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### **Paul McCormick Modern Warfare (2012)**

In the early days of commissioned war painting, it was believed painting was preferable to photography because art interprets where photography documents. Attitudes to photography have changed; it's now accepted as an art form but we're also more sceptical, in this era of photoshop, about its truthfulness. The photograph has lain at the centre of at least two war-related controversies: in 2006, explicit photographs emerged of prisoner torture at Abu Ghraib; in 2007, 'fake' photos of British forces abusing Iraqi prisoners were published in *The Daily Mirror*.

McCormick deliberately chose the medium of oil to document the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq because he wanted to give the works a feeling of permanence. These 'portraits' are of the forgotten, the abused, the nameless victims not typically commemorated in oil. The images are all gleaned from witness accounts. They are small (typically 20 x 20 cm), some not much bigger than photographs. They require you to get up close but when you do you're confronted by horrific scenes replete with dystopian scenarios. At first glance, 'Extracting Information 1' might be an abstract but then the figures cohere: blindfolded and bound, men awaiting their fate. 'Extracting Information 2' could almost be a boy on a diving platform until you realise he's hooded and attached to electrodes. He's been given regulation red underwear so that if - when - he shits himself his humiliation will be more visible. 'Extracting Information 3' reveals the chilling aftermath of a torture session. We see only the open door of the interrogation room with the tell-tale imprint of a bloodied body on its floor and walls.

Back in the 1980s, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard claimed the Gulf War never happened. He meant it was a media and mediated war, played out nightly on our television screens, paradoxically more visible yet distancing us from its blood and guts and horror. In this age of hyperreality where soldiers are trained via PS3 games, McCormick's visceral *Modern Warfare* series is a reminder of the brutal reality of extracting information.

### **Paul McCormick**

After working as a pin hooker, horse trainer and breeder in Ireland for several years, Paul McCormick re-trained as a fine artist. His practice encompasses both figurative and abstract oil paintings and, latterly, a conceptual artwork *Invisible Diamond*, 2011 selected for Praxis' MONA (The Museum of Non-Visible Art) curated by Vallejo Gantner artistic director of PS122 NYC.

**List of Works: Paul McCormick, *Modern Warfare Series*, 2012**

*Extracting Information 1*, oil on canvas, 20 x 20 cm



*Extracting Information 2*, oil on canvas, 20 x 30 cm



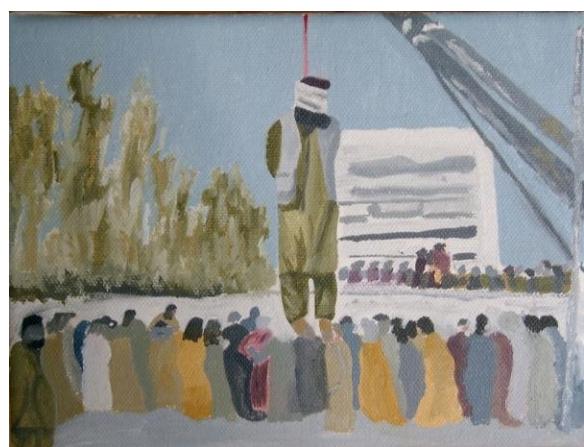
*Extracting Information 3*, oil on canvas, 20 x 15 cm



*Extracting Information 4*, oil on canvas, 20 x 15 cm



*Extracting Information 5*, oil on canvas, 20 x 15 cm



*Down on the Ground 1*, oil on canvas, 20 x 15 cm



*Down on the Ground 2*, oil on canvas, 30 x 23 cm



*Down on the Ground 3*, oil on canvas, 20 x 15 cm



*Down on the Ground 4*, oil on canvas, 30 x 23 cm



*Down on the Ground 5*, oil on canvas, 20 x 15 cm

