

## RITA LEISTNER

(b. 1964, Scarborough, Canada)

Rita Leistner's socially and politically engaged documentary 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, First Nations communities in the Arctic and helicopter loggers on Canada's west coast. 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 her friend Garth Hadley, whom Leistner planted trees with in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia over 25 years ago. She has planted over 500,000 trees. Modern Canadian Tree Planting, now in its third generation, is considered a rite of passage and is an indelible part of Canada's national identity as a world leader in sustainable forest management. "The Tree Planters" photographs and accompanying video premiered on October 21, 2017 at the Stephen Bulger Gallery, which has represented Leistner since 2015. Rita will be returning to the "cut block" for the 2018 tree planting season to continue working toward a book and film.

Rita Leistner studied photography at the International Center of Photography in New York and has a Master of Arts degree in comparative literature in French and English 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, *Looking for Marshall McLuhan in Afghanistan*, an interdisciplinary work about photography, technology and war, was a 2015 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 United States, and Uruguay, features iPhone photographs remastered by master printer Bob Carnie from digital negatives in palladium with applied tri-colour pigment—a hybrid of digital technology and a nineteenth century printing technique rendering permanent prints with an estimated lifespan of over 700 years.

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 in Poland, to the Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo, Uruguay. 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 (2013)* and the *Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture (2018)*.

She is a 2018 World Press Photo Digital Storytelling Award Nominee, has won three Canadian National Magazine Awards Gold Medals and was a 2017 finalist for the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography at Harvard University. Her work is in private, corporate and public collections including the Musée du Nouveau Monde in France, the Comanche National Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Toronto Dominion Bank. In 2017, the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa acquired fifteen years of Rita Leistner's work from Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Afghanistan—among the largest acquisitions in the collection.