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‘Objectifying’ the War. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a Secular Message Board.

Summary

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. has become one of the most important cultural signifiers of the nation. Only what it signifies is far from clear. ‘A place of healing’ is a frequently applied epithet, in conjunction with partial memory loss; but ‘healing’ does not work without prior analysis of the wound. In postmodern fashion, anyone can read into it what they want. Evidence for its enduring popularity are the roughly 90 000 objects that have since its inception in 1982 been deposited at ‘the Wall’. These depositions represent an uncensored and hard to control alternative discourse on Vietnam; they are collected daily and stored at a huge warehouse. The ‘Wall’ is not only a sacred site, a locus of grief and contemplation, and a locus of re-uniting the nation, it has also become a prominent place where cultural battles are waged. Since 1995 there has been a permanent exhibition of a selected “Offerings at the Wall” at the Smithsonian Institute. They collectively represent a discourse refusing to be co-opted into a national strategy to re-interpret the Vietnam War as “in truth a noble cause” and an event in which American soldiers acted honourably.

Key words: Vietnam War aftermath, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, offerings at ‘the Wall’, object-based cultural discourse, American History Museum

“Objektivizacija” vojne. Spomenik vietnamskim vojnim veteranom kot svetno sporočilo

Povzetek

Spomenik vietnamskim vojnim veteranom predstavlja eno najpomembnejših kulturnih znamenj naroda, čeravno ni povsem jasno, kaj zaznamuje. Pogosto se zanj uporablja oznaka “prostor za celjenje ran”, v povezavi z delno izgubo spomina. Toda celjenje ne more biti uspešno brez ugotovitve vzroka rane. V skladu s postmoderno maniro si ga lahko vsak razlaga po svoje. Dokaz za njegovo množično razširjenost, ki se še veča, je okrog 90.000 predmetov, ki so jih ljudje od njegove zasnove leta 1982 položili k “Zidu”. Ti predmeti so necenzuriran in alternativni diskurz o Vietnamu, ki ga je težko nadzirati; zbira se dnevno in shranjuje v ogromno skladišče. “Zid” ni zgolj posvečeno mesto, prostor žalovanja in premišljevanja, tako kot ni zgolj prostor ponovne zedinjenosti naroda, marveč postaja tudi prostor kulturnih soočenj. Od leta 1995 si je moč ogledati stalno zbirko izbranih “daritev Zidu” v prostorih instituta Smithsonian. Zbirka se tako zoperstavlja vključevanju v nacionalno strategijo, ki razlaga vojno v Vietnamu kot “v resnici plemenito dejanje” ter kot dogodek, v katerem so ameriški vojaki odigrali častno vlogo.

Ključne besede: vojna v Vietnamu in njene posledice, Spomenik vietnamskim vojnim veteranom, prispevki “Zidu”, popredmetenje kulturnega diskurza, ameriški zgodovinski muzej

'Objectifying' the War. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a Secular Message Board.

When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (see website) was solemnly dedicated on Veterans' Day 1982, it was – in more sense than one – a contested site. Many in the Reagan administration of that time, as well as many Vietnam veterans, could not accept that the jury which had sifted through 1421 submitted architectural designs had chosen one which ran counter to the tenets of Washington's memorial culture: it was not above ground, it was not white, it was not 'realistic' in the sense of portraying soldierhood, and it did not contain a traditional dedication containing such words as honor or duty or patriotism. It did not even allow for an American flag. Some also objected that its designer, Maya Lin, was an Asian-American woman, and not a veteran or at least a well-respected artist. The stated intention of Jan Scruggs, who had the idea of a memorial in 1979, to start a "process of healing", seemed doomed amidst a cacophony of politically motivated criticism. Its design was abstract: an open 'V' sunk into the ground, with black granite walls containing the names of the 58 000 American dead, reflecting the image of each visitor, who would thus be compelled to view himself as involved into the national disaster that was the Vietnam War. "A black gash of shame" was the quick verdict of the objectors, to which May Lin replied that she had indeed meant to symbolize a breaking open of a comfortable surface, in order to instigate discussion not closure. And so the whole of the Reagan administration pointedly stayed away from the opening ceremony, while prominent right-wing nay-sayers to the design made dire prognostications about the memorial becoming a rallying ground for hippies and leftist protesters. James Webb, then a hawkish member of the Reagan cabinet, but since the congressional elections of November 2006 a Democratic senator for Virginia, predicted that it would turn into "a wailing wall for future anti-draft and anti-nuclear demonstrators" (cited in Allen 1995). A building permission was only granted after the Memorial committee agreed to add Frederick Hart's "Three Servicemen", a traditional bronze statue of three Vietnam War soldiers, and a flag (see website).

Those right-wing fears were totally unfounded. Against all expectations, the 'Vietnam Memorial' (as it now generally known: the shortened term signals a wider degree of cultural acceptance than Vietnam *Veterans* Memorial, an even more pithy term is 'The Wall') exerted a strange fascination on all that visited it. The most common term to describe it in the earliest years was "haunting." This, as can easily be seen, is as yet a qualifier allowing for a great variety of readings. Visitors came from each of the 50 states. They wept, they touched the names of those they had lost, they began to make rubbings. Within one year, all criticism of its modern design stopped. As early as in 1984, Ronald Reagan (no slouch when it came to exploiting popular opinion) gave a speech on Memorial Day, the second anniversary of its dedication, and other cabinet members followed. The number of visitors rose to 3, then to 5 million a year. In November 1985 an article in the *Washington Post* claimed that a full 20 million Americans had visited the site (Wimmer 1989, 232). An exaggeration maybe, but indicative of how 'mainstream' the memorial became in such a short time. Currently, the Memorial's official website claims that 4.5 million visitors come

to see it each year. Obviously, many visitors turn up more than once in a lifetime, but even so we may calculate that since its dedication in 1982, more than 70 million Americans have visited it. Many more have seen it in TV programs, and also in a number of feature films. A visit to the Memorial is the end and climax of Norman Jewison's adaptation of Bobby Ann Mason's novel *In Country* (1989). Hollywood too has discovered the selling power of 'the Wall'.

The opposition from the political Right had been so intense from the time the winner of the architectural contest was announced that some form of reconciliation was felt necessary by the veterans lest the whole plan collapse. Thus, the organizers of the Memorial site with Jan Scruggs as their president felt they had to come to a tentative agreement with the White House as to what the site was. And so Jan Scruggs, after admitting that the nation was bitterly divided on the Vietnam war, made this declaration at the 1982 dedication ceremony:

But one thing that all Americans can agree upon is that the Vietnam veteran deserves recognition and appreciation for their sacrifices. Let this memorial begin the healing process and forever stand as a symbol of national unity (cited in McCombs, 1982).

And "healing" became indeed the most frequently used word in speeches held at the Memorial. A deal was struck: the veterans (who in the 1970s had frequently been portrayed as mentally unstable killers in many Hollywood movies as well as in popular novels) were re-integrated into American society, while they in turn desisted from using their knowledge to break up the official view of Vietnam as "in truth a noble cause". William D. Ehrhart, a Viet vet and also a poet, described the "cliché" of the Wall as a healing site and attacked its silencing effect when he wrote that 'the Wall':

has come to substitute for substance and fact, as if the Wall says it all when in truth it tells us only what each of us chooses to hear. It precludes discussion or critique or wisdom, as though its dark polished face is all we will ever need to know, or ought to know, about the Vietnam War. This is very convenient for those in whose interest it is not to raise such questions as: Why did all those people die? Who offered them up for slaughter? What was accomplished for the price of so much blood? (2002, 24)

Once the memorial's 'sacred' status was established, other interested parties emerged to claim their presence at the memorial. After intense lobbying, a "Vietnam Women's Memorial" was dedicated (see website). It is even more traditional and uninspiring than Frederick Hart's statue, and was unveiled on Veterans Day 1993. Next in line were the dog handlers: they wanted a statue of a dog on the site, to commemorate the dog casualties of 'the Nam'. Their demand was resisted. But another addition happened on Veterans Day 2004: a commemorative plaque titled "In Memory" (see website) was added. The inscription reads: "In memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice." Whether this will be the last addition to the site is doubtful. A strong lobby wants to have another memorial added to American Prisoners of War, those that really were imprisoned in Hanoi and released in 1973, and those that have allegedly been left behind.

Dislocated Discourses

Now for the discourses that have been triggered by ‘the Wall’ but are dislocated from it. As early as in 1984, a veteran named John Devitt resolved to create a ‘Travelling Wall’¹ which was 50% the size of the real memorial, so that people unable to travel could see it in their hometowns. Quirky as the idea may seem, it was a smash success. Small towns all over the Union lined up for a visit, thousands of volunteers came forward to help with the arrangements on each site. A second structure was built in 1987, a third in 1989. By 2006, the organizers claimed that more than 1000 towns had been visited, with an estimate of total visitors in the “tens of millions.” The “Travelling Wall” organisation says its intentions is “to honor the fallen” (*Wikipedia*), a distinct narrowing of the original reflexive intentions by Maya Lin.

That somebody would copy this idea was inevitable. Prodded into action by John Devitt’s idea, ‘Dignity Memorial’[®] (see website), a private enterprise describing itself as “funeral, cremation and cemetery providers”, created a second travelling replica. While the ‘Travelling Wall’ is made of plywood, clearly an ‘undignified’ material, and is 50% the size of the original, the ‘Dignity Vietnam Wall’ is 75% the size of the original and thus substantially more ‘dignified.’ Bigger is better, as we all know. The material used is described as “faux granite”, imitation granite in other words. There is, understandably, a lot of ‘undignified’ friction between the two competing organisations. The ‘Vietnam Dignity Wall’ claims to have visited 158 American cities from coast to coast since the first visits in 1998.

This is the age of the internet, and of course we find a plethora of textual or pictorial responses to the Memorial. To cite but one example, a so-called “The Wall” website offers dozens of poems, short stories and even paintings that were created in response to the Memorial. One might be cynical and say the reason why they are there is that no publisher would print them. Patriotism and sentimentality are dominant features, no poem or story ever mentions the pain and suffering of the Vietnamese.

Offerings at the Wall

Maya Lin said in an interview that she had not wanted a memorial where people just come to have a look. She wanted a place where the survivors could interact with the dead. In her own words, she proposed “an interface between the sunny world and the quiet, dark world beyond, that we can’t enter.” Initially, her intentions were not fulfilled, thanks to politicians like Reagan or generals like Westmoreland who wanted to co-opt this memorial into the long-standing tradition of America’s “good and just” wars. So far we have observed a narrowing of the original discourse range intended by Maya Lin’s design down to those of grief, loss, and a revival of the “in truth a noble cause” reading of the Vietnam War, as initiated by Ronald Reagan in 1981. However, let me now turn to a strange and truly haunting discursive aspect connected with ‘The Wall’, and that is the discourse of left-behind objects. This discourse is much less under the sway of a cultural master narrative, and less controllable.

1 Sometimes also referred to as “the Moving Wall”.

It is said that the first person to leave an object at the Wall was a veteran who turned up when the concrete for the Wall's base was poured, and he threw his Purple Heart medal into the fresh concrete. The story is widely circulated, although the identity of the veteran was never established. Soon after the dedication of November 1982, the Park Service personnel noticed that visitors would paste little notes to the wall, would leave flowers, flags and personal mementos behind. It was decided that one could not leave them all there or else the site would have soon looked like a rubbish dump. So each evening, the Park Service had to collect all the non-perishable objects, and since it seemed undignified just to trash them, stored them at a nearby storage facility². When the initial facility was full, a huge storage hall close to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, in Glenn Dale, Maryland, was rented. Once this became public knowledge, the depositions became bigger and also more planned. By this time we also have a full-time curator; his name is Duery Felton³, a 'purple heart' Vietnam Veteran. A pair of cowboy boots turned up. Then a teddy bear. Or an AK-47 rifle, Russian made and as such war booty, but much preferred by all combat veterans to the standard issue M-16. In 1984, a delegation of Hawaiian veterans came with a string of orchids that were as long as the entire memorial (Oral communication, Felton.)

In 1991 Felton approached the American History section of the Smithsonian Institution asking for a small portion of its rooms to house a temporary exhibition of the collected "Offerings at the Wall". Three rooms were set aside and a six-month exhibition period was agreed upon. Its title was (surprise, surprise!) "Personal Legacy: *The Healing of a Nation*" (my emphasis.)

The success of the exhibition took everyone by surprise. On Sundays, visitors queued up to three hours to get in. After its designated running time, it had to be prolonged, and in 1995 was turned into a permanent exhibition. Thirteen history museums in thirteen states as well as the Imperial War Museum London expressed an interest and had the whole exhibition shipped to them. Their exhibition titles sometimes varied, including "Gathered at the Memorial" or "Vietnam Memories: stories deposited at the Memorial". Of course this did nothing to stop the objects from coming. In 1992 there had been 25 000 objects. In spring 1998, this had swollen to 60 000 objects, and in 2006 the count stands at 90 000. Already poor Mr Felton is thinking of obtaining an even bigger storage facility.

'Offerings at the Wall': the Exhibition

Upon entering the exhibition at the American History Museum the visitor suspects he has come upon evidence of a bizarre death cult. Next to military medals, uniform epaulettes and bayonets lies a "Peace" medal. A cuddly teddy bear sits upright next to an empty cartridge of an M-16. But most significantly, the majority of objects connote a personal stake in the history of the war, outside of what the nation may be thinking. There is a freshly laundered nurse's uniform spread across army issue boots. A bottle of whiskey (full), a joint, a six-pack of beer (also full), a sealed box of cigarettes, a pack of playing cards, a can of pineapples complete with opener, and a can of Campbell's soup hint at what the 'in-country' soldiers desired while "humping the boonies"

² Except miniature flags, which are left by the hundreds each week. They go to civic institutions.

³ Mr Felton agreed to be interviewed by me in May 1998. On two separate occasions we talked for a total of about two hours. Subsequently he was also kind and patient when answering my queries by Mail

(hiking through the jungles). A pair of spectacles of the terribly unfashionable horn-rimmed type, so common 40 years ago, bridge a historical and cultural gap. These are everyday objects, but the everyday no longer exists for the boys that were wasted in Vietnam. Then there are objects that hint at what might have been, what developments the dead boys (whose average age as we know was only 19 in this war) might have taken. There are sports trophies, high school pennants, a trumpet, a golf club, a baseball with the inscription "Floyd, you get one free throw." How many sports careers were never realized, how many academic careers cut short? In 1990, a woman who was 17 when her boyfriend was killed deposited a ballroom shoe with a love message. A widow left two wedding rings behind, explaining their story on an attached letter. More personal even will be an untold story connected to a piece of ladies' underwear.

Into this category also belong a pair of baby shoes, so pink and tiny that tears instantly shot into my eyes. The soldier to whom this baby was born probably never saw her. He was never allowed to live his parenthood and to forge a bond to his offspring. All those things in a normal life which we cherish and consider essential to the human condition never came to fruition. The communicative essence of such objects is a far cry from the political Sunday speeches on themes of valor and sacrifice, pride and service.

The exhibits are not ordered chronologically, just as the names of the dead are not ordered alphabetically. They are grouped by categories. Curator Jennifer Locke of the Smithsonian Institute told me that she and Duery Felton had aimed at the widest possible spectrum of categories. She also advised me that initially, small objects were, sometimes spontaneously, left behind at the wall, but now the process of depositing an object is often carefully planned, can even be the result of a year-long school project. And while the typical 'Wall donor' used to be a parent, a widow or a former sweetheart, i.e. persons very close to the deceased, now it is aunts and uncles and cousins that come to the Wall, there to leave objects. Also present are former buddies, neighbors or even schoolchildren who never knew the dead, but who attend the same school as he once did and use this as link to the past. For example, 46 students of the Rockland County high school in New York left a letter in which they reported how they planted 46 fir trees in honor of the 46 Vietnam soldiers of the same county that did not come back. Another such 'offering' was made by Norman Jewison, the director of the successful 1989 movie *In Country*, which starred Emily Floyd and 'Die Hard' Bruce Willis. He deposited a film roll of the movie *In Country*, in its shiny aluminium box. Such exhibits testify to the enduring power of the Vietnam War, which refuses to be 'over' as president George Bush Sr. advised the nation after the military success of Operation Desert Storm. In the words of Leslie Allen:

That this flood tide of artefacts and documents shows no sign of ebbing even as the war itself recedes into the past testifies to the insistent role Vietnam continues to play in the national imagination. As that role has evolved, the memorial itself has become a combination of holy shrine and secular bulletin board (1995, *website*).

It is the function of the "secular bulletin board" that is of particular interest. At the Wall itself no political statements must be made, but in the notes and objects such statements *are*

invested. Possibly the most problematic of these is a carefully crafted bamboo cage complete with glass splinters in its bottom, ‘donated’ by a state chapter of the ‘National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.’ It insinuates that there are still American prisoners of war kept alive in Vietnamese prisons, something that the MIA/POW lobby has claimed for 26 years now, without producing any evidence. However, extreme right-wing declarations such as this one are unusual. What did the person mean to tell us about the war who left a television set at the Wall? That this was the world’s first televised war? or that the plug was pulled from reporting on Vietnam? Other responses have emanated from the opposite end of the political spectrum. One of the subtlest was a well-thumbed copy of LIFE magazine issued 27 June 1969. Its cover story was “The Faces of the American Dead in Vietnam”. For page after page there were photos and short biographies of the 242 soldiers that had had died the previous week. Leaving this issue at the Wall said “for how long will the after effects of that war be with us?” A model of a toy merry-go-round with empty seats was left by a veteran of Gas City, Indiana, with the inscription “Where have all the children gone / long time passing?” No one can doubt the eloquence of such a simple anti-war statement. Next to a pair of Texas cowboy boots was deposited a large pink triangle, in reference to the way German concentration camps branded homosexual inmates. The inscription on it reads: “In memory of all gay soldiers in Vietnam. They were declared heroes when they battled with other men, they were declared shameful when they loved other men.” And the most powerful indictment of American culture is found in a letter by a black American veteran dedicated to his former buddies: “Dear Gut, Susex, Smazo, Wheat and Edwards – I miss you so very much, but you have died in vain. Apartheid is alive and well and lives on at ... (*name of a US company deleted*). I shall fight no more. With love brother Chief”. Even a package of M&M sweets might be charged with political meaning. As I was once advised by a former field medic, when too many wounded had to be cared for and the morphine ran out, it was standard operating procedure to give them M&M sweets as a placebo.

Letters

A category of its own are the letters which are usually taped to the name of a soldier whose name is on ‘the Wall.’ A collection of such messages was published already back in 1987, edited by Laura Palmer. Hers is a totally one-sided collection, one that contains no messages or poems that would in any way upset traditional discursive strategies to reintegrate the veteran into US society. Palmer, who incredibly proclaims that she does “not know whether this war was right or wrong” (cf. introduction) is out to revise the Vietnam War so that it fits the paradigm of World War II, the “good war” as journalist Studs Terkel said. More recently, an expanded but likewise de-ideologized letter anthology was published continuing the ‘Wall’ visitor responses where Palmer left off (Sofarelli, 2006). But in the ‘Offerings at the Wall’ exhibition such letters are not the norm. The emphasis in these poems is on individual pain and loss. Here is a typical example:

Goodbye David,
My name is Dusty,
And I am the last person

Who you will see,
Who you will touch,
The last person liking you.

Take a rest David
My name is Dusty.
David: and who will give *me*
something for the pain?⁴

Unlike the majority in Laura Palmer's collection, this poem is both powerful in its content and acceptable in its form. Its persona (if not its author) is a nurse, and we would like to think that nurses usually save their patients. The realities of modern warfare are of course very different. Another poem written by a woman is less insistent on personal pain even though it is impossible to overlook it.

Dear Daddy,
Now I'm twenty-three!
You would be proud of me.
They all say I take after you.
I notice the similarities myself.
And I have never forgotten you.
I knew it was you then as Santa Claus –
But I did not want to spoil it for you.

Possibly the most intriguing message ever left at 'the Wall' tells a story of combat and subsequent grief, but its unique aspect is that it is addressed to a *Vietnamese* dead. The message was accompanied by a faded and hand-tinted photograph of a soldier in a North Vietnamese uniform with an approximately six-year-old girl, his daughter presumably. Signed Richard Luttrell, Rochester, Illinois, it explains that the photo came into his possession when he went through the pockets of an enemy soldier whom he had just shot dead. Intriguingly, he emphasizes that the only way he could get rid of the picture which he had "stared at for twenty years" was to donate it to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

Dear Sir,
For twenty two years I have carried your picture in my wallet. I was only eighteen years old that day we faced one another on that trail in Chu Lai, Vietnam. Why you did not take my life I'll never know. You stared at me for such a long time, you with your AK-47. Please forgive me for taking your life, I was just reacting the way I was trained. So many times over the years I have stared at your picture and your daughter, I suspect. Each time my heart and gutts [*sic*] would burn with the pain of guilt. I have two daughters myself now. One

4 The poem was written by a woman who for years identified herself only as Dusty, but was eventually identified as Dana Shuster. She even published a book of poems under her own name called *Battle Dressing: Poems About the Journey of a Nurse in Vietnam*, which includes the poem "Goodbye, David." On 30 September 2006, National Public Radio revealed that Dana Shuster had never been a nurse, never in the military, and never in Vietnam. The revelation came inside the "All Things Considered" slot and had the title of "Celebrated Military Nurse, Poet Revealed as a Fraud".

is twenty. The other one is twenty-two, and has blessed me with two granddaughters. (. . .) Forgive me Sir, I shall try to live my life to the fullest, an opportunity that you and many others were denied.⁵

Luttrell's photo was eventually returned to him so that he could fulfil his secret plan to find the little girl whose father he had killed in Vietnam. An American TV company (NBC) assisted him in his plan and so did a Hanoi newspaper, who published the photo in 1999. Miraculously, the newspaper became wrapping material for a parcel that was sent from the capital into a remote village, where a villager recognized the soldier and his daughter. In March 2000, Luttrell (now white-haired, in his sixties and retired from his job) travelled to North Vietnam and made his peace with the 'girl', a woman who was now 36 years old with a family of her own. In a tearful meeting she embraced him like she had found her own father (Morrison, 2000, website).

However, even this letter and the story it tells is much more likely to arouse pity for the *American* man and not for his victims, the man he killed and his infant daughter. Sigmund Freud (1917a) in writing about the 'labor' of mourning pointed out that mourning was a process in three stages: acceptance, remembrance, and finally what he called *Durcharbeiten*, a process involving appreciation of the what has been lost (which in our case would be America's 'lost innocence') as well as an assessment of the new situation. The opposite of mourning is melancholia, a permanent and pathological sentimentality coupled with a general weepiness. And in an essay published not long after the one referred to above he made a few remarks about unhealthy and unresolved sadness that directly impinge on my discussion. The melancholy person "does not feel shame before others" he wrote, and is possessed by "an importunate urge to communicate which finds satisfaction in its own debasement." (Freud's 1917b, 433). While Richard Luttrell's story is one in which the final stage and with it, closure, were reached, the exhibition is, on the whole, more inclined towards melancholia rather than mourning; it panders to the emotions and discourages critical analysis. Prominently displayed is a large placard close to the entry that proclaims "this is not a history of the Vietnam War, but a long-lost opportunity to say 'welcome home' to our soldiers." A "long-lost opportunity"? How many more "Welcome Home" events, of which there were dozens already in 1985, the ten year anniversary of the fall of Saigon, must be organized? And that quixotic disavowal of the exhibition having to do with the history of the Vietnam War: the site is the Museum for *American History*! How can even one room in it *not* have to do with history? It goes without saying that each of the objects on display has its own historiographical as well as narrative potential, and is tied to a network of other objects that all possess a potential of historical sense making. But it seems that was of no importance at all to the curators. By selecting objects according to their power to evoke pity for Vietnam veterans they have, deliberately it seems, stymied any discussion of the war's historical and ethical dimensions. The wealth of devotional objects amassed in this collection must inevitably suck up all the inquisitorial energy that visitors bring to this site, and will prevent any detached reflection as to the war's wider political and ethical contexts. How could it be otherwise, when so many inscriptions speak of or imply a terribly wrongful treatment of American Vietnam veterans by their country? That myth has long since been exploded. Weighed down by a culture of veneration for the Vietnam warrior,

5 Parts of this letter are available on http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/warletters/letters/warletter_21.html

American youngsters will find it hard to ponder the issue whether the war itself was wrong, whether there should be an apology from its former architects, or why the US has once again embarked on an amoral and unwinnable war in Iraq. They ought to contemplate the question why Americans are so fond of waging war, but they won't, not in this exhibition. Nor will they be encouraged to contemplating the possibility that some of the celebrated veterans may have been evil killers. And how are they to understand that harboring such thoughts is both legitimate and supportive of peace?

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