

MONTAGE OR FAKE NEWS?

AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE

Virtual programme accompanying the exhibition *John Heartfield – Photography plus Dynamite* at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2 June – 23 August 2020

Afterlife

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin



Broomberg and Chanarin, *Afterlife 1*, 2000. Courtesy by the artists © Broomberg & Chanarin

Afterlife presents a reworking of a controversial photograph taken in Iran in August 1979. Eleven blindfolded Kurdish prisoners are shown being shot simultaneously by an eleven member firing squad – one marksman per person. A state photographer had been brought in to record the event, and the moment-of-death photo was subsequently reproduced around the world, winning a Pulitzer Prize. The photographer, however, remained anonymous until recently.

Seeking out the newly-identified photographer, Jahangir Razmi in Tehran, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin found that he had in fact taken a total of 27 photos of the mass execu-

tion, circling the group as he clicked his camera. These had never been reproduced. The two artists received Razmi's permission to work with the 26 neglected black-and-white images. After printing them up, they cut out and regrouped the figures in a collage process, so that each final image in the *Afterlife* series represents a single individual – photographed from various positions and at different moments in the execution process.

Broomberg has spoken of the uncomfortable sensation he had of physically cutting around a photographed figure with a scalpel to isolate it from its background. Once the small figures were sandwiched between two sheets of glass framed with aus-

tere lead beading, the *Afterlife* photographs were installed on a narrow white shelf, where the figures cast shadows on the gallery wall behind them. Thus the basic photographic concept of a single instant of light falling on film to record a photograph has been exploded into a more filmic concept, in which each image records a sequence of events.

