

CRITICS' PICKS

CURRENT PAST

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- "Securing the Shadow: Posthumous Portraiture in America"
- Beverly Buchanan

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- "The Artist's Museum"

Buffalo

- "Mabel Dodge Luhan & Company: American Moderns and the West"

Berlin

Alfredo Jaar
GALERIE THOMAS SCHULTE
 Charlottenstrasse 24
 February 11–April 15

In a constant flood of images, the impact of a single picture, however severe, is often immediately overridden. In his installation *Shadows*, 2014, Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar challenges this tendency by taking one image and letting it dominate a space with the intensity of a feeling, or a beating heart. He chose a photograph by Dutch photojournalist Koen Wessing taken in 1978 in Nicaragua, where, after forty-one years, the US-allied military dictatorship in the country was coming to an end. In the final violent convulsions of the regime, Wessing's lens captured two women whose father had just been killed by authorities, their arms in the air in an almost sculptural gesture—this is the image of absolute despair. The exhibition first presents six backlit photographs, also by Wessing, that chronicle the course of events before and after this moment, before leading visitors into a dark, enclosed space with just this frame displayed. Projected onto an entire back wall, it slowly fades to black while the silhouette of the two women is concurrently illuminated from behind, to the point where its brightness becomes blinding.



Alfredo Jaar, *Shadows*, 2014, video projection with LED lights, aluminum, 9 1/2 x 14 1/2". Installation view.

In a conversation with Dutch filmmaker Kees Hin, screened in another room, Wessing describes the event: legs and hands trembling, defaulting to basic instincts, and then, moved by intuition, the sound of the shutter. The physical experience of the viewer in this show mirrors Wessing's own as he took the picture; a testament to the power of images and their material, bodily consequences. If Jaar's goal is to make us understand something about a certain time and conflict, it is also to stress that understanding must be grounded in both physical and intellectual comprehension. But the work does not elaborate on what kind of action should spring from such insight. Rather, it leaves us, quite simply, struck.

— Kristian Vistrup Madsen

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