



Shipping Containers, Southbank Centre, Extraordinary Rendition, Wallpaper.

Massive Attack are curating this year's Meltdown Festival at the Southbank Centre in London, between 13th & 24th June. They are working with Reprieve, a charity set up by Clive Stafford Smith, a lawyer who has been extremely active in exposing some of the horrendous abuses of power that have occurred within the parameters of The War Against Terror.

The programme of 'extraordinary rendition' where people are kidnapped and secretly flown to 'black sites' where they are tortured and held indefinitely without trial is a matter that deserves much wider public scrutiny than it has received. I was asked if I could contribute anything to this debate.

Like most people, I had heard about this, but I didn't know a great deal about it, other than what I had read in newspapers, so I decided to do a bit of research. I bought a few books, notably Stafford Smith's excellent 'Bad Men', and 'Torture Taxi', by Trevor Paglen and A C Thompson. I already had a copy of a superbly disturbing book about torture called 'Inquisition'. This period of research was pretty upsetting. It's hard to read about torture, hard to believe that people engage in it, and harder to believe that torture has apparently gained something akin to official sanction since The War Against Terror gained momentum.

Of course, no government is going to admit that it tortures people. But that's not the same as saying that it doesn't happen. In a lot of cases, what most people consider to be torture has been redefined; a process which the book 'Inquisition' makes quite clear has happened repeatedly through the ages.

When I had finished reading these books, I made some wallpaper for the Meltdown Festival. The letters and numbers used in the wallpaper are flight numbers from the varied aircraft used in connection with 'extraordinary rendition'.

'Honor bound to defend freedom' is a motto of the prisons in U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay.

The coloured squares in the background are shipping containers, which are frequently used as interrogation, incarceration and torture chambers. The image is a detail taken from 'Shipping Containers, 2007' by Chris Jordan.

The monochrome images in the background are wrist and leg-irons, the water torture, the interrogation chair and the 'Judas Cradle'. All of these monochrome images are taken from 'Inquisition/ Inquisición', a bilingual Guide to the exhibition of torture instruments from the Middle Ages to the industrial era, presented in various European cities in 1985. The Guide was written by Robert Held.

I thoroughly recommend the books I've mentioned here. For more on Meltdown: www.southbankcentre.co.uk/festivals-series/meltdown

Amsterdam Exhibition: 'Everybody's Happy Nowadays'

In other 'news', I'm going to go to Amsterdam, city of canals, art museums, breweries and relaxed attitudes to substances proscribed by most national governments.

But I'm not going there without putting up an exhibition. This one's called 'Everybody's Happy Nowadays', which is a line I've stolen from Buzzcocks. I'm still not entirely sure what I'm going to put in it, but there will definitely be some paintings of asthma inhalers, the 4 metre-long Kozo print of London Views, and the first showing of the large Fleet Street-being-destroyed-by-fire-and-flood linocut that I chiselled out earlier this year.

The show will run from 1st July until 3rd August. For details on gallery opening times, directions et al, please visit:

www.vipsart.nl/amsterdam.html

It will be at VIP's Amsterdam, Spiegelgracht 8, 1017 JR Amsterdam; it's a new space opened by Peter and Dunya, who I did a show with in Rotterdam last year. 'VIP', by the way, stands for Vincent and Peter.

There will be more about this on www.slowlydownward.com soon/when I figure out what I'm doing.