

PRESS COVERAGE



# **Jeffrey A. Wolin: Inconvenient Stories**

October 13 — December 17, 2005

1. Gallery Guide, Nov. 2005
2. the men's book, Fall 2005
3. Time Out Chicago, 11. 24. 2005



**October 13–  
December 17, 2005**

**Stages of Memory:  
The War in Vietnam**

600 S Michigan Ave  
Chicago, IL 60605  
312.663.5554  
mocp@colum.edu  
mocp.org

**October 13–  
December 17, 2005**

**Jeffery A. Wolin:  
Inconvenient Stories**

Free and open to the public  
Monday through Friday  
from 10 am to 5pm  
Thursday until 8pm  
Saturday from noon to 5pm



**Jeffery A. Wolin**  
Nigel "Buddy" Newlin  
2003  
ink jet print

**Columbia**

**COLLEGE CHICAGO**

**Vietnam Exhibits** October 13-December 17

Two exhibits: *Stages of Memory* features the work of artists with close ties to the Vietnam War, either through their own or their parents' experiences. *Vietnam War Veterans: Portraits and Text* features the work of Jeffrey Wolin. At the Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan Ave. Mon.-Fri. 10AM to 5PM; Thurs. 10AM to 8PM; and Sat. noon to 5PM. 312.663.5554 or [www.mocp.org](http://www.mocp.org).

**Thomas Rapai and Peter Finnemore**

October 14-November 19

Paintings by Rapai and photos and video installation by Finnemore. At 40000, 1001 N. Winchester Ave. Sat. noon to 6PM and by appointment. 773.342.4930.

**Eleftheria Lialios** October 27

View three powerful films by Lialios on her search to make sense of her culture and her daughter's death from cancer. The artist will discuss each film following the screening. At Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Randolph St. 6PM. 312.744.6630 or [www.chicagoculturalcenter.org](http://www.chicagoculturalcenter.org).

## ART & DESIGN

# Wages of war

Photography exhibit on Vietnam explores a complex legacy

By Thomas Connors



Howard Henry Chen, from the *Multiple Entry Visa* series, 2002–2005.

"I stuck my thumb in his chest to try to stop the bleeding and I realized half his back was gone." "As far as I can tell, I think I only killed one person." "My experiences in Viet Nam were on the whole positive." "I have nightmares every night."

Reviled, neglected and nearly forgotten, the Vietnam veteran is an importunate presence in American life. And while not every survivor has wandered miserably back home, like those vets who suffer still, the body politic has never been truly whole since the fall of Saigon.

The new Vietnam Veteran's Memorial along the river at Wabash Plaza offers solace in stone, but there's a monument of another sort at the Museum of Contemporary Photography: "Jeffrey A. Wolin: Inconvenient Stories" and "Stages of Memory: The War in Vietnam."

Wolin's "Inconvenient Stories," from which the preceding quotes are taken, is a documentary project whose impact is as effective as the abstracted commentary of Picasso's *Guernica*. "Stages of Memory," organized by MoCP curator Karen Irvine, is a visual-art enterprise whose components

function successfully as political statements. Together, the two shows make a bid for hearts and minds, as well as eyes.

"Inconvenient Stories" comprises snapshots of combatants taken at the time of their service, juxtaposed with Wolin's color portraits and text in which the participants describe some aspect of their war experience. The young Mark Scully appears in a studio portrait in his

uniform; today's Mark Scully—unruly bearded and in fatigues—stands on a beach with a red crucifix at his feet and a U.S. flag flapping in the breeze behind him. We see Larry Heinemann atop a tank back then, and sitting in a booth today: just a guy with his hands folded over a mug of beer. The young Mark Levy looks burdened by the kit around his neck and the pack on his back; he displays nearly the same air and stance captured in Washington Square today.

The expressions on these faces and the often less-than-swank surroundings reinforce the notion of

the Vietnam vet as a broken, marginalized figure. And while post-traumatic-stress syndrome, Agent Orange and other disabilities define some of these lives, not all of Wolin's subjects can be reduced to the walking wounded. The stories they tell force viewers to expand their conception of these fellow citizens.

"Stages of Memory," featuring the work of six photographers—each of whom has some link to Vietnam and the war—mediates the conflict and its legacy in more formal ways. Dinh Q. Le's woven photographs combine movie images of the war with journalistic shots of the period: Tom Cruise's beady eyes from *Born on the Fourth of July* with a protesting Buddhist monk's self-immolation, for example.

Liza Nguyen pairs studio shots of soil gathered from such sites as My Lai and Cu Chi with postcards that depict the monuments and billboards by which the Vietnamese government commemorates the war. Binh Danh takes negatives of documentary images and lays them between leaves and sheets of glass, which sit in the sun until the image is transferred to the foliage. Faint and brittle as memory, the objects recall the sometimes strange romance of Mathew Brady's Civil War pictures. In contrast, Howard Henry Chen reveals Vietnam today, a growing economic power and tourist destination. His shots of his cousins at play in kitschy amusement parks and gaudy restaurants deflate our general understanding of the country as the site of guerrilla warfare and little else.

Coming from dramatically different points, the two exhibitions converge to create a thought-

Together, the two shows make a bid for hearts and minds, as well as eyes.

provoking experience, a reminder that history is memory and memory is never one true thing. And pictures aren't the answer. "We are pathologically confident in photography's communication ability," observes MoCP director Rod Slemmons. "But it's not analysis, it's not knowledge; it's just information."

**"Jeffrey A. Wolin: Inconvenient Stories" and "Stages of Memory: The War in Vietnam" are at the Museum of Contemporary Photography through December 17. See Museums & Institutions.**

## Reviews



Kim Joon, *WE-Cubs*, 2005.

**Kim Joon: "Tattoo You" Walsh Gallery, through Dec 2 (see West Loop).**

Beauty is skin-deep. That's what they say, anyway. But when was the last time you stopped to notice just how revolting our epidermis can be?

South Korean artist Kim Joon certainly seems to have given it careful consideration, as he personally crafted the slightly upsetting flesh of the models in his artwork. That's right: Those monumentally size prints on display are not photographs, but 3-D renderings of Joon. He then turns his subjects' "skin" into a canvas for exploring one of his country's biggest social taboos—the tattoo. Joon plays on the irony that in Korea, the tattoo is seen as something that only prisoners and gangsters do—a symbol of membership in an undesirable club—while the rest of society seems perfectly comfortable forming collective identities centered around cultural icons.

Joon mocks our purchased pride with images of those who've upped the ante from sporting their favorite brand to becoming their favorite brand. These clusters of nude figures, huddled together and emblazoned with the logos of BMW, Gucci, Starbucks and even Korea's political Woori party, turn a mirror on consumer culture and give new meaning to the term *lifestyle brand*.

But the ultimate irony may lie in the sale of this artwork. Will a BMW fetishist be the one to plunk down ten grand to stare in the privacy of his own home at Joon's trio of Bavarian Motor beauties? According to Walsh Gallery's assistant director, David A. Parker, at least one company has approached Joon about doing a custom-job utilizing its logo. If that isn't life imitating art, we don't know what is.—Jason Mojica

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