

mixed media

War shows battle convention

Double exhibit challenges mass media's sanitized images of war By **FRAN SCHECHTER**



SIGNALS IN THE DARK: ART IN THE SHADOW OF WAR at the Blackwood

Gallery (U of T Mississauga, 3359 Mississauga North), 905-828-3789; and the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Hart House, 7 Hart House Circle), 416-978-8398, to March 2. Rating: **NNNN**

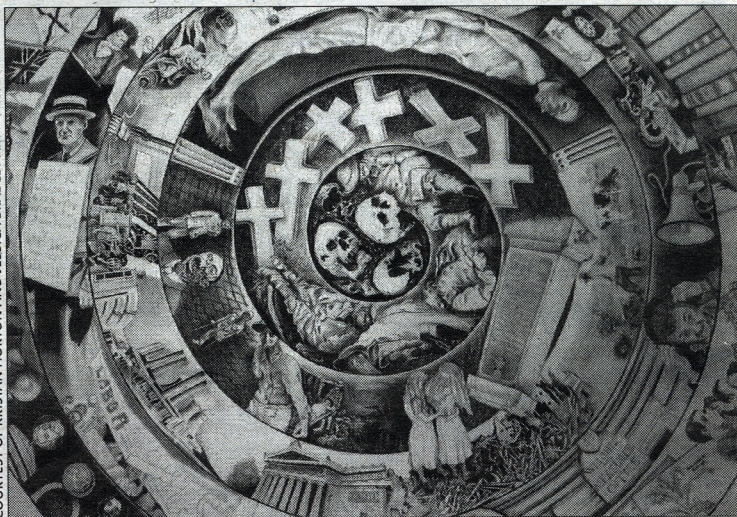
SEAMUS KEALY CURATES THIS AMBITIOUS two-venue show, bringing together artists who want to undermine the "regime of representation" of news images that frame violent conflicts for public consumption.

The variety of media at the Blackwood Gallery makes for easier viewing than the all-video show at Justina Barnicke. We're greeted by a road sign by Vancouver's **Ron Terada** stating, "You Have Left The American Sector." That's small consolation to Iraqi sculptor **Abdul-Karim Khalil**, whose small, classically carved marble of a prisoner with a bag over his head sadly contradicts the sign.

Local **Kristan Horton** reveals excellent draughtsmanship in three spiral drawings depicting the history of World War I. French collective **Bureau d'Etudes** have two fascinating (but are they art?) charts of political linkages, one on the notorious Bohemian Grove, a secret California playground for the military-industrial complex.

Videos include American **Sean Snyder's** interesting exploration of magazine advertisers' relationship to

COURTESY OF KRISTAN HORTON AND JESSICA BRADLEY ART + PROJECTS



Kristan Horton's drawings show superb craftsmanship in Signals In The Dark.

photo spreads on Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Barnicke's centrepiece is **Johan Grimont's** Dial HISTORY, a mash-up of mass media images chronicling airplane hijackings in the 60s and 70s. It's startling to see how the representation of "terrorism" evolved pre-9/11 in the Belgian artist's 1988 work.

In one corner of the gallery, facing out, rentable films like *Children of Men* play, presenting the media's outward face, while a small monitor on the floor facing into another corner plays bad boy **Kendell Geers's** horrifying clip of black South Africans tor-

tureing a suspected police spy to death, to a soundtrack of quotes from René Magritte.

A highlight of the videos installed in small rooms is **Maja Bajevic's** Double Bubble, in which a black-clad woman repeats religious justifications for violence culled from Balkan war crimes testimony.

For those of us used to holding the remote on the couch, watching so many lengthy and disturbing works in a gallery can be problematic, but the important content here rewards that effort. ©

art@nowtoronto.com

is could change your life **NNNN** = Brain candy

NNN = Solid, sometimes inspirational **NN** = Not quite there **N** = Are we at the mall?