



# Jenny Holzer

## ~~War Paintings~~

### Venice, Museo Correr

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Eventi Collaterali



## WAR PAINTINGS

The twenty works that comprise *War Paintings* take as their starting point government documents concerning the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed the events of September 11, 2001. Many of these documents were released under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which requires government agencies to provide public access to their records. For researchers, journalists, and public interest groups, FOIA has long been an invaluable resource.

The fourteen works on view in Room 32 were hand-painted between 2012 and 2015. Six silk-screen paintings dating from 2006–09 can be found in other galleries on the first and second floors.

In discussing her decision to begin painting a decade ago, Holzer explains, “I wanted the handwork to demonstrate attention. I wanted touch.” She adds that although she feels “the content speaks for itself, having torture normalized—by any group—is reprehensible.”

## ROOM 32

1. *water mixed with snow* (2012–13); 2. *I was called, 12. or Burnt*, 13. *The behavior* (all 2013); 4. *I was arrested* (2013–14); 3. *in (JIHAD) time*, 11. *Question Answer*, 6. *We are not* (all 2014); 5. *I my self* (2014–15)

In 2004, the CID began an inquiry into allegations of systematic abuse at an Army base in Gardez, Afghanistan, including the 2003 death of Jamal Nasser, an Afghan detainee. U.S. Special Forces witnesses told CID investigators that medical care and humane treatment had been given to all eight men involved, and that Nasser had died of a kidney ailment. In interviews with Afghan authorities, however, the captured men tell a very different story. In 2008, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) obtained 160 pages of documents from the investigations by both the CID and Afghan authorities.

### 7. *Terrorist Group* (2013)

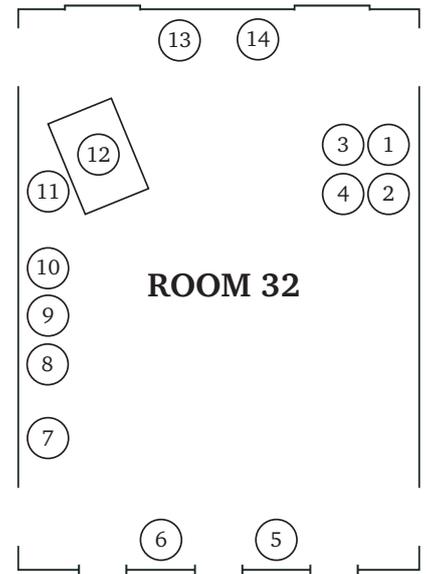
A 2004 report, titled “The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland: An FBI Assessment,” offered the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s overview of terrorist groups that it believed might strike within the United States. The report assessed each group’s aims, its means and organization, and the threat it posed.

### 8. *After my transfer*, 9. *neck was tied up to*, 10. *we are very happy* (all 2014)

Prompted in part by a May 2004 New York Times story about an Afghan police colonel’s allegations of brutal physical, sexual, and verbal abuse during 22 days in U.S. custody in 2003, the U.S. Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID) conducted an investigation. Few U.S. servicemen recalled ever witnessing abuse at first hand, although several recalled isolated incidents of misconduct by British and Afghan police and military personnel. The National Security Archive obtained 536 pages of documents related to the investigation.

### 14. *XX 7* (2013–15)

A 1984 FBI report, titled “Threat Assessment of Pro-Khomeini Shiite Activities in the United States,” presented the FBI’s view of Shiite doctrines, terrorism in the Middle East, and groups in the United States suspected of espionage or support for terrorist activities. As originally released in 2008, the 19-page document was heavily redacted. It was obtained again in 2011 by the National Security Archive with many redacted passages restored, including page 7, which described an Islamic Education Center just outside Washington, D.C.



1. *water mixed with snow*, 2012–13  
Oil on linen, 147.3 x 111.8 cm
2. *I was called*, 2013  
Oil on linen, 147.3 x 111.8 cm
3. *in (JIHAD) time*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 147.3 x 111.8 cm
4. *I was arrested*, 2013–14  
Oil on linen, 147.3 x 111.8 cm
5. *I my self*, 2014–15  
Oil on linen, 147.3 x 111.8 cm
6. *We are not*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 147.3 x 111.8 cm
7. *Terrorist Group*, 2013  
Oil on linen, 203.2 x 157.5 cm
8. *After my transfer*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 61 x 46.2 cm
9. *neck was tied up to*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 61 x 46.2 cm
10. *we are very happy*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 61 x 46.2 cm
11. *Question Answer*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 203.2 x 157.5 cm
12. *or Burnt*, 2013  
Oil on linen, 203.2 x 157.5 cm
13. *The behavior*, 2013  
Oil on linen, 203.2 x 157.5 cm
14. *XX 7*, 2013–15  
Oil on linen, 203.2 x 157.5 cm

## OTHER GALLERIES

### ***DODDOACID 008769 BLUE WHITE*** (2008)

First Floor, Room 1

Another CID detainee abuse investigation focused on video footage of a U.S. soldier kicking a wounded Iraqi prisoner in the face. Although several hundred interviews were conducted in person or by phone, all identifying information was redacted before documents were released to the ACLU in March 2005. The 205-page file contains this set of fingerprints and palm print, evidently made in connection with a 2004 arrest.

### ***Phase IV Operations pewter*** (2007)

First Floor, Room 9

On November 21, 2001, President George Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld began to discuss invading Iraq and deposing Saddam Hussein. By spring 2002, the U.S. Central Command had mapped out a four-phase operation. They used an elaborate PowerPoint presentation in briefings and expected military victory to be achieved in 45 days. In 2004, the National Security Archive made a FOIA request for documents relating to debates about troop levels and obtained the declassified PowerPoint slides in 2007.

### ***Small Right Hand Down blue white, Small Left Hand 0147-03 blue white*** (both 2009)

First Floor, Room 3; Second Floor, Room 23

Emad Kazem Taleb, an Iraqi in U.S. custody at Abu Ghraib prison, died of “arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease” on August 20, 2003. The 49-page file contains a postmortem photograph of Taleb and his fingerprints, including palm prints of both of his hands, but reveals no further information about him.

### ***Wish List*** (2006)

Second Floor, Room 31

By the summer of 2003, insurgency in Iraq had taken a toll on coalition forces, and U.S. Army interrogators, many with little training or experience, were finding reliable and actionable intelligence hard to obtain. One Army captain circulated an e-mail that asked recipients what interrogation techniques they would put on a “wish list” for dealing with unprivileged belligerents. In April 2005, in response to an ACLU FOIA request, 100 pages of documents were released concerning investigations of incidents of prisoner abuse in Iraq.

### ***PALM, FINGERS & FINGERTIPS (RIGHT HAND) 000407*** (2007)

Second Floor, Room 43

A 2004–05 CID detainee abuse investigation was prompted by an Iraqi man’s complaint that he had been beaten in U.S. custody after being arrested while driving a car filled with weapons. One interrogator interviewed by the CID remembered that the man had a black eye and welts on his back. The 248-page investigation record obtained by the ACLU contains 35 pages of fingerprints of Army personnel interviewed by the CID