

white columns

## For Immediate Release

**White Columns proudly presents:  
May 5 – June 10, 2006**

### **Harrell Fletcher – The American War**

At a time when the media is blamed for the negative perception (and reception) of the current conflict in Iraq, Harrell Fletcher's 'The American War' provides both a visceral account and moving acknowledgment of the complex realities of war. 'The American War' is a partial, photographic restaging of 'The War Remnants Museum' in Ho Chi Minh City, a museum dedicated to the Vietnam War and its legacy. (The museum's exhibits consist solely of photographic panels, with accompanying descriptive texts, which Fletcher has casually re-photographed in a manner reminiscent of the 'furtive' photographic images that appear of the auction site EBay, or those taken by U.S. guards at the Abu Gharib prison.) Beyond its social, political, and emotional content, Fletcher's project also throws into sharp focus photography's role – as both a documentary and propagandist medium – in the subsequent construction of history.

In a statement about this project Fletcher has said:

“In June 2005 I was in Vietnam for a month as part of an international artists retreat. While I was there I visited The War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, which is a memorial museum for what is referred to in Vietnam as 'The American War'. I was so affected by what I saw at the museum that I went back several times and eventually photographed all of the images and text descriptions from the main museum - over two hundred photos. I used my digital camera and took the shots hand held at off angles to avoid reflections, so the images have an oddly casual quality but are still accurate representations of the material depicted at the museum, with a similarly horrifying quality.

Even though many of the images were familiar to me, seeing them all together and presented from the Vietnamese perspective was very striking. It made me realize that I didn't know much about the details of the war that had consumed the U.S for most of my early childhood. I started researching the history of the war in an attempt to understand why it happened and what its effects were on the region and in regards to U.S policy. The museum and my re-presentations of it are only showing one perspective, there are many others. I encourage everyone to do their own research and find out more about The American War in Vietnam and all of the other American Wars that have been happening ever since, sometimes covertly and other times, as in the current situation in Iraq, outrageously overtly, but hidden at the same time.”

Fletcher's book *The American War* has been published by J and L Books ([www.jandlbooks.org](http://www.jandlbooks.org)) and will be available from the gallery.

'The American War' debuted in November 2005 at Artpace, San Antonio, Texas, and has since traveled to Solvent Space, Richmond, VA; and the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. Cambridge, MA – where it will be on view until June 9 (concurrently with its White Columns' presentation.)

**Harrell Fletcher** lives and works in Portland, Oregon. He received an M.F.A. from the California College of the Arts and Crafts, San Francisco/Oakland in 1994. He is currently an Assistant Professor at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon. Recent solo exhibitions include: Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco; The Wrong Gallery, New York (both 2005); Christine Burgin Gallery, New York (2004); and Diverse Works, Houston (2003.) Recent group shows include: 2004 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art; “Baja to Vancouver”, Seattle Art Museum (touring) (2003); and “Yes We're Excerpts”, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2002).

**Artist talk & book signing: Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm Harrell Fletcher will discuss 'The American War'.**