

Introduction: My comparative study looks at the impact of conflict as seen by two artists from very different cultures. I saw Paul Nash's painting on a visit to the Imperial war Museum in London. I was then interested in how a contemporary artist might consider similar themes such as loss and regeneration, of boundaries and the way that landscape can be used as a metaphor – to evoke through symbols and associations history and memory. I then consider 'Hot Spots' by Hatoum and finally Fiona Banner's 'Harrier and Jaguar' 2001. These artists led me to approach make a sculpture about war.



'We are making a New World' Paul Nash

PAUL NASH

"I am no longer an artist, I am a messenger who will bring back word from men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on forever. Feeble, inarticulate will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth and may it burn their Lousy souls." - PAUL NASH

"We Are Making A New World" is a oil on canvas painting by Paul Nash from World War One of English design.

Paul Nash was an official war artist in both world wars and his paintings from WW1 contained an explicit and angry anti-war message. In Feb 1917 he was sent to the Western Front and invalided home later.

The rising sun in 'We are making a New World' breaks into No Man's Land on the Western Front. This is a malleable landscape, constantly reshaped by bomb attacks and bombardment. As a result it is polluted, dead and ownerless. The continuous rise also shows the passage of time.

The title mocks any ambitions of war, as the sun rises on total destruction. The landscape is barren, unrecognisable and un-navigable. The mounds of earth are gravestones.

Information from: Wikipedia.org Encyclopedia Britannica
iwm.org
designboom.com bbc.co.uk/history

MONA HATOUN

Mona Hatoun's 'Hanging Garden' consists of 770 jute sacks in a 10m wall, much like the sandbag barricades used in war. However they are filled with seeds that sprout, expressing an image of growth and prosperity.

Gardens also carry historical reference to exile. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world, were built in 600BC by King Nebuchadnezzar II for his homesick wife. For contemporary Iraqi refugees, this suggests optimism in the face of death and destruction.

Just as Paul Nash Experienced the theme of his painting first hand, Hatoun was exiled to London in 1975 when civil war broke out in Lebanon.

Transcript of previous slide

- “I am no longer an artist, I am a messenger who will bring back word from men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on forever. Feeble inarticulate will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth and may it burn their lousy souls” Paul Nash
- ‘We are making a New World’ is a oil painting by Paul Nash from World War I of English design. Paul Nash was an official war artist in both world wars and his paintings from WWII contained an explicit and angry anti war message. In Feb. 1917 he was sent to the western front and invalided home later.
- The rising sun in ‘We are making a New World’ breaks into no man’s land on the western front. This is a malleable landscape constantly reshaped by bombs, it is polluted, dead and ownerless. The continuous rise also shows the passage of time.
- The title mocks any ambitions of war as the sun rises on total destruction. The landscape is barren, mounds of earth are gravestones.
- Mona Hatoum’s ‘Hanging Garden’ consists of 770 jute sacks in a 10m wall, much like the sandbag barricades used in war. However, they are filled with seeds that sprout, expressing an image of growth and prosperity.
- Gardens also carry historical reference to exile. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world were built in 600BCE by King Nebuchadnezzar II for his homesick wife. For contemporary Iraqi refugees this suggests optimism in the face of death and destruction.

Information from:

- <http://www.designboom.com>
- Encyclopaedia Britannica
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history>
- <http://www.lwm.org.uk/history>



Formal Response to Paul Nash's 'We are making a New World'

Sketch by me. Source: 'Messines Ridge – Bomb Crater – November 1915' Paul Nash

The emotional impact of this painting is what first drew me to it in the gallery; clearly the artist was working in passionate response to his feelings about the war. Yet it is the formal structure of the painting that communicates this. The disorientating composition that places the viewer, slightly above and removed from the scene, almost as if we are a ghostly presence floating above the sea of mud. The parallels with the sea are also evident in the wave like rhythm of the undulating mud. The overlapping shapes recede as in a simple stage set; one on which the actors are yet to appear. The space is filled. The depth is also theatrical, both infinite and near as the perspective draws us deeper into the mire.

The cropping at the edge suggests that we are only seeing a small segment of this sea. The horizontal movement is contrasted by the rigid vertical tree stumps – to a Christian audience they suggest the crosses at Golgotha. The circle of the sun, with a geometrical purity emits diagonal rays slicing through the solid forms of the clouds. It casts a stage light that only serves to deepen the black of the shadows. Everything that is earthbound is solid and heavy. The light of the sun is colourless and sterile. The clouds sanguine, dried blood red, the earth a drear khaki brown. This green sludge has a complementary effect on the red making the sky even more ominous.

The small scale is important, it draws us closer to the canvas and I found it made my experience more private and intimate. As I came closer I was more aware of Nash's style: the short oily strokes of opaque colour, the weight and thickness of the paint. It is amazing that he was painting this at the same time as Duchamp was exhibiting 'Fountain' at the Armory Show in New York, a piece that sets the conceptual framework for Mona Hatoum's work that I will compare this to.

British troops march towards trenches near Ypres at the western front during the first world war.
Sketch by me.
Source: Photograph: Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis

The sketches that he made in France formed the basis of 'We are making a New World' When he returned from the battle of Passchendaele he wrote, 'The rain drives on, the stinking mud becomes more evilly yellow, the shell holes fill up with green white water ... O it is unspeakable, Godless, hopeless;'



The First World War: The Cultural context for Paul Nash's Painting

Paul Nash was born in 1889. He started his career as a painter of landscapes in the English pastoral tradition of the romantic Samuel Palmer. This idyllic view of life was crushed by his life experiences. When the First World War broke out in 1914 he signed up as a volunteer but he didn't see action until 1917 when he was injured after three months in France. When he was recuperating in England his drawings of the conflict were seen by the War Artists Advisory Committee who then signed him up as an official war artist.

Information from: THE ARTIST AT WAR. *Time International (Canada Edition)* [serial online]. August 4, 2003;162(5):48. Available from: Advanced Placement Source, Ipswich, MA. Accessed December 6, 2013.

Irony 'We are making a Brave New World'



9 million combatants died in the first world war

"We Are Making a New World is the savagely ironic title of his 1918 masterpiece. Ragged stumps of scorched, blasted tree trunks emerge mournfully from the mud-choked terrain. Although a sun appears behind them, it is inexplicably bleached and surrounded by hills whose colours resemble clotted blood. No soldiers can be detected, and yet the battered trees seem as human as the members of a chorus in a relentless tragedy."

Cork, R. (2003). The killing fields. *New Statesman*, 132(4649), 27.

The bitterness of Paul Nash is apparent in his title, which mocks the propaganda of war. He was very lucky to have survived, if he had not been wounded and sent home he would have died with the rest of his battalion. He was aware that this was a lucky chance. He no longer has any respect for the authority and power of the state. He knows that war is only bringing death and destruction.

Cultural Context 'The Hanging Garden'

Mona Hatoum is a contemporary British artist born in Lebanon of Palestinian origins. These biographical facts are very important to understand the cultural context of her art work, because just as Paul Nash is responding to a personal experience of war she is using art to delve into her feelings of displacement through political conflict.

Her work deals with memory and history, subjects that also concern Anselm Kiefer, but she does this through the use of installation. Dr Vivienne Jabri states that *"it is the installation that enables her to threaten boundaries between the inside and outside, the artist and the viewer, the self and the other"*. These themes are very clear in 'The Hanging Garden' which forms a real barrier that we must walk around.

The body is an important element in her works, sometimes it is her own body, but in this work it is the body of the viewer. She also uses metaphors for boundaries such as cages, wire and especially maps. This can be seen in the second work I look at: 'Hot Spot'.



Dr Vivienne Jabri states that "Hatoum's work has a seductive attraction that draws the viewer into the installation. In a certain sense, the artist and viewer come to share a space that is at once troubling and liberating. There is also a vulnerability associated with this space so that the viewer is no longer a mere passive onlooker, but is deeply involved. The viewer enters a zone of questions and interrogations."

My thoughts in the gallery:

I can imagine being a soldier behind defences as I walk up to the sandbags in the gallery. The piece has a very tactile quality; I want to touch the rough hessian of the sacks. They are bulging with the form of the sand. The grass is growing out fresh, bright green and delicate. I can imagine the gallery attendants watering it each day. The piece has a sense of weight, like a wall, but not permanent as I could drag the bags elsewhere. It does not really feel like an art work. I have an urge to touch it. Yet it also speaks of time. The time before the sacks were filled with sand, when they were empty formless shells and the time after the grass has died and they will be simply a sterile bank again. It is a metaphor for how slight man's imprint is on the landscape and on nature.

The Cultural Context for Mona Hatoum's Art: The Arab Israeli Conflict

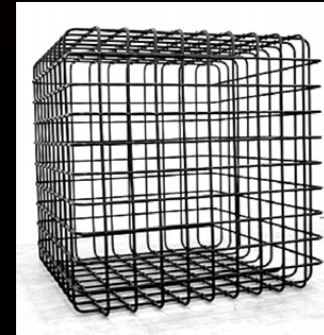
Although both of the pieces by Hatoum that I am looking at are not linked to an individual political event it is obvious that she is very personally aware of the Arab Israeli conflict. This conflict dates back to 19th century nationalist movements leading to the birth of Zionism and The Arab Nationalist movement in the First World War. As Jewish immigration to Palestine grew during the first part of the 20th century so did the conflicts. At this time the area was controlled under the British mandate. After the second world war the allies were determined to solve what they saw as 'The Jewish Problem'. Palestine was formed in 1945 in response to the allies desire to establish a homeland for the Jews displaced by the holocaust and persecuted for centuries. The United Nations agreed on a division of lands and the establishment of Israel in 1948. Maps and boundaries are so important to this conflict that it is obvious why Mona Hatoum has adopted them as a metaphor for the displacement that she felt.

One of the consequences of the subsequent civil disputes and warring factions has been the construction of a so called ' Wall of Separation' around the Gaza strip that divides the Arab Palestinians from the predominantly Jewish Israel.

The research for this information was from:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli%E2%80%93Palestinian_conflict

"Read in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we see in **Hatoum's** work a powerful critique of the 'peace process' as one built on the confinement, incarceration, and continued subjugation of the Palestinian population" Dr Vivienne Jabri



My sketch of: 'Cube' by
Mona Hatoum 2006.

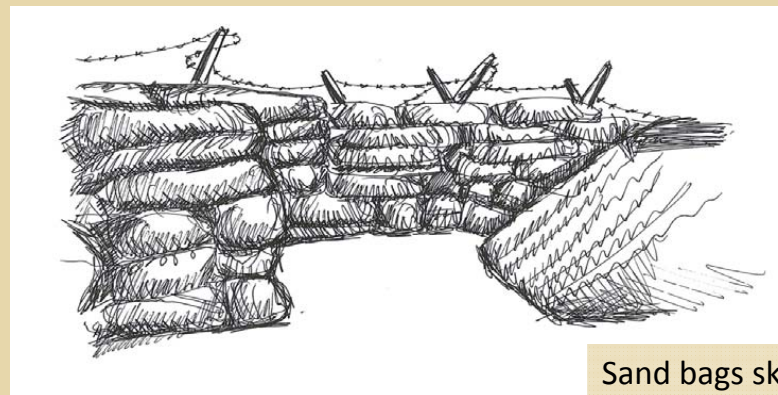
Context:

Mona Hatoum has used the materials of war: barriers, maps, grids and steel. She uses sandbags as a metaphor for conflict. They suggest boundaries, which is particularly appropriate as she is Palestinian by birth.



"A Hamas policeman stand on sand bags along the border with Egypt on September 1, 2013 in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, as smoke rises (L) in the Egyptian side of the border following an explosion at a smuggling tunnel dug beneath the Gaza-Egypt border. Egyptian security forces have stepped up a crackdown campaign on smuggling tunnels between Egypt and the Gaza Strip since July, Hamas officials said."

(Image inspired by a photo from seen at http://assets.nydailynews.com/polopoly_fs/1.1443155.1378080171!/img/httpImage/image.jpg_gen/derivatives/landscape_635/522466996.jpg, Jan 2014)



Sand bags sketched by me



This photograph captures the supposed site of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.



Hatoum and Nash: History and Regeneration?

Both artists suggest regeneration and hope. Hatoum through the seeds that sprout in the sand bags, Nash in the rising sun. However, in both these signs are weak and perhaps doomed omens, as the seedlings cannot survive long in such an artificial and barren form as a sand bag. Similarly the rising sun seems to have insufficient strength to revive the land after the ravages of war. The Poppies that grew on the freshly turned soil of Flanders fields after armistice and which have become a symbol of remembrance and growth after war are equivalents of Hatoum's grass seedlings.

The titles in both works resonate with meaning.

Hatoum is referring to one of the ancient wonders of the world that was significantly close to the modern day Middle Eastern conflicts that determined her life.

Encyclopaedia Britannica says:

On the Euphrates River, in the land that is now Iraq, ruins of the world's first great city stand alone in the desert. The city bore the proud name Bab-Ilu, meaning "gate of the gods." Nebuchadnezzar's own great palace achieved a touch of fairyland from its famous Hanging Gardens, which the Greeks counted as one of the Seven Wonders of the World

Babylonia and Assyria. (2013). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://school.eb.co.uk/levels/intermediate/article/273046>



'The Hanging Garden' Mona Hatoum (Photo: Cordoba2016)

The Special Art Context of a modern gallery space:

Mona Hatoum transforms the sandbags into an art piece by putting them into the special space of an art gallery. This is similar to Walter De Maria, an American land artist with his 'Earth Room'. This conceptual approach to art began with Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain' in 1917, which was exhibited in the same year that Nash painted 'We are making New World' Duchamp questioned what art was? He also drew attention to the special way of looking that we bring to art. When we see something in an art gallery or museum we see it differently. So Hatoum's sandbags become poetic or symbolic as we search for deeper meanings that go beyond their function outside this special space. Walter De Maria really helps us understand this when he fills the artificial space of the gallery with earth from the real landscape.



Walter De Maria 'The New York Earth Room', 1977
Photo: John Cliett. Courtesy Dia Art Foundation.



Sketch that I made from Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain' 1917



'The Hanging Garden' Mona Hatoum (Photo: Cordoba2016)



The colour is used for symbolic effect: heat, fire and energy.

The materials are those of war: steel and fire (the light)



Mona Hatoum 'Hot Spot' 2006

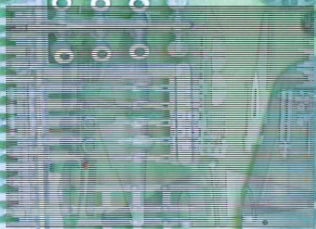
The sculpture 'Hot Spot' is a harsh metal globe structure which sits on the floor of the gallery. The countries of the world are outlined with red neon lights. It looks hot and dangerous, as if the earth is heating up. Hatoum said that the world was *'world continually caught up in conflict and unrest'*. For me it suggests that all the small conflicts over borders in the world have heated up to reduce the planet to a burnt out shell, like the remains of a city after bombing with just red embers glowing around what once were the walls. On the gallery website Andrew Renton suggests that *"Compelling and seemingly dangerous, Hot Spot suggests that it is not simply contested border zones that are political hot spots but an entire global situation"*

The formal impact of this work is created by the scale which relates to that of the viewer, but also threatens us. Just as with 'The Hanging Garden' we are drawn to walk around the work, like a glowing fire. Its form is both as a sculpture and as an installation. It has the structure of a sculpture, armature, form and surface qualities, but because the light glows out it involves the whole gallery space as an installation.



Background: photocopied scan of the model plane parts I used to make my sculpture. I then edited the scan in Photoshop.

Original scan below:



SOURCES:

- <http://blog.visitlondon.com/2010/06/fiona-banner-creates-the-2010-duveens-commission-at-londons-tate-britain/>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jun/28/tate-britain-fiona-banner>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10434348>

For the Duveens Commission of 2010, Fiona Banner purchased two fighter planes from the Ministry of Defence and placed them in the Tate Gallery. The two aircrafts, placed out of context, create a striking juxtaposition with the neo-classical surroundings of the Tate's architecture. The Sea Harrier (left), used by the navy in Bosnia, is suspended from the ceiling as though it is a trussed up bird. Banner reinforced this analogy by hand painting feather patterns on to the wings of the plane. In the adjoining gallery, a RAF Jaguar (right) is placed 'belly-up' on the gallery floor, the pose similar to that of a submissive animal. Despite this, Banner states that her work is not an anti-war piece, but instead "more about how people react to it, rather than a big black and white statement." This intention is very literally displayed in the stripped and polished surface of the Jaguar which reflects the image of whosoever looks at the piece. An observer is unable to detach themselves from the object as they see their own reflection mirrored on the surface of the plane.



Both Fiona Banner's and Mona Hatoum's works are non-polemical. Instead of condemning war, they simply present it as something which exists. There is no one sided view, given to the observer to digest. Alternatively, they provoke thought and cause the observer to reflect on their own opinions on the subject the art presents. Though inspired by historical events they are not restricted to them, encompassing a wider subject within the observer's imagination.



Conclusion: How do these artists use metaphor?

In evaluating these artists I have seen how similar the ideas of Nash and of modern artists are even though they are working in completely different cultures. Paul Nash, Mona Hatoum and Fiona Banner all use metaphor to suggest the wider issues involved in conflict and war. They transform stuff: paint, sand, steel and even a real plane, to create cultural meanings that better help us to understand the world. They confront the viewer with the unexpected so that we can think about the effects of war. I am going to try to make a similar metaphorical piece to conclude my comparative study.



IDEAS

LITERAL

ABSTRACT

In these compositions, I used the idea of soldiers hiding behind masks and façades of emotion to reveal doubt and confusion in the twisted wires behind.

Here, I began my ideas with the themes of war and exile in mind. I determined some war-related materials and objects such as burlap used in jute sack (kamikaze), poppies, a common symbol for all those fallen in the first and second world wars, grass to represent both life and decay, as well as white feathers a war-time symbol.

The twisted wire of the helmets was to show contrast to the solid protective metal helmets are typically supposed to be made from. The gaps between the metal represent the idea that the fighting in war does little to save lives with the killing of so

The compositions on the right are of a more abstract nature. This top piece shows deconstructed shapes of war cut into shapes of the countries around the globe. These then hang from a mess of twisted wire, suggesting a dependence for war throughout the world.

Model planes in these two pieces depict destruction as well as the passage of time as each plane is taken from a different era.

The composition on the right at the bottom is based inside a globe, the interior of which will be painted red to show bloodshed. A light box had also been fitted within the heart of the sculpture so that when switched on, shadows are cast out to show the

world after suspended on made of metal deconstructed

old style plane toy

Fragmented model plane

the modern plane

light box

outside black

countries came inward on globe. Plastic

The countries came inward to suggest a magnetic quality of war, sucking in the countries of the

inside painted red

whole model plane historic

twisted wires represent plane trajectory/passage of

black flesh (eye masks)

white feathers

red wires

extends out

grass

wire twisted

poppies

red ribbon represents blood

white feathers

white burlap sack

black/ flesh (eye masks)

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extends out

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white burlap sack

Transcript of previous slide

IDEAS: Literal –Abstract (notes from Visual Arts Journal for final piece)

- Here, I began my ideas with the theme of war and exile in mind. I determined some war related materials and objects such as burlap used in jute sack barricades, poppies a common symbol for those fallen in the first and second world wars, grass to represent both life and decay as well as white feathers, a wartime symbol of cowardice.
- In these compositions, I used the idea of soldiers hiding behind masks and facades of emotion to reveal doubt and confusion in the twisted wires behind.
- The twisted wire of the helmets was to show a contrast to the solid protective metal helmets are typically supposed to be made from. The gaps between the metal represent the idea that the fighting in war does little to save lives with the killing of so many.
- The compositions on the right are of a more abstract nature. This top piece shows dented metal of war cut into shapes of the countries around the globe. These then hang from a mess of twisted wire, suggesting a dependence for war throughout the world.
- Model planes in these two pieces depict destruction as well as the passage of time as each plane is taken from a different era.
- The composition on the right at the bottom is based inside a globe, the interior of which will be painted red to show bloodshed. A light box has also been fitted within the heart of the sculpture so that when switched on, shadows are cast out to show the spread of warfare.
- The destruction of the modern plane also represents the idea that we are destroying the world through endless fighting.
- The countries curve inwards to suggest a magnetic quality of war, sucking in the countries of the world.

The Globe

Below is my plan for the global part of my sculpture. I intend to sculpt out of clay various fragments of a globe, cover them in plastic, which when fashioned together, will make a spherical shape. I decided to make the splits as tectonic plates (see bottom left) as possible. This is to show destruction and an almost apocalyptic theme, earthquakes often being associated with the end of the world. When finished I intend to spray paint the inside of the plastic globe a red, mimicking the magma found at the Earth's core, as well as the bloodshed war brings.

The continents of the world will be protruding from the globe, trying to break free. I will split them in accordance to the political divides across the globe. Into the surface of these split continents I will add texture by marking my fingerprints into the clay before it is used as a mould for the plastic, showing the impression of

Hatoum's piece highlights every land mass by outlining it in a neon red light that fills the room with an overwhelming red hue. The structure seems to suggest that these neon contoured areas are the 'hot spots' of the world, which, in turn, translates as the whole world is in conflict. She doesn't pinpoint the source of the friction of the specific problem, whether it global or personal, but simply draws attention to the constant struggle present throughout the world.

Mona Hatoum's sculptural work titled *Hot Spot* presents a massive cage-like metallic globe radiating a crimson glow. In terms of global politics and news, a 'hot spot' generally refers to an area of conflict.

Pictures and information taken from www.mymodernmet.com

Lefts an example of the different political divides across the globe.

Transcript of previous slide

The Globe

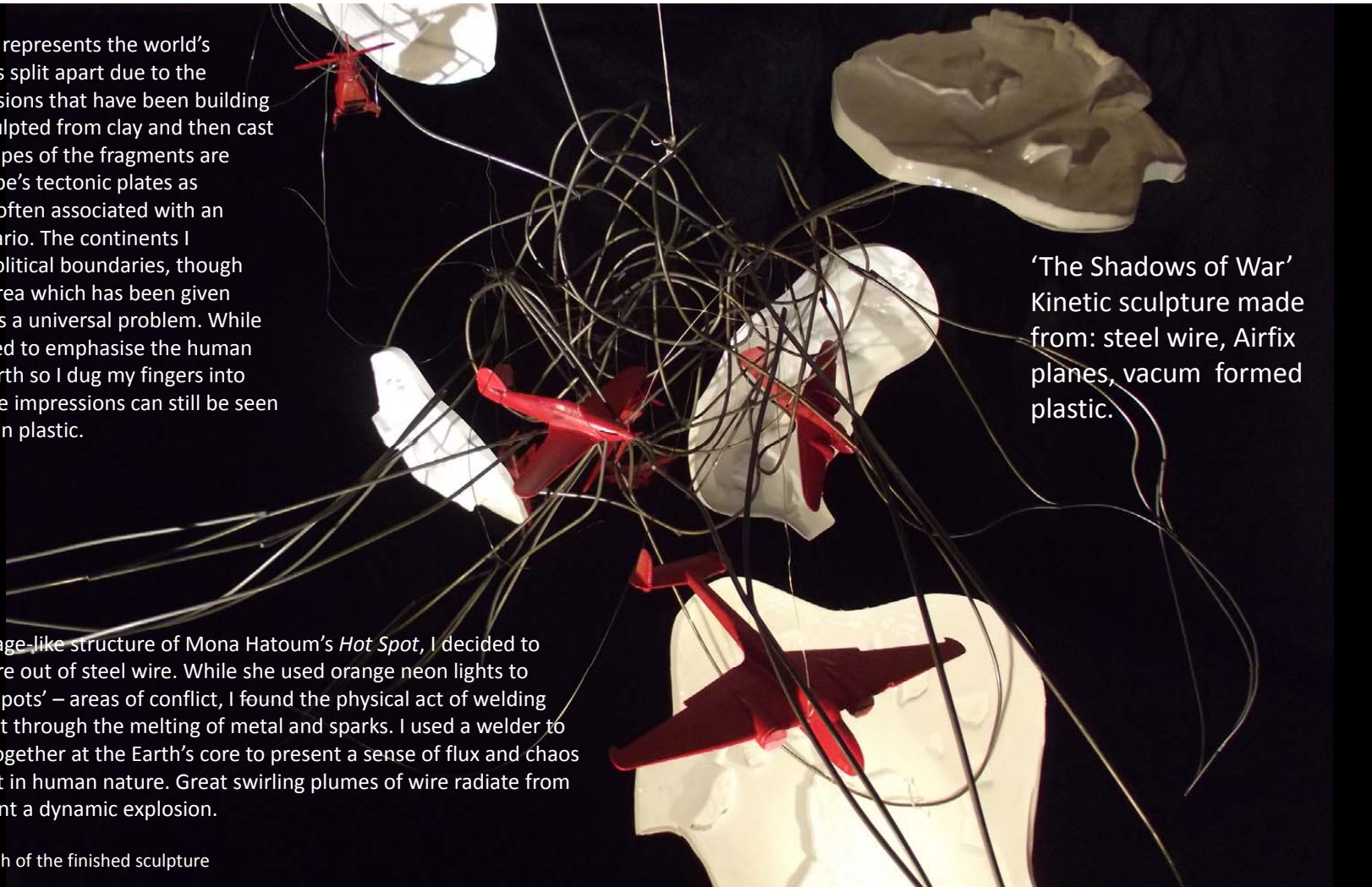
- Below is my plan for the global part of my sculpture. I intend to sculpt out of clay various fragments of a globe, cover them in plastic, which when fashioned together will make a spherical shape. I decided to make the splits as closely resembling the tectonic plates (see bottom left) as possible. This is to show destruction and an almost apocalyptic theme, earthquakes often being associated with the end of the world. When finished I intend to spray-paint the inside of the plastic globe red, mimicking the magma found at the earth's core, as well as the bloodshed war brings.
- The continents of the world will be protruding from the globe, trying to break free. I will split them in accordance to the political divides across the globe into the surface of these split continents. I will add texture by marking my fingerprints into the clay before it is used as a mould for the plastic, showing the impression of humans on the earth,
- Hatoum's piece highlights every land mass outlining it in a neon red light that fills the room with an overwhelming red hue. The structure seems to suggest that these neon contoured areas are the 'hot spots' of the world which in turn translates as the whole world is in conflict. She doesn't pinpoint the source of the friction or the specific problem, whether it is global or personal, but simply draws attention to the constant struggle present throughout the world.
- Left: an example of different political divides across the globe.
- Pictures and information taken from: www.mymodernmet.com

The white plastic represents the world's surface which has split apart due to the pressure and tensions that have been building within it. First sculpted from clay and then cast in plastic, the shapes of the fragments are based on the globe's tectonic plates as earthquakes are often associated with an apocalyptic scenario. The continents I fragmented by political boundaries, though there is no one area which has been given blame – conflict is a universal problem. While sculpting, I wanted to emphasise the human impact on the earth so I dug my fingers into the clay and these impressions can still be seen after the casting in plastic.

Inspired by the cage-like structure of Mona Hatoum's *Hot Spot*, I decided to make my sculpture out of steel wire. While she used orange neon lights to portray the 'hot spots' – areas of conflict, I found the physical act of welding itself created heat through the melting of metal and sparks. I used a welder to tangle the wire together at the Earth's core to present a sense of flux and chaos which is apparent in human nature. Great swirling plumes of wire radiate from the core to present a dynamic explosion.

My own photograph of the finished sculpture

'The Shadows of War'
Kinetic sculpture made from: steel wire, Airfix planes, vacuum formed plastic.



The Shadow of War

The planes were model WWII planes which I assembled and then spray painted with red paint. Painting the planes served a dual purpose of both unifying them within the piece and also representing a sense of the conflict and danger the machines embody through the conflict of the paint. Red symbolises armed conflict, bloodshed and brutality.

Imagery for my Sculpture.

I wanted to use metaphors to create a piece which would both suggest universal ideas as in Hatoum's work, but also to evoke the explosive power of war.

My own photographs of the finished sculpture

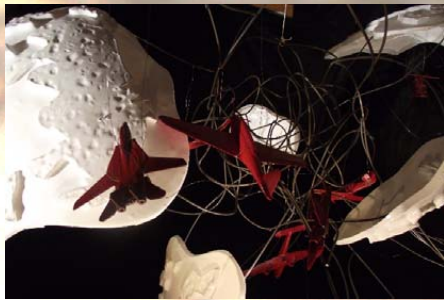
<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/bandl.danby/Pic026Explosion.jpg>



The Shadow of War

While photographing the sculpture, I was pleased to find that when shining dual light sources at the piece, multiple shadows were cast. Just as shining a light has the consequence of creating shadows; war creates its own metaphorical shadows in both the minds of the victims of war and the surrounding landscape. For example, refugees exiled to another country or wide areas barren from vegetation after the chemical contamination bombs.

My own photographs of the finished sculpture



Sources

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- www.mymodernmet.com