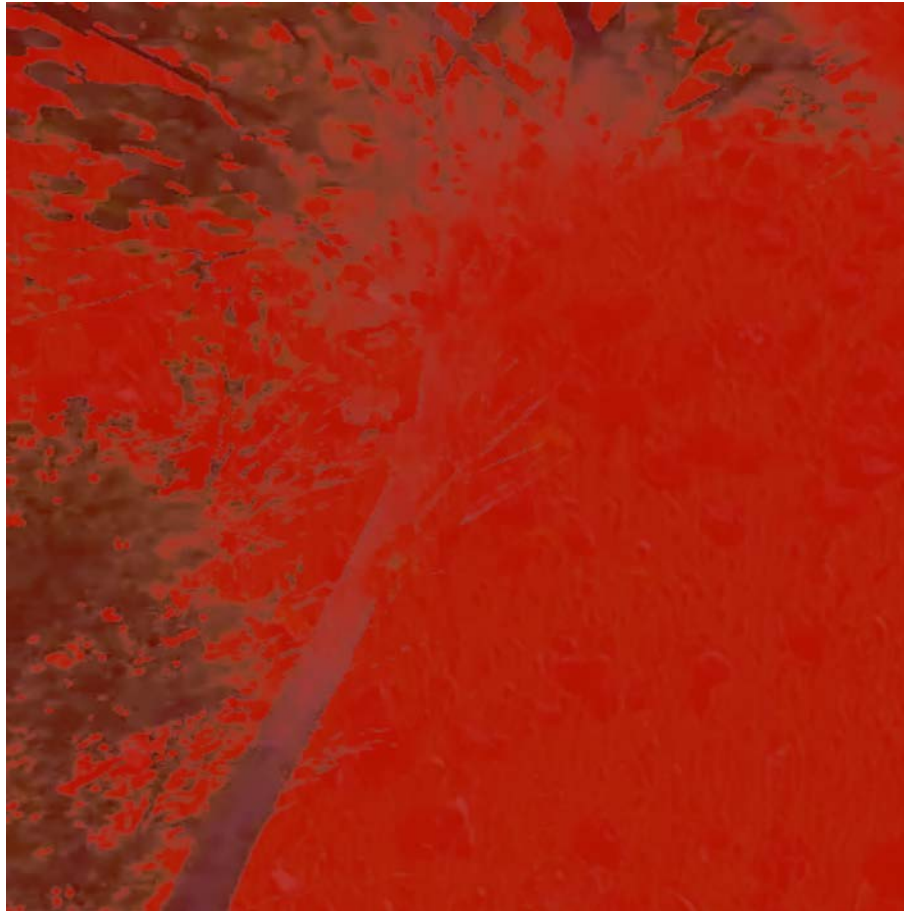


**Victory over Tyranny**  
**Mariah Lookman**  
**An Exhibition with a Shift and Partial Substitutions**  
**Curated by Daniel Kurjaković**

*Lale/Lori* (still), 2015, Video collage, colour, sound, 23:28, loop

**Exhibition: March 5, – May 12, 2016**  
**Artist talk: March 9, 2016, 6pm**

**Part 1:**  
**Opening: Friday, March 4, 2016, 6:30pm**  
**March 5 – April 2, 2016**  
**Part 2:**  
**Opening: Thursday, April 7, 2016, 6:30pm**  
**April 8 – May 12, 2016**

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## Press text

For the exhibition *Victory over Tyranny* Pakistani artist Mariah Lookman delves into iconographies of violence. Her exhibition – featuring entirely new works made, for instance, of video collages, disused bank notes, an artist book or an embroidered shawl – examines historical and current representations of war and violence as well as forms of resistance. The works touch upon seemingly divergent aspects and topics such as ‘The Great Seal of England, 1648,’ American President Harry Truman’s announcement of the Bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, or contemporary video games. While immersive and at times confrontational, the exhibition also encompasses poetic and analytical facets, enabling viewers to explore ethical questions related for example, to states of exception in warfare as discussed in the works of Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, or Carl Schmitt.

In conceiving the works Mariah Lookman has activated a wide ensemble of references, ranging from military documents, vernacular materials on war, conflict, and violence, or historical works of other artists and poets. She has gathered thematically relevant audio and video footage from the Web to create collages of sound and moving images. These allow the viewer to examine the different aspects of the representation of power, military and the other that all share in common some aspect of the timeless theme of the virtuous versus the evil. A central question concerns how media transmit, reproduce, and alter the imagery of violence, and the kinds of information and effects implied by it. In her work, the artist rearranges and re-contextualizes the various materials at the base of her research in order to recalibrate seemingly unrelated materials within a field of simultaneous politico-ethical relevancy. Lookman herself has stated: “When we gaze at these images [of war, weapons and violence] with an often unacknowledged sense of wonder, does the distance created by the media continually shift the violence that accompanies technological accomplishment into the distant realm of sublime? What kind of geometries and spaces do these images create? And why can’t I stop watching?”

The overall, two-part exhibition includes three video works, objects, collages, prints, and an artist book. The exhibition will be shifted by early April entailing the partial substitution of works with new ones. This shift will reconfigure the works’ relationships, create alternative aesthetic constellations and reorient the visitor’s experiences in space. The artist will also present a new twin-set of editions entitled *Lale/Lori*: “Lale”, meaning ‘poppy’ or ‘red’ in Urdu, or ‘wild-lily-of-the-mountains’ in Persian, and “Lori” designating a lullaby both in Urdu and Persian. For the second part Lookman will present a new edition entitled *Red Eagle*.

Text by Daniel Kurjaković

**Images: Part 2**

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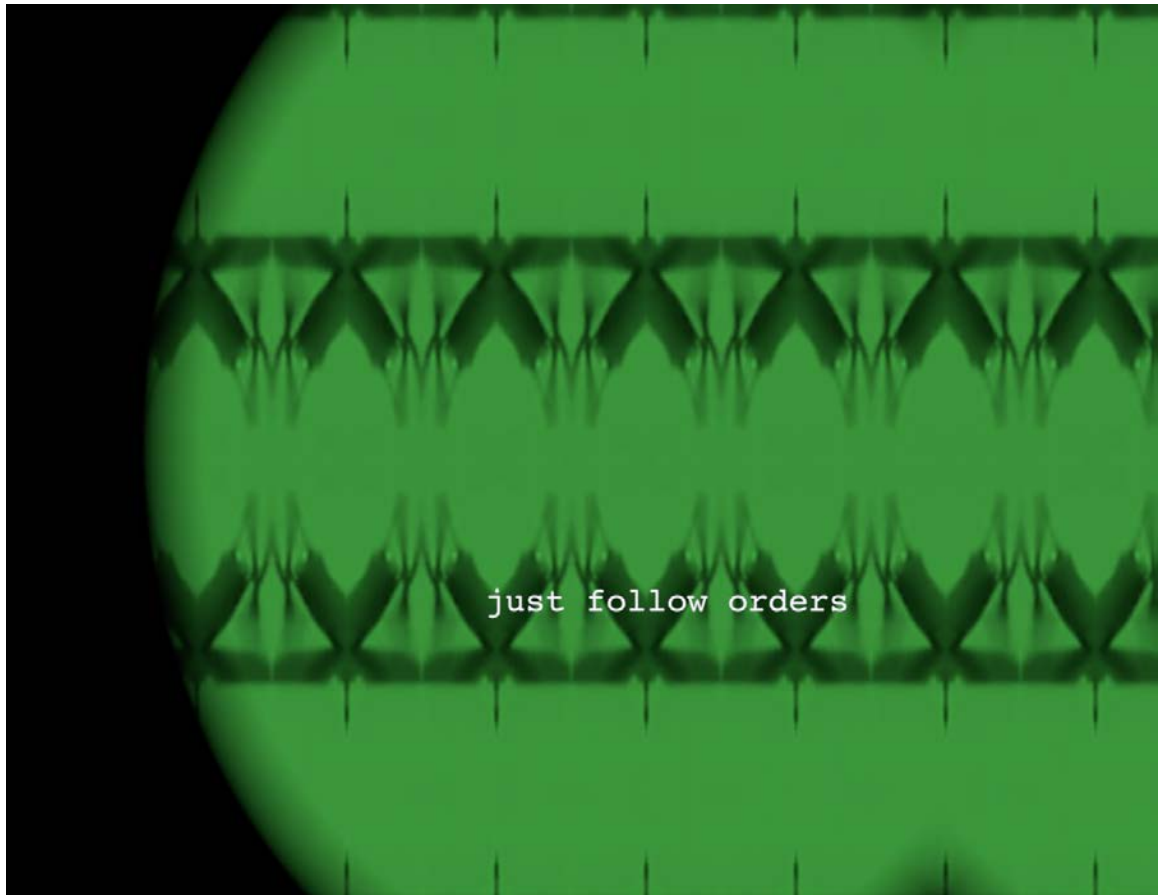


*Lale'/Lori* (still), 2015, Video collage, colour, sound, 23:28, loop



*Lale'/Lori* (still), 2015

**Images: Part 2**



*Night Song* (still), 2015, video and sound collage, colour, 09:15, loop

**Images: Part 2**



*Breaking, re-making (Marvel meets Bloody Nasreen) (detail), 2015/16, Artist book, collage, 30 x 30 cm, 60 pages*

**Images: Part 2**



*Breaking, re-making (Marvel meets Bloody Nasreen) (detail), 2015/16*

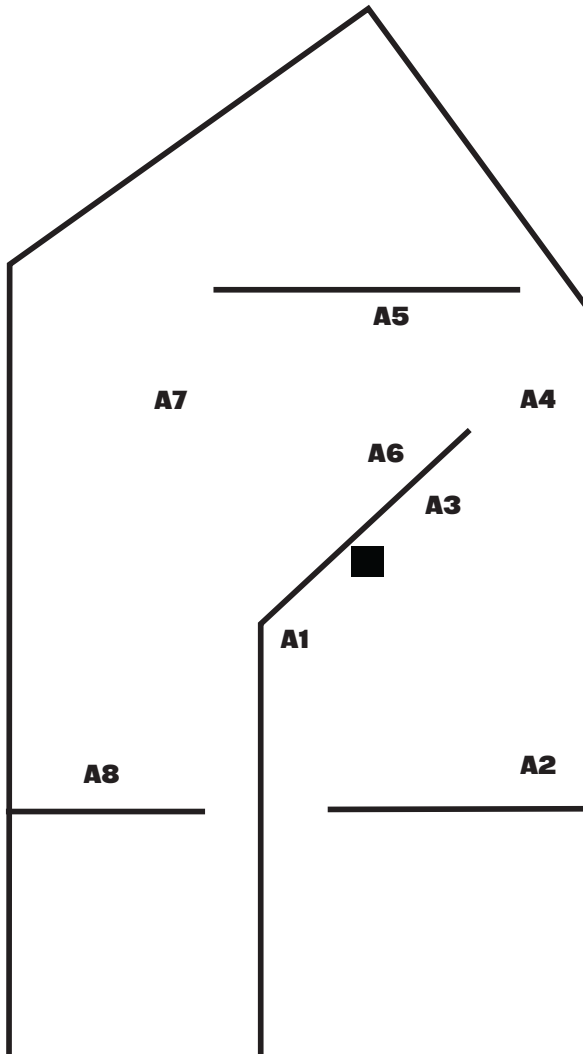


*Breaking, re-making (Marvel meets Bloody Nasreen) (detail), 2015/16*

**Images: Part 2**



*Red Eagle*, 2016, Archival Inkjet print on Platinum etching paper 290gsm, 60 x 84 cm

**Exhibition map: Part 2, April 7 – May 12, 2016****A1**

*Man*, 2016  
Installation  
Toy figure, 5 toy tanks, army of 32, led light, variable dimension

**A2**

[\*Lale/Lori\*](#), 2015  
Single channel projection  
Video collage, colour, sound, 23:28, loop

**A3**

*Lale/Lori*, 2016  
Artist edition, double edition set, Fine Art inkjet on Awagami Mitsumata 45gsm,  
42 x 60 cm each

**A4**

*Cover*, 2016  
Embodied on tailor doll  
Textile drawing on woolen shawl with silk embroidery, 130 cm x 257 cm

**A5**

*Victory over Tyranny*, 2016  
Installation in 2 parts  
Disused (demonetized) Pakistani bank notes, folded, installation dimension  
variable, 25 pieces + 36 pieces

**A6**

[\*Night Song\*](#), 2015  
Installation version with 2 Sony PVMs  
Video and sound collage, colour, sound, 09:15, loop

**A7**

*Breaking, re-making (Marvel meets Bloody Nasreen)*, 2015/16  
Installation version with light bulb, yellow cord, and table  
Artist book, collage, 30 x 30 cm, 60 pages

**A8**

*Red Eagle*, 2016  
Archival Inkjet print on Platinum etching paper 290gsm, 60 x 84 cm

For the duration of Part 2, the shades are lowered.



**Notes on works** (texts by Daniel Kurjaković based on conversations with the artist)

*Lale'/Lori*, 2015

Single channel projection

Video collage, colour, sound, 23:28, loop

The visual presence of the poppy fields culled and rearranged out of found online footage is layered with multiplayer online shooter Squad. Shooter games have a succinctly immersive character, and participating players can typically play from different physical locations. The games rely on a strong virtual dynamic as designers go to great lengths at ensuring locational accuracy such as determining exact (geographical) coordinates, and registering physical parameters such as duration and time of actions. Despite – or precisely because of – their physical distance and dislocation to the “referenced” location in the game, players strive to get as close as possible to “reality”. The work making use of the setting originating in the war scenario of Afghanistan, is more specifically related to a paradigmatic notion of simultaneity that marks contemporary media societies: the virtual situation of the game (modeled after the specific conflict) overlaps with the present geopolitical occurrence (the ongoing war in Afghanistan). Incidentally, war training is based on simulators, re-created simulated situations with the military using the very same technological template, the same source of visual ‘world-making’.

The title’s term “Lale’” translates as ‘poppy’ or ‘red’ in Urdu, or ‘wild-lily-of-the-mountains’ in Persian, and “Lori” designates a lullaby both in Urdu and Persian. The ‘lullaby’ – a soothing song or piece of music, usually played or sung to children or adults – references the primary age group of consumers of war games. The games designed to heighten a sense of one’s grandiosity in and power over what are psychologically highly complex experiences (conflict, violence, war) that in reality often induce trauma, breakdowns, and general ongoing disarray in combatants.

\*

*Lale'/Lori*, 2016

Artist edition

Double edition set, Inkjet Fine Art on Awagami Mitsumata 45gsm, 42 x 60 cm each

Screens and text developed out of video collage *Lale'/Lori*, 2015 and gaming session Squad.

\*

*Red Eagle*, 2016

Artist edition

Archival Inkjet print on Platinum etching paper 290gsm, 60 x 84 cm

Screen and image developed out of video collage *Lale'/Lori* 2015. Entitled *Red Eagle*, the image of the Bald Eagle is set in the tradition of military posters, in this instance hovering between lament and victory call.

\*

*Night Song*, 2015

Installation version with 2 Sony PVMs

Video and sound collage, colour, sound, 09:15, loop

The video, double-screened on two iconic monitors, echo each other in a slightly a-synchronic manner. Inspired by war films, and by Hannah Arendt's observation that the justification of acts of aggression during war are less to do with binary divisions – such as good and evil, good guys versus bad guys – being mere diversions commonly used to rationalize military atrocities. They are but to do with the condition of military training; to blindly follow orders kindled by notions of loyalty or duty are in fact a condition of “not thinking” that is explored in this work as an insight into otherwise mindless perpetuation of war related violence into the twenty-first century. The found footage has been doctored using mirroring techniques, the sound has been composed using sound samples from Freesound.org and the artist has written the text for the ‘narrative’ of this work.

\*

*Victory over Tyranny*, 2016

Disused (demonetized) Pakistani bank notes, folded, installation dimension variable, 25 pieces + 36 pieces

In this 2-part work, *Riaet*, *Sand* and *Victory over Tyranny*, the 500, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 2 rupee Pakistani bank notes have been reconfigured to link the association of monetary spending, and the army. Ironically, 3.4% of Pakistan's GDP is spent on “Defense”, and in most instances what is acquired are forms of obsolete technology, and roughly only 0.34% is spent on education. At the same time, Pakistan is also a country with steadily declining living standards. Moreover, just as conventional warfare is fast becoming obsolete, the Government of Pakistan routinely prints “new” money to flush out counterfeit money allegedly used for funding “terrorism” locally. On a conceptual level, even as the form of the stars refer to the badges and insignia on military uniforms and flags, it is used by the artist as a provocation to think about the unstable network of relations masked by grand nationalist narratives mixed in the imaginings with glories of warfare. The works – here arranged in the form of a polyhedron or ‘pyramid’ – allow for reconfigurations of their geometric shapes.

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*Cover*, 2016

Embodied on tailor doll

Textile drawing on woolen shawl with silk embroidery, 130 cm x 257 cm

The particular shawl in this textile drawing is an ordinary model, used both by men and women. It can typically serve multiple purposes: it is worn as a cover or a wrap, or as a scarf for protection against heat and cold weather depending on the material used. Its cultural significations can vary and straddle a diverse range of meanings such as; shield, a mark of honour, designation of a caste or tribe, and symbolically attributed to pride, dignity, and wealth. In the tradition and spirit of War Carpets, the artist thinks of this work as her resistance piece. The making is collaboration between the artist and a master embroiderer; wool with silk thread and the airplane motifs are derived from *AirFix Magazine* editions 1969-1975.

The rearrangement of the work from the horizontal display mirroring an airplane filled sky in Part 1 to the embodied display in exhibition Part 2 is a way to activate the multiple layers of possible interpretations.

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*Breaking, re-making (Marvel meets Bloody Nasreen), 2015/16*  
Installation version with light bulb, yellow cord, and table  
Artist book, collage, 30 x 30 cm, 60 pages

The collage with a cut out book is made from old editions of marvel comics dating from the 1970's-80's, where whilst turning the pages we get to see various heroes and heroines traveling through what appears to be a ruined or charred landscape to eventually meet the newest female super heroine, Shahan Zaidi's "Bloody Nasreen" from Karachi. Made with an array of hand torn paper and blade, the cut and paste technique used is very much in keeping with the "cut and paste" technique of 'handmade' films that underpin the making of the video collages for this exhibition (such as *Freedom by God's Blessing Restored, 2015*).

\*

*Man, 2016*  
Installation  
Toy figure, 6 toy tanks, army of 32, led light, variable dimension

The elements of this installation are made up of 6 tanks produced in Hollis, New York, 1975, 1 and 32 miniature soldiers in various postures dispersed throughout the space.

## Bios

**Mariah Lookman** is a Pakistani artist and researcher. Her works cover a range of media rooted in drawing and painting. Her participation in museum shows include the group exhibitions In-Site at the Ashmolean Museum (2012) and Ruskin Shorts (2013 at Modern Art Oxford). Her research interests are art and the history of ideas with special focus on scientific ideas/inventions and the political. Mariah Lookman has a B.F.A. from the National College of Arts, Lahore, a M.A. from the Slade School of Fine Art, and a D.Phil. from the Ruskin School of Art. She lives and works between Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. Current work in progress involves setting up an artist's residency with an interdisciplinary and multi-format publication called "Art South Asia" (ASA). With residency locations in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India, the first ASA project (2016-18) looks east towards China, along the Silk route (land and sea) as vital to the exchange of ideas that have had a forming influence on the syncretic philosophies and cultures of both South and East Asia. Mariah Lookman is the Independent Researcher for Pakistan Projects, Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong.

For the first time, Counter Space invites a guest curator, **Daniel Kurjaković**, based in Paris and Zurich, to realize an exhibition. Recent projects by Kurjaković include the transnational film program Cinéphémère for FIAC 2015, or the third issue of *Torrent* – Magazine for Source Material by Artists, which Kurjaković also founded. Concurrently with the exhibition by Mariah Lookman, Kurjaković presently is working on the inter-institutional project De-Neutralize – Global Stories from Zurich, with the publication due to be released in late May 2016. It unites newly commissioned contributions by some thirty artists, writers and historians. The project, initiated by Kurjaković, is a cooperation between the Chair for History of the Modern World/ETH Zurich, the Johann Jacobs Museum in Zurich, and both the Fine Arts Department (VBK) and the Institute for Contemporary Arts Research (IFCAR) at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Kurjaković is a researcher, critic and longtime lecturer at the Zurich University of the Arts. In 2015-16 he has lectured at Bibliothèque Kandinsky Paris, École supérieure d'art de Grenoble, Museum Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich as well as the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts Paris (upcoming).

**Counter Space** is an independent exhibition space in Zurich publicly supported by Stadt Zürich Kultur, Fachstelle Kultur Kanton Zürich and Migros Kulturprozent.

It aims to present the use of temporary and process-like methods in artistic work. The programme is curated by Angelo Romano, Linda Jensen and Tashi Brauen; Yasmin Kiss (Research and text); Vicenta Rodrigo-Jiménez (Administration).



Stadt Zürich  
Kultur



Kanton Zürich  
Fachstelle Kultur

Mathis Tinner

MIGROS  
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