

COUNTER INVESTIGATIONS: FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE

7 March – 6 May 2018



'The Ayotzinapa Case: A Cartography of Violence', 2017. Full caption on page 3.

The Institute of Contemporary Arts is pleased to present the first UK survey of the work of Forensic Architecture, an independent research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London.

The exhibition marks the beginning of a long-term collaboration between Forensic Architecture and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, extending into new areas of investigative research, and the development of a curriculum built around the methodologies and concepts that underpin the work of the agency.

'Forensic Architecture' is both the name of the research group established in 2010, and a form of investigative practice that traverses architectural, journalistic, legal and political fields, and moves from theoretical examination to practical application.

In recent years Forensic Architecture has undertaken [a series of investigations](#) into human rights violations and acts of state and corporate violence. These investigations have led to the contestation of accounts of events given by state authorities, affecting legal and human rights processes, and military, parliamentary and UN inquiries. The work of the agency is grounded in the use of architecture as an 'optical device', employing forms of spatial and material analysis, mapping and reconstruction, and extending outwards to overlay elements of witness testimony, and the aggregative forms of visual documentation enabled by contemporary media.

The exhibition spans the Institute of Contemporary Arts' Lower and Upper galleries as well as the Institute's theatre. In presenting a selection of recent investigations, the exhibition provides a forum for the exposition of previously obscured evidence, and a critical examination of the theoretical and methodological ground for Forensic Architecture as a practice. The group's investigations are presented as open-ended processes that interact with the world in which they exist, stir-up highly antagonistic responses and impact on political processes. The exhibition also becomes the physical infrastructure for a curriculum of a short course in Forensic Architecture. The individual investigations function here as anchors for public events, workshops and discussions.

Investigations presented at the Institute of Contemporary Arts include a report on the possible collusion between a member of a German domestic intelligence agency and a neo-Nazi group in the racist murder of Halit Yozgat in Kassel, 2006; a reconstruction of the Israeli forces' bombardment of Rafah, Gaza, between 1 August and 4 August, 2014; the detailed mapping and examination of the events leading up to the 2014 attack by local police on students from the Rural Normal School of Ayotzinapa, Iguala, Mexico; and investigations into the deaths of migrants in the central Mediterranean Sea, and the subsequent evasion of responsibility for effective search and rescue operations by state and NATO coalition forces. The exhibition and related public programmes also present new investigations, supported by the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Architect and theorist Eyal Weizman, founder of Forensic Architecture, has articulated a theoretical ground for the practice through the etymological origin of forensics in 'forensis', Latin for 'pertaining to the forum'. The Roman forum was a 'multidimensional space of politics, law, and economy', in contrast to the contemporary understanding of forensics as the application of science and medicine within the frame of a court of law. Since state agencies seek to monopolize both killing and the control of the narrative of events in zones of war and oppression, 'counter-forensics' must emerge to turn the state's own means against the violence it commits.

Aesthetics sits at the centre of such an understanding, in the manner in which politics appears to us, and by which claims of truth are based on modes of representation and staging. Indeed, using models, videos, large-scale maps, graphics, and interactive platforms, the presentation of Forensic Architecture's recent investigations at the Institute of Contemporary Arts constitutes a possible forum for counter-forensic practices, a site for the debate and pursuit of public accountability.

FULL IMAGE CAPTION

Project: The Ayotzinapa Case: A Cartography of Violence

Forensic Architecture was commissioned by and worked in collaboration with the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF) and Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (Centro Prodh) to conceive of an interactive cartographic platform to map out and examine the different narratives of the events of 26–27 September 2014, when 43 students from the Rural Normal School of Ayotzinapa were forcibly disappeared in the town of Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. The project aims to reconstruct, for the first time, the entirety of the known events that took place that night in and around Iguala and to provide a forensic tool for researchers to further the investigation.

Forensic Architecture used this photograph taken by the military agent present at the Palacio de Justicia scene at 23:00 on 26 September 2014 to assist in reconstructing the environment and the various elements (vehicles, persons, etc.) present at the scene at that time. Image: Forensic Architecture, 2017

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FURTHER EXAMPLES/IMAGES



Project: 77sqm_9:26min

Composite of both the physical and virtual reconstructions of the internet cafe where Halit Yozgat was murdered on the 6th April 2006 by a member of the neo-Nazi group known as the National Socialist Underground (NSU). The person pictured is an actor reenacting the movements of security agent Andres Temme, who was present in the internet cafe when the shooting occurred. In this simulation, we proved that the body of Halit Yozgat would clearly lie within Temme's field of vision before he exited the cafe. Image: Forensic Architecture, 2017



Project: Rafah: Black Friday

The story of Rafah, on 1 August 2014, lies somewhere between hundreds of images and video clips existing in disparate locations, on the smart-phones of activists, press clippings and social media posts. Three-dimensional models provided an optical device and a means of composing the relation between multiple images and videos in space and time. This evidence-assemblage is what allowed for a narrative of events to emerge. Image: Forensic Architecture, 2015

This project was undertaken in collaboration with Amnesty International.