

Third Floor Gallery

Press Release

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Of Duties

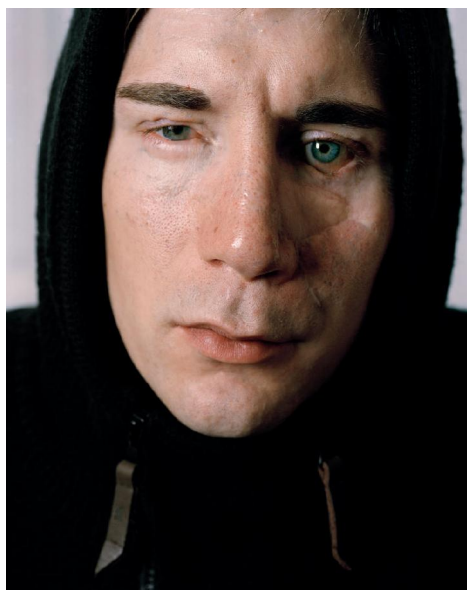
Stuart Griffiths, Jay Romano, Tim & Matt Bowditch

10 September – 9 October 2011

Opening Night Preview: Friday 9th of September from 7pm

The involvement of Western armies in distant conflicts has increased significantly since 2001. The Afghanistan war has now raged for ten years bringing in over a million ground troops from the coalition countries. What became as a clearly defined warfare scenario has over time become a large scale military occupation punctuated with episodes of guerilla warfare, ambushes and targeted assassinations. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, dubbed Operation Iraqi Freedom, quickly toppled Saddam Hussein from power but brought little change. The country's slow and tortuous recovery led to most coalition troops to leave by 2011. But as of today 50.000 American troops remain engaged in sporadic combat.

Of Duties consists of three projects that bring the life of soldiers, as seen by soldiers, to the walls of Third Floor Gallery. In *665 Days*, the American soldier and photographer Jay Romano tells us his experience in Iraq during his tour of duty. The daily life of the camps, the interaction of the foreign military and the Iraqi citizens, and the constant threat of explosive devices, feature heavily in his work. In *Polaroids*, British photographer Tim Bowditch compiles the instant photographs that his brother Matt Bowditch sends him from Afghanistan. Matt, who is currently deployed in Helmand, focuses his camera on to the alien landscape beyond the gates of Camp Bastion, and on the false impression of familiarity and routine within it. Finally, in the series *Closer*, Stuart Griffiths finds those soldiers who have returned from the frontlines and follows their re-integration into civilian life.



This exhibition is supported by Otley Brewing Company and the School of Art, Media and Design of Newport University.

Images by Tim & Matt Bowditch, and Stuart Griffiths