

FFOTO

RITA LEISTNER

Rita Leistner's photography practice is based on first-hand engagement in the world, in particular on documenting communities in extreme conditions, such as soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, female patients at psychiatric hospitals in war-time, and first Nations communities in the Arctic. Most recently, she has been "embedded" with tree planters in the remote and rugged Canadian Wilderness in the planting camps of Coast Range Contracting, owned by Garth Hadley, who Leistner first met when they planted together in the 80s. Having planted over half a million trees from 1983-1992, Leistner says, "I felt great urgency to begin this work while I was still strong enough to keep up with the athleticism required by tree planting and did not want to go to my grave without artistically exploring this uniquely Canadian coming-of-age experience.

Leistner is a graduate of the International Center of Photography in New York (2000) and has a Master of Arts degree in comparative literature from the University of Toronto (1990), where from 2010-2016 she taught the history of photojournalism and documentary photography. She is co-author of several books including *Unembedded: Four Independent Photojournalists on the War in Iraq*, and *The Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story*. Her first monograph is *Looking for Marshall McLuhan in Afghanistan*, an interdisciplinary work about photography, technology, and war that was a finalist for the Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in the Field of Media Ecology. The associated photo and text-based exhibition, which has been translated into French and Spanish and exhibited in France, Canada, the US, and Uruguay, features iPhone photographs remastered from digital negatives in palladium with applied tri-colour pigment.

Her photographs have been exhibited and published internationally at venues ranging from the Musée Albert-Kahn (Paris), Ben Gurion University (Beersheba), North Vancouver Museum, Musée du nouveau monde La Rochelle, the Fotofestiwal Łódź, to the Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo, Uruguay. In 2018 The University of Mexico will host her first retrospective. Leistner's articles, essays, and reviews have appeared in numerous magazines and books including Julian Stallabrass's *Memories of Fire: Images of War and the War of Images* and the forthcoming *Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture*.

She has won three Canadian National Magazine Awards Gold Medals and was a 2017 finalist for the prestigious Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography at Harvard. The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa has recently acquired fifteen years of Rita Leistner's work from Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Afghanistan—among the largest additions to the collection by any photographer and the largest by a female photographer.