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THE “INEVITABLE SUGGESTION OF LATIN AMERICA”: LINDA KITSON AND LEON GOLUB REPORT TO LONDON IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS WAR OF 1982

Introduction

On 15 June 1982, Argentinean troops surrendered to the British Task Force in the Falklands/Malvinas.¹ This ended a 72-day war in which around 1000 British and Argentinean military personnel died in a dispute over a remote piece of British sovereign territory inhabited by 1.800 islanders. A month later, Linda Kitson, the only official artist of the conflict, presented to an expectant press corps at the Imperial War

¹ I refer to the islands as the Falklands/Malvinas in accordance with the United Nations designation of the territory *Falkland Islands (Malvinas)* in languages other than Spanish and *Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands)* in Spanish. In accordance with the terminology of international law I refer to the six counties in the north of Ireland under UK governance as Northern Ireland.

Museum (IWM) in London a selection of directly observed drawings from a body of over 400 such works documenting British troop activity. That autumn saw the publication of Kitson's book, *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* in which individual sketches are reproduced alongside extracts from the written record she kept during the commission. The drawings were exhibited in a temporary exhibition at the IWM which opened in November 1982 and subsequently toured regional venues in England, Scotland and Wales, concluding in July 1984.

Meetings of the IWM's Artistic Records Committee (ARC) who appointed Kitson indicate that she "had been selected as an artist with the right kind of graphic style and method of working," as much as for her readiness to depart abruptly for the South Atlantic, despite the conflict's uncertain future development.² Hailing from an elite British military family, Kitson was the only female civilian to make landfall in the Falklands/Malvinas during the war, to observe active combat and have contact with both British and Argentinean troops. Kitson's celebrity was short-lived and her work largely overlooked by a London art world increasingly aligned with the anti-militaristic and anti-nuclear positions of the Labour-led Greater London Council (GLC). The IWM acquired approximately 60 of Kitson's works on paper, together with garments that she wore during the commission and personal items including her red, white and blue legwarmers.³ **(Fig. 1)**

² ARC Minutes for Meeting of 27 April, 1982, 5. Future Commissions, IWM Museum File ENG/2/ACC/2/1/1

³ The remainder of Kitson's drawings was dispersed through private collections of mainly military personnel associated with the war.



[Fig. 1.] British army issue arctic smock, trousers and goggles. © IWM Collection.

Note: Since 2014 and at the time of writing these garments have been displayed at the IWM and attributed as belonging to and having been worn by Linda Kitson on assignment as Official Artist of the Falklands War. Kitson herself disputes that she wore the garments and indeed in photographs of her working on the commission she appears wearing her own non-army issue clothes. The provenance of these garments is currently being investigated by the IWM.

Concurrently, “Leon Golub: Mercenaries and Interrogations” opened at London’s Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA). The exhibition included what is now considered the best work by this “grand old man of American political painting.”⁴ In an interview with the British critic Michael Newman in the exhibition catalogue, Golub asserts that his large-scale depictions of violent abuses of power are not specific to any

⁴ McEwen, John (1982). Art, Confrontations. *The Spectator*, 7 August 1982. <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/7th-august-1982/25/art>. [Accessed 2017, October 25th]

one country, but draw on amalgamated photographic sources including press pictures, sado-masochist publications and the jingoistic magazine *Soldier of Fortune*. Nevertheless, Golub orients his viewers unambiguously towards a generalized global south: “Africa for example, and the interrogations in Latin America.”⁵ As noted in one of the many favourable reviews that the exhibition received, “there is an inevitable suggestion of Latin America throughout.”⁶ In the catalogue preface, ICA Director Sandy Nairne reinforces the notion that “Mercenaries and Interrogations” is topical: “...although Golub might argue rightly that [the works in the exhibition] are relevant to *any* time, they appear in a disturbing manner to be peculiarly pertinent to our present time.”⁷ It appears that the catalogue content was generated during the active combat phase of the Falklands/Malvinas war and both the artist and the exhibition makers imply that “Mercenaries and Interrogations” should be understood as relating to this conflict.

In 1982 both Kitson and Golub referred to their respective practices as forms of “reporting.” However, their interpretations of this term diverged, as did their portrayals of “Latin America” and their lives. Kitson was an upper class white English woman, trained as a commercial artist and illustrator and embedded with British troops in the South Atlantic. New York based Golub, a descendent of East European Jews and a former US Army mapmaker, was affiliated with activist groups calling to end US-sponsored intervention in Latin America. By contrasting such differences, I will consider the following. First, how popular and official narratives of defence that were

⁵ Newman, Michael (1982). Interview with Leon Golub. In: *Leon Golub: Mercenaries and Interrogations*, London: ICA. 6.

⁶ McEwen, Art, Confrontations. [*op. cit.*].

⁷ Nairne, Sandy (1982). Preface. In: *Leon Golub: Mercenaries and Interrogations*. [*op. cit.*], 2.

generated in the context of Britain’s domestic social upheaval of the late 1970s and early 1980s and performed through the military campaign of 1982, fixated on the perceived threat of an “alien” other. Second, the anomaly of Kitson’s signification within the broader context of social crisis and armed conflict that was dominated by polarizing representations of militarized masculinity and pacifist feminism. Third, how Kitson’s commission as Official Artist of the Falklands War evinces the interface between the ARC and the networks of NATO militarism up to and including the conflict of 1982. Finally, why art history and the institutions of contemporary art might have effaced Kitson’s tentative, sketches of Britain’s overt confrontation with Argentina, in favour of the universalizing rhetoric of Golub’s paintings of US-sponsored covert military interventions in “Latin America.” Following the approach of social historians of art such as T.J. Clark and Griselda Pollock, my analysis sets out to understand “the complex relation of the artist to the total historical situation and in particular to the traditions of representation.”⁸

1982: “We Want Defence”

We have the right,

The right to choose,

We want defence,

And we want the cruise,

When you’re on your knees with a gun to your head

⁸ Clark, T.J. (1973). *The Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*. London: Thames and Hudson, 12.

It's better to be dead than fucking red/

Remember the Falklands

Don't forget our dead.⁹

IF IT'S A COMMUNIST THAT'S TRYING TO TAKE OVER I AGREE
THE U.S. SHOULD STEP IN. A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE NOT
REALIZING WHAT'S HAPPENING. IF YOU TAKE A MAP AND
LOOK AT IT, YOU WILL SEE THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE
TRYING TO SURROUND US.¹⁰

In the context of the Cold War, the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas conflict represents a defining spectacle of “white” and *de facto* anti-communist Anglo-American unity. Despite now declassified accounts attesting to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s disappointment with US President Ronald Reagan’s apparent lack of commitment to British interests, these difficulties remained largely behind the scenes, trumped by the symbolic high visibility “special relationship” between the leaders of two of NATO’s most prominent member states.¹¹ During their time in office, Reagan and Thatcher deployed a common rhetoric of suspicion, “othering” and defensive nationalism that effectively mobilised the same xenophobic values by exploiting ignorance and bigotry. Both used the rhetorical tactic of equating the threatening spectre of communism with the global south and anyone originating from it. In the US in the early 1980s such hyperbole was deployed to

⁹ Combat 84 (1982). The Right to Choose. In: *Orders of the Day*. 7th Cavalry Records.

¹⁰ Ault, Julie (ed.) (2010). Anonymous receptionist interviewed by Group Material and quoted on poster sited in Times Square as part of the exhibition “Da Zi Baos (Big Word Poster)”, Union Square New York, from April 16th, 1982. *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*. London: Four Corner Books, 69.

¹¹ Glover-James, Ian (1992) May 31 Falklands: Reagan phone call to Thatcher (urges ceasefire). *Sunday Times*. 8 March 1992

<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110526> [Accessed 2017, October 10th].

generate internal support for that nation’s military intervention in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. While in the context of the British campaign to recapture the Falklands/Malvinas, the discourse was modulated to play on post-Imperial insecurities. Amplified by the mainstream media in both countries, notably the tabloid American *New York Post* and the British *Sun* newspaper, both owned by the Australian-born media mogul Rupert Murdoch, this rhetoric tended to reinforce a myth of imperilled “white” nationalism.¹² The fact that in 1982 Argentina was ruled by a non-aligned fascist dictatorship, with which both Britain and the US had been trading arms, now seemed irrelevant.¹³

Within the British frame of reference, the 1982 fight over a remote piece of colonial territory can be seen as the crystallizing expression of anxieties around “race”, identity and self-determination. As Zoe Anderson explains, this manifested in the polarisation between Thatcher’s nationalistic hetero-normative, militaristic and pro-nuclear conservatism, and a leftist counter politics embodied in policies implemented by the GLC which supported gay and minority rights, advocated nuclear disarmament and supported British labour unions.¹⁴ The sense of insecurity concerning the boundaries of the “English” nation had begun to take root during the first phase of post-World War Two decolonisation and continued to grow alongside ensuing waves of

¹² For a vivid description of British tabloid coverage of the war see: Greenslade, Roy (2002). A New Britain, A New Kind of Newspaper. *The Guardian*. 25 February <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/feb/25/pressandpublishing.falklands> [Accessed 2018, March 5th].

¹³ Dearden, Nick (2012). Argentina’s “Falklands debt” goes to the heart of our unethical foreign policy, *The New Statesman*. 10 April. <https://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/world-affairs/2012/04/argentina%E2%80%99s-falklands-debt-goes-heart-our-unethical-foreign-policy> [Accessed 2017, October 25th].

¹⁴ Anderson, Zoe (2011). Empire’s Fetish: Sexualised Nationalism and gendering of the Falklands War. *National Identities*. Vol. 13, No. 2, 189-204.

immigration from former British territories. During a 1978 televised speech Thatcher notoriously legitimized the prevailing climate of xenophobia through the language of “empire:” “People are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a rather different culture, [...] the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and has done so much throughout the world, that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.”¹⁵

The remarks successfully won votes from the fascist National Front in the general election of 1979.¹⁶ The Conservative Party supplanted Labour and far right discourse was absorbed into the political mainstream. A year later London’s Metropolitan Police implemented Operation Swamp 81 using so-called “sus” laws that allowed them to stop and search anyone on the grounds of mere suspicion. This resulted in the literal and representational criminalisation of black and Asian youth who were disproportionately targeted, and portrayed in the media as “muggers.”¹⁷ In May 1981 tensions fuelled by Operation Swamp culminated in the Brixton riot, a three-day confrontation between police and protesters involving 5 000 people in south London.

Lord Scarman’s official report into the causes of the disturbances claimed there was no basis for allegations of “institutional racism,”

¹⁵ Thatcher, Margaret (1978). *World in Action*. Granada Television. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHhKI5ijnxQ>. [Accessed 2017, October 15th].

¹⁶ “... in the general election of 1979, when the NF mounted the largest scale challenge of any ‘insurgent’ party since the Labour Party in 1918, it flopped dismally and won a numerical and percentage vote which was considerably lower than in earlier elections.” Taylor, Stan (1982). *The National Front in English Politics*. London: MacMillan, xi.

¹⁷A useful discussion of media representation of black British urban communities at this time was advanced by Kieran Connell (2017). Photographing Handsworth: race, rioting and the politics of community. *Decolonising History: Visualisations of Conflict in a ‘Post-War’ Europe*. Conference paper. Centre for the Study of Contemporary Art: University College London, 18 March.

instead pointing to “racial disadvantage” and “racial discrimination” against blacks and Asians in Brixton. Among Scarman’s qualifications for investigating the Lambeth disturbances was his prior experience authoring a government report into the Violence and Civil Disturbances in Northern Ireland of 1969.¹⁸ In the context of Brixton in 1982, Scarman recommended that “positive discrimination is a price worth paying” to mitigate the causes of social disorder and also advocated the use of culture and leisure as means to tackle societal discord.¹⁹ These proposals, in tandem with the political rhetoric of “multiculturalism,” which was increasingly present in British public life from the early 1980s onwards “formed a framework in which ‘race’ was acknowledged, under the guise of ‘culture’, but leaving in place the idea of Britain as white.”²⁰

In 1982 the representational logic of multiculturalism had yet to impact state-sponsored visual arts enterprises, including the running of the IWM’s Art Department whose first commission of a non-white artist post-World War Two was not until 1988.²¹ The ICA programme that year was virtually all white, while the main event at the Hayward Gallery was “Image of Man: The Indian Perception of the Universe Through 2000 Years of Painting and Sculpture,” an exhibition whose tone was deferential to this Commonwealth ally but simultaneously

¹⁸ Government of Northern Ireland (1972). *Violence and Civil Disturbances in Northern Ireland in 1969. Report of Tribunal of Inquiry Chairman: The Hon. Mr. Justice Scarman.* Published in Belfast by Her Majesty’s Stationary Office. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/scarman.htm> [Accessed 2017, October 24th].

¹⁹ The Rt. Hon. Mr Justice Scarman’s Report into the serious disorder in Brixton on April 1981 quoted in Law, Ian (2015). *The Scarman Report. Encyclopedia of Race, Nationalism and Ethnicity.* Wiley Blackwell, 30 December. Online version.

²⁰ Anderson, *Empire’s Fetish: Sexualised Nationalism and gendering of the Falklands War.* [op. cit.], 190.

²¹ The British/Indian artist Shanti Panchal was commissioned in 1988 to make a series of works documenting the tailoring of British army uniforms. See ARC Meeting Minutes, 1 February, 1988, ENG/2/ACC/2/1/1.

exoticising. 1982 also saw the emergence of a generation of young British black and Asian artists who shared a concern with representation, favoured non-traditional media such as film, photography and collage and were self-organising. But, despite their importance and the fact that they would later play a pivotal role in consolidating the London-based south-orientated global artistic network, it took years before artist-led initiatives such as the journal *Black Phoenix* (founded by Rashid Araeen in 1979) and the Black Artists Movement and Black Audio Film Collective (both founded in 1982), and those behind them, were accepted into mainstream British visual culture.²²

The UK's first exhibition of British African, Caribbean and Asian modernism, "The Other Story" did not take place until the end of the decade. As Jean Fisher notes in her discussion of this Hayward Gallery show of 1989, the fact that the British government had in the 1970s lost its enthusiasm for the Commonwealth as an economic and cultural market, together with its increasing political identification with the USA meant that "the aggressive promotion of American art and consumerism during the Cold War had a resounding effect on British art."²³ One of the impacts of this US-oriented diplomacy was to eclipse the importance of the south-aligned artistic network that had existed in London during the 1950s and 1960s through a preceding "Commonwealth" generation of modernists such as the British Guyanese painter, Aubrey Williams and associated members of the

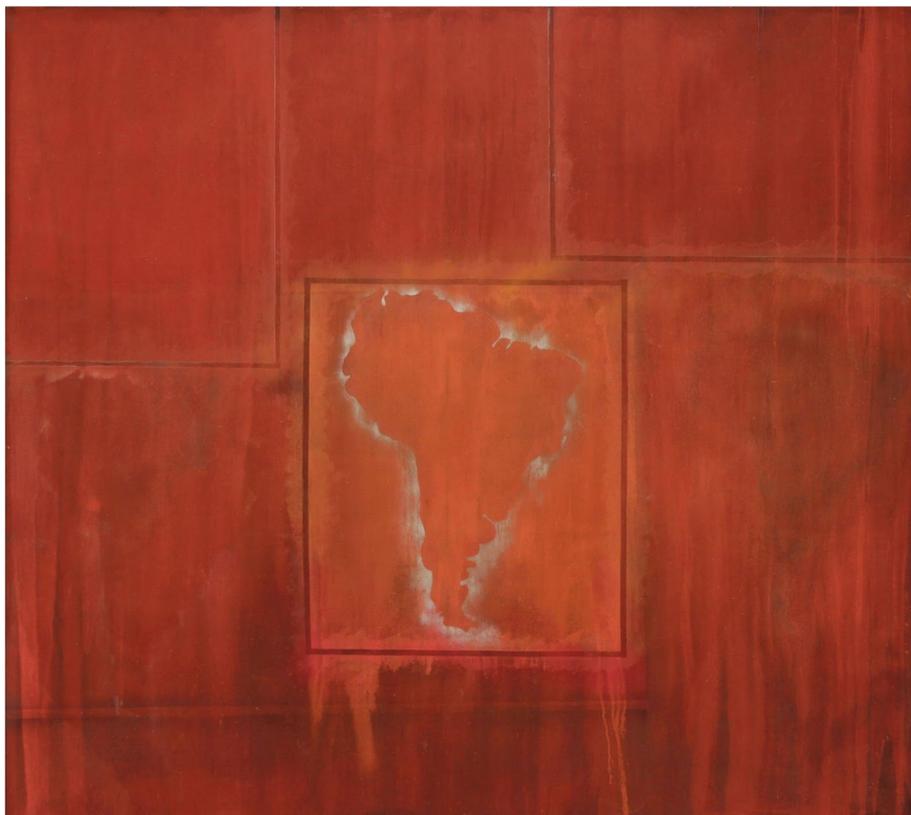
²² Among others examples are the Association for Black Photographers (ABP) Autograph founded in 1988, and the International Institute for Visual Arts (InIVA) founded in 1994.

²³ Fisher, Jean (2009). *The Other Story and the Past Imperfect*, *Tate Papers* no. 12. <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/no-12/the-other-story-and-the-past-imperfect> [Accessed 2018, March 5th]

Caribbean Artists Movement among others. Indeed another British Guyanese painter, Frank Bowling relocated from London to New York in the mid-1960s where between 1967 and 1971 he produced a series of ‘Map Paintings’ in which cartographic imagery is combined with the language of abstract expressionism as a metaphor for his own double artistic exile. (Fig. 2)

In July 1981, riots that followed a similar pattern to the Brixton disturbances took place in Leeds, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, with lesser disturbances elsewhere. In the only incidence of its use outside Northern Ireland, police deployed CS gas to disperse protestors in Toxteth (an inner-city area of Liverpool). The mismatch between the reality of a plural, post-Imperial society in crisis and the traditional values of “white” Britishness alluded to by Thatcher in her “swamp” speech was demonstrated in the dismaying concurrency of these events with the feudal fairy-tale symbolism of the Royal wedding of Prince Charles—dressed in the uniform of a British naval officer—and the blond virginal aristocrat Lady Diana Spencer.

The disenfranchisement experienced by Britain’s ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged and blocked from entering dominant institutions of the “white” British state, extended to even broader sections of working-class society formerly doing jobs impacted by Thatcher’s policies of privatisation and closure. Saatchi and Saatchi’s 1979 campaign for her Conservative Party had famously abutted a picture of a dole queue with the slogan “Labour Isn’t Working”.



[Fig. 2.] Frank Bowling, *South America Squared*, 1967, Acrylic on canvas. 243 x 274 x 5.7cm. © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2017.

It was the kind of smug, punning, juxtaposition of text/title and image that would characterize, not just the tabloid coverage of the 1982 war with Argentina, but the work of the (mainly white) “Young British Artists” who the British collector Charles Saatchi (one half of the advertising agency) patronised over the succeeding decade. Despite the success of the 1979 electoral campaign, by the end of 1981 unemployment rates had reached a 50-year high and Thatcher’s popularity ratings were at a corresponding low.²⁴

²⁴ By the end of 1981 unemployment rose to 13.3%. Noakes quoted in Anderson, *Empire’s Fetish: Sexualised Nationalism and gendering of the Falklands War. [op. cit.]*,198.

From across Britain’s “multicultural” spectrum musicians with divergent backgrounds and ideologies sang about the hopelessness and ubiquity of life on the dole. While the multiracial, cross-gender Liverpool reggae outfit Cross-Section intoned, “what are you going to do/ cause they don’t care for me or you/see the dole/is it your eternal role?”²⁵ The all white, exclusively male, London Oi! punk band Combat 84 sang: “You won’t get a job anywhere/Not when you’ve got short hair/There’s nothing here for me and you/19, 1982.”²⁶ Combat 84’s members exemplify the confused white nationalist cultural signification that was consolidated through the imagery of the Falklands war, and to which Linda Kitson, in her brief role as celebrity war artist, might be seen to belong. Although none of Combat 84’s members had served in the army, their address seems aimed at proletarian youth who were its traditional recruiting base.²⁷ Their name, record cover artwork, cropped haircuts, army fatigues and boots, and song lyrics were militaristic and implicitly racist in tone (**Fig. 3**). The words of their song Right To Choose (quoted at the start of this section) which was released in the autumn of 1982, conflate the “Falklands” war with the threat posed by “reds” and “the right to choose” nuclear armament.²⁸

²⁵ Amir, Graham (Cross-Section) (1982). The Dole (Come On, Sign On). *John Peel Show*, BBC Radio 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SxscZWUd04> [Accessed 2018, March 5th].

²⁶ Combat 84 (1982). 1982. In: *Orders of the Day*. [op. cit.].

²⁷ In 1982 the band featured in a BBC *Arena* documentary in which vocalist Chris Henderson claimed the police were tougher on white skinheads than they were on black rioters, and that “there will never be racial harmony.” The comments were widely understood as expressing racist sentiments.

²⁸ The rhetoric of entitlement resonates with Thatcher’s controversial Right to Buy policy introduced in 1980, whereby public assets in the form of social housing were transferred into private hands.



[Fig. 3.] Photographer Unknown, *Combat 84* (1982). © 7th Cavalry Records.

Combat 84's irrational lyrics about white entitlement exemplify what Patrick Wright in his 1985 study of Britain's "heritage" sector, described as the typical "thematizing" address of the time, which used the accumulating terms of national identity, culture, history and tradition to "mobilise hopes, fears, memories, rationality, prejudices, confusions and just plain ignorance as it will." As Wright went on to explain, this "nationalist thematization" became so powerful "...that during 1982 it seemed to enter the news not just as a formal characteristic of its presentation but increasingly at the level of content itself; it seemed to become so strong that it was actually capable of generating events."²⁹ In other words the "Falklands Campaign" was symbolic: it provided a convenient way for a government faced with economic failure and social disintegration to create a unified cause that capitalized on resurgent nationalistic pride—which like the islands, an

²⁹ Wright, Patrick (1985). *On Living in the Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*, Verso, London, 141.

illusory mini-England complete with scarlet pillar boxes and locals with British accents—required defence from a threatening alien “other.”³⁰

With the arrival of the first anniversary of the Brixton riots in April 1982, pictures of Metropolitan police officers battling protestors were supplanted by the carefully stage-managed spectacle of full-scale, high-intensity warfare: a naval “armada” of 100-plus ships departing in a carnival atmosphere from the historic Royal Naval dockyard at Portsmouth to uphold British values. Like the Falklands/Malvinas themselves, Argentina was a place, with its substantial disconnection from the events of the two World Wars, that many British people might have struggled to locate on a map. In the British imaginary of 1982, Argentina and “Latin America”—with a predominantly Roman Catholic and Hispanophone culture—were empty ciphers waiting to be filled.

“Woman artist joins the fighting men”³¹

“men act and women appear”³²

The young policeman who asked Linda Kitson her business on the quayside by the towering QE2 was not impressed when she said she was the official war artist: “For all I know you’re an out of work punk rocker.” As one who had a quick hug from her cousin [sic] Lieut-General Sir Frank Kitson scheduled into his visit to the QE2 just before she

³⁰ Peregrine Worsthorne quoted in *Sunday Telegraph* cited in Gilroy, Paul (1987). *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack*. London: Routledge, 51. “For, as confirmed in the words of some contemporary commentators, “whiteness” lay at the heart of this venture: “if the Falkland Islanders were British citizens with black or brown skins, spoke with strange accents, or worshipped different Gods, it is doubtful whether the Royal Navy [...] would today be fighting for their liberation.”

³¹ Unattributed (1982). Woman artist joins the fighting men. *The Guardian*, 12 May.

³² Berger, John (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 32.

sailed, Linda Kitson was not in the least perturbed.³³ In any case she said her severely cropped hair at least wasn't green or purple.³⁴

It took almost a month for the naval Task Force to cover the 8 000 miles between Portsmouth and the 200 mile exclusion zone around the Falklands/Malvinas, which the UK had declared on 30 April, 1982. Once the flotilla arrived, news and newsworthy images were sparse and failed to sate a public appetite for spectacle whetted by the Portsmouth sendoff. The dearth of images was substantially due to reporting restrictions imposed by the British Ministry of Defence (MOD), responding to the "lessons learned" in Vietnam. Senior US military advisors to the Royal Navy maintained that rather than having lost that war to the North Vietnamese, victory had eluded them because reporters had not only revealed US positions and tactics, but fuelled the groundswell of opposition to the conflict with photographic depictions of graphic violence.³⁵

The MOD twice blocking eminent British photojournalist Don McCullin from accompanying the navy to the South Atlantic—the only way to get there—is indicative of its anxiety about war reportage. Despite being injured, McCullin returned from a *Times* newspaper assignment in El Salvador with the specific aim of covering the war. After being refused press accreditation he appealed through the IWM for a commission as

³³ I refer to Frank Kitson as Linda Kitson's uncle since the term 'uncle' is understood generically to denote a relative. It should be noted however that at the time of the Falklands/Malvinas war the British press referred to Frank Kitson variously as her uncle and as her cousin (see examples below quoted below quoted respectively from ITN News and *The Sunday Telegraph*). When I spoke to Linda Kitson in December 2017 she referred to Sir Frank Kitson as 'my second cousin once removed'.

³⁴ Hall, Anthea (1982). Anthea Hall Meets the Task Force War Artist on QE2. Flying the Flag of Art. *Sunday Telegraph*. 16 May.

³⁵ See the account of Rupert Colin Frank Nichol, British officer who served as Instructor Officer on board HMS Hermes during Falklands War, 1982. IWM Oral History Archive 2002, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80022266>. [Accessed June, 2018]

official war photographer. This position hadn't been awarded to anyone since World War Two and despite the IWM's full support of McCullin, the MOD again refused to grant him permission to travel to the Islands. But Kitson, who'd trained as a commercial graphic artist, worked as a drawing tutor at the Royal College of Art (RCA), provided editorial illustrations for *The Spectator* magazine, the Folio Society, cookery books and wine guides, evidently posed no risk to military security or public opinion.

By virtue of her status as a proxy witness in this celebrated war without images, Kitson instantly became a celebrity and everything about her from the circumstances that made her “available” for such a commission to her personal attire, was deemed worthy of comment. As the IWM's bulging press file on the 1982 commission testifies, for a brief period the absent image of war was replaced by photographs and written descriptions of the artist/image maker. In these, mention of Kitson's artwork, or professional qualification for the commission was invariably preceded by allusions to her physique and sartorial style: “Miss Kitson who describes herself as ‘determinedly single’ was chosen from a short list drawn up by the Artistic Records Committee of the Imperial War Museum,” cooed the *Evening Standard*.³⁶ “Miss Kitson, a small gamine figure in punk-style clothes is fairly used to drawing men and women actually in the course of their jobs” noted *The Guardian*.³⁷

From the moment of her appointment in May until her arrival home to Brize Norton Airfield in late July, the implication of this disproportionate focus on Kitson's appearance and attire and away from her the ARC commission was clear: Kitson's value as an artist, and

³⁶ Unattributed (1982). Ladies of War, *Daily Express*, 12 May.

³⁷ Unattributed, Woman artist joins the fighting men. [*op. cit.*].

by extension the art that she produced in response to the war, was secondary to her worth as an embodiment of patriotism, adventurousness, and eccentricity. This, and the frequently alluded to fact that having “no emotional partner or dependents who would be bereaved by her death or injury” and was therefore apparently dispensable, was seemingly deemed more important than the ability to “draw very quickly and prolifically [...] and capture atmosphere fast” that had qualified her for the commission.³⁸

As *The Sunday Telegraph* extract quoted above implies, the media insinuated that while the war was reframing the nation, direct personal experience of it was transformative for the artist. Kitson herself reinforced the impression that it would be possible to track this metamorphosis through her appearance: “She has a razored punk style haircut and yesterday was wearing a red shirt and black baggy trousers adorned with silver chains.[...] “Once I am on board I’ll be shovelling my hair into a hat and wearing camouflage clothes.” [...] Her only jewellery will be a ring with a family seal and a bracelet saying she is allergic to penicillin.”³⁹ The predicted change came to pass and on her arrival home Kitson descended from the steps of an RAF troop carrier looking more like a member of Britain’s armed forces than an RCA tutor. Once on the tarmac “and as the Welsh Guards looked on there was big hug from her uncle Sir Frank Kitson.”⁴⁰

In the context of such coverage, Kitson appears to be performing the role of feminized forces mascot; but with her cropped hair and bohemian/scruffy attire, this war artist’s look simultaneously echoed

³⁸ Chadwick, Jonathan. IWM Secretary quoted in Unattributed, *Ladies of War*. [op. cit.].

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ ITN News (1982). Official Artist Arrives at Brize Norton. July 29. IWM Film Archive, FAL 16371.

that of pacifist protestors despite her affiliation with national militarism being radically opposed to their views. If Kitson was an instrument in the apparatus of soft power, then she suggested that instead of attempting to “disarm patriarchy”, creative and nonconformist women might join forces with fighting men, at least in spirit.⁴¹ This reading of Kitson’s role in the representational field of the 1982 war simultaneously masks and hints at her real familial affiliation to the military establishment. Given MOD anxiety about reportage, we shouldn’t overlook Frank Kitson being her uncle. He waved her off from Southampton and was the first person, and only family member, to greet her when she returned.

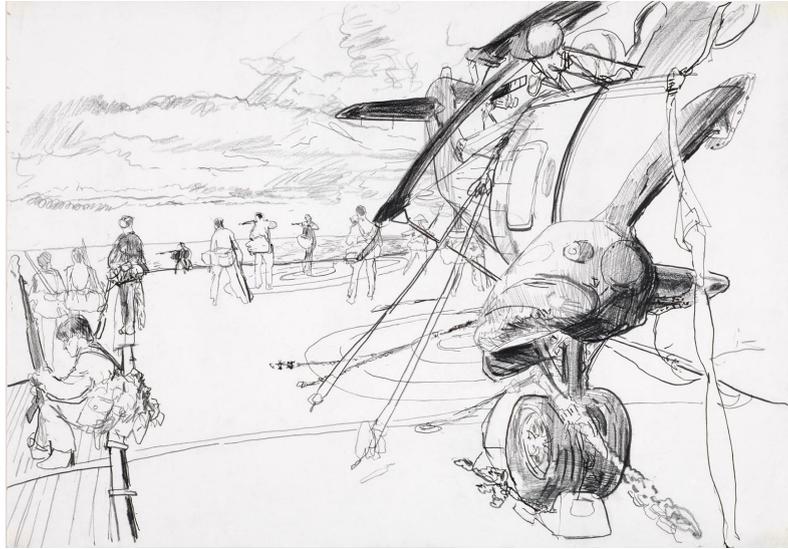
Kitson’s brief was “to explore any activities taking place with the military Task Force” and the drawings she produced offer a comprehensive record of military detail. Continuous training and preparation on the journey south, the maritime transfer to the hospital ship SS Canberra; landings at San Carlos; plus the Argentine surrender at Stanley/Puerto Argentina, alongside the clean-up operation and battlefield tours in the aftermath of the ceasefire. **(Figs. 4-6)** The drawings testify to the fact that Kitson had contact with personnel from across the British military hierarchy, as well as glancingly with Argentines. Text entries in *A Visual Diary* suggest that everyone Kitson encountered in the course of the commission treated her with extreme deference. While this might be attributable simply to the ingrained gallantry of military culture, or to her being a lone woman surrounded by professional soldiers in the dangerous and

⁴¹ This phrase is borrowed from Sasha Roseneil’s sociological study of the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp. Roseneil, Sasha (1995). *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. In spring 1982 concurrent with the war with Argentina, the Greenham women became increasingly publicly visible through actions such as blockading shipments of nuclear warheads.

psychologically stressful conditions of war, there is also a sense that Kitson's circumvention of rigid military hierarchies was not just a function of gender, or the fact that she had a unique and unusual professional mission, but due to her social and familial affiliation with the military elite. This is illustrated in her description of the Gurkha soldiers who she describes as, "quite extraordinarily polite and a delight to draw,"⁴² as well as her striking account of a British officer recognizing a contemporary from his student days at the University of Oxford in the person of an Argentinean officer attempting to pass as an ordinary soldier so as to avoid interrogation, "These Argentine [officer class prisoners of war] were very different to the young recruits. Initially they pretended to speak no English but then a Canberra officer recognized one he had known at Oxford."⁴³ Through this ostensibly unimportant anecdote the representational logic of "othering" Argentineans as the unscrupulous foreign foes of the "white" British nation that characterizes popular narratives of the war, collapses in on itself by exposing the supranational network of privileged elitism to which Kitson herself belonged.

⁴² "Once, when I'd been bundled into a trench during an alert, its rightful occupier crouched on the end to request, please, if it would be alright if he could get in too" Kitson, Linda (1982). *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary*. London: Mitchell Beazley in Association with IWM, 62.

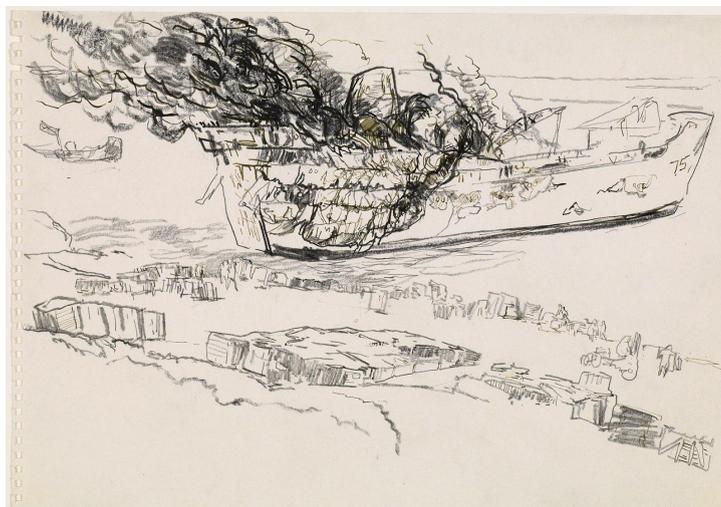
⁴³ *Ibid.*, 48.



[Fig. 4.] Linda Kitson, *Gurkha Live Firing from the Helicopter pad of the QE2, 26 May 1982*, (1982). conté crayon on paper, 417 x 594 mm. © IWM Collection.



[Fig. 5.] Linda Kitson, *SS Canberra. British and Argentinian Casualties receiving Hospital Treatment. 3 June 1982* (1982). conté crayon on paper, 406 x 506 mm. © IWM Collection.



[Fig. 6.] Linda Kitson, *Sir Galahad Moored at Fitzroy*. She continued to burn until she was towed out to sea and sunk as a War Grave. 16 June 1982 (1982). conté crayon, oil pastel and pen on paper, 296 x 421 mm. © IWM Collection.

“Low intensity operations” in the North and South

The British have always had cultural no go areas. The Falklands War is one of those subjects today, like the recent history of Northern Ireland, and anything connected to espionage.⁴⁴

A Visual Diary contains no reference to Frank Kitson. Nevertheless, as Commander of UK Land Forces at the time of the Falklands/Malvinas war he held one of the most senior positions in the British army. Post World War Two, Frank Kitson had participated in Britain’s decolonization conflicts, having fought against the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party in a guerilla war that lasted from 1948 to 1960 and played significant roles in the British suppression of Kenyan Kikuyu during the “Mau Mau” Rebellion of 1952 to 60 and in the British

⁴⁴ Greengrass, Paul (1992). Foreword. In: Aulich, James (ed). *Framing the Falklands: War, Nationhood, Culture*, Open University Press, Buckingham, ix.

“peacekeeping” operation in Cyprus during hostilities between Greek and Turkish Cypriots which lasted from 1955 to 64. In both Kenya and Cyprus Frank Kitson had impressed World War Two veteran, and then Deputy Chief of Staff, Field Marshall Lord Michael Carver with his “approach to the problems of this unfamiliar type of warfare.”⁴⁵ In the laudatory forward that Carver provided for the first edition of Kitson’s 1971 book *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping*, Carver quotes Kitson’s own description of his approach as “a sort of game based on intense mental activity allied to a determination to find things out and an ability to regard everything on its merits without regard to customs, doctrine or drill.”⁴⁶ In Kitson’s terms, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, and the then current conflicts involving US and British forces in Vietnam and Northern Ireland respectively were all “low intensity operations”. Distinct from a “high intensity operation” such as World War Two the key tactic to be deployed in “low intensity” campaigns was intelligence gathering, achieved through infiltration using fake guerilla “pseudo-gangs” as well as psychological operations, propaganda and experimental interrogation techniques.⁴⁷

Under Carver’s auspices as an IWM Trustee and ARC member during the 1970s and 1980s, the commissioning of official war artists—a scheme whose origins lay in a World War One Ministry of Information initiative but which had been inactive since 1945—was reinvigorated. Given the total nature of the two world wars it’s unsurprising that earlier war art commissioning schemes were accepted as a necessary part of the propaganda of conflict, and attracted both traditional and

⁴⁵ Carver, Michael (1972). Preface. In: Kitson, Frank (1972). *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping*. London: Faber, xi.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Also see Kitson, Frank (1960). *Gangs and Counter-Gangs*, based on his experiences during the “Mau-Mau” rebellion. London: Barrie and Rockliff.

avant-garde artists. For example, the Vorticism of Wyndam Lewis, the Surrealism of Paul Nash, and the pictorial figuration—referenced by Linda Kitson’s *Visual Diary*—of Muirhead Bone, Edward Ardizzone and Anthony Gross. As Chair of the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC), during World War Two, National Gallery director Sir Kenneth Clark, made it an explicit mission to appoint “the best artists of the day” which to him meant those in touch with the Continental avant-gardes.⁴⁸ What is striking about the 1972 iteration of the commissioning scheme, especially in light of the emphasis that Frank Kitson placed on “information gathering” is that through its reconstitution as an Artistic Records Committee, the appointments were slanted away from “non-objective” interpretation and towards the evidential.

IWM records indicate that the Trustees’ ostensible purpose in establishing the ARC was to redress an imbalance in existing “artistic records” of the many “small wars” involving British troops that had taken place since 1945.⁴⁹ In addition, the discussions that resulted in the formation of the ARC took place against the background of the public image crisis of the conflicts in Vietnam and Northern Ireland. Since 1969 the British army had been involved in an increasingly contentious “peace-keeping” operation between Northern Ireland’s Loyalist Protestant majority and Republican Roman Catholic minority. Initially inspired by the black civil rights movement in the US, in the late 1960s the Catholic minority had begun to protest against the

⁴⁸ See Foss, Brain (2007). *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity 1939-45*. New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

⁴⁹ “The Board approved the proposal that the Imperial War Museum should seek funds to commission two artists to work in Northern Ireland under the auspices of the Army. Lieutenant General Sir Harry Tuzo GOC in Northern Ireland had suggested the idea and Sir Arthur Drew had informed the Director, with whom he had discussed it, that the Army Board supported it.” Minutes of Meeting of IWM Board of Trustees, March 29, 1972, Item 2 (a), IWM Museum Archive.

discriminatory policies of the British state.⁵⁰ It was at one such protest against the recently implemented policy of internment in Derry/Londonderry on 30 January 1972 that British paratroopers shot at unarmed demonstrators, killing a total of 14 people. Pictures of the victims’ bloodstained corpses, circulated in the international press causing huge embarrassment to the British Government and army.⁵¹

Ken Howard who received the ARC’s first commission arrived in Northern Ireland in 1973. He’d done national service as a marine commando and therefore like Linda Kitson was pre-affiliated with British military culture. The two artists also shared a figurative style and disconnection from avant-garde culture. Howard’s brief in Northern Ireland, like Kitson’s in 1982, was to create a drawn and painted record of British army activity. Comparison of their work reveals as much about the divergent conditions of the two conflicts, as it does about each individual practice. Kitson’s sketches, especially those made during the active phase of combat, bear evidence of being completed under difficult conditions, for example mud splashes, incomplete or very shaky lines, and unresolved detail. (**Fig. 6**) Howard’s more considered compositions and carefully worked out renderings of human figures on academic lines, reveal the slower pace of the Northern Ireland conflict which the artist said was; “often simply about

⁵⁰ The Roman Catholic minority of Northern Ireland’s identification with the USA black civil rights movement is another significant dimension in the ideological constellation of geography, religion and “race” lurking in the official and popular British representation and political rhetoric of the war with Argentina, in particular its mobilization of the image of a “racially” distinct “other”. Anglo-British prejudice against Irish Catholics—who since the Renaissance some English writers and graphic artists had depicted as “apes”—was so deeply and unconsciously rooted in white English identity that it could be inferred simply through the invocation of the Argentina’s state religion of Roman Catholicism.

⁵¹ These events were referred to henceforth as “Bloody Sunday”. A 12-year long public enquiry by Lord Saville into the deaths concluded in 2010 that the British army’s attack on the protestors was unprovoked. Frank Kitson gave evidence at the enquiry but claimed not to remember what had taken place.

watching and waiting.”⁵² (Fig. 7) Perhaps the most significant continuity between Howard and Kitson is that they both claimed, or at least paid lip service to, a non-partisan view of the conflicts that they were commissioned to record.



[Fig. 7.] Ken Howard, *8 Brigade Ops Room, Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry, 12 March, 1978* (1978) ink and watercolour on paper, 381 x 558 mm. © IWM Collection.

From just before the time of Howard’s commission until after Britain’s 1982 war with Argentina, Northern Ireland was a testing ground for the counterinsurgency tactics developed by Frank Kitson. Here under his guidance the deployment of “pseudo-gangs” that had been proved so effective during the rebellion in Kenya continued. As Belfast politician Paddy Devlin pointed out, it was through such operations that Kitson “did more than any other individual to sour the relations between the Catholic community and the security forces.”⁵³ Concurrently,

⁵² Ken Howard, conversation with the author, September 2017.

⁵³ Paddy Devlin, quoted in Hughes, James (2014). Frank Kitson in Northern Ireland and the ‘British way’ of counterinsurgency. *History Ireland*. Issue 1, Volume 22, 68.

throughout the phase of covert US intervention in Latin America during the 1980s, “reported” by Leon Golub and denounced by many North American artists, the same terms and tactics were widely adopted by the US military.⁵⁴ Rather than being committed to a political cause recruits to “pseudo-gangs” were often incentivized by sadistic impulses or—especially in the constrained economies outside the overdeveloped world—by money. Leon Golub’s depictions of mercenaries and interrogations in the non-specific global south must thus be read in the context of Frank Kitson’s “counterinsurgency” doctrine.⁵⁵

Recuperating violence: the artist as reporter

The boss in ‘Interrogation (II)’ might be asking for his tea, his crew of Jack the Lads seem to respond to the hidden audience of the artist, a more old-fashioned, anglophile type (there is an inevitable suggestion of Latin America throughout) smokes a cigarette. The bound and hooded naked victim sits waiting on the chair.⁵⁶

On 23 May 1982 Leon Golub concluded his address to students graduating from the Art Institute of Chicago with the following statement: “artists are more important than ever [...] we’re living in an extremely complex society where information is being thrown at us from all directions all the time. These inputs are simultaneous. You get

⁵⁴ Brocades Zaalberg, Thijs (2016). *Soldiers and Civil Power: Supporting Or Substituting Civil Authorities in Modern Peace Operations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 46.

⁵⁵ In 1962 Frank Kitson addressed senior US, Australian and Filipino military personal about his deployment of pseudogangs in Kenya at *Counterinsurgency: A Symposium*, organised by the Advanced Research and Projects Agency (RAND Corporation). The pretext for event was the Kennedy Administration’s concern over the growing Communist insurgency in Vietnam.

⁵⁶ McEwen, Art, Confrontations. [*op. cit.*].

it through all the media. If an event happens, for example in the Falkland Islands, it doesn't take three weeks for that information to be transmitted to you. You know about it that afternoon."⁵⁷ Throughout his long career Golub made frequent allusions to the artist's social role and *sui generis* relationship to history and the present. Among his consistently reiterated views on the subject was the conviction that while history was accessible through the art of the past—in particular the classical relief sculptures which provided the compositional basis for his early paintings such as the series of *Gigantomachies*, 1966-7 (**Fig. 8**)—the present was available “through all media.”⁵⁸ As his address to the Chicago students attests, Golub believed that the distinctive mission of the contemporary artist was to respond to an incessant flow of information.

⁵⁷ Obrist, Hans Ulrich (1996). Leon Golub, Transcript of Graduation Commencement: Address of the Art Institute of Chicago, May 23, 1982. In: *Leon Golub: Do Paintings Bite*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 78.

⁵⁸ This series was influenced by the depiction of battles between gods and giants on the Pergamon altar.



[Fig. 8.] Leon Golub, *Gigantomachy II* (1966). Acrylic on linen, 305 x 731.5 cm. Courtesy the Nancy Spero and Leon Golub Foundation for the Arts and Hauser and Wirth. *Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue*, Installation view, Serpentine Gallery (4 March – 17 May 2015). Photo © readreads.info.

In the conversation with Michael Newman that took place at the time of the Golub’s 1982 ICA exhibition, the painter outlines the trajectory of his art as a form of reporting, locating its origins in a body of work which he describes as an attempt to “make contact” with the events of the Vietnam war. He invokes first the painting *Napalm 1*, 1968-9, a depiction of two male nudes, one in a victorious upright posture and the other vanquished and horizontal, explaining to Newman that despite the classical styling of the figures, which pulls the image backwards into the past and away from the specificities of Vietnam in 1969, the work was a “concerted political effort.”⁵⁹ In a later series showing American GIs threatening Vietnamese civilians the historicizing tendency is modified as the paintings are based on composite photographic sources, including news pictures of the war in Vietnam. Golub describes how the impulse to engage with political contemporaneity led him to alter the original title of the series from *Assassins* to *Vietnam*: “Assassins was

⁵⁹ Golub, in: Newman, *Leon Golub: Mercenaries and Interrogations*. [*op. cit.*], 4.

never really appropriate as it seemed to disproportionately accuse the soldiers rather than their leaders.”⁶⁰

Despite the still widely-held contention that Golub is a “political” artist, and his framing as such by the ICA in 1982, the vagueness of the painter’s response to the Vietnam war is thrown into relief if we compare *Assassins* to the series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-72) by fellow New Yorker Martha Rosler. While Rosler makes an unambiguous critique of the interdependence of consumer society and imperialist violence through disturbingly juxtaposed depictions of these subjects, Golub occludes his photographic sources. The compositional references for the six large unstretched canvases included in the 1982 ICA exhibition showed the eponymous mercenaries and their commanders engaged in performative interactions with one another, their victims and by implication with the viewer. (Fig. 9) Golub explained, “One of the sources I use are sado-masochistic publications: to get an image of a man hanging. I didn’t have anything that the secret police of Argentina could provide for me.”⁶¹ Indeed from the late 1960s onwards Golub began to amass a library of images of violent actions. Organized according to Warburgian principles such that for example all depictions of hanging or beheading were grouped together, Golub mined the collection for the compositional reference that would best suit the canvas he was working on. In a series such as *Assassins*, and to an even greater degree the *Mercenaries* and *Interrogations* of the 1980s, the violence is aestheticized. The fact that these representations are unique luxury objects, whose intensively worked surfaces evince the hand of the artist enhances an effect that is both troubling, and as noted

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

by Rosler in a 1984 conversation with the painter, “titillating.”⁶² Rosler and Golub’s differing approaches to depicting violence is reinforced when earlier during the same conversation she questions his activist commitment by confronting him with past comments that he made about the *Mercenaries* and *Interrogations* series: “I’m not in the business of getting people to act. The basic thing I want is a kind of reportage [...]. In the twentieth century I have to ask ‘Who are the actors on the stage that I am trying to report on? I’ve ended up with the notion of mercenaries and police interrogators.”⁶³



[Fig. 9.] Interrogation II, 1981, Acrylic on canvas, 305 x 427 cm (120 x 168 in.). Gift of Society for Contemporary Art, 1983.264. Art © Leon Golub/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

⁶² “the introduction of the image of the mercenary, so appropriate to this era of the 1980s, into the arena of the genteel world; it’s reminiscent of the traditional procedure of shock. Every decent American is supposed to care, but it seems to titillate.” Leon Golub in conversation with Martha Rosler at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, November 1, 1984. In: *Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue* (2015). London: Serpentine Gallery and Koenig Books, 146.

⁶³ McGill, Douglas (1984). Art People. *The New York Times*, 12 October, quoted in: *Ibid.*, 140.

Like Rosler and other members of the New York avant-garde with whom he was affiliated, Golub ostensibly opposed US intervention in the global south. During the 1970s he and his artist wife Nancy Spero—together with a younger generation including Doug Ashford, Julie Ault and Tim Rollins—had belonged to the Artists Meeting for Social Change group.⁶⁴ Disillusioned with the positions of “old left” the younger artists went on to form their own collective, Group Material, which from the early 1980s shared its West Side Manhattan premises with a range of Latin American community organizations including Taller Latinoamericano, Casa Nicaragua, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, and Committee in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala. In June 1982, Group Material collaborated with them on the organization of “¡Luchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America.” The project was intended to make a critical political statement about US government policies in Central America as well as to initiate solidarity with Central American artists working in exile. The exhibition included work by Rosler and although there is no record of Golub and Spero’s participation, the following year they both contributed to Group Material’s “A Chronicle of US Intervention in Central and South America” at PS1 Contemporary Art Centre in Queens, New York.

This latter show was part of Artists Call Against US Intervention in Latin America which between 1983 and 1985 “broadcast a message of solidarity throughout the art world in a national campaign of exhibitions and other events organized in hundreds of alternative and

⁶⁴ Rollins, Tim, What Was to be Done? In: Ault (ed.), Anonymous receptionist interviewed by Group Material and quoted on poster sited in Times Square as part the exhibition “Da Zi Baos (Big Word Poster)”. [*op. cit.*], 218

established cultural institutions across the country.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it is hard to extrapolate any activist impulse on Golub’s part. Considering that over 700 artists participated in Artists Call it would have been strange if Golub had *not* been involved. His association with such activist enterprises in the 1980s was concurrent with his absorption by the art-market, itself contingent on the success of the series *Mercenaries* and *Interrogations*, which after the ICA exhibition were acquired by the Charles Saatchi.⁶⁶ Golub’s description of his work as “reporting” is his way of resolving the apparent paradox of his opposition to the Reagan doctrine in the Americas and the purchase of his depictions of their violent consequences by a propagandist for Reagan’s closest political and military ally. Typically Golub was able to rationalize this paradox in terms of a nebulous critique of state control: “Nobody is totally in charge; it’s like switches on a train in a big terminal. Train switches track—you can play the game of switching from Reagan to the people behind Reagan, then from the army to the CIA, from the power sector to the more private sector. But all the switches and changes still refer to the control and domination that elites use selfishly to keep themselves in power.”⁶⁷

Golub’s self justification contrasts with Group Material’s efforts to contextualise “US Intervention in Central and South America” both historically and in terms that involved their neighbours from New York’s Latino community. Golub’s statement above, like his representational recuperations of violence, occludes the political

⁶⁵ Grace, Claire (2011). Counter-Time: Group Material’s Chronicle of US Intervention in Central and South America. *Afterall*, Issue 26, Spring.

⁶⁶ In 1988 four works which had appeared in the ICA show of 1982 were presented together with works by Sigmar Polke, Phillip Guston and John Chamberlain at the Saatchi Gallery in St John’s Wood.

⁶⁷ Leon Golub in conversation with Martha Rosler at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, November 1, 1984. [*op. cit.*], 144-5.

realities; including that during President Carter's 1970s US Administration, Argentine relations had weakened under pressure from human rights groups such as Amnesty International who condemned the junta's systematic use of torture and disappearances as a form of state control. And that while President Reagan saw Argentina as a Cold War bulwark against communist incursions in Central America and actively assisted the Argentinean junta, military and intelligence cooperation with it ended upon Argentina's "seizure" of the Falklands/Malvinas from Britain.

Golub's explicit reference to the South Atlantic conflict in his Chicago address of 1982 reveals a lack of theoretical rigor, since it suggests "information" conveyed via the media is both "instantaneous" and accurate, a misconception that undermines his opposition to imperialist intervention elsewhere. On the day of the Chicago address, and throughout the proceeding weeks, the escalating conflict in the South Atlantic made headlines in the USA. However, a news summary from the *New York Times* of 23 May carries (contradictory) reports from both British and Argentinean sources, neither of whom, as the article itself makes clear, were present in the Islands at the time.⁶⁸ The reporting of the Falklands/Malvinas war was beset with the logistical complications

⁶⁸ Unattributed (1982). News Summary, *The New York Times*, Sunday May 23. <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/23/nyregion/news-summary-sunday-may-23-1982.html> [Accessed 2017, November 11th].

of distance and MOD censorship.⁶⁹ Golub may have been unaware of these realities, indeed the full extent of official manipulations of this coverage may never be known. But in his Chicago speech he is no more concerned about the accuracy of available information than he is with specifying the geographical locations and ideological positions of the subjects represented in his paintings.

Conclusion

Linda Kitson’s book *The Falklands War: A Visual Diary* is a meticulously detailed account of the conflict, chronologically organised and supported with documentary material and data confirming the fact of her presence as a witness and apparent accuracy. This contrasts starkly with the universalizing rhetoric of Golub’s paintings and their generalized references to “Latin America,” opportunistically invoked at the time of their exhibition in London in the summer of 1982. As Kitson herself attests, her appointment as Official Artist of the Falklands War remains the defining moment of her career.⁷⁰ This was recently affirmed during a public ‘in conversation’ event with the critic William Feaver at London’s Royal Drawing School and in the exhibition “Linda

⁶⁹ As the British novelist Julian Barnes explained retrospectively: “While our armed forces defeated the Argentineans, the Ministry of Defence was putting to rout the British media. All the significant news, good or bad, was announced or leaked from London. [...] Reports were censored, delayed, occasionally lost, or at best sent back on the slowest carrier-turtle the Royal Navy could find”. Full article in Barnes, Julian (2002). *The Worst Reported War since the Crimean*. *The Guardian*, 25 February. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/feb/25/broadcasting.falklands> [Accessed 2017, November 11th]. Tim Wilcox, writing closer in time to the war itself pointed out, “The Falklands Conflict was one of the most under reported and misreported wars of modern times.” In Wilcox, Tim (1989). *WE ARE ALL FALKLANDERS NOW: Representations, War and National Identity*. In: *The Falklands Factor, Representations of a Conflict*. Exhibition catalogue. Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1989.

⁷⁰ Linda Kitson in conversation with the author, London, December 2017

Kitson: Drawings and Projects” (3 March – 30 April 2017) curated by Kitson’s friend and former RCA colleague Quentin Blake at London’s House of Illustration, both of which emphasised the Falklands commission over Kitson’s other work which was treated largely as context for her war drawings. Such events are typical in confining the exhibition and discussion of Kitson’s work within the circumscribed frames of drawing or illustration practices and military subject matter.⁷¹

While Kitson remains a marginal figure in current contemporary art, in 2015 Golub was honoured with a retrospective at London’s Serpentine Gallery which included works from the ICA show of 1982 (**Figs. 10 and 11**). However, nowhere in the 158-page catalogue with contributions by leading figures of activist-aligned contemporary art—including Hans Haacke, Alfredo Jaar and Oscar Murillo—is any mention made of Argentina or the Falklands/Malvinas conflict. The fact that the British art press and exhibiting institutions beyond the IWM virtually ignored Kitson at the time of her commission and subsequently, may have been a judgment on a perceived lack of artistic originality, and/or an indication that she was seen as part of the jingoistic representation of the war.⁷² Struggling to negotiate the prevailing politics of conservative

⁷¹ Linda Kitson in conversation with William Feaver, 27 April, 2016, Royal Drawing School, Shoreditch, London. Much of this conversation was devoted to discussion of Kitson’s work during the 1982 conflict. An audio transcription can be found here: <https://royaldrawingschool.org/lectures-events/linda-kitson-conversation-william-feaver/> [Accessed 2018, March]. Another recent exhibition by Kitson at London’s Framers Gallery “Linda Kitson: iPad Pictures of the Scalpel & The City” (16 October-4 November 2017) was devoted exclusively to representations of the City of London undergoing its current phase of exponential growth. A selection of the drawings commissioned by the ARC have been exhibited at the IWM since 2014 as part of a mixed media display entitled “War on the Doorstep” and devoted to the Northern Ireland and the 1982 war with Argentina.

⁷² That the London art world did not consider Kitson to be worthy of attention is indicated by the fact that earlier that year her work sent to the high profile open submission Hayward Annual, organized around the theme of drawing, was rejected.

militarism against the leftism of the GLC—soon to be abolished by Thatcher, its former headquarters would eventually become home to Charles Saatchi’s collection—the London art world of the time was more comfortable with Golub’s speculative genericism. This remains the case today.



[Fig. 10.] Leon Golub, *Interrogation III* (1981). Acrylic on linen. 305 x 429.5 cm. The Broad Art Foundation. Leon Golub: *Bite Your Tongue*. Installation view, Serpentine Gallery (4 March – 17 May 2015). Photo © readreads.info.



[Fig. 11.] Leon Golub, *Mercenaries IV* (1980). Acrylic on linen 305 x 584 cm. Ulrich and Harriet Meyer Collection. Leon Golub: *Bite Your Tongue*. Installation view, Serpentine Gallery (4 March – 17 May 2015). Photo © readreads.info.

In the immediate aftermath the Falklands/Malvinas war, British artists produced a significant body of work that was unambiguously critical of the conflict. Since the war was embedded in its media representations, almost all of this work was based on secondary sources, mainly the sparse news images that had circulated at the time. These were either re-worked in paint (*à la* Golub), as in the case of Bruce McLean's *Broadside*, 1985 inspired by Martin Cleaver's celebrated photograph of the British naval frigate HMS Antelope bursting into flames. Or as collages such as Peter Kennard's *Decoration*, 1982 in which the same picture is photo-montaged to a medal ribbon.⁷³ (Fig. 12) In the context of such work, the documentary value of Linda Kitson's Falklands commission—which the ARC intended to record the conflict—is beyond doubt. Kitson's privileged access facilitated by the British military, allowed her to fulfil her objective of reporting details unavailable to camera and "... capturing the result of war, rather than the bangs and

⁷³ Aulich, *Framing the Falklands: War, Nationhood, Culture*. [op. cit.].

flashes and immediacy of it. [because] These are the sorts of pictures that photographers can take.”⁷⁴



[Fig. 12.] Peter Kennard, *Decoration* (1982), photographs, gelatin silver silver print on paper with ink on board, 350 x 265 mm © Peter Kennard

The fact that the pictorial idiom of Kitson’s report referred more closely to the visual diaries produced under commission during two world wars than to discourses around race, gender, representation and the politics of power, which in 1982 were bubbling under the surface of the programmes of publicly funded institutions such as the ICA, must be read as exemplifying a tendency which British/Jamaican cultural

⁷⁴ Linda Kitson, quoted in: Unattributed, *Ladies of War*. [*op. cit.*].

theorist Stuart Hall identified as consonant with Thatcherist ideology and termed “regressive modernism.” Together with her depictions of military conflict, Kitson the “performing” war artist formed part of the representational machinery of state violence. But like her family military connections, and the artistic/military nexus of the postwar period, her unique artistic record of the Falklands/Malvinas war merits further investigation.

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