional connections between viewers and the military personnel depicted. I argue that these connections, which are present in both OWAS and CFAP paintings, build support for such efforts, and define these efforts in terms of a national affect of care. In this way, the affective register operates to produce and reproduce individual and collective attachments to the human side of warfare, and helps to portray the paradoxical concept of human-centered—or humane—warfare as being central to Australian and Canadian military actions.

However, the representation of Australian and Canadian military activities in artworks produced through official war art programs not only legitimates each country’s role in relation to an affect of care, but also helps to naturalize militarization and war as a deterritorialized, permanent state of exception. In an historical period defined by a global war on an affect—terror—the enemy is perceived to be denationalized. Although conflict occurs within the geospatial territorial boundaries of particular nation-states, proponents of the War on Terror mobilize the affect of terror to project the idea of war as “indeterminate, both spatially and temporally” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 14). The ideological projection of war as deterritorialized creates a perception that there is no inside or outside, “there are only different kinds and degrees of belonging to the inside” (Kuus 2009, 546). Former US president George W. Bush expressed the need for nation-states to define their “degrees of belonging” in November 2001: "A coalition
partner must do more than just express sympathy, a coalition partner must perform. That means,” he continued, “different things for different nations. Some nations don't want to contribute troops and we understand that. Other nations can contribute intelligence-sharing. ... But all nations, if they want to fight terror, must do something” (Bush 2001). Bush here interprets the War on Terror as a deterritorializing process. However, the political economy of affect and the ideological projection of war and peace as deterritorialized is uneven, because only particular nation-states are permitted to inhabit particular affects. This perception of deterritorialization, then, is not democratic. For Australia and Canada, representing and visualizing their role in current military conflict through an affect of care reconstitutes the cultural and geographic boundaries of the each nation as a recognizable and viable entity, and asserts their identity as liberal nation-states on the side of “good” in the War on Terror.

In 2001, Bush challenged nations to define their position in relation to the War on Terror: “all nations, if they want to fight terror, must do something” (Bush 2001). His call for “all nations” to participate in the war on “terror” illuminates that to the US administration, it is not just war that is ideologically projected as deterritorialized, but also security, peace, and freedom, which are assumed to exist as universal, denationalized values. Both Australia and Canada’s participation in the War on Terror mobilized their military response, their “do something,” in the name of peacekeeping and care. Contrasting with yet complementing the US’s aggressive military responses, Australian and Canadian military actions soften the sharp edges of war, representing and visualizing the invasion of Afghanistan as humanitarian mission rather than imperialistic conquest. As I discuss in Chapter 4, exhibitions addressing Australian and Canadian conflict narratives are able to seamlessly incorporate Afghan material culture and their perceived experiences. These two exhibitions—War Without Boundaries: Australia and the ‘War on Terror’ and The Battleground Project—pose Australian and Canadian military activities as the solution to
the suffering of Afghan civilians. That is, through reinterpreting Afghan war rugs into a liberal national/ist context, Australian and Canadian activities are perceived as caring both on the macro level of the political economy of affect and on the micro level of Afghan victims. The success of Australia’s and Canada’s official conflict narratives as humane peacekeeping is measured through the degree to which they have become naturalized and unquestioned in mainstream discussions and depictions. Parallel to the perception of Australia’s and Canada’s domestic policies as unproblematically inclusive and multicultural, the expectation of both countries’ affect of care, as part of their foreign policy, has been accepted by mainstream narratives of Australian and Canadian activities.

Official narratives of Australia’s and Canada’s conflict histories define military response as ontologically predicated on an affect of care and peacekeeping. That is, Australian and Canadian official conflict narratives position any and all actions undertaken by their military as humane peacekeeping, because Australia and Canada are humane and caring nations (see Buck-Morss 2003, 65). The perceived and projected ontological connections between the identity of Australia and Canada with an affect of care, however, is neither static nor inherent. It is constantly constituted and legitimated through military institutions as well as civilian structures, such as visualizations, education, and the mainstream media—what Merje Kuus defines as the “structures of legitimacy” (2009, 548). As well, the self-identification of Australian and Canadian military efforts with an affect of care, once established, must be continually reconstituted and legitimated. For example, in 2011 both the Australian and Canadian national war museums hosted exhibitions related to the histories of medicine and war in Australia and Canada. Linking participation in war with acts of healing, the two shows, Nurses: Zululand to Afghanistan at the Australian War Memorial, and War and Medicine at the Canadian War Museum, make visually concrete the identity of both countries as ontologically defined by military actions of care and
peace in times of war. The poster advertising the show at the Canadian War Museum shows a man wearing camouflage fatigues leaning over a patient strapped to a gurney and attached to a breathing apparatus (fig. 31).

**Figure 31: Official exhibition poster, War and Medicine, 2011. Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (image from exhibition’s official website).**

As visualized in its official poster, the exhibition focuses on Canadian military personnel as medical professionals rather than soldiers. In this way, the figure of the Canadian military is the embodiment of Canada’s self-identification with an affect of care.

These two exhibitions are just two of the more recent examples of visualizations that operate as “structures of legitimacy” for official narratives of Australian and Canadian military conflict involvement. However, “structures of legitimacy” do not just reproduce official narratives, but also resist such narratives. As I discuss in Chapter 5, five artists—Barb Hunt, Allyson Mitchell, Tobey C. Anderson, Parvaneh Radmard, and Zanny Begg—subvert mainstream images of military participation to present “counter narratives” that negotiate and resist official and dominant narratives of national/ist conflict. By mobilizing Brecht’s strategy of making the familiar unfamiliar, the works by these artists situate everyday images or objects in
unconventional ways in order to provoke new and alternative ways of thinking of Australian and
Canadian military history. By examining cultural objects that constitute, legitimate, and resist
official narratives of Australian and Canadian conflict, in this chapter I address the ways in which
visualizations of contemporary conflict create a complex, contested, and multi-dimensional
understanding of Australia’s and Canada’s narratives of contemporary military conflict, which
officials, artists, and citizens all collaborate in producing, reproducing, and challenging.

Beginning in June 2011, Canadian Premier Stephen Harper began withdrawing Canadian
soldiers from Afghanistan, although several hundred Canadian Forces personnel will remain
stationed in Afghanistan in order to provide training to the Afghan National Security Forces and
the Afghan National Army (CBC 2011). In the same month, US President Barack Obama
announced the removal of over 10,000 US troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year, with
another 20,000 expected to be withdrawn by the end of 2012 (Sciutto, Bruce, and Dwyer 2011).
While there are those who criticize this removal of mass numbers of troops from Afghanistan at
this stage (MacAskill 2011), retired Canadian Ambassador to the European Union Jeremy
Kinsmen felt that this move by Canadian and US forces indicated that “Afghanistan is maybe
becoming Afghanistan as opposed to being a centre for some sort of global jihadist threat”
(Proussalidis 2011). Despite the troop withdrawals by its military allies, Australia is committed to
maintaining its troop numbers in Afghanistan, according to Prime Minister Julia Gillard
(Norington 2011). The reconstitution of the purposes of the mission in Afghanistan, as well as the
changing roles of Australian and Canadian troops participation in it, will surely alter both
countries’ self-identification and representation. The examples and analyses I offer in this study
contribute to an ongoing dialogue of the cultural and political negotiations of a particular
historical instance.
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