



Diego Ibarra Sánchez – Hijacked Education
Opening Tuesday October 10, 2017, at 06:00 PM
Dates: October 11 – November 25, 2017
Hours: from Tuesday to Friday, 3:00PM – 7:00PM
Saturday by-appointment
Free entrance

Mudima Lab
via A. Tadino, 20
20124 Milano
tel. 02 49527789
www.mudimalab.com
info@mudimalab.com

On **October 10, 2017 Mudima Lab** will inaugurate the third exhibition in the framework of its project **GUERRE**; entitled *Hijacked Education*, it presents photographs by documentary photographer **Diego Ibarra Sánchez**.

The project **GUERRE** is the first cycle of exhibitions conceived and curated by **Mudima Lab**, which includes six solo exhibitions, each lasting about two months.

The **GUERRE** project originates from the desire to raise the visibility of the work of war photographers who often are not supported by institutions and risk their lives in conflict areas. The main themes of these exhibitions are to show the intertwining of wars and consequent migrations within the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East; and to attempt to tell, through the photographers' eyes, the causes and effects of wars that are near us but are too often ignored by an indifferent Western world only focused on the economic problems that may arise from conflict.

A special thank goes to **MeMo-Turin** for believing in this idea and facilitating contacts and relationships with the photographers involved in the project.

Following upon the works by **Fabio Bucciarelli** (Robert Capa Award 2012, World Press Photo 2013), drawn from his project *The Dream*, and those by **Manu Brabo** (Pulitzer Prize 2013 for photojournalism) in *Libya. Illusion of Freedom*, this exhibition presents **Diego Ibarra Sánchez's** work. These three freelance photojournalists are also founders of MeMo Coop in Turin, memo-mag.com. **MeMo** is a network and a meeting point for freelance photojournalists from around the world. Photojournalists want to be part of a community and need employment protection for work that is often dangerous and is not always economically supported in a proper way.

Our mission, following several decades of experience of the **Mudima Foundation** within the artistic and cultural fields, is to decontextualize the war photography from the traditional newspaper headlines. We aim to involve an ever-widening audience in understanding painful and complicated topics that affect us directly and to which we cannot remain indifferent.

GUERRE involves the production of six exhibitions over a period of about one year; after which a book will be produced, edited by **Fondazione Mudima**, concerning the experience as a whole and containing critical texts and photographs by the authors involved.

Irene Di Maggio and Fabio Mantegna

Diego Ibarra Sánchez – Hijacked Education
Opening Tuesday October 10, 2017, at 06:00 PM
Dates: October 11 – November 25, 2017
Hours: from Tuesday to Friday, 3:00PM – 7:00PM
Saturday by-appointment
Free entrance

Hijacked Education

Diego Ibarra Sánchez, has been working for over ten years on the project ***Hijacked Education***; this has taken him to countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Lebanon: his research is intended to lead to an exposé on the conditions of school-age children during wartime.

The title, ***Hijacked Education***, leaves no doubt on the message that the photographer intends to communicate: “education, culture, schooling are denied” to entire generations of children of all ages, who are inevitably condemned to “being left behind”, wiping out their future.

Diego Ibarra Sánchez has unceasingly documented the daily lives of children in refugee camps and in cities transformed into war fields, thus building up a corpus of work characterized by his intimate and almost delicate quest; giving rise to a vigilant but always respectful gaze on his subjects.

At the same time, the author’s intent is to denounce that *«violence, extremism, intolerance and fear are wiping out the future of an entire generation of thousands of children.*

There are schools destroyed and abandoned. Those are the altars without shape of the lost learning.

There are teachers and students in the exile, kids soldiers, education kidnaped and rape. There are books burned, photographs on the ground, identities lost and stolen. There are empty classrooms, desks stacked, piled up, covert with the void of ignorance» (Diego I. Sánchez).

During Isis’ destruction of northern Iraq and Syria, schools were occupied and turned into military bases, school syllabi cancelled and reformulated with the aim of reinstating a dogmatic and backward-looking education, in order to make a clean slate of the conquests achieved in the field of culture.

Families, forced to flee, find themselves exiled in temporary settlements, very similar to improvised prisons, where time stops, remains suspended. Months and years go by unperceived, as people wait to be able to return to their Country, which in the majority of cases has been devastated by war and needs to be rebuilt from scratch. If this is painful for adults, it is certainly dramatic for children who see their childhood stolen and, even when they manage to survive, they have lost with it the chance to access an education allowing them to escape the condition of adolescents, and then adults, who are forced to take on underpaid jobs to survive.

Diego Ibarra Sánchez’ gaze goes beyond the frontline, documenting and showing us all that is left behind after the bombings, the killings and the battles: a humanity that has nothing left beyond its life, and thousands of children who have lost their future.

The author assumes a very critical stance regarding the use of images in our own society, defining this historical moment as *«lobotomized era of “tourism” on the other’s pain»*: in his work he endeavors to ensure that photography is no longer merely a window allowing a view on what happens in the world, but becomes a means to raise questions and generate reflections.

The author’s aesthetic sense, fed by his cultural and personal baggage –he is the son of a teacher and is a father himself– is the instrument accompanying the observer into the drama of our times.

Diego Ibarra Sánchez’ photographs become the voice of those children and awaken our conscience.

The photographs on show document this ceaseless quest, between refugee camps, demolished schools and children who, in spite of it all, haven’t lost their smiles.

The fact that ***Hijacked Education*** does not have a territorial boundary is meaningful, the countries immortalized in the author’s prints are indeed several, from Syria to Pakistan, from Lebanon to Iraq, the accusations made by Diego Ibarra Sánchez are universal, they testify that wars are all the same: what is left after the violence is an incurable fracture in the survivors’ timeline.

Diego Ibarra Sánchez Bio

Diego Ibarra Sánchez, co-founder of **MeMo**, is a documentary photographer based in **Lebanon**.

Diego understands photography as a way to be engaged with our world, in such a way that it raises awareness and critical thinking. He strongly believes in documentary photography as a catalyst, shaking consciences and showing the resilience and courage found in forgotten stories, always demonstrating a deep respect toward the story's protagonist.

Diego is very self-motivated, working on his own body of works while publishing many of his stories in numerous newspapers and magazines, such as **The New York Times**, **Der Spiegel**, **Al Jazeera** and **Diari ARA** among others.

In **2006** several grants made it possible for Diego to spend a year in **South America** to improve his storytelling process. Upon returning to **Spain** he worked for two years for the **Catalan** newspaper **Avui**, while still continuing his own photography projects. In **2009** Diego decided to move to **Pakistan** where he developed a strong visual body of work focused on Pakistan. At the same time he continued travelling to several other countries including **Afghanistan**, **Bahrain**, **Libya**, **Nigeria**, and **Tanzania**.

He left Pakistan in **2014** and he is currently based in **Lebanon** while he keeps traveling and working on his projects around Middle East.

GUERRE

Wars.

A plural noun, a plural meaning, one consequence.

The war scenario, which today surrounds the Mediterranean and the Middle East, is unstable, complex, evolves and changes constantly according to ancient wounds and new global economic interests which control the international area.

Broken balances and bilateral impulses between West and East move multitudes of people that fluctuate from one side to the other like waves, and just as waves, crash on shore in the same way people are pushed to other shores, ours, with the hope of life.

This happens on a daily basis and whether we want to focus on reality or not, it continues to take place with or without our attention. Even if we are talking about human lives, as always in wars, the concept of life or death we have, coming from the "other side", too often goes missing. We tend, through a psychological self defense, to become accustomed to numbers of those who have lost their lives today or of who will win tomorrow by continuing to kill. We are facing humanitarian catastrophes and we cannot remain indifferent. One small step we can do is to dedicate a moment of our life to understand what is really happening not far from us, deepening our knowledge. War photographers, through their travels, show reality and knowledge of facts. From the front line of war or from behind, they tirelessly document lives and deaths during the conflicts and make us witnesses of the political and economic scenarios that follow one another. These photographers depict the consequences on people and populations and outline a map of historical changes before they are "formalized" by international politics and economy through photography.

Irene Di Maggio

From the part of the photographer

The method of taking a picture is variable.

Much depends on the situation that brings us to photograph and when we place our eye in the "viewfinder," We see nothing around us: the scenario is consumed and lives within the frame we are focused on. It's like being underwater. All that happens above the sea level is perceived as muted, while we try to catch through the mask a glimpse of what we see. Events multiply, and the photographer must be able to observe and listen at the same time, because everything is evolving fast even behind him. Concentration is fundamental, and everything you can perceive and listen to will help to predict what might happen in the near future.

All this is even more important and at the same time crucial for those who have chosen to photograph in conflict areas. This automatic way of acting is difficult to combine with an intimate, sometimes artistic feeling that we commonly call natural talent.

As a photographer, I believe that to be aware of all this is necessary to properly read a photo and give a critical review.

Fabio Mantegna