



## Disarming Images

Disarming Images presents a three screen, lucidly structured video documentation focused on the rise of American outcries against the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The work reveals the prodigious scope of domestic unrest, acts of conscience and manifestations of rage, minimized and more often ignored by home front media. Though it is certainly a retrospective survey, the video also has a right to be judged as a newsbreaking event.

Covering the years 2001-2005, Disarming Images shows protest groups gathering their forces and inventively spreading their word, within an environment manipulated by official dogma and misinformation. The story is developed as an implied dialogue circulating between two explanatory channels. Bulletins set forth a time line of calamities that detail the worsening international situation, while a swirling collage of vigils, confrontations, and marches evokes the atmosphere of indignant response to them. The textual segment is laconic, and chronological, above all matter-of-fact; the visual one is effusive and Baroque.

Disarming Images compiles video footage and still photographs that are spliced together from an amazingly wide array of sources. They were orchestrated by Ann Messner, with Elaine Angelopoulos and Debra Werblud, alongside the text written by Carole Ashley, all members of New York based Artists Against the War, the sponsor of this project. Their distinctive choice of materials is informed by a visual sensibility, ironic or poignant by turns, at the service of a work that is continually exciting to look at.

This will come as no surprise, since the video accentuates many provocations by artists who had joined in the public action.



They answer to names like Art Mob, Eyes Wide Open, and Bread and Puppet Theatre. But the list swells with such outfits as Veterans for Peace, Women in Black, War Resisters League, Move on, Not in Our Name, and Jazz Funeral for Democracy. In this combined outpouring, the artists have become populists, while the activists reveal themselves as creative spirits.

A parade of flag draped coffins carried by silent figures at the time of Bush's second swearing in is an imaginative memorial as well as a political accusation. Snaps of happy Baghdadis before the invasion do not anticipate the bad fate that was in store for them. The image of the hooded figure, tortured at Abu Ghraib, infamously substitutes for the Statue of Liberty. Ashcroft croons while reports are heard of "extraordinary renditions." Someone flourishes a poster: "Dismantle Weapons of Mass Deception." On the streets or at their computers, the people who contribute to this uproar at a debacle are of all ages, and come from every race, class and culture.

Disarming Images is an appropriate yet paradoxical title for such an engaged video. Its subjects are shown at the very least to be passionately fed up, while their collective voices give weight to a tone that is defiant when it is not sardonic. They are no friends of Patriot Acts that shrink their civil liberties. But at the same time, they do call for disarmament—of ideologies, no less than withdrawal from the illegal use of U.S. force. Even as the policy they oppose continues its dismal course, their wish for peace upholds a consoling vision. That is the true content of Disarming Images.

Max Kozloff

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A self-funded project by Artists Against the War, a New York based collective that has been creating actions of resistance to our government's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since March, 2003.

Send your donation for handling and shipping, along with your name and address, to receive a copy of the 3-DVD installation, with 3 screens playing simultaneously. Running time: 1 hour

Handling and shipping: US \$25

Donations appreciated:

Total:

Artists Against the War  
PO Box 1874  
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New York, NY 10013

Please write tax deductible checks over \$50 to: A.J. Muste Memorial Institute and write "Disarming Images" on the memo line.

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