

New Editions 2011

Daniel Heyman

When Photographers are Blinded, Eagles' Wings are Clipped (2009-2010)

65 prints: etching and woodgrain relief on 100% cotton rag Revere, overall: 136 x 169 3/4 inches, edition of 5, printed by CR Ettinger Studio, Philadelphia, published by the artist (available through Cade Tompkins, Providence, RI), \$20,000–\$30,000.

The inspiration for this architecturally-scaled print came from two bouts of military adventurism: that of the Bush administration in the last decade and that of the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I in the 15th century. In the case of the former, Heyman was responding to the duplicity and human cost of the war in Iraq; the latter mattered because it provided the occasion for Albrecht Dürer's *Triumphal Arch for Emperor Maximilian* (1515), a 12-foot high architectural fantasy printed from 192 blocks. Dürer exploited both physical scale and the distributive power of print to talk about political might. Heyman's 65-part magnum opus takes on a related form and subject, but while Dürer was on commission, and had to play nice, Heyman is free to express outrage.

Heyman is not interested in celebrating military triumph, but in dramatizing false triumphs and their insidious damage. He saw Dürer's vast print in the "Grand Scale," exhibition organized by Wellesley College around the same time he heard a talk with photojournalist Michael Kamber. Kamber, who had spent years embedded with the US military in Iraq, described the



Daniel Heyman, *When Photographers are Blinded, Eagles' Wings are Clipped* (2009-2010).

situation and the attendant limitations placed on the pictures he was allowed to make as being "blinded." At the center of Heyman's allegory stands (falls?) a house of cards whose faces flip toward the viewer, revealing Assyrian reliefs, Roman warriors, women in burkas. On one side a photographer lifts a camera to his blindfolded eyes; on the other side a tortured, arrow-pierced, naked man tumbles headfirst. A frieze of eagles surrounds the central composition on three sides—soaring at the top, plummeting at the left, perched vulture-like at the right. The repeated image across the bottom is of "boots on

the ground," all in pairs except for three panels in which one foot is replaced by a peg leg.

By design, these various parts do not coalesce into a solid story. The repeated eagles suggest not grandeur, but a stammering inability to move forward. The individual prints can be joined together in various ways, with multiple hinged parts. Some parts have been editioned separately as individual prints. Grand narrative—so elaborately and visibly contrived in the Dürer—is denied here, replaced by something fractured and contingent, a visual triumph depicting multiple defeats. ■