


Traces of War

Art [King's College London](#), Temple  Until Sunday December 18 2016 **FREE** ★★☆☆☆☆

Baptist Coelho, 'Attempts to contain', 2015. Installation with ten photographs on archival paper. Courtesy of the artist.

TIME OUT SAYS**DETAILS****DATES AND TIMES****USERS SAY**

The three photographers in this show make work about war. But rather than the usual grim images of scorched battlefields and ashen-faced civilians, they take a more sideways approach.

KCL artist-in-residence Baptist Coelho has taken the Indian-Pakistani territorial conflict over the Siachen Glacier in the Himalayas as his case study. At nearly 19,000 feet, it's the highest battleground on earth, where the climate kills as many soldiers as combat. Coelho's photos of a huddled, naked body with arms, legs and fingers knotted together make for a lucid meditation on human frailty. A museum-style display based around a 1905 mountaineering survival book he discovered in the college archives.

Australian photographer Shaun Gladwell uses war as a prism to look at issues of empathy and perspective. A two-channel film of a pair of soldiers, circling each other, one filming the other, reminds us of the endless playback of war in the era of 24-hour rolling news coverage and viral media. In another piece, a dark-haired, bearded man field-strips an assault rifle whilst knelt and blindfolded. The wall caption reveals that he isn't a militant or insurgent, but an incognito US soldier. It's an interesting play on our face value assumptions; that it's viewed through a VR headset adds little but some annoying button-fiddling.

Lastly, Iraq-born Jananne Al-Ani has one film and a few stills from another on display. They feature aerial shots of landscapes affected by wars across history – from archaeological sites in the Middle East to disused munitions factories in Kent. These slick black-and-white images are couched in the optics of drone surveillance; I was reminded of that footage of bin Laden's secret compound before it was stormed by the Navy SEALs.

It's a cramped, slightly disjointed exhibition, mostly because Somerset House's Inigo Rooms were never built for things like AV projections and installations. But regardless, you get three varied voices offering fresh commentaries on a subject that we're all too often numbed to by overexposure.

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