

An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, showing a grid pattern of streets and buildings. The image is in black and white and has a grainy, high-contrast appearance. The text "War is for the Living" is overlaid in the center in a large, bold, serif font.

# War is for the Living

**The Sylvia Wald and Po Kim Art Gallery  
February 12-March 23, 2013**

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## *War is for the Living*

Curated by Chuong-Dai Vo and Midori Yamamura

This exhibition is about living in a world affected by war, but not wholly determined or shaped by it. Although most of the artists engage with a particular historical event (World War II, Vietnamese Civil War/Vietnam War, U.S. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq), their works are not direct responses to it. Rather these projects point to the invisible aspects and ever-present possibility of war, and the living that comes after and in spite of.

The exhibition brings together a distinguished group of emerging and established artists whose works provoke questions about the routines of war, the relationships formed and broken in such times, the displacements that people endure, and the inadvertent histories and technologies that arise. These projects contemplate our relationship to a world permeated by war.

**Simon Leung's** *War After War* is a collaboration with his subject, a former World War II refugee and Vietnam War deserter, whose life foregrounds the ethical challenge of reciprocity and hospitality. **Hiroshi Sunairi's** *Tree Project Film* features an interview with a tree doctor who cares for trees that survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and who gives the seeds from these trees to people who will plant them. **Allan deSouza's** *Cityscapes*, images of urban landscapes comprising material he scavenged from the streets of lower Manhattan in the spring of 2001, are hauntingly prophetic of the destruction of 9/11. **Yoshiaki Kaihatsu**, who is one of the most socially engaged artists concerned with Japan's 3/11 Great Earthquake, was immensely influenced by 9/11. His floor installation *Dust* commemorates Ground Zero. Between 2001 and 2008, **Nina Berman** photographed *Homeland*, a series of images that examines the post-9/11 militarization of American life, in particular the burgeoning security state and its influence on national and personal identity. **Paul Qaysi's** *Misprints* are purposely blurred images of U.S. military activity in Iraq printed on the reverse side of the inkjet paper; the images allude to the misperceptions that lead to military attacks on civilians and the effects of war on ourselves. Made during the Vietnam War, **Yoko Ono's** public art project, *WAR IS OVER! (If You Want It)* is as relevant for the current time as it was three decades ago. **An-My Lê's** *Events Ashore* shows the larger world of the U.S. military, its scientific, exploratory and humanitarian missions. **Dinh Q. Lê's** hand embroidery *The Texture of Memory* and photo-weavings *Untitled, from The Hill of Poisonous Trees* commemorate the dead of the Cambodian Genocide. An artist known for socially engaged art, **Nancy Hwang** will invite artists and audience members to share their stories and memories of lives affected by war. **Tomie Arai's** silk screens encapsulate the theme of the show in her use of the folk tale *Momotaro* to tell a story of the internment of Japanese Americans and their journeys of survival, hope and possibilities.

# WAR IS OVER!

IF YOU WANT IT

Happy Christmas from John & Yoko

John Lennon and Yoko Ono, *War is Over!*, 1969, poster, dimensions variable

## Yoko Ono

Born in Tokyo in 1933, Yoko Ono is an internationally acclaimed artist whose thought-provoking work challenges people's understanding of art and the world around them. From the beginning of her career, she considered ideation itself as art. Ono is a conceptualist, whose work encompasses feminism, film, instruction, music, performance, and writing. Growing up during World War II uniquely shaped her art. She realized imagination can serve as a powerful tool to free the human mind from preconceived notions and transform the world. *War is Over! (If You Want It)* was one of Yoko Ono and John Lennon's urgent responses to the Vietnam War, and Ono has been reiterating this still relevant phrase ever since. *War is Over!* forces us to contemplate a society permeated by wars and suggests a resolution, which is that each one of us is responsible for peace.



"Civilian Killings. Baghdad, Iraq. July 12, 2007 [MAY 12 Misprint]" from *Misprints*, 2012, archival inkjet prints, 16.5x12.5 in.

## Paul Qaysi

Using digital images of civilian casualties from the Iraq War found on the internet, Paul Qaysi's *Misprints* is a series of photo-drawings printed on the reverse side of commercial inkjet paper and film. Without the necessary coating substrate, the ink bleeds and pools, complicating recognition of the original image. The "misprint" refers both to the "accidental" killings and to Qaysi's deliberate printing of the image on the reverse side of the paper. One print is of the November 19, 2005, "Haditha Killings" (also called the "Haditha Incident or Massacre") and another print is of the July 12, 2007, "Baghdad Airstrike." The source for "Baghdad Airstrike" is a Wikileaks video, while "Haditha Killings" is from the U.S. Marines, Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Iraqi websites. Born in Baghdad, Iraq, Qaysi lives and works in Brooklyn.



*Tree Project Film*, 2012, HD film, 27 min., 22 sec.

## Hiroshi Sunairi

Born in Hiroshima in 1972, Hiroshi Sunairi came to the U.S. in 1990. His first-hand experience of 9/11 politicized his art. *Tree Project Film* is a portrait of Chikara Horiguchi, a tree doctor who specializes in caring for *hibaku* trees, trees that survived the World War II atomic bombing in Hiroshima. Horiguchi's story is augmented by images of *hibaku* trees--including Camphor, Plantae, Ginkgo, and Camilia. Building on Horiguchi's efforts to extend the legacy of these trees that survived near total destruction, Sunairi has since 2005 been distributing seeds from *hibaku* trees to people around the world. He documented this effort in *Leur Existence—Tree Project*, an exhibition held at The Horticultural Society of New York in winter 2009-2010.

### Photo credits

Tomie Arai: Jean Vong  
Nancy Berman: Courtesy of the artist  
Allan deSouza: Courtesy of the artist and Talwar Gallery, New York/New Delhi  
Nancy Hwang: Courtesy of the artist  
Yoshiaki Kaihatsu: Courtesy of the artist  
An-My Lê: Courtesy of Murray Guy, New York  
Dinh Q. Lê: Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York  
Simon Leung: David Kelley  
Yoko Ono: Courtesy of John Lennon and Yoko Ono  
Paul Qaysi: Courtesy of the artist  
Hiroshi Sunairi: Courtesy of the artist

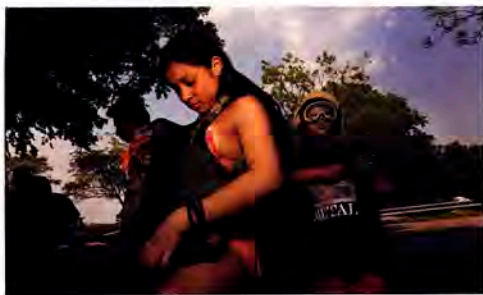
## Tomie Arai



*Momotaro/Peach Boy*, 2008, painted laser transfer on wood, 20x24 in. each

Japanese American artist and community activist Tomie Arai's print-based multiples typically incorporate found imagery, which expand the narrative beyond conventional histories—both popular and institutional. *Momotaro/Peach Boy* is a portfolio of seven printed laser transfers based on a popular Japanese folk tale about a baby who emerges from a giant peach and becomes a hero. The story was used as a propaganda vehicle during Japan's imperial expansion. For Arai, the classical adventure tale evokes memories of her family's internment experiences during World War II. The artist draws on the popular tale as a story of hope and redemption by juxtaposing the images taken from popular and historical sources, as well as the artist's family album.

## Nina Berman



*Boy and Girl at U.S. Marines Recruiting Event, Orchard Beach, the Bronx*, 2007, pigment print, 16x24 in.

Nina Berman is a New York-based documentary photographer with a primary interest in the U.S. political and social landscape. She is the author of two monographs, *Purple Hearts—Back from Iraq* and *Homeland*; both examine the post-9/11 war and militarization at home. This exhibition features four works from *Homeland*. Capturing the emphasis on uniforms, dress up, scripting, logos, and state-controlled special effects in this series, Berman sees homeland security as a form of state-sponsored “performance art” where participants find purpose and value through militarized experiences. Her thought-provoking images portray visual indifference between “real” or everyday security measures and “simulations,” leaving the viewer to consider where the game ends and the real world begins.

## Allan deSouza



*A blurring of the world, a refocusing seconds, minutes, hours, days, maybe years later, with everything put together differently, in ways he doesn't understand*, 2001, c-print digital components, 24x47 in.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, to Indian parents, the Los Angeles-based Allan deSouza is known for photo-based works that exploit the medium's unique relationship to fact, commemoration, and dramatization. *Terrains*, a landscape series that deSouza began creating in 1999, presents seemingly “familiar” scenes at first glance. However, upon closer examination, they reveal an unexpected, perpetually complex relationship to authenticity. This exhibition features three works that began with discarded components deSouza scavenged during his June 2001 one-month residency in New York; using such debris, he built what he calls “fabricated tabletop landscapes,” then photographed and digitally manipulated them. Made before the attacks of 9/11, these landscapes were unknowingly prophetic in their use of urban debris and concern with spectacle and vision.

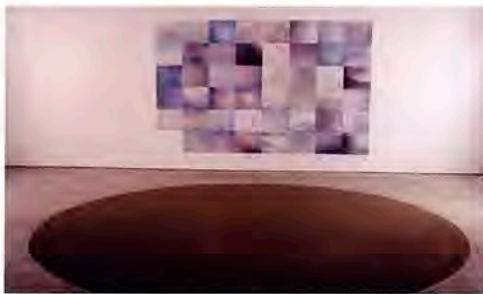
## Nancy Hwang



Video stills from *Impromptu*, a participatory project at Sculpturecenter, LIC, 2005

Nancy Hwang has been producing audience-participatory projects in North America, Europe and Asia for more than fifteen years. She will offer two actions: first, in a conversation-based event titled *What's It to You?*, she invites members of the public to share stories of how war has touched their lives; second, Hwang invites artist Robin Kahn to share her experience living with the Sahrawi people and their fight for independence from Morocco in Western Sahara—the former Spanish Sahara.

Robin Kahn lived with Sahrawi families in the Tindouf Refugee Camps in Algeria, where she assembled a cookbook that explores how the women continue to provide sustenance and fortitude in a community compromised by war, occupation and exile. The book is *Dining in Refugee Camps: The Art of Sahrawi Cooking* (autonomedia, 2010). In addition to her selection of videos for this exhibition, Kahn will host an afternoon of tea, music and discussion about her experiences with the women.



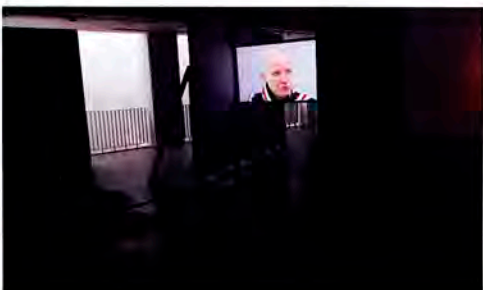
*Dust*, floor installation, dust gathered near the 9/11 Ground Zero, 2002, and video, 2001, dimensions variable



*Oden, Swedish Ice Breaker, McMurdo, Antarctica*, 2008, archival pigment print, 40x56.5 in. (Edition of 5)



*Untitled from The Hill of Poisonous Trees series* (man and woman), 2008, c-print and linen tape, 47.25x78.75 in.



*War After War*, 2011, single channel video/sculpture

## Yoshiaki Kaihatsu

Born in Yamanashi, Japan, Yoshiaki Kaihatsu is known for his witty time-based participatory art that actively engages community. After Japan's 3/11 Great Earthquake, he has been commuting to Minamisōma, where the nuclear meltdown took place, hosting workshops for the evacuees. For Kaihatsu, the event of 9/11, which he experienced in New York, politicized his work. An installation comprising debris he collected from Ground Zero half a year after the event, *Dust* is shaped in the manner of *karesansui*, a traditional Japanese dry garden. The artist explains that the circular form represents a teardrop of the World Trade Center, and the sorrow that transformed people's lives.

## An-My Lê

An-My Lê is one of twenty-three recipients of the 2012 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. Lê's latest ongoing body of work, *Events Ashore*, comprises color photographs shot in various coastal and oceanic locations around the world (West Africa, Japan, Vietnam, Kuwait and Antarctica) where the U.S. Marines and Navy are stationed to train for and deploy in current and potential conflicts. Among the always polarizing and mythologizing representations of military force, Lê takes up the military's movement over the world's vast, ungovernable oceans as a site to visualize forces that today often seem beyond representation: changing global circulations of people, resources, power, and capital. Lê explores the military conflicts of the last half-century of American history obliquely, photographing places where war is psychologically anticipated, processed, and relived.

## Dinh Q. Lê

Growing up in Vietnam near the border with Cambodia, Dinh Q. Lê watched his aunt weave grass mats. By modifying the patterns he had learned as a child, he created an inventive photo-weaving technique that became the hallmark of his oeuvre. He travelled to Cambodia in 1994, visiting both Angkor Wat and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, located on the site of the brutal Khmer Rouge execution center. He puts into conversation the disjuncture between the incredible artistic accomplishments of the Khmer Empire and the horrific dimensions of the Cambodian Genocide. These works commemorate the murdered victims of the Khmer Rouge, which was notorious for taking photographs of everyone they brought to Tuol Sleng, a death camp from 1975 to 1979. Lê lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

## Simon Leung

*War After War* (2011) is part of a trilogy by New York and Los Angeles-based artist Simon Leung that examines the dislocation and disparities that are left in the aftermath of war. Revisiting the artist's friend and frequent subject/collaborator Warren Niesluchowski, the video/sculpture serves as an accompaniment to an earlier work, *Warren Piece (in the 1970s)* from 1993. Born in a displaced persons' camp in Germany, Niesluchowski immigrated to the United States as a child, only to leave again when he became an army deserter during the Vietnam War. During the last decade, he has become, in Leung's words, a "cosmopolitan nomad," often spending his time as an international house guest without a permanent home of his own. Leung's work takes its audience to the place where ethical ideals and war's remains look upon themselves, and we are left to consider the ramifications of wars, and to imagine the (im)possibility of living otherwise. Simon Leung teaches in the Studio Art Department at the University of California, Irvine.

## Performance

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Việt Lê, *Incredible Indelible Invisible Man*

February 14, 2013, 7:45-8:15 pm

## Participatory Actions

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Nancy Hwang and Robin Khan, *What's It to You?*

March 2, 2013, 4:00-6:00 pm

Robin Kahn, *Western Sahara: 'The Art of Sahrawi Cooking'*

March 9, 2013, 4:00-6:00 pm

There will be tea and discussion with the artist about her ongoing project with the women of Western Sahara, including their recent collaboration at *Documenta XIII*.

Yoshiaki Kaihatsu, *Thank You (3.9 in Japanese) Art Project*

March 9, 2013, 4:00-6:00 pm

The artist will give away one of his drawings as part of an ongoing project that encourages art appreciation.



the sylvia wald and po kim  
art gallery

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new york, ny 10003



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## The curators

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Chuong-Dai Vo is an independent curator and writer based in New York City, and a Visiting Scholar at MIT. Her research specialty is contemporary Southeast Asian literature, films and art. While at MIT, she organized a one-day symposium on war, art and feminist activism. She has received fellowships and grants from the Mellon Foundation, Fulbright Foundation, and UC Pacific Rim Research Program, among others.

Midori Yamamura (Ph.D., CUNY Graduate Center) is an independent curator, CUNY faculty member, and lecturer at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. She specializes in post-WWII Asian art in relation to transnationalism, feminism, and critical theory. She was a curator of the international section of Tokyo Municipal Government's *Faret Tachikawa Project* (1994) and *Grapefruit: Yoko Ono in 1964* (2004); a contributor to the 2011 Tate Modern catalogue, *Yayoi Kusama*; and the main author of the Boijman's Museum catalogue, *Yayoi Kusama: Mirrored Years* (2009). Among various distinctions, she has been the recipient of fellowships from the Smithsonian American Museum Terra Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Center for Place Culture and Politics at CUNY, and Ford Foundation.

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