



CAUSE FOR CONFLICT

FRIEDRIKE KALZ  
JAN BEŠOVEC

# CAUSE FOR CONFLICT

PHOTOGRAPHISCHE INSZENIERUNG  
VON KONFLIKTSTOFF



## Cause for Conflict - Introduction

“Cause for Conflict” is a photographic art project that restages a textile artefact being a true copy of an assault rifle, the Kalashnikov AK-47.

Since 2011, photographer Friederike Kalz and textile artist Jan Bejšovec have intended to project the idea of an armed conflict onto a Western country.

In this process the common thought of public media and stereotypes of global power and conflicts are questioned.

Why is a silhouette of an assault rifle so familiar to us that we recognise it as a “real” weapon even if it is obviously just made of textile?

Why is placing an armed conflict in the urban space of a Western metropolis so bewildering to us?

For a long time photojournalism has used young male rebels or fighters armed with Kalashnikovs as stereotypes.

This type remained unchanged from the liberation movements of the 60s, over the post-socialist upheavals to the present conflicts in the Near East becoming an icon, whether the conflict was of anticolonial, socialist, ethnic, or Islamic nature.

At the same time these fighters are always representatives of societies, which are affected by poverty, lack of prospects and exploitation, facts that are intuitively represented by most viewers of the so-called First World.

The wars in former Yugoslavia and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine astonished the common certainty that armed conflicts exist only in certain regions of the world.

Like this, the propaganda stereotype of the fighter with the Kalashnikov supports the dissociation from foreign conflicts by the mixed feelings of cultural superiority and romanticisation.

“Cause for Conflict” intends to show that no society is resistant to violent and armed conflicts.

## Cause for Conflict – Artistic idea

Artist Jan Bejšovec uses fabrics with specific designs or particular origins as an additional level of authenticity in his collages.

So the fabric itself strengthens the significance of the work beside the actual subject.

This technique of extremes, soft textile components and yet factual messages of the picture, enhances the options of expression.

The facsimile of an AK-47 Kalashnikov, exclusively made for the photo project “Cause for Conflict”, makes this idea obvious.

Even though the “weapon” is completely made of textiles, its icon-like shape has a threatening effect.

The use of original military camouflage fabric for all parts of the “weapon” deepens this impression.

The expertise of this fabric, solely created for and used only by military, fuses with the outline of the weapon forming a new authentic looking artefact.

For any beholder, the scenarios shown in the photos communicate a real conflict situation on the spot.

This way the fake of a photo-journalistic standard triggers a very realistic and threatening impression.

Even the participants, who volunteered as models for the photo project, got the feeling of being armed by handling the textile “weapon”.

No matter if the models had been socialised as men or women, or if they had been in contact with real weapons before, the presence of the weapon-like corpus made of military fabric placed everybody the sense of being effectively fit for action.

“Cause for Conflict” does not only scrutinise the viewing habits of the spectator of the photographs, it is also an experiment how much an object like a weapon is part of our perceptions and actions.

Although real arms are barely visible or available in today's Western society, the acquaintance of weapons is much more channelled by the media like TV, film, internet, or games.

The art project successfully shows how fast these stereotypes are retrievable.

## Cause for Conflict – Photographic realisation

It was very important to the photographer Friederike Kalz to arrange lifelike scenes, which look like from a real conflict.

Even though the motifs were staged, it should make the impression as if it is a photo-journalistic work. This was achieved additionally by the abandonment of complex light and camera equipment and the use of almost only natural daylight. For the arrangement of the scenes authenticity was paramount.

The models were non-professional people from the circle of friends of the artists, which were introduced into the topic before.

Partially the artists acted too.

The protagonists were asked to choose the kind of clothes, which they would wear in a real fighting situation.

In that way they created a mixture of plain and military clothing like in real conflict zones.

The models could also participate in the realization of the scenes, since they should not only be static actors but put themselves into a combat situation.

In the process dynamic battle scenes as well as moments of quietness and exhaustion were created. It was important to depict a conflict not only as active fighting but also as moments of rest and daily organizational routines.

Nevertheless the feelings of inner disturbance and constant threat by an invisible enemy necessarily remained.

Private flats, public buildings and the urban space of Berlin were chosen as places of action. The question regarding the nature of the conflict is not answered.

It's the intention to show that a conflict by any reason can happen anytime also in our society.

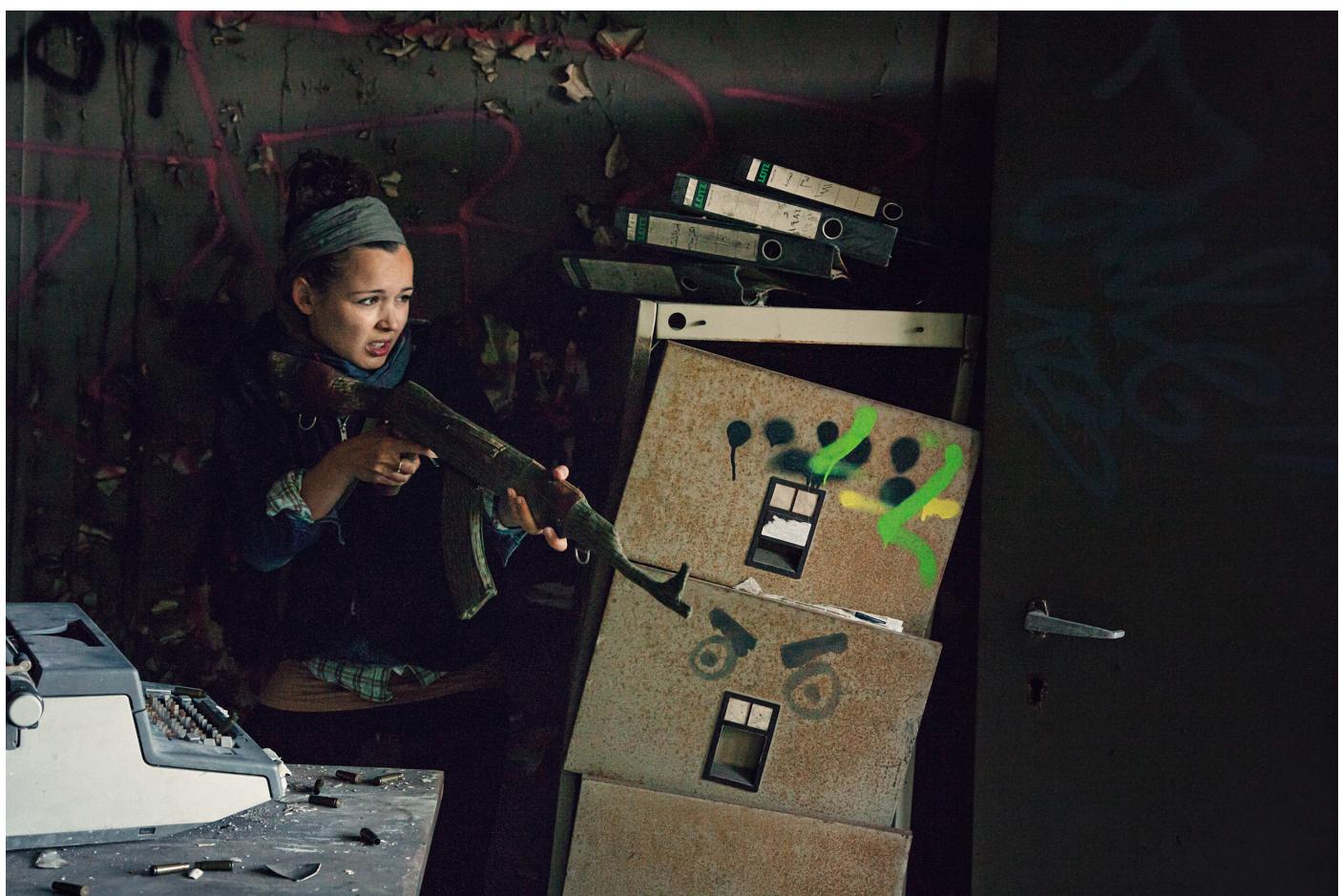
The weapon as the symbol of fight is only partially visible in the shots.

But again it is the key element and creates a feeling of threat.

The models have different demographic, social and psychographic characters. That kind of diversity was an attempt to break the stereotype of the young male fighter.

Everybody can be in a situation where he has to fight.

The recipient is forced to drop the usual dissociation from the stereotype of the fighter and to ask himself how to react in a real conflict situation.





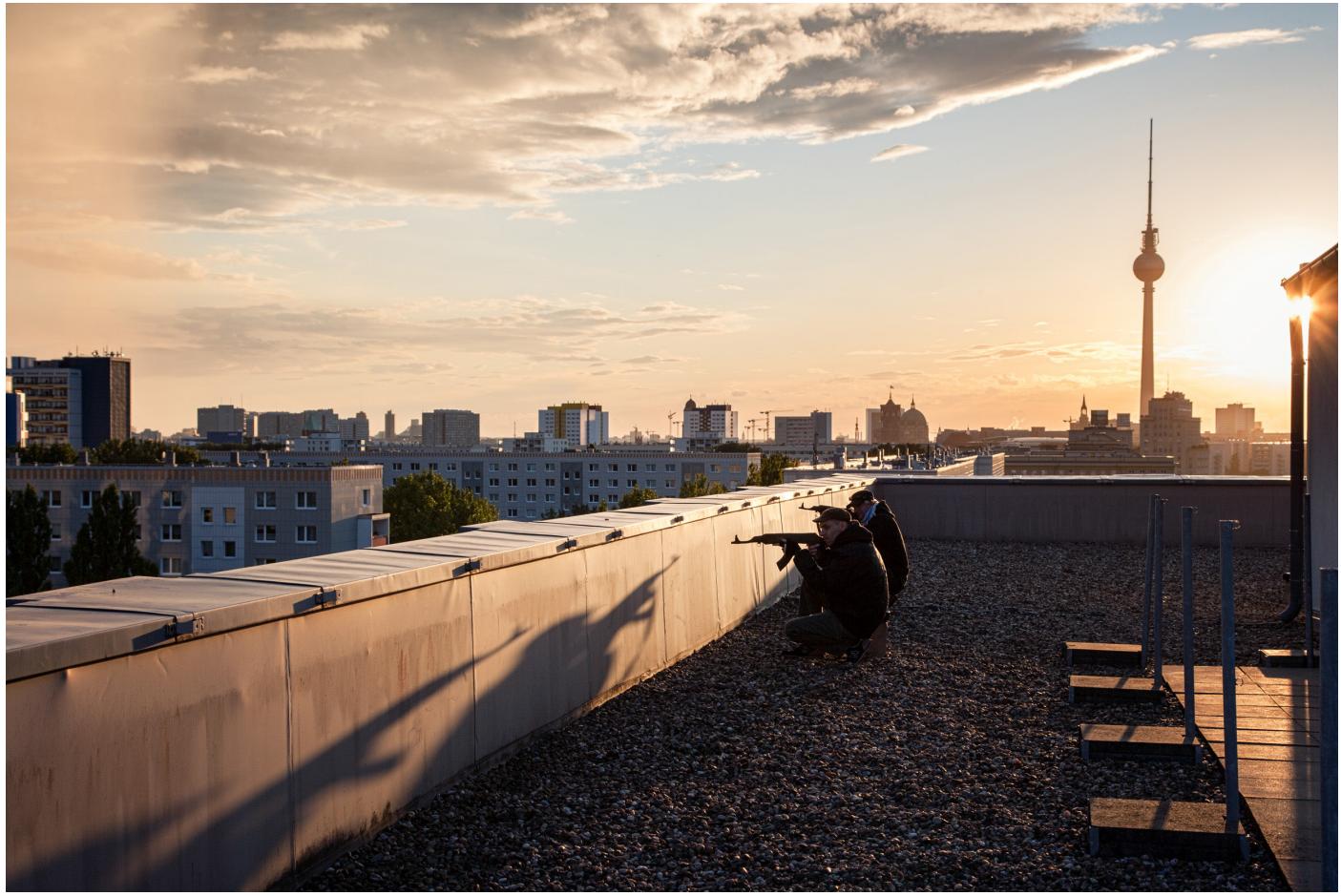
















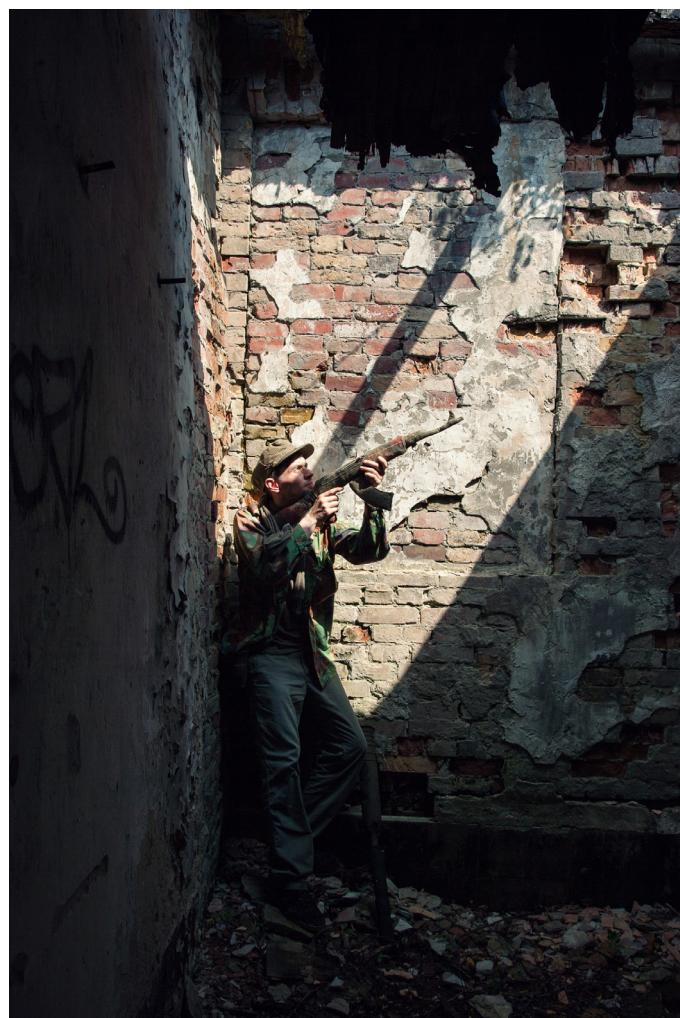












## Vita Friederike Kalz

Friederike Kalz was born 1986 in Berlin and raised in the south of Brandenburg. From 2001 to 2008 she lived in Düsseldorf, passing the school examination there in 2006 and discovered her interest in film and photography. After collecting first experiences in the media industry at the WDR in Düsseldorf and in the TV production company Rachals Film in Munich, she dedicated herself to photography after 2008 and had her first exhibition with the title "Absurd" in Leipzig the very same year. In 2009 she started her photographic education with the renowned photographers Neumann and Rodtmann in Berlin, finishing it in 2012 as one of the best students.

Since then she worked with different photographers and is a self-employed portrait photographer in Berlin since 2013.

In the spring of 2013 she organized the photo project "I Can Show You" for the IFB Institut für fotografische Bildung (Institute for Photographic Education) as a project manager and instructor.

In cooperation with the Children's Fund Global Care and the Centre for Tribal and Rural Development she went together with photographer Reza Nadji to India to work with children and young people.

Olympus sponsored compact cameras to enable the participants to express themselves through photography for the first time.

The goal of the project was to use photography as a means of expression to reflect upon yourself and your environment.

In summer 2014 she worked for the after-flood-project "Spuren im Land" ("Traces in the Land") of neugierig e.V. and "Aktion Deutschland Hilft" in Saxony-Anhalt. The project served the psychosocial treatment after the flood in 2013 in the district of Stendal.

Friederike Kalz documented the project by film and instructed young people in a photo workshop, which could reflect about their experiences with the flood disaster with the help of photography.

Currently she works on other film and photographic projects, like a documentary film about the project „Freie Schule Elbe-Havel-Land“ in Saxony-Anhalt.

## Vita Jan Bejšovec

Jan Bejšovec (\*30.06.1975, Freiberg/Sa.) is a German artist whose work is dedicated to the textile arts and contains in addition to pictures, installations and objects. The main subject of his art revolves around political or historical issues. Jan Bejšovec lives and works in Berlin.

### Youth

Jan Bejšovec was born in the GDR as the only child of parents of Bohemian descent. He went through a typical socialization and was a member of the Youth organisations. The collapse of the state in 1989 and the social changes in East Germany influenced him as well as his artistic work. The nearly complete destruction of the local textile industry and the disappearance of state symbols such as flags or uniforms generated an interest in textile forms of expression.

### Academic and Professional Experiences

During the 1990s, dis- and reorientation defined Jan Bejšovec as well as the whole of East German society. He studied different degree programmes, including Political and Historical sciences. After 1997, he worked some years as journalist in the Turkish capital Ankara. From 2001 till 2007 he was employed by Corporate Communications in Munich.

### Artistic Development

His professional work as a textile artist began after moving to Berlin in 2007 and the first exhibitions took place. The single show at ARD Hauptstadtstudio in 2011 and the group show 2012 at The Bundeswehr Military History Museum in Dresden with Anselm Kiefer and Michael Sailstorfer were his first successes.

### Work

Under the label KONFLIKTSTOFF Bejšovec frequently deals with political and social themes. The graphic and sometimes provocative depiction contrasts deliberately with the textile medium. The use of authentic fabrics or materials like military camouflage or vintage clothes adds to the various motifs. Next to the many political statements in his works, Bejšovec refers to the old traditions of textile arts and crafts in stately, military, or propagandistic contexts. He also tries to call attention to relevant historical places through textile installations within the public space.

Bejšovec is a modernist in the textile arts and combines traditional craft techniques with computer generated motifs influenced by street art or stencil-art. By the elaborate use of hand embroidery he creates a relief-like textile structure. To create photographically accurate templates for the embroidery, modern picture editing software is used. The embroidery itself is always done by hand, not by machines, thus increasing the authenticity of the picture.

## Selected exhibitions

- 2016 Kranj, solo show „Cause for conflict“ at artillery tower Škrlovec (Layer House)
- 2016 Kranj, Artist-in-residence at Layer House
- 2015 Chemnitz, group show „ausgezeichnet! most excellent!“ at Moated Castle Klaffenbach
- 2015 Halle, group show „Art localisation - Love your hometown“ at Galerie temporaire
- 2015 Ljubljana, solo show „City of flags“ at the Gallery Night-Window-Pešak
- 2015 Berlin, Co-Curator of the exhibition „77□13 Political art and resistance in Turkey“ at nGbK
- 2015 Ljubljana, Writer-in-residence at Galerija Alkatraz
- 2014 Miami, group show Art Miami with Gallery LÄKEMÄKER
- 2014 Berlin, solo show „metabole“ Gallery LÄKEMÄKER
- 2014 Berlin, group show „A hundred years after the Great War“ at okk
- 2014 Born auf dem Darß, group show „Artists of LÄKEMÄKER gallery“
- 2014 Berlin, solo show „By the beard of the prophet“
- 2013 Berlin, group show „24 hours“ Konfliktstoff at Deutsche Bank art space Alte Münze Berlin
- 2013 Berlin, solo show „Humans / Rights“ at okk
- 2013 Chemnitz, group show „2+2 / Phoenix Chemnitz - An exhibition at Peace Day“
- 2012 Berlin, group show „Kosmos as Presence, V5 Russian-German art convent“ at InteriorDAsein
- 2012 Berlin, curator of the group show „Vis-à-vis. Female portraits 1936-94“ with works from Graphothek Berlin
- 2012 Dresden, group show „Conflict of pictures - Tanks and positions of contemporary art“ at MHM Dresden with works of Anselm Kiefer, Frank Böltner, Michael Sailstorfer
- 2011 Berlin, group show „Turning Point“ at ARD-Hauptstadtstudio
- 2011 Chemnitz, group show „Begehungens Nr. 8“ - festival for young art
- 2011 Berlin, solo show „Konfliktstoff Germany“ at ARD-Hauptstadtstudio