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Abstract	The Falklands War in 1982 has been described as the last eruption of colonial warfare to be fought by the British Empire. It was conducted under draconian restrictions that controlled the transmission of images, texts, and first-hand front-line narratives. With an imaginative record of commissioning war art in the twentieth century, the Imperial War Museum sent a single artist to accompany troops in the latter part of the war. Linda Kitson’s portfolio of line drawings reinforced positive notions of the authority of the eyewitness. First-hand visual testimony effectively trumped all. This chapter explores the work produced at the time and the body of creative material that later emerged (in Britain and in Argentina), as artists, art therapists, and other visual commentators started to reflect, critique, and celebrate the British Empire’s ‘last colonial war.’	

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CHAPTER 21

‘Re-membering’ the Past: Eyewitness and Post-battle Artistic Accounts of the Falklands War

Paul Gough

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Introduction: The Power of the Headline

Few words are as synonymous with the Falklands War as the demotic headline ‘GOTCHA’ that was emblazoned across the front page of a mass-circulation British newspaper in May 1982. “GOTCHA. Our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser” was concocted by a group of executives at *The Sun* newspaper in London. It was their spontaneous response to a news agency report that the Argentinian light cruiser, ARA *General Belgrano* had been hit by a missile fired from a ship of the British Royal Navy. As further details emerged about the huge loss of life in the South Atlantic, subsequent editions carried the less controversial line “Did 1200 Argies drown?,” and the next day, “ALIVE! Hundreds of Argies saved from the Atlantic,” which played down the fact that over 300 sailors were killed in the attack. Along with other catchphrase headlines created by the popular press—“Stick this up your Junta”—‘GOTCHA’ came to symbolize *The Sun* newspaper’s cynical, jingoistic, and unrelentingly bloodthirsty coverage of the war in the South Atlantic. As I shall explore in this chapter, words and catchphrases, slang and slogan played a fundamental part in the shaping, controlling, and the articulation of this war; imagery less so.

An example of the persistence of word over image is evident in the painting titled *The New World* commissioned and produced in 2014 by the illustrator and political cartoonist Steve Bell. Best known for his daily strip called “If…,” which has appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper since 1981, Bell was emerging as a cartoonist at the time of the Falklands War but his withering depictions of

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politicians, statesmen, and royalty captured the left-wing disdain for a populist war fought for overtly political gain. Bell returned to the theme, some 30 years later, in a new piece commissioned to remember the First World War. Quoting from Paul Nash's "We Are Making a New World" (1918), Bell reintroduced themes from the Falklands War: the eviscerated trees so memorable in Nash's dystopian vision now spell out the word 'GOTCHA,' while the craters in the shell-torn foreground are strewn with torn fragments of texts from the British press with their xenophobic, cynical, and black-humoured tone. Over the horizon, in a brilliant parody of Nash's apocalyptic sunrise, Bell located *The Sun* newspaper's title, topped by its beaming proprietor.

The New World is an extraordinary painting. Not only for its clever conflation of two colonial wars, the First World War and the Falklands War, fought decades apart, but because it brings together the most memorable word from one war with the key iconography of another. Furthermore, it invites us to explore the visual records, works of art, and other interpretations that were produced during (and immediately after) the war in 1982.

The conflict resulted from the Argentinian invasion of the British-owned Falkland Islands, known also as *Las Malvinas.* Located in the South Atlantic, 10,000 miles from Britain, Argentina had long claimed the islands as part of its territory. In April 1982, Argentine forces landed in the Falklands and captured the islands within days. In response, the British dispatched a naval and amphibious task force to the region. After initial phases fought mainly at sea between the Royal Navy and the Argentine Air Force, British troops landed in late May and fought their way successfully across the islands. On 14 June, after several fierce battles against significantly greater numbers, they secured the capital Port Stanley and compelled the Argentine occupiers to surrender. The defeat led to the immediate downfall of the Argentine president and his ruling military junta. Britain suffered 258 killed and 777 wounded. In addition, 2 destroyers, 2 frigates, and 2 auxiliary vessels were sunk. For Argentina, the war for *Las Malvinas* cost 649 killed, 1068 wounded, and 11,313 captured. In addition, the Argentinian Navy lost a submarine, a light cruiser, and 75 fixed wing aircraft. Despite its complete defeat, Argentina still claims the Falklands and South Georgia.

Only 29 journalists were permitted to travel with the Royal Navy Task Force. All were British, all were berthed on government-managed ships, and only two were photographers. Of these pressmen, only 16 or so were allowed to land on the islands at any one time and most were kept at some distance from the front line. One of the two photojournalists was forbidden to go ashore for 12 days at the height of the fighting and instead spent time developing, printing, and wiring the few photographs taken by his colleagues, which then had to pass strict government censorship at the Ministry of Defence. Most of the photographs that were eventually wired back to Britain had been taken by non-journalist photographers attached to military units. Much of their work was published after the ceasefire. The intense censorship was augmented by the primitive technology then available on Royal Navy vessels. For the first few

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weeks, the Task Force had none of the 'wire' terminals which make it possible for images to be transmitted by radio from ship to shore. Films shot on or around the islands had to be flown to the British base on Ascension Island, but it had no darkroom facilities so film was sent onto London for processing. It will be no surprise to learn that only three batches of film reached London before the end of the fighting, and only 202 photographs were reproduced for circulation. Such limited availability of real time, on-the-ground footage and photographs now seems more reminiscent of the trench wars on the Western Front—when the British government released only two official photographers across a vast stretch of militarized terrain—than of a war fought only a decade after the Vietnam War, which nurtured dozens of world-class documentary photographers and film-makers.[1] Indeed, one of Britain's most eminent war photographers Don McCullin remembered being refused permission to travel with the Falklands Task Force, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) choosing instead (in his memorable words) to take crates of *Mars* chocolate bars. "It was a crushing defeat for me not to go to the Falklands War," he reflected to CNN in 2015, "in effect, I had more battleground experience than any soldier that went there."[2]

My purpose here, building on John Taylor's impressive essay (1989) on political censorship of that era, is not to imagine a conspiracy that kept television film or photographs from the British, indeed global, public who were eager to understand the machinations of a colonial skirmish over an obscure cluster of islands at the far end of a forlorn empire. Nor is it to simply accept that pictorial representation was a technical impossibility (awaiting a digital solution) or a low priority (awaiting the appointment of an Official War Artist). My purpose is to examine the role and impact of visual artists during and after the war.

To do so, I will first examine one of the very few exhibitions that attempted to survey cultural responses and output during and after the war. Entitled "The Falklands Factor," it was staged in several venues in the UK during 1988–1989. I will then examine in more detail the work of three artists whose work has been informed, shaped, and remembered through the historic lens of the Falklands War. Each of the artists represents differing approaches to the conflict, but they also represent differing chronological responses. As the UK government's sole official war artist, Linda Kitson has the unique reputation of being 'one who was there,' a title coveted by many artists during the 70-year history of government-sponsored war art. David Rowlands only painted his first military commission the year after the war, in 1983. As one 'who was not there,' Rowlands is a self-employed artist who makes vicarious representations of the war, responding to the lived and transmitted memories of the events that he then combines into reimagined pictorial narratives. Cecilia Mandrile is an Argentinian printmaker who was only 13 years old at the time of the conflict, but her work has many of the hallmarks of departure, loss, and erasure that characterized the short but savage squabble in the South Atlantic.

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116 ## 'Re-membering': A *Bricolage* Appreciation
117 of the Conflict

118 Military victory in the South Atlantic was matched soon after by political tri-
119 umph for the Conservative government. Not only did Margaret Thatcher's
120 previously unpopular government increase its majority in the General Election
121 held the following year, but the country saw economic recovery, a boost to
122 national esteem and a renewed authority to press ahead with a radical agenda
123 of social and economic reform. Characterized as the 'Falklands Factor,' it was
124 seen by many as a critical—if unplanned—moral and strategic step in the recov-
125 ery of Britain and its place in the West. Thatcher was lauded for having sent a
126 firm message to all dictators, would-be aggressors and post–Cold War despots:
127 "We fought to show that aggression does not pay and that the robber cannot
128 be allowed to get away with his swag."[3]
129 However, this message and this verdict of history was not universally
130 accepted, then or now, as an accurate reflection of a tumultuous period in
131 global power and positioning. For many, the 'Falklands Factor' gave false
132 authority and the illusion of consensus to a leader seemingly intent on disman-
133 tling the trade unions, the Welfare State, and the social fabric of the kingdom.
134 This so-called victory in the South Atlantic, an insignificant scuffle between
135 unequal enemies, heralded the full reform known now as Thatcherism. For
136 many, the human and material cost of the war, given the stakes, was simply
137 untenable: for Britain, the war cost the lives of hundreds of men, many ships
138 and aircraft, and an estimated financial cost of £ 2.778 billion.[4]
139 It was in this unsettled socio-economic context that an exhibition of the
140 same title was curated and then staged in Manchester and Wolverhampton dur-
141 ing late 1988 and early 1989.[5] The exhibition consisted of 132 items, amongst
142 them some 35 paintings, sculptures, and drawings (including 8 produced on
143 location by the sole Official War Artist sent to the conflict), and a larger body
144 of cartoons and graphic work (63 pieces) created for newspapers, magazines,
145 books, and television news by many of the leading British graphic artists of the
146 day—Steve Bell, Raymond Briggs, Peter Brookes, Gerald Scarfe, and Ralph
147 Steadman. A suite of 25 documentary photographs, taken by disparate photo-
148 journalists, official photographers (for the army's *Soldier* magazine), and regi-
149 mental recorders. Possibly the most poignant imagery in the entire show of
150 work was the suite of collages produced by combatants attending therapy ses-
151 sions to treat post-traumatic stress syndrome (known now as 'disorder'). These
152 16 collages were the byproduct of treatment for Falklands War veterans given
153 at the Royal Naval Hospital in Haslar, Gosport, and loaned by the Royal Naval
154 Psychiatric Hospital. Characteristically, a collage might include a photographic
155 representation of a Royal Navy vessel, HMS Ardent for example, seen in pris-
156 tine pre-battle condition on one corner of the paper. On the other corner, by
157 contrast, are black-and-white photographs of its mangled stern and rear deck
158 belching with acrid smoke. Many of the collages have texts and headlines from
159 contemporary newspapers or maps of the Falkland Islands glued in place; ironic

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phrases and rallying calls, queries, and question marks are often diligently inscribed. Curator Tim Wilcox remarked of the radical juxtaposition of a life lived before and after the war;

> the suddenness of the disruption and the contrast between two lives produces a particularly painful and moving image of an attempt at a reconciliation of the experience; to bridge this chasm and realise two worlds symbolically [is] represented by the two ships as a part of one life.[6]

From the vantage point of 30 years, the exhibition invites several questions and observations. First, it was a unique exhibition. Nothing similar has been attempted since. A brief and by many accounts an unnecessary post-colonial war has been forgotten by artists just as political commentators have parked it as an historical footnote. Secondly, the work in this one exhibition was, to be truthful, variable in quality and intensity. In its effort to offer a panorama of the war, the selectors drew on a shallow pool of readily available artists, illustrators, and veterans, all British, the majority male, a small number with established reputations in the field of acerbic political commentary. This is especially the case of several of the selected artists—namely, John Keane, Jock McFadyen, and Michael Sandle—who have since sealed strong reputations as politically savvy creative commentators of international standing. That subjective view aside, there is a third characteristic of the work, which can be understood by scrutinizing the pictorial approaches used by the artists. The first is the recurrent use of the silhouette as a means of articulating a simple, stripped down—indeed one-dimensional—rendering of the conflict. Many of the most memorable and singular images of the war, for example, Martin Cleaver's photograph of HMS *Antelope Exploding* are captured as bold silhouettes of black motif against a lit background, in this instance, the dreadful flare of the ship's ordnance as it ignited spectacularly. It was to become the *leitmotif* of the war, an icon in a war largely devoid of memorable visual imagery.

The second visual characteristic is the overwhelming reliance on a collaged approach to picture-making. As a bringing together of disparate parts, the collage is often used in post-war art, as a means of re-membering what has previously been dis-membered, that which has been torn apart by the impact of conflict. Much of the creative output in *The Falklands Factor* is a form of *bricolage*, an attempt to incorporate various fragmented images, beliefs, sights, understandings into a coherent and more practical framework.

The artist as potential *bricoleur* was brought into popular usage by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in his seminal book *The Savage Mind*.[7] It articulates the tasks of the *bricoleur*, a creative mind capable of combining often disparate material into a heterogeneous form. Such methodology has particular resonance in the work of many of those selected for *The Falklands Factor*. Take, for example, the striking collages created in the immediate aftermath of the war by Michael Peel. "Rejoice, Rejoice" (1983) takes its title from the now notorious remark made by Margaret Thatcher when questioned by the British press

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203 on the sinking of the *General Belgrano*. One of a suite of collages made by Peel,
204 it offers a shrewdly ironic remix of the design of the British Union Jack flag, in
205 which the crosses of the flag are now comprised of a screw and various leads
206 and cables. The words "Next of Kin will be Informed" are strident along the
207 bottom: the monochrome fragments bordered in red, white, and blue silk,
208 another ironic touch with its reference to medal ribbon and possibly the lining
209 of coffins.

210 Jock McFadyen's large oil painting *With Singing Hearts and Throaty*
211 *Roarings* (1983) was one of two significantly large oil paintings in the exhibi-
212 tion. It takes a wry look at the jingoistic nationalism that was unlocked by the
213 war. Crammed closely together in bull-necked feverishness and near bloodlust
214 on the docksides of Southampton, McFadyen uses a compressed collage
215 approach to recreate this uncomfortable and awkward assemblage of charac-
216 ters. Possibly the most overt items of *bricolage* in the exhibition were created
217 by the *Leeds Postcards* publishing collective, and by Steve Hardstaff and Rick
218 Walker, a duo of professional printers and designers. They assembled found
219 objects and bulk printed ephemera. "South Atlantic Souvenirs" is their collec-
220 tion of over 100 postcards, punning on the acronym SAS (as in the elite mili-
221 tary unit Special Air Service) to recreate comically bitter designs which
222 amalgamate popular imagery taken from certificates, insignia, and printed
223 ephemera with acerbic tags and headlines. One of their most memorable cards
224 has the banner headline "600,000 sheep can't be wrong." Even more provoca-
225 tive is an image which frames the sinking *General Belgrano* inside the cover
226 design for a British matchbox with its painfully ironic brand title 'England's
227 Glory.' Leeds Postcards has been promoting activism by design since 1979 and
228 relies on collage to articulate its political agenda. For such groups, the 1980s
229 were a fertile breeding ground for oppositional activism. "After all," they
230 argued, "Thatcher was in power, Mandela was in prison, feminism hardly got a
231 look in let alone environmental issues. In the mid-eighties we were publishing
232 our cards on recycled stock with soya based ink."[8]

233 In the hands of the *bricoleur*, picture-making embraces the collage, using
234 materials left over from other projects or drawn from diverse sources as a cre-
235 ative and disruptive way to construct new artefacts. In a commemorative envi-
236 ronment, *bricolage* might be regarded as a means of reconstituting the recent
237 past, revisiting and reordering painful events through a process of reassembling
238 elements that had been torn apart through violent conflict. In order to exam-
239 ine this notion further, we turn now to three artists whose work is linked in
240 various ways to the conflict in the South Atlantic.

241 'One Who Was There': The Authority of Being Present

242 An illustrator and lecturer in art and design schools throughout London, Linda
243 Kitson (born 1945) was chosen by the Artistic Records Committee of the
244 Imperial War Museum (and the Fleet Air Arm) as their only artist to travel with
245 the Task Force. Through her selection, she gained the distinction of becoming

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the first female artist officially to accompany troops in battle. She sailed in May 1982 on Queen Elizabeth II with 5 Infantry Brigade, and then transferred to SS Canberra, as women were then debarred from sailing on Royal Navy vessels. Kitson disembarked at San Carlos beachhead on 3 June 1982, almost two weeks after the first landings by British troops, and some four days after the Battle of Goose Green (28–29 May). Although she could not have known it at the time, there were only 11 days left of the campaign before the Argentinian General Mario Menendez surrendered to Major General Jeremy Moore as British forces secured Port Stanley. Kitson remained on the islands until 17 July to record the aftermath of the war, following the troops as they advanced overland to the island's capital.[9]

From the outset, Kitson felt a strong affinity to the troops she worked and lived alongside, and having strong familial links with senior figures in the military services, she empathized with the leadership challenges and burdens of the general staff. By comparison, she later distanced herself from many in the press (going as far as expressing a hatred of them) whom she felt leaked sensitive material and thus risked the lives of front-line soldiers. She spoke of the great privilege of being a war artist, how it gave her unlimited access on board the ships and opportunities on the islands that were denied others. Her powerful affirmation of the military cause lent an expectation that her artistic production would be factual, authoritative, and unbiased.[10]

Despite having been taught by and knowing many artists with considerable experience of active military service—amongst them Leonard Rosoman, Edward Bawden, Carel Weight, Edward Ardizonne—Kitson had learned little about their preparations for war and nothing about coping with a war to be waged at such distance. She recalled with astonishment Ardizonne's recollection while on government service as a war artist in North Africa and Italy that when he ran short of art supplies, he simply ordered fresh material to be sent to him. By comparison, the Falkland Islands were 8000 miles distant: resupply was not an option. With this in mind, Kitson arrived at Southampton Docks, on 72 hours' notice to sail, laden with a vast pile of equipment—easels, folding chairs, angling umbrellas, and an oversize tin trunk—crammed with the material and clothing she predicted she might need for a winter in the southern hemisphere. Naturally cautious and habitually oversupplied, she packed a vast stack of paper, drawing materials, and piles of clips, fasteners, and other tools to secure her drawing pads in inclement weather. The satirical magazine *Private Eye* dubbed her 'Linda Kitbags,' a moniker which she found hilariously appropriate.

There is no record of a specific brief from the Imperial War Museum. Recognizing her reputation as a professional illustrator capable of generating rapid and spontaneous reportage drawings, she was encouraged to produce bold narrative and representational material which reflected the multifarious aspects of the conflict that lay ahead. In truth, the commissioners could not predict how events might unfold, but they recognized her ability to draw

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quickly, in a neutral line and (in her own words) to "record things without bias."[11]

Bias (and the perception of bias) has an important part to play in any understanding of government-sponsored war art. The British government's first official war artist Muirhead Bone was appointed in 1916 on the basis of his reputation as an impeccable draughtsman with a compelling objective graphic style. His task was to produce objective artworks that could be used for propaganda purposes. Harsh critics dismissed his deadpan panoramas of the derelict villages and devastated terrain on the old Somme battlefield as unerringly accurate but rather dull. "Too true to be good," pilloried one newspaper critic.[12] Yet Bone was merely working to his brief. Any official artist or photographer who created over-elaborate, imagined, or fictional scenes of the war was severely censured. In a well-known case, the Australian government-funded photographer Frank Hurley combined photographic negatives to create composite photographs as a way of conjuring up dramatic battle scenes.[13] The extraordinarily dramatic results were roundly condemned by Charles W. Bean, the official historian and manager of war records. Forensic by instinct, he insisted on nothing more than an indexical account of outward appearances. In his view, documentary evidence was the only antidote to imaginative speculation.[14]

This tension between the indexical and interpretation persists in the commissioning of war art. Despite 80 years of re-imagining the face of war, this issue of retinal authority refuses to go away. Ten years after Kitson exhibited her Falklands work, the Scottish artist Peter Howson had a piece of his work refused by the Imperial War Museum, which had sponsored and promoted his commission to the Balkans War.[15] Their objection was that the painting, which depicted the scene of a violent rape between combatants and civilians had not been 'witnessed' by the artist. Its exclusion caused uproar in the press. It brought into sharp focus the rumbling debate about the very role and contribution of a war artist. The dispute probed their value as independent witnesses and questioned the validity of painting 'imaginary' events as opposed to 'factual' records. It focused not so much on the abomination itself but on the right of an official artist to pass off such scenes as 'authentic.' The exclusion of Howson's painting from the permanent collection further polarized two schools of thought: those that felt it necessary to depict the true face of warfare using whatever means available, and those who argued that an artist (and by extension photographer, reporter, writer) must bear witness—ocular not just circumstantial—to a scene of horror before committing it to paper or canvas.[16]

The topic was very much alive as Linda Kitson headed south with the Task force. It may in part explain why so much of her recollected narrative of the war focused primarily on overcoming the hostile conditions and extreme weather on the islands. Sharing the abject discomforts of the combatants, cramped into noisome sheep sheds and bunkers, she had to clad herself in thick and cumbersome clothes, and while drawing wear a variety of gloves (invariably two or three pairs at any one time). In order to ward off the freezing horizontal rain,

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she wrapped her paper and materials in swathes of plastic sheeting held down by dozens of metal clips and pegs against an unstoppable wind. Far from detracting from the end product, these hardships actually underpin the authority of the artwork, an authority that relied almost entirely on Kitson's unchallenged role as solitary artistic witness to the immediate aftermath of war. It may also explain the visual characteristics of her huge output while on commission. In this respect, Muirhead Bone had set a high bar: in a six-week period on the Somme, he had produced over 150 highly finished drawings. Kitson produced some 400 drawings over three months in her inimitable style, her eye roaming almost at random, in true *bricoleur* manner, across a diverse subject matter: signallers working their radios in the hairdressing salon on board ship, Royal Marines practising live firing from the decks of the luxury liner, Welsh Guardsmen at rest in its richly decorated lounges. If surreal juxtaposition and incongruity marked her subject matter on the journey south, her experiences on land were often grim, confronting, and at times extremely unpleasant.

Constantly required to work on location and in full exposure to the deteriorating weather conditions, she wrote later how "freezing temperatures and gales were a feature of airfields: a crater provided me with a windbreak of a kind… I got so cold from watching from my crater that, when it was all over, I couldn't get up and had to be lifted out. Clearing up and cleaning was the way of life at [the township of] Goose Green. Everyone there had suffered, every home was damaged, and now everyone helped everyone else."[17]

On the Task Force vessels, on the beach head, and during the march across the islands, Kitson drew as she moved, recording a visual diary in an endless suite of perceptive, endlessly busy, calligraphic line drawings. Everything was considered a potential subject. Like Muirhead Bone, nothing daunted her—not the cluttered interior of a Command Post nor the blades of a Sea King helicopter or 80 men crowded into a landing craft. However, when confronted with the immediate consequences of the fighting, she faced the crucial dilemma of any artist at war:

> At Goose Green, I had to make a decision about what aspects of war I should record. My brief was to record the sights that might be recognised as common experiences. I decided that the horrifying sight of parts of human bodies, a helmet with a head still in it—pictorially sensational and relevant though they were—were not part of my brief; neither were the war graves, which were recorded on news films and in photographs. I still question that decision. Would it have been a stronger, cautionary record if I had used such shock tactics?[18]

This was an important (and bravely honest) concession for a front-line artist. In making her choice, she places herself firmly in the lineage of such witness-illustrators as Edward Ardizonne and Edward Bawden, rather than combatant-painters such as Paul Nash or 'Richard' Nevinson. Her stance promotes dispassionate reportage over involved interpretation, however well-defined (and authenticated) by front-line experience.[19] However, this is not to dismiss

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the very real hardships that Kitson experienced. Shortly after the Battle for Mount Tumbledown (in late May), she took refuge with some 600 Scots Guards who had just stormed the enemy stronghold. With barely enough room to move, she was determined to continue drawing and maintain her continuous visual record. She later recalled that it was some of the most difficult drawing she had ever attempted, interrupted constantly by battle-charged, jubilant, yet still shocked soldiers. The spectacle around her was extraordinary:

> What I was trying to capture there, were [the sights of] men immediately writing home, there were men terribly concerned about the state of their feet, there were men being forced to deal with their weapons in order to stop them blathering; again there were enormous number of men who simply could not sit down, the shed being so crammed with guardsmen and their kit; everything was going on right at my knee level, it was so awfully hard to assimilate, from the chaps right in front of you and yet far in to the distance. So technically they're things I had no experience of dealing with … those drawings were so far removed from what I was hoping to get.[20]

Her drawings of this spectacle are endlessly energetic, with overlapping outlines indicating the restless movement of figures. Bristling with disciplined tension, her calligraphy carefully picks out salient features, the deep crowded spaces, but also the frenzied air of the sheds. Her narrative recollections are even more harrowing. An oral history for the Imperial War Museum was recorded in 1994. It consists of 21 thirty-minute interviews in which she recalls her experiences in her inimitable (and deeply credible) elliptical manner, piecing together the extreme moments of her time on the islands but also its characters and curiosities. As a form of post hoc *bricolage*, it is a compelling, if at times tortured, narrative. It becomes very clear why it took Kitson many months, possibly years, to recover from such experiences. It also explains how difficult it has been for her to reframe her practice as something other than the female artist who went to the Falklands War.

A Vicarious Presence: Piecing Together the Memories of Others

The work of 'military' or 'regimental' artists is often dismissed as being jingoistic, irrelevant, and designed on anachronistic pictorial strategies rooted in high-Victorian battle painting. However, a core of professional painters still works regularly for the British armed services to record, and occasionally commemorate, contemporary and past feats of arms, as well as more mundane public service duties such as ceremonial displays and garrison duty. Their work is largely unseen by the non-military public, mainly because it is intended for a closed community of serving soldiers, their families, and veterans associated with the unit. Why is such art work still commissioned at all? Oil paintings on

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canvas, like tabletop bronze sculptures and silverware, are imbued with a cultural capital, with an historic legacy of value and tradition, which photographs are deemed not to have. In the eyes of the military, the camera is a strictly utilitarian procedure, essential for accurate recording and documenting outward appearances, but not for creating an historic record that would last for posterity.

The period immediately after a war was an especially fertile time for such artists looking to be commissioned. David Cobb (1921–2014), a highly successful British marine artist with a record of creating striking renditions of civilian and military shipping, seized the opportunity in late 1982 to visit the Falkland Islands with the full co-operation of the services. His record of the naval vessels in the Task Force is painted as if he was there at the very time the actions took place. One oil painting of SS *Canberra* in San Carlos Bay seen from far overhead is rendered in a breezy, impressionistic style as if sketched in real time; the tiny helicopters mere silhouetted cyphers hovering over the immense cruise liner-cum-troopship. Another painting of a *mexeflote* ferrying troops to the shore is equally impressionistic, lending an air of just-in-time verity to the scene. The paintings are often signed with the date of the event rather than the date it was completed, and are invariably accompanied by detailed captions describing in detail the scene, the context, and the technical abilities of the equipment, which provide another level of didactic detail well beyond the incident depicted:

> This painting by Charles David Cobb shows the Scorpion tanks coming ashore with the Commando Brigade. These lightweight tanks were just about the only vehicles available to the British that could handle the harsh, boggy terrain of the Falkland Islands.[21]

Immediately after the conflict in the South Atlantic, many of Britain's most renowned military painters were commissioned to create commemorative works for museums and messes, though unlike Cobb few if any of them were invited to travel down to the islands. Veteran painters such as David Shepherd and Terence Cuneo painted medical evacuations ('casevacs') and life behind the front-line from information garnered from various sources. Less familiar names—David Pentland, Peter Archer, Mark Churns, and David Rowlands—were each commissioned to paint specific moments of action during the conflict. The assault on Mount Longdon, for example, was a popular subject matter, and even more specifically the "Heroic Action of Sgt Mackay VC," which is depicted by at least three painters. The title of one rendition is almost indexical in its account: "Sgt. Ian John McKay VC calls for covering fire as he leads forward elements of 4 and 5 platoon of B Company 3 Para, to assault Argentinean positions held by 7th Infantry regiment, Falklands War 11th–12th June 1982." To such painters, and even more so to those who commission such work, exactitude is paramount. Indeed, it is the presiding requirement of any commission. Peter Burke has described how the narrative conventions of

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such canvases relied on and contain 'formulae' in the form of small-scale schemata that could be deployed, sometimes prescriptively, as stock repertoire in figure composition.[22] However, unlike Kitson who had the (mixed) advantage of 'being there,' military painters such as David Rowlands had to rely on eyewitness accounts, reports, logbooks, and any other reliable source of verification to help develop a composition. Compared to Kitson's spontaneous drawings, Rowlands and his cohort of military painters take a near-archaeological approach to unearthing their own version of the truth. It is a vicarious approach that is worth examining in detail. Rowlands offers an excellent case study.

Having been instructed by the commissioning mess or museum to recreate a particular incident in paint on canvas, Rowlands concentrates on information gathering. He (the genre is now highly gendered) will first collect, where possible, eyewitness accounts, often traveling to interview those who have taken part. Clearly, such interviews can only be conducted with those who survived or those who wish to make themselves known. This is a familiar practice amongst artists who have depicted battle: Elizabeth Butler did much the same when commissioned to paint her well-known cavalry charge of the Royal Scots Greys at Waterloo.[23] In 1915, Eric Kennington sought out the surviving members of his platoon to restage his tableau "The Kensingtons at Laventie."[24] To fulfil his official commission, Henry Lamb asked the officials at the Imperial War Museum in 1918 to procure a full set of soldier's equipment and three somewhat unkempt soldiers from a Salvation Army Hostel who posed for him during the summer of 1919, each "in turn leaned, crouched, and posed as though hurtling for cover among the paraphernalia of water bottles, entrenching tools and mess-tins that littered the studio floor."[25]

Site visits are also crucial for gathering evidence; the method is invariably forensic because verifiable accuracy is paramount to those who commission the painting, but also by the combatants who are exacting in their appreciation of technical elements and data. David Rowlands always insists that where possible he is shown the key locations by a guide who was actually present at the key incident or by an individual directly involved in the subject of the painting "so that tactical detail is accurate."[26] In more recent paintings carried out after the First Iraq War, Rowlands visited the scene of an infamous tank-on-tank rescue escorted by the Squadron Leader who acted as cicerone: AU4

> The track marks in the crumbling earthen banks on the slope of the causeway and the marshy ground at the bottom clearly showed where 'Two One' [the armoured vehicle] had been extricated from its predicament. While we stood here I was able to make a sketch of the terrain. When I was in bivouac with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cpls Simons and Garrett explained the recovery process and showed me their CRARRV [armoured vehicle].[27]

Further negotiations follow. After the interviews and site visits, preparatory sketches are usually drawn up and sent to the client so that an interim review of factual, technical, and tactical detail can be checked and signed off. Through

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this dialogue, a set of operational details are mutually agreed upon. Although the aesthetic and design concerns remain the preserve of the artist, they are invariably subordinate to the detailed tactical and military considerations, which are determined by the commissioning body. However, some local and incidental colour can often be added to the agreed composition. This is clearly the case in a large painting by Rowlands commissioned after the Falklands War. It depicts Royal Marines from 40 Commando wading ashore at San Carlos Bay on the morning of 21 May. Every word in the 271-word caption carries historical authority. Indeed, its accurate index dictates the iconography for the painter: faces were blackened, a mixture of berets and helmets were worn, some men waded in at waist-height in water. On the morning of the landings, there were successive waves of Royal Marines and paratroopers landing on the beaches; for this particular commission, Rowlands is expected to understand any subtle differences in dress, behaviour, and even language (a forced march for the Marine is a 'yomp', for the Paras it is a 'tab'). Kitson learned these nuances: Rowlands likewise, and he was expected to articulate them visually. There must be no ambiguity. This stage is crucial in the commissioning process because, given the complexity of the army's internal structures, with its programme of *roulement*, secondments, and cross-posting, it is vital that the artist locates sufficient visual clues and identifiers to link an often confused action or event with a specific military unit. Without this level of specificity, there is no focus to the commission, no correlation between event, narrative, and record.[28]

From this point in the commissioning process (possibly after many weeks of correspondence), a composite picture, a *bricolage* of cross-referenced information, is finalized. Constructed out of conversation, fieldwork, and local histories, it is often augmented by hand-written notes, technical drawings, and photographs borrowed from combatants. The process of verification does not stop there. The precise position of individual combatants will be checked and double-checked by artist and commissioner, and the location of vehicles, vessels, command posts, bunkers, or other points of tactical value will be rigorously tested and located in the design. Little is left to chance. Only the more transient features—plumes of smoke, detritus, other visual ephemera—can be used by the artist to balance the composition, orientate the design, or add local characteristics. In the case of David Rowlands' work, a penultimate inspection is permitted. In fact, commissioners are strongly advised by the artist to:

> …visit David's studio before completion in case any detailed changes need to be made at points during the production. Once the painting is finished you are invited to confirm its completion before a professional art photographer takes digital images to produce your prints. David has worked closely with his printers over a ten-year period and will scrutinise proofs for colour accuracy and quality.[29]

The pressure to achieve technical verisimilitude requires professional acuity, an illustrative naturalism, and an ability to subordinate certain narrative

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548 elements so as to premise the over-particular above the general. Captions help
549 underpin the hierarchies within a given composition, helping locate place,
550 time, and (certain elements of) context. In many regimental paintings, just as
551 the title lends irrefutable authority to the depicted event, each individual can
552 be identified; indeed, most will have been interviewed to help exactly fix their
553 part in a given action. Clearly, the dead cannot be interviewed. Sgt Ian Mackay
554 VC died while assaulting enemy machine-gunners on Mount Longdon. The
555 heroic picture of the action by several military painters, including the venerable
556 Peter Archer, thus serves a dual commemorative function as both an emblem-
557 atic *souvenir* of a distinguished action and a memorial image to a recently
558 deceased soldier.[30]

559 Absence Made Tangible: Connecting with 560 the Memories of Loss

561 Linda Kitson deliberately avoided the abject and the shocking; her most mem-
562 orable rendition of the actual fighting was the striking image of acrid smoke
563 belching from the bombed landing craft RFA Sir Galahad in Port Pleasant,
564 Fitzroy, which signalled the death and mutilation of dozens of Welsh
565 Guardsmen. For many, her refusal to engage with anything other than 'com-
566 mon human experiences' was deemed to be an abdication of responsibility for
567 a front-line reporter. Criticized (often unfairly) for becoming partisan, a mere
568 implement of propaganda, she admitted that such subjects were the preroga-
569 tive of the photographer, not an illustrator. Military painters such as Peter
570 Archer or David Rowlands could not have disagreed more. In their *genre*, oil
571 on canvas conveys an historical and cultural provenance that is authoritative,
572 unimpeachable, and lasting. When endorsed by unassailable eyewitness
573 accounts and official blessing, such painters perform the ultimate vicarious act,
574 bringing back to life those who were there. Through this delegated process,
575 events can be retrieved from obscured memory, and then recounted detail by
576 detail in an illustrative idiom that is arresting and yet reassuring. For these
577 painters and their audience, exactitude is an unassailable truth.

578 Yet, as we have seen with the work of those contemporary British artists and
579 illustrators in the mid- to late-1980s, there was a sizeable body of work that
580 was stimulated by the conflict in the South Atlantic. Paintings, sculptures, car-
581 toons, and graphics were produced in rapid response by those who had not
582 taken part, would never visit the scenes of fighting, and perhaps regarded the
583 imagery of this particular conflict as fresh material for their own creative and
584 political agenda. Was this also the case in Argentina, where the population
585 reacted to the defeat in *Islas Malvinas* by ousting the military leadership under
586 President Galtieri and his junta, which had controlled the country since a mili-
587 tary coup in the 1970s? The junta's rule had brought dark times for the coun-
588 try: trade unions, political parties, and provincial government were banned;
589 Congress was suspended. A lengthy period of 'state-condoned terrorism,'

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termed the 'Dirty War,' was conducted between the early 1970s and 1983, the year after the Falklands debacle. Right-wing execution squads eliminated thousands of alleged subversives. It is estimated that as many as 30,000 individuals simply vanished. A benighted country, Argentina's economy deteriorated even further and its global standing was significantly blighted.

Cecilia Mandrile was born in Argentina in 1969 on the very cusp of the junta's regime. Trained as a fine artist first in Cordoba and then the United States, she studied for a doctorate in Bristol, UK. Nomadic by intent, her current practice is based in New York City, where she has a printmaking studio, but she has also had recent international residencies in London, Jordan, Estonia, and Cuba. She exhibits globally and her work is in the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, and the *Casa de las Americas* in Havana, to name only a few.[31]

Mandrile's work is derived from a process of construction, documentation, destruction, and reconstruction of fragments in different scenarios; she assembles intense photographs of close-up faces, printed collage, wrapped, tied, and doll-like objects arranged to create striking installations of the familiar suffused with the paraphernalia of the unknowable. In her own words, "photographs displaced and displacement photographed."[32] Experiential, haptic, haunted, it is not easy to summarize the disquieting ambience of an installation by Mandrile. Her work in the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, depicts a suite of dolls photographed with scant resources in different urban surroundings, their faces presented as little more than enlarged eyes and mouths peering out from a shrouded hood of bandaged linen. The impact is instant and visceral, whispering of abandonment, displacement, and forlorn hope.

In a recent exhibition in the United States, curators brought together artists concerned with isolation and alienation, and more specifically those who find themselves unwanted, moved on, transient. Mandrile's *Silence Between Hands* is an exact match to these themes. It is a soft sculpture of a doll with no clear facial features that might help identify gender, nationality, or race. It is placed, as so often in her work, in an open vintage suitcase—boxy, leather, with worn stitching, an object that has seen many luggage racks and railway platforms. When pressed lightly, the doll's chest activates a mechanism which creates the impression that it is breathing lightly. Mandrile's work has always conveyed this air of vulnerability, the fragility of the family but also its ability to remain robust under pressure. One of the curators asks: "It's this whole thought of what you carry with you when you travel… What's important to you? Is your infancy and where you grew up what's important to you? And what you are going to carry with you? Or are you going to leave this and grab something new from your new country?"[33]

Although Mandrile has not yet made the connection in her own reflections on her creative work, one could feasibly argue that these fragile and tender artworks refer to her country's crisis in the era of the fighting for Islas Malvinas. Mandrile is obsessed by the threat of loss of identity, its fragmentation—both

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personal and political—that is caused by the displacement of whole peoples. Her prints, photographs, and installations reflect the pressure on migrants to move from place to place. Nomadic herself, unsettled and always on the move, her work may also refer to the disappearance of so many thousands of her country's people during the 'Dirty War.' Her blurred portraits, taken at close quarters, are redolent of the lost faces of the poorly trained Argentinian conscripts who succumbed to the British onslaughts at Goose Green and Mount Longdon. Through Mandrile's lens and peering dead-eyed from their thin-skinned parka hoods, the wounded and dying conscripts are an iteration of those thousands who simply vanished during the 'Dirty War.' As an artist obsessed by haunted, restless movement and by unassailable loss, Mandrile's thought-provoking photographs and collages evoke a haunted echo of those lost in two distant and unnecessary wars. Many of her artists' statements touch on themes of absence, emptiness, and loss that as we have seen proved only too real for Kitson, during and for years after the war, just as they were dreadfully real for war painters, poets, photographers, and writers as they dwell on the awful impact of:

> Gathering, capturing, re-presenting and recording transience, photographic traces unveil the process that lies beneath them, a process that 'holds' the metaphor of the passage, a process that based on the awareness of incompleteness constantly searches for its own language, the one that makes possible the translation of a wound.[34]

AU6

Conclusion

Taking the lens of the creative *bricoleur* we have scrutinized a disparate range of artistic responses and reactions to the Falklands War. This chapter has identified some common thematic and pictorial threads that connect a number of artists and artworks. It has also noted where their work diverges, and where the nature of the commission dictates particular pictorial responses that are the subject of considerable negotiation. Through these divergent case studies, we have asked whether a reading of the artist's and curator's work as a form of commemorative *bricolage* offers a way of understanding how fragmented images, beliefs, sights, understandings might be reshaped into a coherent and useful framework. The 'Falklands Factor' exhibition attempted to curate such fragments into a comprehensible pattern, as a way of reflecting on a very recent and for many a politically problematic past. Military painters such as David Rowlands and David Cobb had to forensically reconstruct the components of time and place to satisfy a specific, even partisan audience, by piecing together a narrative and create painted memorial souvenirs. The more recent work of Mandrile is posited as a reflection on how artists gather, capture, and re-present states of transience. Concerned with global concerns of displacement and disappearance, her artwork may yet reveal its relationship to the troubled aftermath of the Falklands War in her defeated home country. Linda Kitson's work

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for the Imperial War Museum offers the most conventionally authoritative account of the ground war, due largely to her privileged position as an official recorder of events. As a visual diary of the war, it owes less to the post hoc reformulation and 're-membering' that characterizes the work of the other artists in this chapter. However, Kitson's oral history now seems almost as important as her real-time, on-site drawings made under such bleak conditions in the Falklands. Her lengthy spoken recollections are a powerful collage of sights, thoughts, and feelings, which may now constitute one of the most compelling and moving front-line artistic testimonies of that period.

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Author Queries

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Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please check and confirm the edits made in the chapter title.	
AU2	Please note that it is standard practice to set names of paintings in italic, not within quotation marks. Please check all names of paintings.	
AU3	Please check the spelling and casing for "Scots Guards".	
AU4	Please check whether "tank-on-tank rescue" is OK as edited.	
AU5	Please check whether the part "waded in at waist-height in water" should read as "waded in at waist-height water".	
AU6	Note 34 was present twice. We have deleted the later one. Kindly check and confirm.	
AU7	Is the part "Concerned with global concerns" OK as it is?	

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