



Alfredo Jaar, *Shadows*, 2014, mixed media, 116" x 174".
Original photograph: Koen Wessing, *Estelí, Nicaragua*,
September 1978.

ALFREDO JAAR

GALERIE LELONG
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The central image was searing, its brilliance both blinding and revelatory. Housed in an enclosed, darkened space within the gallery, the picture of two young women was taken by Dutch photojournalist Koen Wessing (1942–2011) during the 1978 Nicaraguan revolution. Chilean-born artist Alfredo Jaar blew up the image and made it the linchpin of his installation *Shadows* (2014), accompanying it with six light-boxed transparencies of the same event also captured by Wessing. Here Jaar shows the women emerging from a pale ground, coming slowly into sharper focus, running home. Their bodies are torqued in raw, unmistakable grief; they've just learned about the assassination of their father. As the image becomes brighter and brighter, the figures coalesce into a white silhouette, and then everything dissolves into a whiteness that assaults the eyes, followed by blackness—and the flash of the afterimage.

The work is the second of a planned trilogy (the first was *The Sound of Silence*, 2006, based on the controversial photo taken by photojournalist Kevin Carter of a child being stalked by a vulture). Jaar, a dedicated activist for human rights, omits the text that is usually integral to his projects, betting on the power of a single image to convey all that needs to be communicated, which it did, detonating like a visual bomb.

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