

## Summary

I used my Early Career Fellowship 2017–18 to explore how the international arms trade is legitimised and normalised through rituals of etiquette. The devastating impact of the arms industry was acutely clear during the year of the fellowship, as evidence emerged that Saudi Arabia has used UK and US-made weaponry to bomb civilian areas in the war Yemen, creating a humanitarian disaster with the destruction of vital infrastructure. In August 2018 a US-made bomb hit a school bus killing 40 children. Yet, the UK and US have continued to license military equipment for export to the regime. My research asked how these sales are presented as acceptable. As the year unfolded, I focussed increasingly on a performance of respectability in the industry based on formal dress, hospitality, and sales gestures that offer weapons as products.

Respectability is a difficult subject to research. Most academic research is based on reason. Yet respectability is not reasoned but aesthetic; it is displayed and enacted. However, aesthetic methods also pose problems as they are easily appropriated and reinterpreted. So, I took an interdisciplinary approach combining aesthetic methods – drawing, performance and curating, with an analysis of the industry.

## Method

My fellowship focussed on an archive of material that I have produced and gathered from arms fairs, trade shows for military equipment from 2008 to 2018. I curated an exhibition of this material at the Bradford Peace Museum, April – July 2018, with an installation of sketchbooks drawn inside arms fairs, photographs of my performance as an arms trader inside these events, and complimentary gifts from the stalls. The exhibition was covered by the Guardian (11/04/18), the BBC World Service (28/04/18), BBC Radio 4 (08/05/18), and local press, and was extended by the Bradford Peace Museum in a pop-up venue until March 2019. I also produced a book, *The Etiquette of the Arms Trade* (2018) with a selection of drawings, a weapons list, and two essays. The first essay situated the project in the context of current research about the industry (Feinstein, 2011; Stavrianikis, 2017; Tan, 2010). The second essay discussed the potential of drawing as a method to research performance and gesture referring to Berger (2011), Taussig (2011), and Brecht (2018). The weapons list was inspired by Perec (1997), and attempted to disrupt arms marketing by taking product names out of context for instance ‘moral effect grenades’ and ‘insensitive missiles’. I wrote a book chapter ‘This is Not a Bomb, materiel culture and the arms trade’ (Maltby ed., 2020) discussing promotional gifts from arms fairs, and the extent to which it is possible to use them to reveal processes of commodification in the industry.

## Future Research

The fellowship has been invaluable, opening up a number of strands of future research. I am continuing to research performance as a means of legitimising corporate corruption, and, conversely, as a method of documenting these processes. I am particularly interested in lapses in corporate performances, animal moments when the veneer of respectability is interrupted by a ‘mute communication’ of the body (Lyotard in Crome and Williams, 2006), and the particular potential of drawing to convey this. Underpinning this, I am writing a history of art and the arms trade, examining both the use of art to validate weapons production, and artists’ attempts to resist and challenge the arms industry. I continue to draw inside arms and security fairs, documenting the industry response to an increasingly volatile political climate. I am exhibiting in *Up In Arms*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, nGbK, Berlin 28/09/19 – 15/12/19.

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