

Queer look, Future Anterior and the Image of War

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Abstract: How can contemporary representations of war be reflected from a gendered and sexualized perspective? I intend to enter the visual and discursive field of war through the narratives/images of sexualized violence and especially their artistic reconfigurations. My starting point is the assumption that sexual violence is currently constructed as a field of trauma. This construction happens mainly through the claim of (especially visual) unrepresentability and the unbearable confrontation with the entanglement of sexuality and violence. It generally neglects narratives of survivors who indeed very often find a way to describe, narrate and represent their experience. Searching for a queer and feminist response to current representations of sexualized violence in times of war by means of art the text attempts to activate Sanja Ivekovic's techniques of looking and imagining. I suggest reinterpreting the images of the contemporary fashion industry (like Sanja Ivekovic did) and their explicit connection to images of war distributed in the media, as empowering re-stagings of sexualized violence. With this proposition I intend to challenge the viewer to imagine additional layers of image in order to insert a queer practice of looking, and reopen the position of the viewer to ethical responsiveness. For that purpose, I examine Steven Meisel's iconography of images of war in fashion photography through their atmosphere of futurism or science fiction. As a consequence, I examine the potentiality of a different future past (future anterior) as a crucial temporality of both photography and queer S/M practices, which reflect back on historical events and painful experiences. The last part of the text examines my own artwork, the photo installation "Future Anterior – Illustrations of War" in which I insert short texts based on future anterior into fragments of Steven Meisel's photographs.

Keywords: sexualized violence, contemporary fashion industry, queer S/M practices, overwriting images.



Introduction

The feminist artist Sanja Iveković has explored the forgetting of anti-fascist female figures, who in socialist times played an important role in Eastern European societies but were easily erased from social memory after the change of socialist political systems. Although very active throughout the 70s and 80s, Ivekovic's work only became known after 2000, when she was discovered by several (Western) art institutions.¹⁶ In this text I will focus on Ivekovic's photo installation "Gen XX (1997 – 2001)". The work was originally published as a photo series in several magazines (*Arkzin*, *Zaposlena*, *Frakcija*, *Kruh i ruze*, and *Kontura*) between 1997 and 1998 as an intervention in the established ways of creating commercial but also political content and information in the media. "Gen XX (1997 – 2001)" was made in order to reflect the loss of remembrance as a precise shift in the politics of memory after 1989. Instead of exposing the forgotten female characters, Ivekovic inserted their names and short descriptions about their deaths in fashion magazine posters. These are the texts written on the posters:

Anka Butorac
 Charged with anti-fascist activities.
 Tortured and executed in Kostajnica in 1942.
 Died at the age of 36.

Dragica Koncar
 Charged with anti-fascist activities.
 Tortured and executed in Zagreb in 1942.
 Died at the age of 27.

Sisters Bakovic
 Charged with anti-fascist activities.
 Tortured and executed in Zagreb in 1942.
 Age at the time of execution: 21 and 24.

Nada Dimic
 Charged with anti-fascist activities.
 Tortured and executed in Nova Gradiska in 1942.
 Age at the time of execution: 19.

¹⁶ Numerous monographs demonstrate the increasing interest in Ivekovic's work in recent years. See Silvia Eiblmayr (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic. Personal Cuts*. (Wien: Triton Verlag 2001); Kathrin Rhomberg (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic: Selected Works*. (Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 2008); Maria Hlavajova (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic. Urgent Matters*. (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2009); Magdalena Ziolkowska (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic. Practice makes the Master*. (Lodz: Muzeum Sztuki, 2009); Roxana Marcoci (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic. Sweet violence*. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011); Ruth Noack: *Sanja Ivekovic. Triangle*. (London: Afterall Books, 2013)

Ljubica Gerovac
Charged with anti-fascist activities.
While being captured she committed suicide.
Died at the age of 22.

Nera Safaric
Persecuted for her anti-fascist activities.
Arrested in Crikvenica in 1942 and taken to Auschwitz concentration camp, from
which she was freed in 1945.
Age at the time of her arrest: 23.

The short inscriptions about the anti-fascist activities and the deaths of Ljubica Gerovac, Dragica Koncar and others created an uncanny perception of conscious and unconscious memories. While the familiar, the highly distributed images of the fashion world faces provoked recognition on first sight, the lack of visual depiction of those figures, which were only mentioned by their names, stated clearly how the regulation of memory and forgetting became part of every individual gaze. The artist herself is personally inflicted in this image production: one of the images shows Ivekovic's mother, Nera Safaric, who was captured and sent to Auschwitz in 1942. It is thus possible to understand the photo series also as a post-memorial account of the artist, its starting point being the identification with the mother's anti-fascist struggle. The impossibility to relate to the past is crucial in this process, a past, which remained inaccessible since Ivekovic has never found any additional information about her mother's death.

A crucial moment in the depiction of all women, both models and Ivekovic's mother, is the lack of visual symbols of torture and (sexualized) violence. We see the women in glamorous dresses, they are photographed as carriers of capitalist consumerist cultures, which objectify the female body and transform femininity into a commodity. However, this appearance becomes a necessary part of Ivekovic's strategy to refuse the depiction of the female body as fragmented or violated – something that is often done when anti-fascist female activists are represented. On one hand one can recall this dominant representation of female suffering through the names, on the other hand Ivekovic doesn't fulfil the viewer's expectation to see these images of violence again. She offers instead a connection to another dominant form of representation of femininity. Thus, one political system seems to fold into the other, socialism and capitalism appear as just two sides of the same coin, precisely because of Ivekovic's decision to confront both political and social systems through the female body. Or, as Natasa Ilic has formulated it, Gen XX links “the issues of social amnesia and economic exploitation

to the different aspects of women's position in society."¹⁷ Those otherwise strictly separated worlds (political fighters versus fashion models) become unified through Ivekovic's re-combination of body, name and social function. Although text and image seem to fit together perfectly, their impossible belonging together "uncovers the historical gulf which cannot be bridged as it becomes painfully evident" as Sylvia Eyblmeyer states.¹⁸ What we get goes far deeper than a critique of consumer capitalism or the erasure of socialist systems. Ivekovic intervenes in the field of visibility as an important instance of memory and all political arrangements organized around remembrance.

I'm interested in Ivekovic's methods because I hope to add to a memorial reservoir of histories, which are still caught between dominant narratives on war, femininity and sexualized violence. In Ivekovic's work the historical trauma of Eastern European transformation was reflected from an embodied, gendered and sexualized perspective. This particular point of view was meant to intervene in an undifferentiated field of dominant historical narratives, which emerged in the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia. In a similar way this text seeks to intervene in the construction of war in the present, its hovering between reality and fiction, memory and forgetting. I would like to add a new perspective on war to Ivekovic's work, by having a look not only at gender ascriptions but also at the shifting narratives of sexualized violence in times of war, which are rendered as traumatic and exceptional, in order to reshape the notion of war, especially its imaginative and staged investment in different ways. Furthermore, I would like to ask if this different look on war can enable conditions of ethical responsiveness, a term coined by Judith Butler in her book *Frames of War*.¹⁹

The representation of sexualized violence

The institutionalization of violence and the creation of war has been structured, facilitated and communicated through the discursive and the visual fields, enabling discourses and images to circulate as agents of power thereby actively creating the entanglement of politics, discourse and imagery of war. According to Judith Butler, today, one is confronted with war and suffering through specific frames, frames that shape our capacity to perceive the suffering of others (as referred to by

¹⁷ Natasa Ilic, "We might say that everybody is an intellectual, but not all people in society perform the social function of the intellectual. (A. Gramsci)" in Silvia Eiblmair (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic. Personal Cuts*. (Wien: Triton Verlag 2001), 128.

¹⁸ Silvia Eiblmair, „Personal Cuts“ in Silvia Eiblmair (Ed.): *Sanja Ivekovic. Personal Cuts*. (Wien: Triton Verlag 2001).

¹⁹ Judith Butler, *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable* (London: Verso, 2010), 64.

Susan Sontag) and our willingness to grieve.²⁰ Those frames function thereby through inclusion and exclusion and make our ethical responsiveness increasingly difficult.²¹ One of the main discursive frameworks of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, for instance, has been shaped by a dominant narrative of sexualized violence in times of war, making a perception and acknowledgement of those who suffered from sexualized violence impossible. Feminists like Dubrovka Zarkov have claimed that the perception of sexualized violence in the wars in ex-Yugoslavia as unique and exceptional has created problematic discursive changes. “Classical feminist studies of women and war shifted from a conceptualization of agency and empowerment to a theoretically and politically much more problematic conceptualization of sexual victimization”, argues Zarkov.²² Coined as exceptionally traumatic, and historically unique, these forms of sexualized violence were perceived through an older discourse about the unrepresentability of sexual violence and its inaccessibility in the visual field.

The visual theorist Ariella Azoulay, who has dealt extensively with the representation of violence through photography, has formulated an interesting question to expose the normative field of regulations of sexuality and violence: “Has anyone ever seen a photograph of a rape?”²³ Azoulay’s answer is that the discourse on sexualized violence is so authoritative that it doesn’t allow for its visual depiction.²⁴ Sexual violence is constructed as a field of trauma, through the claim of (especially visual) unrepresentability and the unbearable confrontation with the entanglement of sexuality and violence, which generally neglects narratives of survivors who indeed very often find a way to describe, narrate and represent their experiences.²⁵

Although every warfare produces its own visual material on sexual violence, productive public discussions about sexual violence and war are rare. One possibility to discuss the issue further is through the discourses around the pictures of tortured Iraqi prisoners made by American soldiers in the prison of Abu Ghraib.²⁶ The images from Abu Ghraib gained attention primarily because of

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 63.

²² Dubrovka Zarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity and Gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 218.

²³ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 217.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ In the context of ex-Yugoslavia I would like to mention Lina Vušković, Zorica Trifunović (Eds.): *Women’s side of War*. (Beograd: Women in Black, 2008) as one of the most important examples of collecting women’s stories about the war.

²⁶ Ibid.

their sexual aspects. Susan Sontag and many others linked those images of torture to pornography by arguing that the Abu Ghraib pictures included “what formerly was segregated as pornography, as the exercise of extreme sadomasochistic longings.”²⁷ The link between sexualized violence and pornography was meant not only to condemn violence but also to stigmatize certain forms of sexuality as non-normative. It reiterated what older discussions have suggested about rape and pornography: that violence and non-normative sexualities belong together, and that pornography and pictures of rape equally have to be condemned.²⁸

In these discussions pornography itself was seen as a field depicting rape or even inciting rape, suggesting that “what happens at the level of the body in rape happens at the level of representation in pornography.”²⁹ In this contradictory argument the visual field becomes a direct medium of transmitting violence without giving any other possibility to look at the image than repeating the gaze of the perpetrator, who is not only identified as violent but at the same time perceived as having a non-normative sexual identity. In this case the image is clearly placing the viewer in the perpetrator’s position, without even considering a possible position which does not merge violence and non-normative sexuality in one identity. Accordingly, this interpretation cannot allow an ethical response to the torture, rape or violence depicted. If the perpetrator is exclusively pathologized and perceived as being outside, or beyond, any ethical social order, the visual identification with his position can only allow an identification with violence through his “extreme sadomasochistic longings,” as previously stated by Sontag. It cannot consider the ethical imperative or even slight possibility of condemning violence without condemning non-normative sexualities or identifications with consensual enactments of sadomasochistic longings – which are crucial and inevitable for an intervention in problematic representations.

Susan Sontag suggested already in her early writing in “On Photography” to consider the image’s affectiveness for ethical responsiveness, claiming that images of atrocities initially produce shock and demand interpretation and context to facilitate full understanding.³⁰ Images of murder and death lose their potential to provoke a reaction or an ethical response from the viewer, she

²⁷ Susan Sontag, “Regarding the Torture of Others” in *New York Times*, May 23, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>, (Accessed May, 2014).

²⁸ See Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

²⁹ Butler, *Frames of War*, 88.

³⁰ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977). Sontag modified her view slightly in the later *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

maintains, thus an additional narrative is needed. Although she acknowledged the strength of photography depicting the Vietnam War (and enabling anti – war protests in the 1970s), the shocking effect of the image appears disconnected from the discursive level of image interpretation in Sontag’s thinking. Therefore the viewers’ embodied, psychic reaction to an image exists in contrast to their ability to articulate and reflect; images are considered to have a non-reliable and manipulative force. Ethical and political responsiveness can only emerge through neglecting one’s own emotional affectiveness and vulnerability. Yet the presumption of an inability to react in front of images of death is a problematic one, especially considering the repeatedly performed usage of images for political purposes.

It is necessary to distinguish between non-normative sexual practices and violence or torture as a starting point for an intervention into the field of images of violence and sexual politics and discursive productions around them. A sideway approach might still be by reinterpreting the images of the contemporary fashion industry (like Sanja Ivekovic did) and their explicit connection to images of war. I suggest looking at such images as re-stagings of violence, to imagine additional layers of the image in order to insert a queer practice of looking, and reopen the position of the viewer as a queer one, without contradicting affectiveness of the image and a necessary ethical response to it. Proposing a queer position for the viewer includes opening up the gaze to discover deeper, unconscious, layers of the image, involving it in various practices of looking through more complex temporalities than those dictated by normative perspectives.

This sideway allows one to speak about images of war as not affective in the first instance, rendering one unable to react and respond ethically to the violence depicted therein. The reorganization and contextualization of violence in fashion photography can serve the purpose of overcoming the “split between being affected and being able to think and understand.”³¹ How to create an entanglement between the visual and discursive fields, which does not give an a priori existence or status to either?

The unconscious image of war

Vogue Italia’s 25th anniversary issue, published in July 2013, was dedicated to the photographer Steven Meisel, one of the most controversial fashion photographers of the last twenty years. Meisel not only created most of the covers of the fashion magazine. His work prompted wide discussion since he started to employ iconography of images of war in fashion photography. This

³¹ Butler, *Frames of War*, 70.

becomes evident when seeing all series together like they were presented in the anniversary issue. They all show several scenarios of violence between strictly gendered actors. Further, they are all identifiable as fashion images through contemporary dress codes and an emphasis of normative femininity. One can see high heels on the models, lying in a row like exhumed corpses in a desert surrounding. There is a person in a short skirt dragged away by hospital security guards, and in the next picture a person with long blond hair is pushed onto the floor by police officers. More “fashion victims” lie on the street, dressed in camouflage pants and combat boots, carefully placed like dead bodies. All images use iconic elements of recent war scenarios, arguably blurring the boundaries between fashion photography and pictures of torture and death.

Linda Hentschel emphasized the connection between sexual relations and violence in Meisel’s work saying that in his images “naked violence becomes not only a question of inner security, but also a game of patriarchal gender domination.”³² What seems to link fashion photography and images of torture is their high implementation of sexuality - violence becomes a sexualized issue. A clear demarcation between these fields seems to be impossible. Instead, Meisel’s pictures offer the possibility of reworking the traumatic content they touch upon precisely because they are located in the field of sexuality and sexual fantasies and can be discussed through their queer aspects. Their explicit staged character refuses any discursive reference to depictions of war and torture while making this connection obvious, or even obscene, through the visual field. In these pictures, then, obscenity and the refusal of referentiality create a very specific tension. The images seem to stage the unconscious desires of warfare as blunt settings of highly heteronormative, white and ableist relations. But these relations appear strangely disconnected and faked, in a crucially fashionable way.

Still, the disconnection embedded within these images do not make them critical of images of torture and war. The obvious constructiveness doesn’t offer an alternative position for a viewer per se, but it can be useful for a reshaping of the discursive field, which reflects back on the visual and transforms the way one sees the images. What lies within the images between their unconscious reference to the iconography of war and their fake settings is an atmosphere of futurism, or science

³² Linda Hentschel, “Haupt oder Gesicht: Visuelle Gouvernementalität seit 9/11,” in *Bilderpolitik in Zeiten von Krieg und Terror: Medien, Macht und Geschlechterverhältnisse*, ed. Linda Hentschel (Berlin: bbooks, 2008), 194. The German original quote: “Verschoben in ein inszeniertes Setting polizeilicher Risikoprävention und paramilitärischen Sicherheitsauftrags, wurde aus nackter Gewalt nicht nur eine Frage der inneren Sicherheit, sondern auch ein Spiel um patriarchale Geschlechterdominanzen“. (trans. Hoffner)

fiction. By carrying the unspoken relation to a past and simultaneously neglecting any connection to actual, present-day reality those images become highly futuristic. When this futuristic component is not neglected but emphasized, staged violence in fashion photography might offer a different way of representational reading. How to work with the temporality embedded in those images, a future's past - future anterior and make it become a different future?

The temporal connection between reality and fiction in Meisel's images is not emerging by chance: future anterior is a temporality which has been exhaustively discussed in connection to photography. Susan Sontag claimed that photography always includes a "memento mori" and thus haunts the viewer with its insistence that death is unavoidable.³³ Looking at the images of dead bodies one has to recognize that one also "will have been," the images show that one's own death will happen in the future, that it too will become an event of the past. I also think here of Roland Barthes' referral to the "ca a ete" of the image, the connection to a past which happened and cannot be claimed back.³⁴ For Barthes, all images carry these traces or referentiality (to the specific time and space in which they were made) and create the uncanny feeling of a reminder of death. Building up on this rich tradition of reading photography through a future's past, we can ask: What does it mean to understand the re-staging of violence for the fashion industry through this temporal shift, or, specifically, what does the temporal shift do to questions of sexualized violence and torture in return?

The viewer of an S/M scenario

The sphere of staged violence that makes use of a future's past the most is the sphere of queer S/M practices. Opening up a different future's past therefore also means opening up the possibility of a queer reading/looking. Many writings on queer S/M practices have emphasized the importance of employing a different temporality in sexual reenactments, the potential to reflect back on historical events and painful experiences. Additionally, I would like to understand these temporalities coming from queer S/M reenactments as an entrance to ethical responsiveness, because they acknowledge violence and non-normative sexuality without producing a dominant narrative of moral condemnation. Those queer positionalities might allow us to change exclusive

³³ Sontag, *On Photography*, 15.

³⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

representations of a contemporary war regime based on the unrepresentability of sexualized violence.

In order to enter the field of queer S/M reenactments it is necessary to examine the different positionalities of those involved and especially their entanglement within the field of vision. Elisabeth Freeman understands the S/M ritual as an instrument for writing history and transferring individual, as well as collective, experiences of injustice into a desirable scenario.³⁵ Imagined in this way, S/M functions as a re-appropriation of bodily experiences, reformulating positionalities and temporalities. For Freeman “S/M becomes a form of writing history with the body in which the linearity of history itself may be called into question, but, crucially, the past does not thereby cease to exist.”³⁶ When the phantasmal return to the violent experience is made, it functions to re-establish the connection to the experience of the past through the temporality of future anterior. The painful event is not solely situated in the past but becomes something that will have been, a promise of creating a past in the future and the opportunity to distance oneself from the original painful experience. For Lynda Hart, who has elaborated on S/M relations further, the “future anterior is the grammar of the Real.”³⁷ It allows individuals to experience different temporalities at the same time and get closer to the internal images of violence in order to use them for a therapeutic purpose. But in order for a queer S/M reenactment to succeed the position of the viewer is paramount. “What the scene requires, in order to be both pleasurable and therapeutic, is someone who watches,” states Lynda Hart.³⁸ How to activate the position of the viewer as the one that is important for the pleasure but also for a therapeutic effect (and I would like to add: for the ethical responsiveness of the viewer) in front of the reenactment?

When Hart emphasizes the position of the viewer of an S/M reenactment she also proposes a queer way of looking. Queerness in this context might be understood as a method to intervene in clearly identified layers of conscious and unconscious, internal and external images of sexualized violence. A queer look enables the viewer to go beyond these demarcations. Thus, a queer look is not about the question of how to document or remember a violent event by means of photography.

³⁵ See Elisabeth Freeman, *Timebinds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 139.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Lynda Hart, *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadoomasochism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 161.

³⁸ Ibid., 181.

Instead it is about creating a certain position for the viewer, about making him/her see the fictional restaged part and its real point of reference simultaneously. Still, a queer look can only remain a proposal, it is in the decision but also in the unconscious capacities of the viewer to follow its path.

Queer look

My notion of looking is here highly connected to Kaja Silverman's concept of the "productive look".³⁹ Silverman distinguishes between look and gaze in her book *The Threshold of the Visible World* in order to develop a complex position of the viewer and establish agency within the field of vision. She does so by first deconstructing the fantasy of mastery and transcendence in the visual field in the works of Sartre and Lacan. She focuses on a double scenario in which the viewer (or in this case even the voyeur) first looks through a keyhole and then experiences him/herself as a spectacle in relation to an unseen Other. The viewer is the one who is looking but he/she is also the one who is being caught looking by someone else, meaning he/she is also looked at. This scenario has been interpreted by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* as a confrontation of the subject with God or master and in Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* as the distinction between the looking subject and the gaze, which is in Lacan's case equated with the camera. Silverman emphasizes Lacan's distinction in the following way:

*"Lacan metaphorizes the gaze as a camera so as to characterize it as an apparatus whose only function is to put us in the picture. It does not determine what that picture will be, nor what it will mean for us to be there. Nor is it possessed of any intrinsic properties whereby we might truthfully know it. How we are photographed, and the terms under which we experience our specularity, are the result of another agency altogether, as are the values which we impute to the gaze."*⁴⁰

Still, the formation of the gaze underlies certain unconscious processes, which are bound to and structured through a libidinal economy. Silverman understands, like Lacan, the way we look and consequently the way we conceptualize the gaze/camera within our fantasy through desire. The desire to look is a constituting force of our ability to see and it is grounded in the subject's incapacity to master the field of vision. The viewer in Sartre's and Lacan's scenario of vision is bound to the

³⁹ Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1996)

⁴⁰ Silverman, *Threshold*, 168.

Other, as he is never transcends himself as pure look but is also the object of someone else's gaze. This incapacity makes the subject/viewer work against him/herself – he/she tries to externalize what he/she cannot accept about him/herself and places him/herself as the (ultimate) gaze. Silverman is concerned about how to give the subject “the opportunity to acknowledge as his own what he is accustomed to throw violently away, and, so, to renegotiate the relation between his ego and the object”⁴¹. Her concept of the “productive look” arises from this desire to enable more ways of looking, more perspectives on the same image and therefore more agency in the field of vision. Although this might sound as an utterly conscious activity Silverman emphasizes that looking is embedded in both conscious and unconscious processes and cannot be manipulated exclusively by the subject's conscious decisions. The category, which enables a different way of looking for Silverman, and which also introduces the importance of temporality in the field of vision is - memory. And this is also the place in which I would like to insert the notion of queerness (or queer desire) as a possible encounter of the productive look. If looking is only possible as a libidinal activity, how can we understand a looking outside of heteronormative desire and its binary oppositions of male/female, subject/Other?

In order to explain the importance of memory for the productive look Silverman relies on Freud's explanation of visual perception in the *Interpretation of Dreams*. According to Freud visual stimuli enter the psyche first through the unconscious. They form a network of unconscious memories, which build a reservoir of visual impressions. In order to understand what we see, we have to rely heavily on unconscious memories. Silverman's productive look is therefore to be understood as a *remembering* look, which constantly returns to visual impressions of the past. It is crucial to emphasize this process of looking as involuntary and beyond the subject's mastery. “The unconscious manifests a striking indifference to the question of what is conventionally assumed to be important or worthless”, states Silverman.⁴² It simply collects and associates visual memories again and again. In this process it is possible to insert a future's past of memory as a possibility to be reminded of something that “will have been” and activate the subject's ability to look at his/her own perception retrospectively and use one's own reservoir of memories differently. How will I look in the future? How will I have seen this image, when the moment of actual perception is long gone? This moment is by itself outside the normative relation between the subject and its Other, as

⁴¹ Ibid. 172/3.

⁴² Ibid., 180.

it doesn't allow for a stabilizing externalization of the subject's lack. However, whether complex procedure is experienced as as pleasurable, queer way of looking, it cannot be controlled. The only sphere of intervention remains in the screen offered for looking at images. For this reason I have produced a photo installation, inserting short texts based on future anterior into fragments of Steven Meisel's photographs. Here I'm proposing the viewer to use his/her own queer look, involving him/her in a scenario usually performed in queer S/M reenactments.

Future Anterior – Illustrations of War

“Future Anterior: Illustrations of War“ consists of seven frames, each one showing two pages of image, text and blank paper, in different combinations. The photo installation is my attempt at overwriting Steven Meisel's images using the temporality of future anterior, but also in cutting out, rearranging, and reassembling images of sexualized violence. The texts I have written for this intervention are the following:

A new web journal illustrates the future anterior of the war. It transfers institutionalized violence to a staged setting, where the event of war has not yet taken place, but it might have happened in a similar way in the future. At that point, peace time injury becomes a damage of war, and the scenario shows how it could have been while the image depicts neither war nor peace.

The web journal calls for a military intervention because of the parallel between the violent deaths then and the war now. The war emerges only in a *future anterior* of post war times: Soon an event will have taken place, which happened back then already. In this case the picture of violence will have shown that the fear of a new war was legitimate.

„After tens of thousands of deaths, after months of hesitation, calls and sanctions, after diplomatic negotiations and attempts at mediation...“, a web journal describes the unbearable aftermath. Later in the text it turns out that the event is happening in the present. The description becomes an image of war suggesting a violent scenario which might have happened like this.

The web journal shows images of a violent event which might become an option for the future. The perpetrators have disappeared from the pictures or show themselves only vaguely. Because of their absence the scene gets in motion and produces more protagonists. Therefore the question of distribution appears in *future anterior*: Which protagonists will have been pushed into what positions? Will there be change? But the excitement stays only for a short time and - institutionalized violence is staged as before.

Today it came out that the call for another war contains voids: it cannot illustrate temporality appropriately. It repeats itself to exhaustion in an attempt to leave all times behind. It jumps back and forth and struggles for a *future anterior*, a time when future and past will finally merge into each other. But the event of the war happens exactly in these voids by means of institutionalized violence.

The text I have written for “Future Anterior: Illustrations of War“ relates to the field of sexuality, war and violence depicted in the image. I intend this text to become an acteur of its own and intervene in Meisel’s photographs as an autonomous speaker situated next to the image, not within it. The text speaks of an unidentified “web journal”, which reports on war and violence picking up the general, unidentified condition of war in which the images are places. There is no identification of a specific war, nor is there a reference to a specific site of violence that could give a concrete context to (the) warfare and situate it in a negotiable political and social context. The construction of a web journal should be read as an obvious invention, not trying to hide itself as an invention. In this way it should perform the same obscenity as the images placed next to it, thereby reflecting the inventiveness, profanity and exposure of visual distribution formats. The web journal describes “the unbearable aftermath” or shows “images of a violent event”. It creates a field where it can actively “transfer institutionalized violence into a staged setting” or call “for a military intervention”.

That said, I don’t want the text in the photo installation to be understood purely as a media critique, it shouldn’t exclusively reflect the field of media distribution. The staging of “institutionalized violence” is repeatedly referred to and interprets the pictures, which are located in institutional scenarios of medicine, police and army. I try to intervene in those scenarios by claiming that they produce war, making those images consequential and effective and thus “grounding” the invented, staged and non-referential in a very precise field of war. The text should challenge the viewer to understand the photographs as scenes of interpretation of institutionalized violence, which are deprived of their innocent status.

“Future Anterior: Illustrations of War“ is thus also my attempt to take the images out of the safe surroundings of the fashion industry (that which separates them from the socio-political realities of warfare), in order to claim in an ironic way that they can be placed in an illustrative relation to war. This allegation might enable us to recognize the fashion pictures as part of a discursive field producing a memory, a history and a temporality of war - again. Also, the ironic claim focuses on

the performativity of this scenario and centralizes the entanglement of violence and desire. It rejects the purely faked character, which is employed in order to differentiate commodification and consumerism from war and violence. In this way the performativity of strictly normative fashionable bodies might be seen through their potential to shift the binaries of real/faked gender, real/faked relations of war and commodification, real/faked documents and information.

For this shift to happen I employ the specific temporality of future anterior. I overwrite the images as depictions of future anterior suggesting that they might have a relation to war, that they might be a source from a time that will have been. Thus I hope to displace those fashion world staged settings outside of the site of war. This is a process which questions the common practice of distancing any depictions of multiple violences, be it in time or space. The position of the viewer might therefore be radically relocated within the imagery itself: instead of seeing documents of events situated in times and places far away from the viewer, the viewer is confronted with a depiction of how it could have been, he/she could look at different temporalities at the same time, at those proposed by the initial context of the pictures and those proposed by the future anterior. The imagined picture of violence becomes then situated in the faked re-staging, it opens a double dimension, an additional layer of the image.

With this intervention I want to state that there are more layers to the imagery of war, conscious and unconscious depictions of violence, which structure the imaginary field of war, than we can usually see. Recognizing those multiple layers rejects and refuses any single one, straight way of looking, or a conscious recognition of those images as simply faked and other images of violence as simply real. It makes the look itself unstable, ambivalent and engaged differently in the field of the conscious and unconscious images of war. Whilst the look is confronted with the seemingly impossible depiction (as there can be no image of a future past since it has not happened yet), the ‘problem’ of representing war is shifting towards the look itself by suggesting that it might not be a stable, clear or reliable one precisely because it is unable to offer an evident picture and a view of history in a linear timeline.

This means approaching staged fashion photography in the same way as queer S/M reenactment/s, which have references to historical events and therefore also to very precise scenarios of war. This position of the viewer might then get closer to an ethical responsiveness, an active role in someone else’s process of creating distance towards a violent experience. The ethical responsiveness would consist in enabling agency for someone who has suffered from sexualized

violence through a queer look at conscious and unconscious images of violence. The viewer is then actively involved, by looking at the unconscious parts of a glamorous re-staging, as a reworking of traumatic pasts of war.

Summary

This text started with the question of how to intervene in representations of war, particularly its establishment through the visual and discursive fields. My intention was to examine problematic representations of narratives/images of sexualized violence in times of war and shift their meaning through queer feminist methods stemming from contemporary art, especially Sanja Ivekovic's installation "Gen XX". I suggested a side look on these narratives/images by analysing contemporary fashion photography by Vogue photographer Stephen Meisel. This material does not only contain staged settings of sexualized violence, it places them within the iconography of present day war journalism. By openly staging violence for a consumerist purpose and neglecting any connection to actual sites of war and their depiction these images develop a futurist, or science fictional visual vocabulary. Therefore I concentrated on the temporality of a future past, future anterior, as an instrument for a different reading of the images. Future anterior turned out to be a productive tool as it plays a vital role not only in photography (Sontag, Barthes) but also in queer S/M reenactments. Consequently I suggested establishing a queer way of looking at the images by means of future anterior. The claim that the images show "how it will have been", places the viewer of sexualized violence in times of war depicted therein in a position of possible ethical responsiveness. As the painful event itself is not solely situated in the past but becomes something that will have been, a promise of creating a past in the future and the opportunity to distance oneself from the original painful experience emerges. The viewer's look is able to recognize different conscious and unconscious layers in the images of sexualized violence, the simultaneity of different temporalities and events, by refusing its own stability, clarity or reliability and enjoying its queer position. The following text and image combinations in my own artwork "Future Anterior – Illustrations of War" are a try-out in overwriting Meisel's images using the temporality of future anterior, but also in cutting out, rearranging, and reassembling images of sexualized violence.

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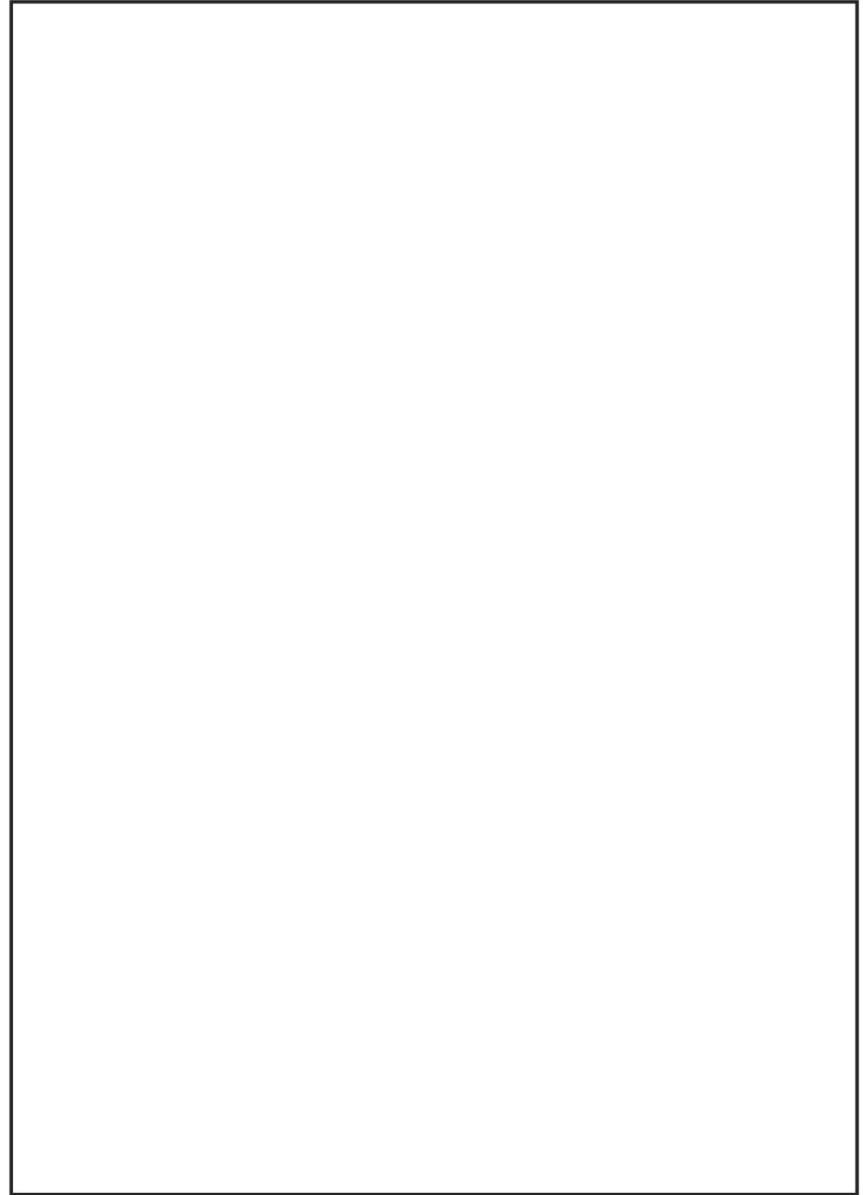
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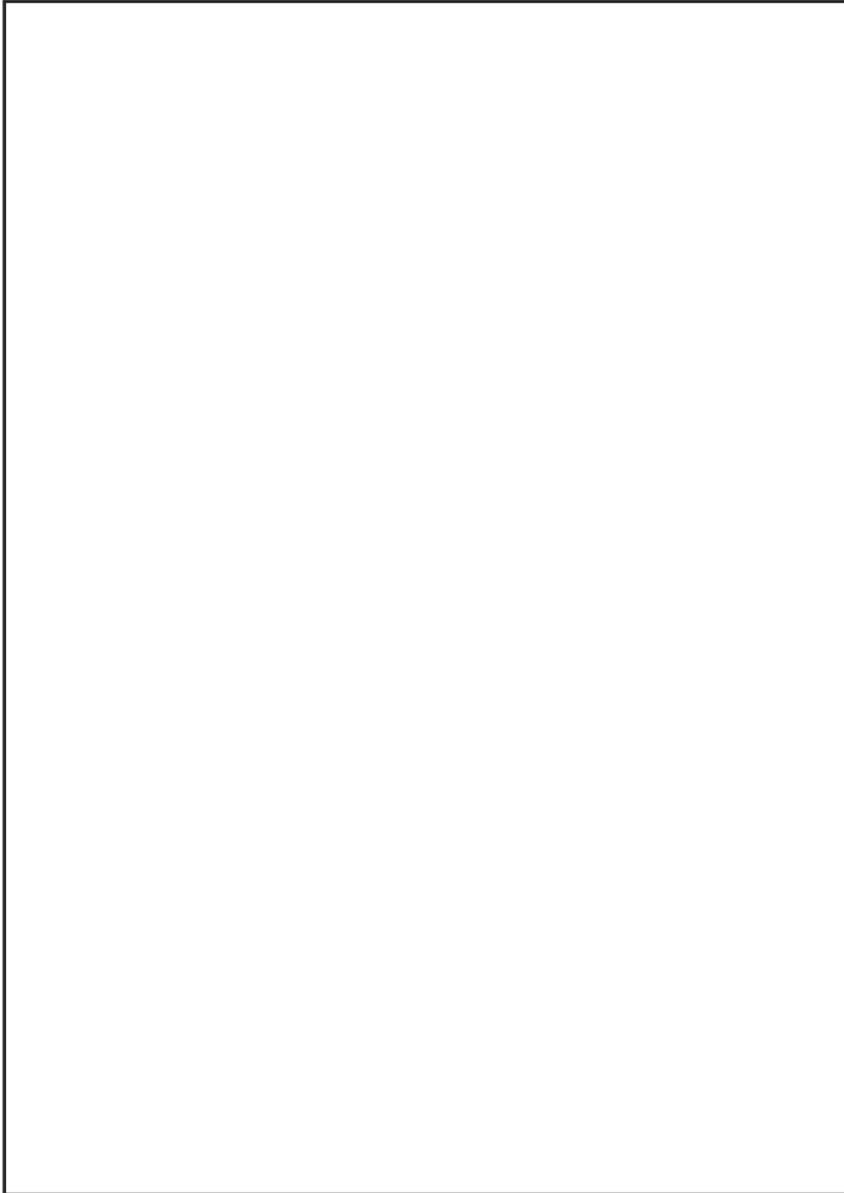
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A new web journal illustrates the *future anterior* of the war. It transfers institutionalized violence to a staged setting, where the event of war has not yet taken place, but it might have happened in a similar way in the future. At that point, peace time injury becomes a damage of war, and the scenario shows how it could have been while the image depicts neither war nor peace.

Ana Hoffner, *Future Anterior – Illustrations of War*, Photo collage, Inkjet print on hand made paper, seven frames, each 33,8 x 48 cm, 2013

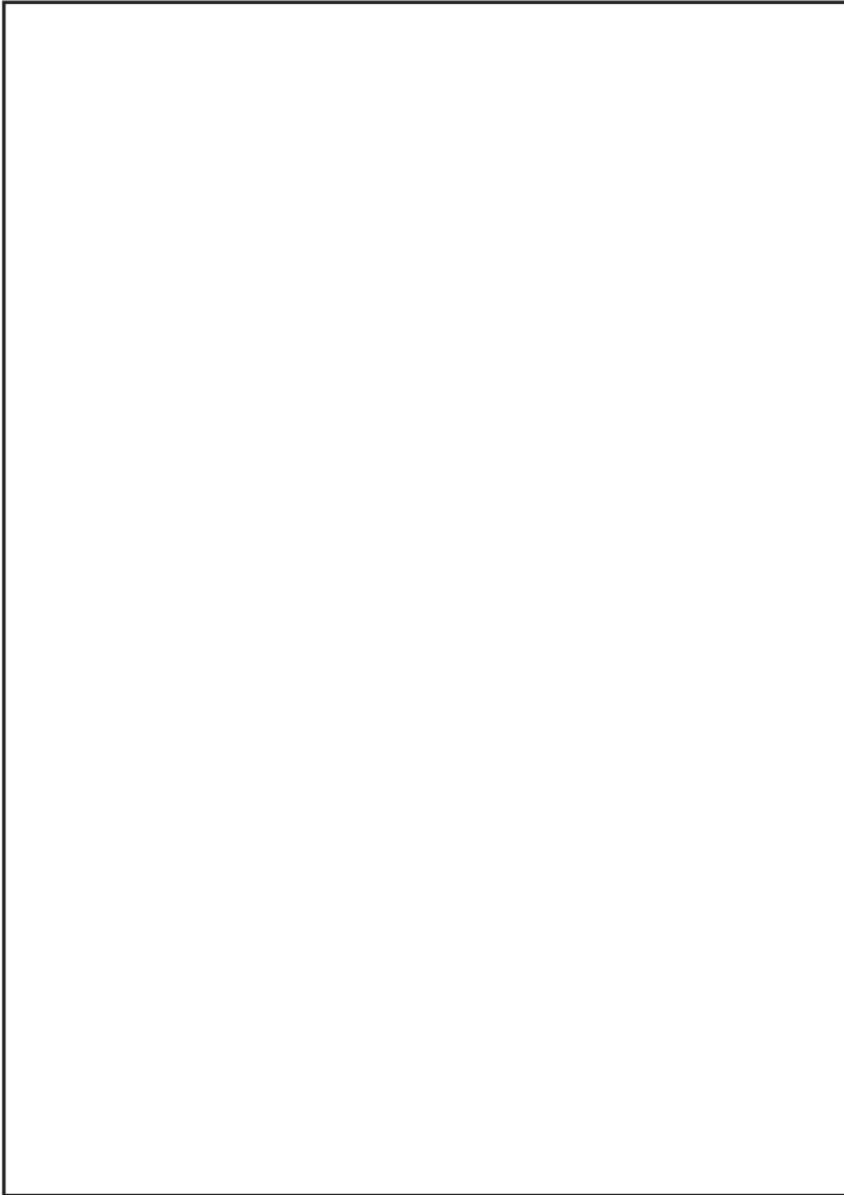




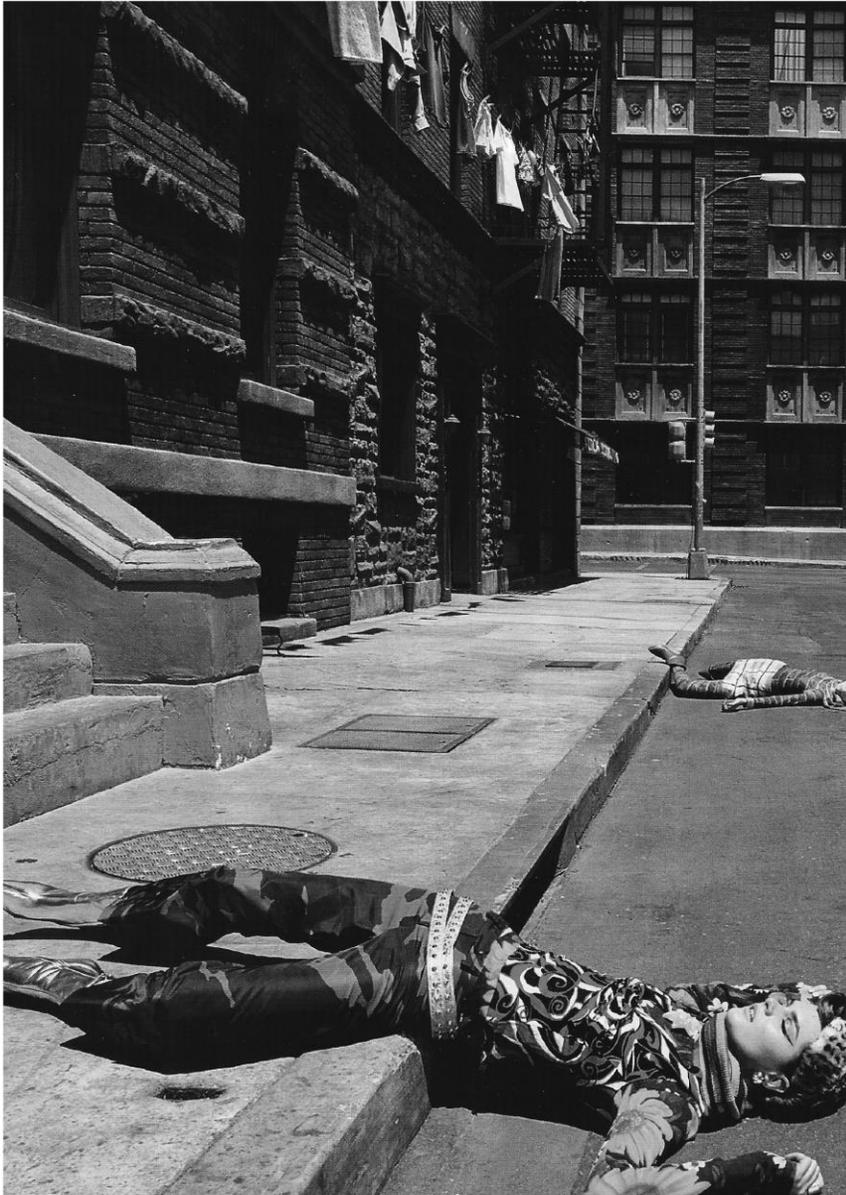
The web journal calls for a military intervention because of the parallel between the violent deaths then and the war now. The war emerges only in a *future anterior* of post war times: Soon an event will have taken place, which happened back then already. In this case the picture of violence will have shown that the fear of a new war was legitimate.



“After ten thousands of dead, after months of hesitation, calls and sanctions, after diplomatic negotiations and attempts at mediation...” A web journal describes the unbearable aftermath. Later in the text it turns out that the event is happening in the present. The description becomes an image of war suggesting a violent scenario which might have happened like this.



The web journal shows images of a violent event, which might become an option for the future. The perpetrators have disappeared from the pictures or show themselves only vaguely. Because of their absence the scene gets in motion and produces more protagonists. Therefore the question of distribution appears in *future anterior*: Which protagonists will have been pushed into what positions? Will there be change? But the excitement stays only for a short time and - institutionalized violence is staged as before.



Today it came out that the call for another war contains voids: it cannot illustrate temporality appropriately. It repeats itself in the exhaustion to leave all times behind. It jumps back and forth and struggles for a *future anterior*, a time when future and past will finally merge into each other. But the event of war happens exactly in these voids by means of institutionalized violence.