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“Along the Wings of a Tornado”

The Aerial Aesthetics of Frank Hurley in Palestine

Andrew Yip and Emma Crott

Abstract

In 1917 the Australian photographer Frank Hurley, renowned in Australia and Europe as an aesthete for his theatrical photographs of Antarctica, was commissioned as Australia’s official First World War photographer. His tour encompassed France, Belgium, and finally Palestine where he, more concerned with visual experimentation than historical documentary, experimented first with color and then aerial photography. Hurley occupied a contested role on the battlefield as an artist engaged in wartime. His blending of artistic techniques with military technologies during the Palestine campaign, at the dawn of aerial imaging, represented a significant moment in the history of photography, and lays bare many of the ethical complexities that concern contemporary aerial images that are synonymous with power and control.

Keywords

First World War; James Francis Frank Hurley; aerial photography; Palestine; conflict photography.

In 1917 the noted Australian Pictorialist photographer James Francis (Frank) Hurley (1885–1962) was appointed to the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as official war photographer. He was engaged primarily to record the Australian campaign on the Western Front, but was sent later to capture the war in Palestine. In this appointment he was initially recommended and supported by Australia’s official correspondent to the Great War (who later became Australia’s

official WWI historian), Charles Bean. Bean's journalism from the Ottoman and Western Fronts during the war, and his subsequent compilation of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18*,¹ helped to establish popular literary, historical, and pictorial maxims which persist today, in which Australia's war served as a bridge between the frontier society of Australia's Eurocolonial past and a newly-federated Australian polity, engaged for the first time in international geopolitical movements. This general characterization of Australia's experience in the First World War as a nation-building moment was not necessarily dependent on close engagement with the socio-cultural histories of the societies in which these conflicts took place. This is particularly true of Australia's campaign against the Ottoman Empire in the Dardanelles, Egypt, and Palestine, which in the latter twentieth century became increasingly identified in Australian histories with revisionist readings of the war as an invigoration of Turkish nationhood and ethnic determination, rather than the result of the movements of empire.

The persistence of this particular nationalist framework adds complexity to the usual concerns regarding authenticity, messaging, and purpose that condition our understanding of all conflict photographers. As an artist at war, Frank Hurley operated both within and without these boundaries. Commissioned under the Australian Official War Art Scheme, he was obliged to record the deeds of soldiers in the battles in which Australian forces took part.² These images certainly played a role in establishing historical narratives around the territories in which he was deployed. But Hurley was an aesthete, not a soldier, more concerned with conveying the theatrics and sensations of the battlefield than using the camera as a tool or political weapon. This is reflected in his images of French and Belgian battlefields, which are both famous and infamous for his technically innovative use of large format, composite techniques to aestheticize and restage the experience of trench warfare from multiple images.

Less well known are Hurley's experiments with aerial imaging during his tour of Palestine in 1917 and 1918, which represent a significant and problematic moment in the history of photography. These experiments were conditioned by the circumstances of Hurley's encounter with Palestine. He was not an ethnographer or anthropologist following a documentary tradition. Instead, he went there in support of combatants under military jurisdiction, and where the lives of Palestinians are captured in his photographs, the references are fleeting and reflect the unfamiliar eye of the outsider. Like another Australian Official War Artist assigned to Palestine – the painter George Lambert – Hurley approached and understood the Palestinian landscape aesthetically and compositionally, through its similarities to the landscapes of his youth. Hurley had little understanding of the political and ethnic complexities of the Middle East. Yet his photographs are not politically neutral. Commissioned as an honorary lieutenant in the Australian Imperial Force, his work, poetic though it was, imaged a moment in the history of his own nation through the lens of the occupation of another. For example, though he arrived after the fact, Hurley restaged and photographed a *tableau vivant* showing Australian troops occupying Jerusalem.

Hurley's aesthetic experiments with aerial photography in Palestine – a novel genre for artistic expression in 1917, made more so in the circumstances – represent

an important and complicated moment in the history of photographic aesthetics. In the hands of an artist like Hurley, this new pictorial space, representing as it did general advances in industrial technologies as well as a specific military control over the lands captured in his images, raised new and uncomfortable questions about the ethical boundaries of the artist at war and exposed the political networks that brought them to the battlefield. His aerial images thus deserve critical reflection a century after their production, at a time in which aerospatial imaging has evolved to become synonymous with the construction and control of territories and borders.

Hurley's images were produced at an inflection point for both the history of photographs and the status of the photographer. The emergence of portable imaging technologies, such as the Vest Pocket Kodak, allowed for the widescale capture of non-studio imagery while, simultaneously, aesthetic movements were laying the foundations for modernist pictorial experiments that allowed artists to interrogate the limits and philosophies of photographic imaging itself. The camera was being freed from its imperative to record in favor of the photographer's ability to interpret. As an artist and commercial practitioner, Hurley's approach to photography was heavily influenced by the Pictorialist movement that surfaced in the late nineteenth century, which sought to cement photography as an aesthetic form rather than simply a mirror of reality. These photographers emphasized the atmospheric qualities of the medium by manipulating tone and texture, sometimes scratching or painting directly onto the surface of negatives, drawing on classical principles of composition, staging scenes, and employing romantic or symbolic imagery.

This pictorial interest was one of two factors that framed his wartime work. The other was the dramatic persona he had created around himself that positioned him as something of a romantic protagonist. By the time of his commission as a war artist in 1917, Frank Hurley had already been mythologized in popular culture as a daring and heroic adventurer, made famous for his spectacular images of Antarctic exploration. His reputation as a young postcard photographer willing to take personal risks to obtain the ideal shot positioned him for his appointment as the official photographer and cinematographer for the Mawson (1911–13) and Shackleton (1914–16) Antarctic expeditions. His silent documentary film *Home of the Blizzard (Life in the Antarctic)* (1913) was celebrated for its portrayal of the treacherous conditions of polar exploration and the magnitude of the icy landscape.

In Hurley's most successful photographs, his aesthetic is conditional on two opposing experiments with scale and perception. On the one lies the subjectivity and agency of Hurley the explorer and, on the other, the sheer monumentality of the environments in which this exploration takes place. In his Antarctic series, he pursued this strategy in order to convey the task of exploration, the sublime conflict between humanity and the limits of the earth, and the perilous nature of this contest. When he arrived in France in 1917, Hurley approached the battlefield with a similar impetus. However, he was deeply frustrated by the technological inability of the cumbersome large-format cameras with which he worked to adequately capture the temporal complexity and geographic spread of action in modern warfare. "I have tried and

tried to include events on a single negative,” he wrote, “but the results were hopeless. Everything was on such a vast scale.”³ As a result Hurley took to producing composite images where multiple indicators of war, such as airplanes, bomb blasts, smoke, and soldiers, all appear in one frame to create a frenetic yet visually harmonious evocation of the event. The most iconic example is Hurley’s composite of four different negatives titled *Episode after Battle of Zonnebeke* (1918), which depicts Australian soldiers on the Western Front emerging from the trenches as they prepare to cross a no man’s land littered with explosions and the ever-present danger of aircraft overhead.

While Hurley’s role as an official photographer was ostensibly to document, he was convinced that the act of communication required his visual intervention. As cultural historian Bernd Hüppauf argues, Hurley’s exasperation with the restrictions of photography pointed to the gap between the experience of warfare and the limitations of the camera to adequately portray such an experience, despite the presumed mimetic capacity of photography. He argues this failure is indicative of a larger concept of modern reality as “disjointed, abstract, complex, and the product of technical, including photographic, constructions.”⁴ Charles Bean certainly failed to grasp the necessity of the photographer’s eye in conveying vision; he approached photographs solely as historical texts whose usefulness as sources of information were bound to their unadulterated materiality. As a result, Hurley’s subjectivity was met with derision by Bean, who was more concerned with factual and objective recording rather than the “publicity pictures and aesthetic results” that so excited Hurley.⁵ As his biographer David P. Millar notes, “Hurley loved the flourish. He was a communicator who wanted to make sure that the public would fully appreciate the mud, courage and stoical bravery of the boys at the front. If this meant that a picture should be cropped, or details burnt out, or negatives garnished with explosions, then so be it.”⁶

After an argument with Hurley over the use of composites, which he described as “fake,” Bean stubbornly insisted on the integrity of representation, writing in his diary, “I can see his point, he has been nearly killed a dozen times and has failed to get the pictures he wants – but we will not have it at any price.”⁷ Hurley threatened to resign but eventually a compromise was agreed to, allowing him to produce six composite images for exhibition. Yet Hurley’s composites were not mere flourishes. This was a task he approached soberly rather than jingoistically. On witnessing battle for the first time, he recorded in his diary that “[it is] the most awful and appalling sight I have ever seen. The exaggerated machinations of hell are here typified. Everywhere the ground is littered with bits of guns, bayonets, shells and men.”⁸

Hurley was not able to resolve his aesthetic problems under the eye of Bean in France and Belgium, and toward the end of 1917, he was deployed to Palestine to record the campaign of the Australian Light Horse against the Ottoman Empire. However, by the time he had transited through Cairo, Allied forces had already captured Beersheba, Jerusalem, and Gaza, where he arrived on 28 December. Though he saw action in February 1918 at the Battle of Nabi Musa and the subsequent capture of Jericho, and on another occasion narrowly escaped pursuit by an Ottoman patrol under heavy fire, Hurley’s Palestine campaign was a more subdued affair than his experiences in

France and Belgium. “Life is more Australian, open air and expansive,” he wrote of Palestine. “There is not the strain of war nor the eternal fear of death ... France is hell, Palestine more or less a holiday.”⁹ In Palestine he experienced relatively more freedom to produce images in the Pictorialist aesthetic, often capturing re-enacted “stunts” and staged scenes.¹⁰ To make these he was allowed the use of a group of Light Horse to photograph in Jerusalem, and he found the soldiers enthusiastic participants. This welcome latitude allowed Hurley to experiment; in Palestine he is believed to have produced the only extant color-plate photographs of the war, using the Paget plate technique developed in Britain shortly before the war in 1912 as a competitor to the first commercially available color photographic process, the autochrome, released by the Lumière brothers in 1907. Hurley was delighted by the results of the Paget process, which he used compositionally to great effect to explore the contrasting colors of the landscape.

These aesthetic experiments in Palestine led Hurley to aerial imaging. An initial flight with the No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, based at Medjdel (Majdal) airfield, impressed upon him the aesthetic potential of this new vision. The scale and perspective were revelatory to him. After a flight on 16 February 1918, he recorded that looking down from the sky he was “intoxicated by the mighty works of nature ... from my seat, we are hurtling along on the wings of a tornado, poised over the deep blue waters of the mystic sea!”¹¹ His resultant body of photographs offer vertical and oblique perspectives markedly different from the spectacular imagery of his ground views from the Western Front, which were often shot at a low angle to give an authoritative and heroic status to the soldiers.

Just as the invention of the steam locomotive altered perceptions of the landscape through motion, so too did the airplane, though while the locomotive offered visual speed and distortion, the airplane offered distance, perspective, and relativity. Combined with photography, airplanes offered new forms of perceiving and experiencing the landscape. Primarily used for military reconnaissance, aerial photographs were not published in the press until the end of World War I due to their obvious application to military strategy. These photographs flattened the harsh terrain of the battlefield, reducing the intricate trench systems of WWI to geometric patterns, and allowing scenes of mass destruction to be read as “grandiose spectacles of places of pure horror,” divorced from the carnage of the trench.¹² The aerial perspective in Western artistic traditions, from landscape painting to cartography and mapmaking, has a long history of association with power and control. This is most obviously through religious connotations of the eye of God, but also manifests as a projection of nationalistic and imperial desires and the construction of territorial boundaries. With the technological advancement of aerial warfare in WWI for both reconnaissance and bombardment, the pilot assumed a new, god-like figure of domination.

On 25 February 1918, Hurley requested, and was accepted, to accompany planes from No. 1 Squadron on a bombing mission to attack Ottoman cavalry at al-Qutrani, east of the Dead Sea, where they were protecting a strategic point on the Hijaz

Railway. Hurley assumed the position of rear gunner, replacing the pintle-mounted machine gun with his own camera, in so doing putting himself in significant danger while also reducing the ability of the aircraft to be defended. Photographs of him in the cockpit before the mission show him as confident and sure-footed, clad in a leather flight jacket. They recall the image Hurley had constructed of himself as the heroic and intrepid Antarctic explorer, though here less an observer than a protagonist, a complicity evident in his recollection of the event:

The wonderful scenery of the range viewed from this elevation beggars description. The mountains appear to be great piles of limestone covered with stunted growth and around their bases the waddies, now dry, have cut deep channels... it lay below us like a great stagnant blue pool, rippleless and dead. From our height we could look from end to end of the abysmal basin.... Below us the fleet of bombing planes soared like great birds, making the desolation re-echo with the hum of power. Yet it all looked so peaceful that the mission of death and destruction on which we were bent, God Knows, was hellish enough: and it would be an unnatural being who could look down upon the majesty of nature below, smiling and peaceful and not feel regretful.... The machines circled like great vultures over the doomed Citadel, and I could distinctly see the large 100 lb bombs drop through the air. With a great detonation one fell directly in the courtyard. God knows what heinous damage it wrought....¹³

Hurley vacillates between the beauty and sensory aesthetics of the moment and the unknowable destruction he is engaged in. Even the bombers take on anthropomorphic forms. They soar like “great birds,” only to become “great vultures” when they drop their payloads. Hurley understands his complicity through his regret and yet, in spite of his vantage point and experience, refuses to imagine the damage done by his flight, again a problem of scale where human action and consequence are insufficiently resolved.

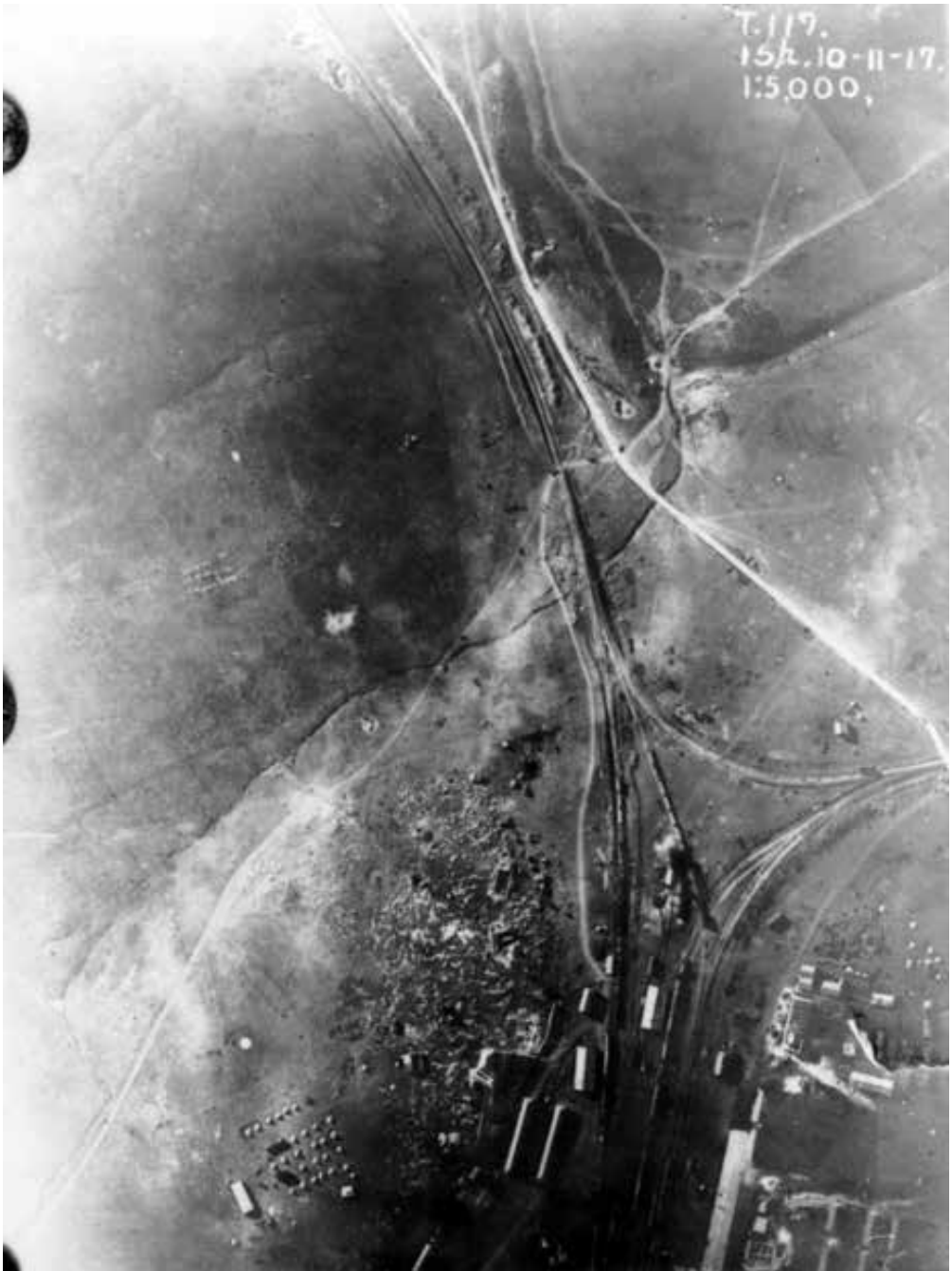
This is particularly evident when considering Hurley’s *A photograph taken from the air during the bombing of Jenin, showing a bomb dropping from a plane* (1918) (figure 1). Among the squiggly lines demarcating the topography of Jenin we see in the middle third of the image the ominous shadow of a bomb moments before it is detonated. In this, the lens of the camera morphs into a hybrid weapon, exposing the role of optical imaging in scoping, targeting, and measuring the delivery of ordnance. The photograph itself operates in a hybrid space and time. It is useless as reconnaissance for a mission underway and does not function as a measure of the mission – it cannot, until the bomb explodes and success or failure can be obtained. It records Hurley’s own interstitial position caught between being an observer and an actor.



Figure 1. *A photograph taken from the air during the bombing of Jenin, showing a bomb dropping from a plane* (1918), Australian War Museum, online at www.awm.gov.au/collection/C972279 (accessed 15 June 2020).

Here aerial photography acts in a mode distinct from traditional war photographs recorded by bystanders to the event or its aftermath. It constitutes a crisis of representation, in which the visual scale of aerial imaging allows the context of the action to be understood holistically, but which also completely distances the viewer from consequence. The flattening of the landscape generated by the verticality of the aerial photograph engenders an aesthetic quality to the image founded on the ordering principles of geometry, as well as the emerging conceptual tenants of abstraction. As such, these early aerial photographs undermined the presumed realism of the camera. Hüppauf notes how the merging of new technologies of photography and aviation in war profoundly impacted on perceptions of landscape and space, transforming the profusion of worldly details into ordered and abstract patterns.¹⁴

For example, in *A photograph taken from the air showing a bomb bursting on a train at the railway station, centre left, at Jenin* (1918) (figure 2), physical distance is emphasized, but the viewer also remains emotionally distanced from the bombing event due to the difficulty of deciphering the image. In this inability to perceive, the viewer's reading shares something with Hurley's own diary accounts. Describing the view from his airplane, Hurley noted, "The earth assumed the appearance of patchwork."¹⁵ The problematic of these images lies in the potential for the aesthetic to overwhelm the devastating impact of war on real people and places. Interestingly, photographers such as Edward Steichen abandoned their commitment to the moody softness of Pictorialism after WWI, in favor of the hard-edge lines and abstraction of modernist aesthetics reflected in their experience from the sky.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

B01766

Figure 2. *A photograph taken from the air showing a bomb bursting on a train at the railway station, centre left, at Jenin, (1918), Australian War Memorial, online at www.awm.gov.au/collection/C972278 (accessed 15 June 2020).*

Apart from his aerial images, other photographs taken during Hurley's time in the Middle East also employ an oblique, high angle to show the "exotic" features of the landscape in a manner that played on Hurley's unfamiliarity and fascination with the Middle East. He was not the only Australian artist to depict the Palestinian landscape during the First World War. The painter George Lambert, who would be Bean's particular choice to record the aftermath of the Gallipoli Campaign in 1919, was similarly attached to the Light Horse in Palestine and produced a series of majestic, high-keyed landscapes, often from elevated positions that evoked elements of the sublime in their scale and depth. Lambert, however, approached the Palestine landscape from the symbolic conceit of it as an extension of the Australian frontier tradition. To Lambert, the Light Horse soldiers in Palestine were evocations of the popular cultural hero of the nineteenth century, the Australian "bushman" (the stereotypical pioneer of European descent valorized in the foundation of colonial Australia). Lambert's painting *A Sergeant of the Light Horse in Palestine* (1920),¹⁶ which depicted fellow soldier-artist Thomas Henry Ivers who also drew and painted Palestine, was read at home as an exemplar of the character of Australian men and as a symbol of the arrival of the Australian national identity on the world stage. Indeed by 1918, as a particular consequence of the Gallipoli Campaign, the Middle Eastern theatre had acquired something of a mythological place in Australian narratives of the war – as an historical engagement between the recently federated nation with ancient and biblical cultures.¹⁷

During his First World War tour in Palestine, Hurley does not seem to have followed Lambert's particular line of national-mythologizing in his photographs. For example, unlike the lower angle employed in the Western Front to emphasize the individual heroism of the soldiers, images such as *A regiment of the Australian Light Horse on the march near either Bethlehem or Jerusalem [-] Leading the column is Brigadier General Charles Frederick Cox* (1918),¹⁸ taken from a higher vantage point, underscores the sheer vastness of the brigade. This and other images project the might of the Allied forces, but step away slightly from leveraging the historicity of Palestine as a motif. And yet clearly Palestine had a deep impact on Hurley throughout his life. When he returned in 1940 for his second tour as an Australian official World War II photographer (which also encompassed Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria), this time charged with creating overtly propagandistic images, he had clearly adopted a more symbolic reading of the journey as a Christian pilgrimage.¹⁹ Palestine's "very soil and ancient olive trees exhale the wondrous past and create an atmosphere that makes one ponder with some reverent awe," he wrote. "Here one sees inhabitants that seem to have existed from Bible days. They have not altered their customs nor methods ... they grow their olives, till the soil as they did thousands of years ago."²⁰

In Jerusalem, he produced a photographic book capturing the life and

architecture of the city, titled *The Holy City: A Camera Study of Jerusalem and its Borderlands*.²¹ Atypical of his oeuvre, this was a work concerned with a Christian ontology of Palestine. The images are highly aestheticized and make good use of elevated, aerial perspectives to imbue the architecture of the city with grandeur and scale, as well as stylized, volumetric lighting that evoked his composite images of World War I battlefields. They followed a narrative constructed through accompanying captions taken from biblical passages and included an image titled *The Light of the World*, a clear reference to William Holman Hunt's Pre-Raphaelite painting of 1851–56.²²

Hurley's Palestine photographs, some displayed as colored lantern slides, were exhibited to great acclaim as part of a group of 136 of his photographs at Grafton Galleries, London, in May 1918. Hurley's Palestine tours bracketed his career and were facilitated by two world wars. Yet Australia's problematic engagement with the Middle East through violent conflicts continued into the twenty-first century, through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, both of which have seen the commissioning of numerous new official Australian war artists. As a consequence, the Australian Official War Art Scheme remains the longest continually operating art commissioning program in Australian history. It is thus necessary to interrogate one more relationship of complicity – that of the contemporary Australian body politic in imagining the Middle East, and to consider how the transmission and reception of Hurley's images has evolved over the century.

Our understanding of the photographic medium has evolved since Bean's insistence on material authenticity. As Jolly argues, "To the contemporaneous viewer Hurley's composite techniques were not illicit fakery, but licit special effects tacitly deployed to produce a legitimate scenario worthy of emotional and phenomenological investment."²³ This is true for twenty-first century audiences whose experience of photographic imagery is often heavily mediated, constructed, remixed, and shared. However, it is also true that we live in a contemporary moment where aerial images of war once again have caused a crisis of representation. There is a need to devise new modes of visual perception for interpreting the abstract shapes that signify roads, buildings, and the natural geographic landscape, let alone identifying any discernible human subjects in aerial imagery. Caroline Brothers suggests that the normalization of aerial photography's detached and impersonal perspective works to diminish the human impact of war.²⁴ This is made abundantly clear by the advent of the god-like cruise missile cameras of the first Gulf war, and the sight of young drone pilots remotely flying unmanned missions from sites deeply removed from physical danger. Yet in relation to the aerial photography of World War II, Cosgrove and Fox argue that due to the geographically dispersed theatre of war it was difficult for civilians to conceive its scope without the aid of aerial images.²⁵



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

B01599

Figure 3. *An aerial view of the Turkish defenses of Jerusalem taken from an aircraft of the Australian Flying Corps (1918)*, Australian War Memorial, online at www.awm.gov.au/collection/C969258 (accessed 15 June 2020).

The difficulty of reconciling these visions persists; photography theorist and critic Allan Sekula was particularly critical of the retrospective use of Steichen's aerial reconnaissance photographs from the war for aesthetic contemplation in galleries and museums, arguing these images once served an instrumental functional purpose and required specialist decoding and interpretation.²⁶ This is typical of a reading of the medium of photography that highlights the contextual significance of the image for its ideological understanding.

While it is indeed important to consider the context of Hurley's aerial images, which served functional, propaganda, and documentary purposes, context fails to account for the inherent indeterminant nature of photography as situated between contingency and artistic agency. As Jacques Rancière notes when discussing documentary photography, the image itself cannot reveal its status as either artistic expression or reportage.²⁷ It is perhaps this unknowing of whether the aesthetic framing of Hurley's aerial photography is intentional – such as the gradated tone and balanced symmetry of the road that cuts diagonally through the image titled *An aerial view of the Turkish*

defences of Jerusalem taken from an aircraft of the Australian Flying Corps (1918) (figure 3) – that makes them so compelling yet disturbing in the context of conflict. Of course, this contingency is shattered in his more famous composite images, which is possibly another reason why these unadulterated aerial images are something of an enigma in his oeuvre.

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Endnotes

- 1 Charles Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1921–1942), 12v.
- 2 For the most comprehensive account of the Official War Art Scheme, see Margaret Hutchinson, *Painting War: A History of Australia's First World War Art Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- 3 Hurley, quoted in Bernd Hüppauf, “Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation,” *New German Critique*, no. 59 (1993): 53.
- 4 Hüppauf, “Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation,” 53.
- 5 Hurley, quoted in David P. Millar, *From Snowdrift to Shellfire: Capt. James Francis (Frank) Hurley, 1885–1962* (Sydney: David Ell Press, 1984), 48.
- 6 Millar, *From Snowdrift to Shellfire*, 50.
- 7 Bean, quoted in Martin Jolly, “Australian First-World-War Photography: Frank Hurley and Charles Bean,” *History of Photography* 23, 2 (1999): 142.
- 8 “Frank Hurley Diary,” 23 August 1917, Australian National Library, Canberra, MS 833.
- 9 “Frank Hurley Diary,” 31 December 1917.
- 10 Jolly, “Australian First-World-War Photography,” 142.
- 11 Quoted by Daniel O’Keefe, *Hurley at War: the Photography and Diaries of Frank Hurley in Two World Wars* (Broadway NSW: Fairfax Library, 1986), 104.
- 12 Hüppauf, “Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation,” 56.
- 13 Hurley, quoted by Daniel O’Keefe, *Hurley at War*, 88.
- 14 Bernd Hüppauf, “Modernism and the Photographic Representation of War and Destruction,” in *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology, and Photography*, ed. Roger Hillman and Leslie Devereaux (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 106.
- 15 Hurley, quoted in Robert Dixon and Christopher Lee, eds., *The Diaries of Frank Hurley 1912–41* (New York: Anthem Press, 2011), 153.
- 16 See online at www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/5822/ (accessed 7 June 2020).
- 17 Although not a sustained thread in Australian art history, representations of Palestine, the Maghreb, and the Ottoman Middle East bore some traces of a late and etiolated Orientalism informed by earlier European artist journeys. In 1909 the Australian post-impressionist painters Ethel Carrick and Emmanuel Philips Fox had reprised Delacroix’s route through Algeria, engaging with the unfamiliar environments in aesthetic experiments. Australian Impressionist Charles Conder likewise found visual inspiration in Algeria. The landscape painter Arthur Streeton, also appointed an Australian Official War Artist, travelled extensively through Egypt on his way to London, keeping detailed sketchbooks.

- 18 See online at www.awm.gov.au/collection/B01619/ (accessed 7 June 2020).
- 19 When Hurley was seconded as the official photographer for WWII, he continued to draw on Pictorialist aesthetics, much to the dismay of his younger colleagues who considered this mode of imaging as outdated and unrepresentative of technology's increasing role in contemporary experience. Helen Ennis, *Man with a Camera: Frank Hurley Overseas* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002).
- 20 Hurley, quoted in O'Keefe, *Hurley at War*, 144.
- 21 Frank Hurley, *The Holy City: a Camera Study of the Holy City and its Borderlands* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1949).
- 22 When Hunt's *The Light of the World* toured Sydney in 1906 its exhibition at the then National Art Gallery of New South Wales was met with great critical acclaim and attended by two hundred thousand people. It is not known whether Hurley saw the painting in that context.
- 23 Jolly, "Australian First-World-War Photography," 147.
- 24 Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 103.
- 25 Denis Cosgrove and William L. Fox, "The Airman's Vision: World War II and After," in *Photography & Flight* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 57.
- 26 Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41, 1 (Spring 1981): 15–25.
- 27 Jacques Rancière, "Notes on the Photographic Image," *Radical Philosophy* 156 (July/August 2009): 15.