

Social Imaging in the Euromaidan Protests and Beyond

With the rapid rise in popularity of image-based social networks such as Instagram, the production and dissemination of political content on social media is becoming an increasing visual activity. Throughout the Arab Spring and subsequent political upheavals, images captured and shared through cell phones play a key role in the way protest movements conceive of themselves and project that image to the world.

Alongside this phenomenon, social imaging more broadly, including the much-discussed “selfie,” has burgeoned into an enormous new realm of visual culture. People are creating and sharing images of themselves, their experiences, and their friends at a volume that dwarfs what was enabled by previous amateur photography technologies. Social imaging is often an effort to articulate, contemplate, and share the identity of the photographer. This activity takes on new dimensions when the producers of social images are taking part in historic and violent events. In conflict photography there was once a clear division between subject, photographer and viewer. Now, all three roles blend into one. A single actor in a revolutionary event will act as photographer, subject, and primary viewer of an image. The audience for these images consists of a network of others wearing the same three hats. When the main function of social images is the formation and communication of individual identity, how does this function change when these images double as historical documents? How is history written differently when it’s done instantly and self-reflexively, by the same people driving the historical events?

Taking a selfie during a revolution is not just a way of showing the world what’s happening, it’s a way of creating an image used to contemplate that reality for oneself, which is

then shared and archived, allowing that contemplation to continue through a social network and through memory.

Euromaidan

On November 21, 2013, protesters took to streets in Kiev, Ukraine, angry that president Viktor Yanukovych abruptly decided against signing an Association Agreement and Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. The move would have signaled continued Westernization for the former Soviet Bloc state. Instead, Yanukovych opted to strengthen ties to the East, with Russian president Vladimir Putin. The protesters, upset by a stagnant economy and widespread corruption, called for the resignation of Yanukovych.

The protests grew substantially on November 30 as a response to police violence. Protesters and police each claimed areas of Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), the main square of Kiev. The occasionally violent battles continued through the bitterly cold winter. In late February, violence escalated in the Square, Yanukovych and many of his supporters in parliament fled, allowing for opposition politicians to pass a series of reforms, effectively ending the standoff.

The protest came to be known as Euromaidan, a name coined on Twitter, which combines Euro- (for Europe) with Maidan (for the square). As with other recent protest movements, participants used social media to document and organize actions.

Around the time the Euromaidan protests were nearing their conclusion, I was experimenting with a web service called IFTTT.com (<https://ifttt.com/>), an acronym for If This Then That. It allows users to create “recipes” that allow different web services to interact with each other. A trigger in one service causes an action in another. It’s often used to create automatic back-ups, or small efficiency improvements. I noticed that the Instagram trigger allowed you to collect photos based on the location where the photo was taken. This allows you

to essentially follow a location on Instagram, rather than a person. You select a location on a map, and anytime someone takes an Instagram photo there, it triggers the IFTTT recipe. I made a recipe to collect all the Instagram photos taken in Independence Square in Kiev and save them to a Google spreadsheet.

Over the last several days of the protests, I collected thousands of images. In general the images fall into three categories. First, amateur photojournalism, photos that exist primarily to document the scene. These include photos of burning barricades, first aid efforts, damage to buildings, makeshift memorials for the dead, etc. The second type is propaganda. These images are often not photographs, but are drawings or other graphics supporting the cause of the protestors. These are captured because they were uploaded from Independence Square, so they bear the GPS signature. The final type of images are the ones of primary interest to me, social images. I define social images as images that communicate the user's identity, narrative, and style. These images include selfies, self-portraits taken at an arms length, but they also include portraits of friends, visual narrative, and other explorations of aesthetic identity. An important function of social images is their ability to help the photographer contemplate, archive, and re-contemplate themselves and their surroundings. This function is always present, but it becomes even more crucial when the circumstances surrounding the image become historic, violent, or otherwise hard to come to terms with.

The Selfie

To better understand social images, lets take a closer look at the ultimate social image, the selfie. In an essay titled, “Art at Arm’s Length: A History of the Selfie” art critic Jerry Saltz defines and unpacks the form:

A fast self-portrait, made with a smartphone’s camera and immediately distributed and inscribed into a network, is an instant visual

communication of where we are, what we're doing, who we think we are, and who we think is watching. Selfies have changed aspects of social interaction, body language, self-awareness, privacy, and humor, altering temporality, irony, and public behavior. It's become a new visual genre—a type of self-portraiture formally distinct from all others in history.

Saltz points out that while selfies are casual, they are not accidental. Each image must be reviewed before it's uploaded. This moment between capturing and sharing allows for "control as well as the presence of performing, self-criticality, and irony." Selfies typically contain a knowing glance, a look of simulated eye contact with the viewer. Saltz compares this to "methexis" in ancient Greek theater, when the performer addressed the audience directly.

Some of the most noteworthy selfies are taken in unusual or inappropriate circumstances. Selfies taken at funerals by teens are common enough to warrant a blog, Funeral Selfies, that does nothing but track the questionable images. Many other examples of selfies in inappropriate situations exist, including touring a gas chamber at Auschwitz, in front of a car crash, and with someone about to jump off a bridge visible over the subject/photographer's shoulder.

The most famous, or infamous, funeral selfie has never been seen. We only have third party documentation of the moment it was taken. President Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt took a group selfie at the memorial service for Nelson Mandela. Saltz imagines the thoughts going through the heads of these world leaders as they snap this cheery and surreal photo. "It is totally incomprehensible, even to us, to be us ... being here." (Saltz 2014)

These three world leaders, like the protesters in Independence Square, are writing both a personal and an historical narrative at once. In the moment, however, the weight of history only casts an uncanny shadow on the more immediate act of creating the image as a way of contemplating oneself in unbelievable circumstances.

I interviewed Alicia Eler, Selfie Columnist for Hyperallergic since June 2013. I asked her what she thought of my idea that selfies in warzones are first a tool of self-contemplation, and second a communication with the wider world. She said,

“Selfies are recognizable as selfies, and those who take them in the middle of conflict zones do so as networked postcards. They at once appear as memories, documentary, and a quick hello, as if to say: ‘I was here. This is me.’ There’s a great selfie from the latest round of protests in Istanbul—protestors are thrown into the back of a van, and together they take a selfie that was instantly associated with Ellen’s academy awards corporate selfie because of the angle, the number of people in the photo, and the timing of both selfies. In this way, no matter where the selfie is taken—in the back of a protest van, at the academy awards, on a vacation, in a bathroom—it is more likely to be considered in relation to the composition of other selfies. And then the protest is against the selfie itself rather than what it captures.” (Eler 2014)

If a selfie automatically situates itself in the wider context of other selfies, it’s worth expanding this idea to social images more generally. Where else do social imaging and violent conflict intersect, and what can they tell us about the nature of each?

Rabih Mroué’s *Pixelated Revolution*

“The Syrian protestors are recording their own death.” So begins a lecture/performance presented by Lebanese artist and actor Rabih Mroué in 2011 and 2012. Near the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Mroué found several clips on YouTube of protestors accidentally filming their own deaths. This was at a moment when the uprising in Syria was still viewed as the latest in a series of revolutions known as the Arab Spring. The violence captured in these videos was the very beginning of a long a brutal civil war that still rages today.

The videos were taken because there was a sense that the crimes of the regime needed to be recorded, with the hope that president Bashar al-Assad would be held accountable. In one video, the cameraman stands on a balcony, frantically panning around in search of a soldier who is firing on nearby protesters. The video finds the shooter, they share eye contact for a moment, then

the image jerks wildly with a loud bang. Mroué calls the found videos “double shootings.”
(Fasshauer 2012)

In the lecture, Mroué compares the aesthetic of double shooting videos to Dogme 95 (Downey 2012). Dogme 95 was an independent film movement that was active in Denmark in the mid 90’s. Filmmakers adhered to a strict set of guidelines, using very small budgets. Filmmakers eschewed special effects and other production techniques in favor of grit and veracity. The exchange of filming tactics among Syrian protesters operates as a parallel manifesto. In an interview, Mroué says,

“[Dogme 95] stipulates that you should not record violent scenes, or weapons, because they don’t want to fake these things. So it’s not necessary to use them. For the Syrians, they add to this dictate insofar as the violent scenes being recorded are actually for real and the stipulation is also correct - do not record violence - insofar as the weapon could kill them and the scene of killing is thereafter real. There is no attempt to fake death here - it is all too real.” (Downey 2012)

The Democratic Promise of Social Media

A persistent myth surrounding social media and political conflict since the beginning of the Arab Spring, or before, is that these technologies will have a democratizing effect. Once the world sees the actions of dictators through the eyes of the oppressed, the thinking goes, international condemnation and response will be swift and effective. This has not turned out to be true.

Social media is a propaganda tool that’s free for anyone to use. There’s no better reminder of this than the official Instagram account of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Widely considered to be a war criminal, Assad’s Instagram feed features political rallies, smiling diplomatic meetings in a lavish palace, and plenty of precious photos of the first lady performing humanitarian aid. Writing in the New Yorker, Emily Greenhouse considers the ethics of this banal and horrifying stream of images. She asks, “What does a social-media company do when a

user known to be attacking civilians is blasting out feel-good content?” To find out, she asked Instagram. They refused to comment on specific users, but still managed to give a response with maddeningly circular logic. In general, Instagram will ban users who upload violent or hateful content. The determination is based largely on context, and “context” is limited to the content uploaded to the site. So as long as Assad’s Instagram feed presents the appearance of a benevolent and just leader—in other words, portrays effective propaganda—Instagram is just fine with it (Greenhouse 2013).

Social media as a democratizing force is also undercut by the way content can travel freely, even when it’s divorced from ideology. In the Washington Post, Neil Ketchley observes that revolutionaries share tactics through social media regardless of ideology. Recent Muslim Brotherhood protesters in Egypt have studied tactics of the Ukrainian protesters, despite the fact that their political affiliations couldn’t be more different. The Euromaidan protesters were fighting for increased Westernization and closer ties to Europe, while the Muslim Brotherhood is fighting for a return to power for Islamist leaders deposed by a more secular military. Ketchley quotes an anonymous Muslim Brotherhood protester, emphasis mine:

The Ukrainians know how to make big molotovs, so we watch how they use them and in which situations so that we can better defend ourselves against the police. *We don't care about the situation in Ukraine*; we only hear a little about it on the news. But they know how to use molotovs to hold their square against the police.

Another revelatory example of social media use in war is the way the Israeli Defense Forces have recently used a number of platforms, including Instagram. A November 2012 assault on Gaza was documented in real time on multiple social media platforms. Updates came at each stage of the assault, announcing the killing of key enemy combatants, statistics on rocket strikes, and warnings to Palestinian civilians to avoid Hamas operatives for their own safety.

Huw Lemmey takes a critical look at IDF's social media strategy, particularly Instagram, in his essay "Devastation in Meatspace." This propaganda, like older examples, synthesizes a community that excludes others while protecting you, the intended viewer. Lemmey says the IDF employs a "visual regime based around firmly entrenched, conservative branding techniques." Instagram has the dual effect of putting the war on a "consumer scale," as well as positioning the conflict in a visual relationship with wars of the past through Instagram retro filters. The images don't appear as raw digital evidence of the now. They are not the type of images that impress upon us the duty of deciding the moral culpability of those depicted. That work has already been done. The retro feel places the images safely in the historic narrative of the nation of Israel, alongside wars whose moral questions have already been settled. Lemmey characterizes the aesthetic of these images this way, "These are the photos you would take if you served in the IDF. We are just like you, and these military decisions are the ones you would take, if you were in our situation." (Lemmey 2012)

Another tactic deployed by the IDF on Instagram is posting photos taken by individual soldiers going about their daily lives. They look sexy, fun, and hip. They suggest to the viewer, we can hang out, we can be friends, even if we don't know each other, we should. The personal and political completely collapse into one. We're no longer able to distinguish our feelings about what these soldiers are doing on a moral and geopolitical scale with who we think they are, and how fun it might be to hang out with them. Images of Palestinians, meanwhile, get further from us, less relatable, more other (Lemmey 2012).

The Third Meaning

What distinguishes the IDF's Instagram feed from my collection of all the Instagram photos taken in Independence Square during the final days of Euromaidan is the intentionality with which the images are created and shared. IDF's Instagram is clearly propaganda. Some of

the photos from Euromaidan are as well, but with others it's hard to know. Who took these photos? Were they uploaded right away, or later? Who was the intended audience? If they conform to our idea of the recent narrative of Ukraine, who ensures that they tell the correct story, the photographer or the viewer? Collecting and decontextualizing images in this way has a strange dual effect. On one hand, the conflict becomes very real, close, and almost personal. The rage and fear of the protesters becomes as genuine and immediate as everything else I see on Instagram, like my friends' lunches and trips to the beach. On the other hand, this conflict is very far away and foreign. The images often seem raw and unfiltered, but also somehow conspicuously planned. They carry extra, incidental meanings. While employing smartphones to instantly capture, contemplate and share images of themselves in unbelievable circumstances, these photographers embed layers in these images beyond their intent and comprehension.

In *Image Music Text*, Roland Barthes identifies three ways images communicate meaning. The first is informational, the objects and people depicted. The second is symbolic. This is what the informational elements communicate through a shared understanding of the meaning of commonly interpreted signs. The third meaning is the obtuse meaning. This is similar to the symbolic meaning, but is open, incomplete, or perhaps broken. There is a sign, but we cannot give the signified a name. We can't even be sure that it's intentional. It's the aspects of an image that point to meanings beyond language. Barthes talks about it this way,

The third meaning also seems to me greater than the pure, upright, secant, legal perpendicular of the narrative, it seems to open the field of meaning totally, that is infinitely. I even accept for the obtuse meaning the word's pejorative connotation: the obtuse meaning appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information; analytically, it has something derisory about it: opening out into the infinity of language... (Barthes 1977)

Social Images from violent conflicts are most revealing in the aspects that are beyond their intended meaning. As they blend self-referential and documentary purposes, they gain an

obtuse meaning that escapes the intention of the maker. This is because the intended audience of the images is the photographer herself and her social network, not history. They gain the third meaning when they become documents of greater historical and political significance. Signifiers that once pointed to some shared meaning are severed, giving the images an aura that comes from dislocation.

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First Person History

Social Imaging in the Euromaidan Protests and
Beyond

Euromaidan

- Ukraine anti-government protests that began November 21, 2013
- Began when government decided to not sign Association Agreement and a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union
- Called for the resignation of President Viktor Yanukovych
- Grew substantially in response to police violence on November 30
- Opposition gained power in late February, ousting Yanukovych, causing protests to end

Euromaidan

- The name Euromaidan was coined on Twitter
- It combines Euro- for Europe, with Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), the main square of Kiev, where the protests took place



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Geo-tagged Instagram photos taken or uploaded near Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate in Millennium Park, Chicago. Project by Kevin Buist / kevinbuist.com



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#ifttt #instagram #chicago #cloud gate #the bean



A photo taken or uploaded near Cloud Gate in Millennium Park, Chicago. // had to. #tourist by jenna_maria_ <http://ift.tt/1ofmRpX>

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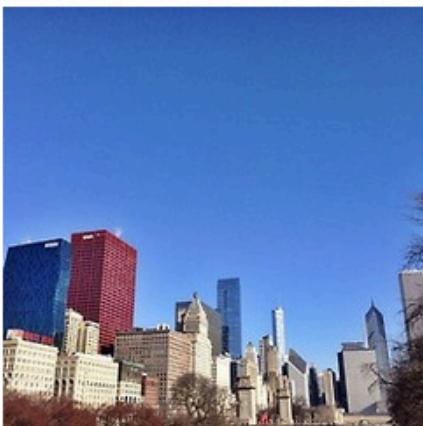


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<http://cloudgatephotos.tumblr.com/>

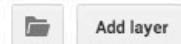


<http://caldergram.tumblr.com/>

Caldergram

These are the locations of the red Alexander Calder stabiles that are documented on

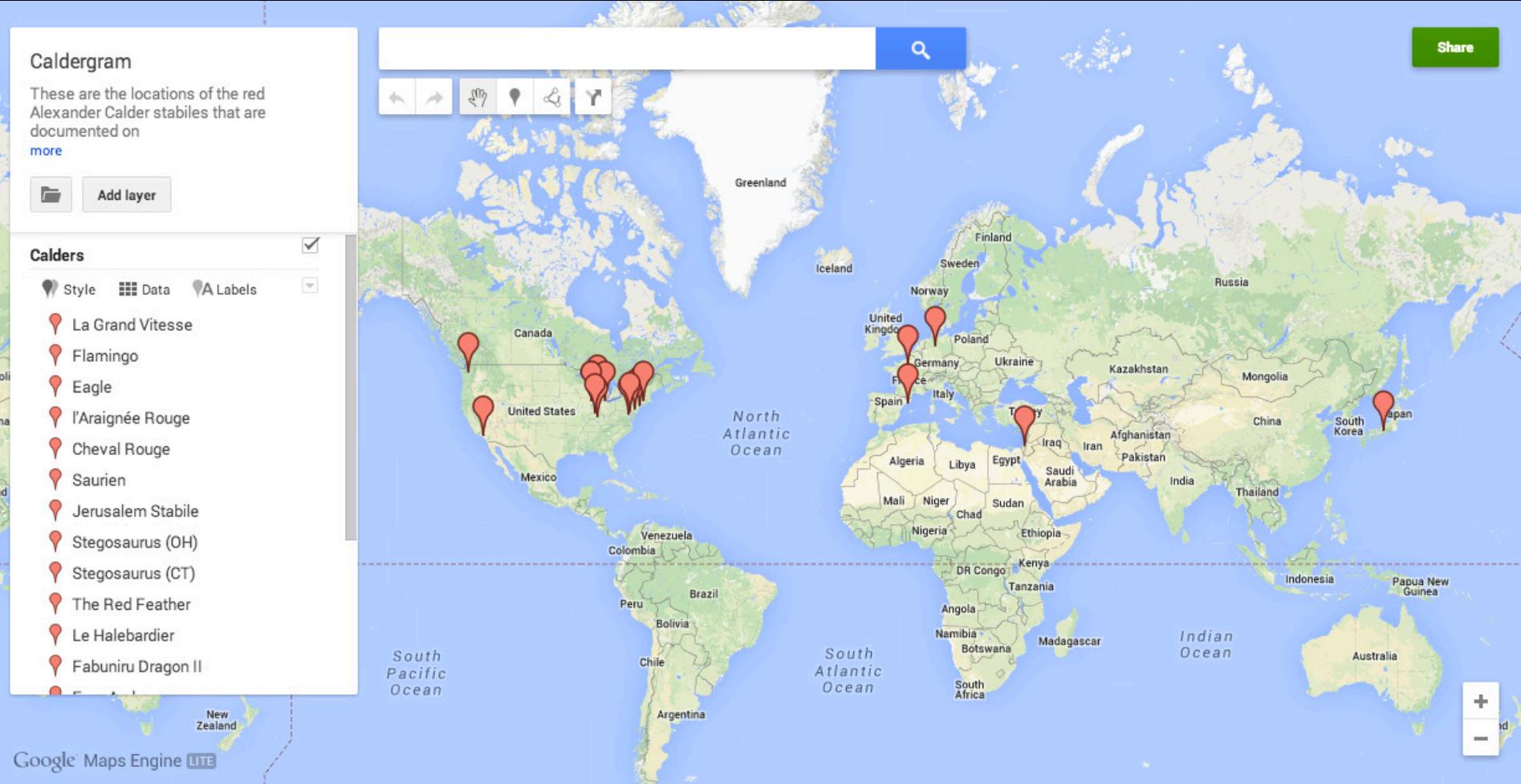
more



Calders



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 - 📍 Saurien
 - 📍 Jerusalem Stabile
 - 📍 Stegosaurus (OH)
 - 📍 Stegosaurus (CT)
 - 📍 The Red Feather
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 - 📍 Fabuniru Dragon II



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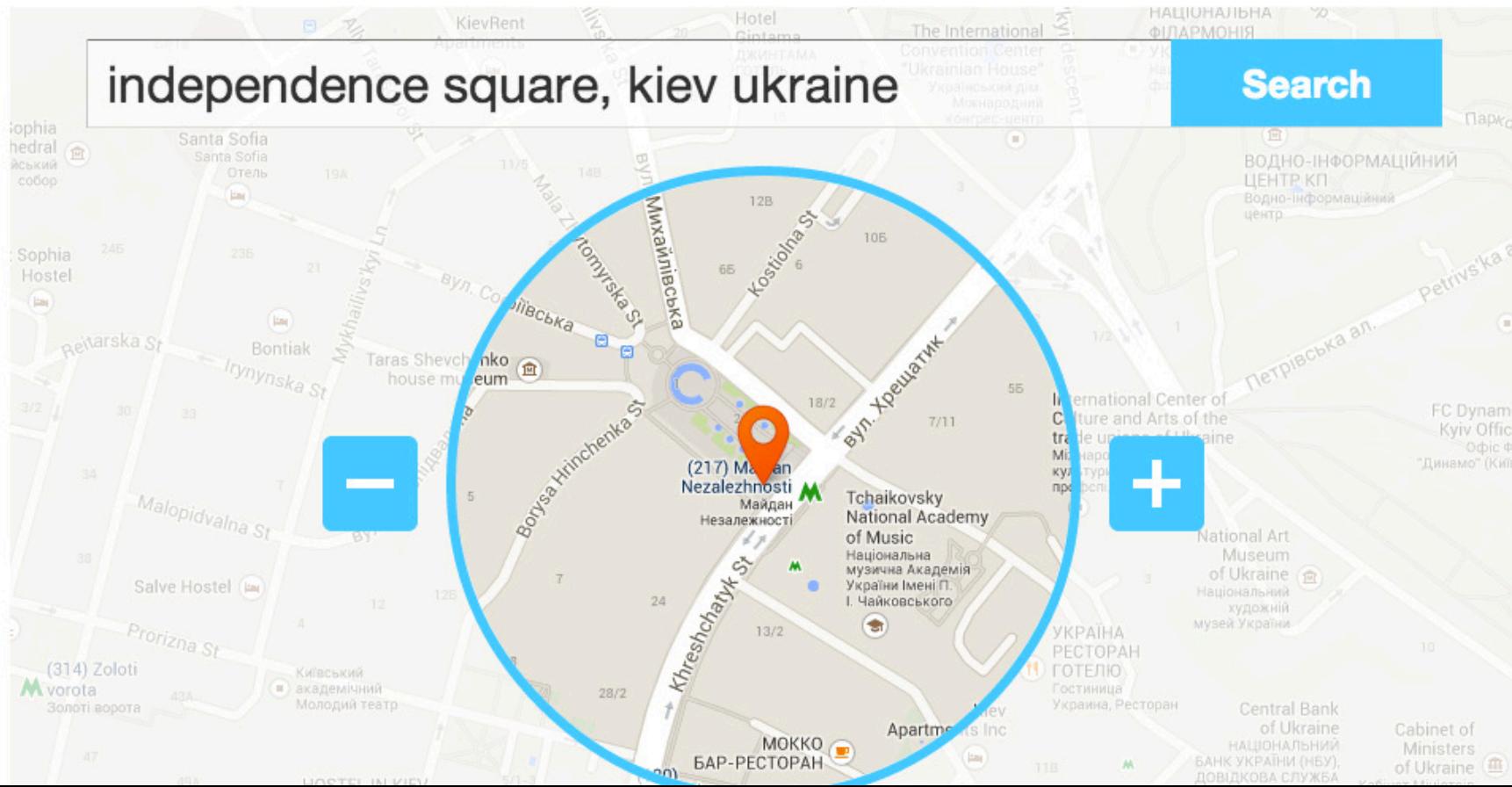
Trigger

New photo by anyone in area

This Trigger fires every time anyone shares a public photo at a location you specify. NOTE: limited to 15 photos per check.



Locate an area



Action

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This Action will add a single row to the bottom of the first worksheet of the spreadsheet you specify. NOTE: A new spreadsheet is created after 2000 rows.

 Spreadsheet name

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||| =IMAGE(" SourceUrl ";1)

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1	February 20, 2014 at 12:36PM	mariaradul	Не будьте равнодушными. Берегите себя.	http://ift.tt/							
2	February 20, 2014 at 12:38PM	yura1971	Киев	http://ift.tt/							
3	February 20, 2014 at 12:40PM	yura1971	Киев #евромайдан #euromaidan	http://ift.tt/							

Three Main Types of Image

- 1. Amateur photojournalism
- 2. Propaganda
- 3. Social images (selfies, portraits, visual narrative, explorations of aesthetic identity)

Amateur photojournalism



yura1971

1 month ago

Киев

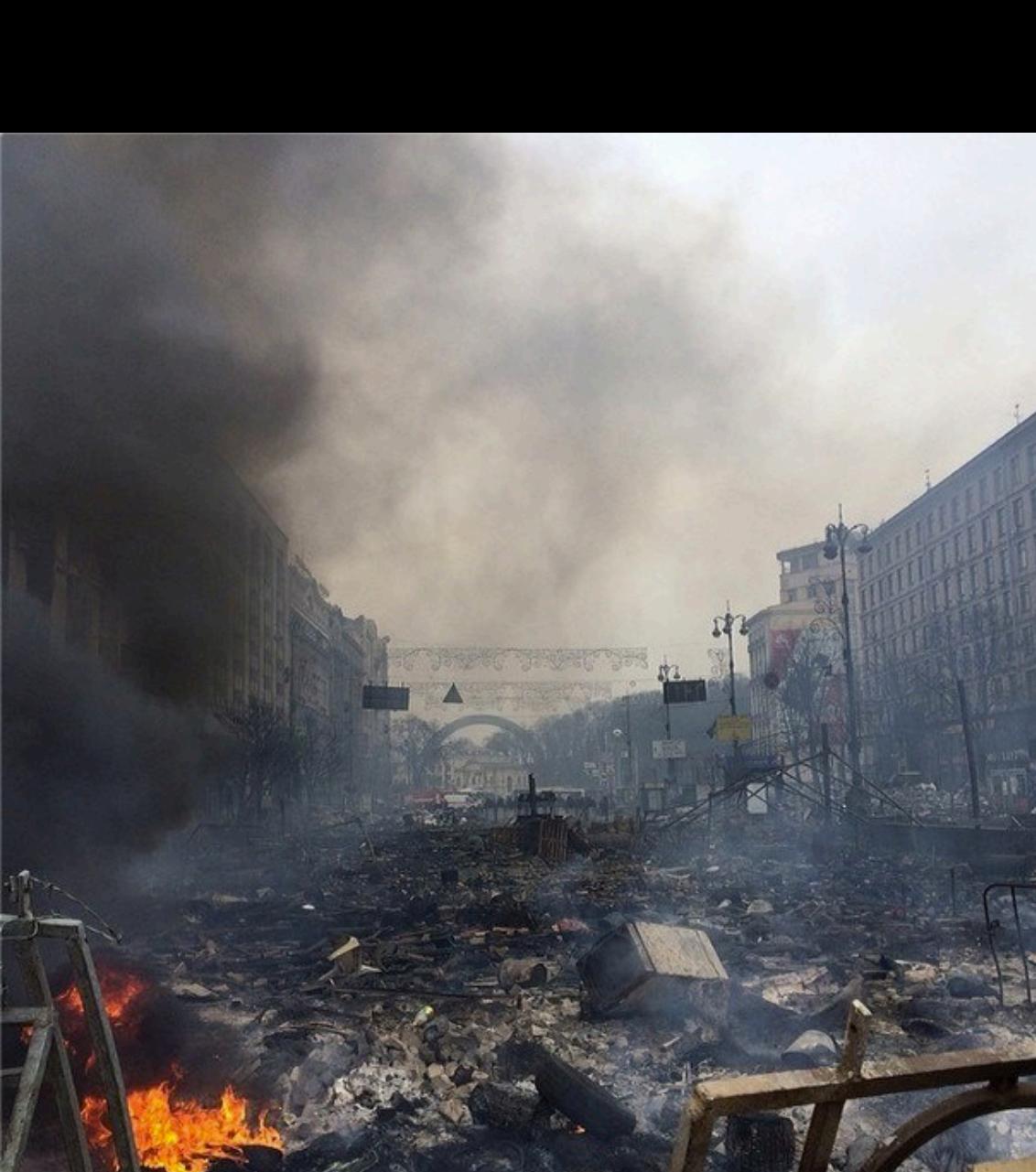
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ekzitman

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It is not scary. It hurts, but not terrible. Well written by one person on facebook: the country was divided into those who withdraws money from bank cards and stored gasoline and pasta, and those who staffed field hospitals medicines for the year ahead. Choice is always there. # # Ukraine kiev maidan # # freedom



_k_l_m_n_ , zenina_kate , katedli and 27 others like this.



d_morgendorffer

Stop, and that there is no third? I did not make either the first or the second one: To whom am I?



ekzitman

@ D_morgendorffer you know better



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@ Ekzitman and you helped hospitals?



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 abbadonische, beloschuk, owlelizabeth and 25 others like this.

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Рука не піднімається ставити лайк. Дякую за такі актуальні фото! Слава Україні!

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Героям слава!



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Propaganda



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Боротьба не за щастя вже навіть іде — за життя! Бо його забирають. Нас Надія веде, нас Ідея веде за свободу для рідного краю. Українцю, поглянь, там побили жінок! Глянь, вже люди ховаються в храмі! Де таке ще траплялось, коли це було Аж в такому нестерпному стані?.. Так чинили лиш варвари, злісні хани, лиш від них люди в церкві ховались.



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kmanzhos

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Героям Слава



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iramaevskaya

Алена! Или домой! Тоже мне Евромайданица! ☹



alenayunovich

Вот белорусы так дома и сидят...



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Ну если у вас на одного Беркута 100 человек... то
у на на одного человека 6 милиционэров!



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В Україні про зміну Папи буде свідчити дим над Межигірям. Колір диму не є принциповим

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—prayforme— chirya_ grinyavitalich and 148 others like this.



ch77777

а дим там буде обов'язково!!!



nikita_pahomov

@ilozovaya и как там?)



immawarhol

|||



ilozovaya

@kkv77 100%|||



ilozovaya

@nikita_pahomov съезди посмотри|||



nikita_pahomov

@ilozovaya ясно, спасибо |||



lyubchenkodennis

@ilozovaya снова ты там...|| Ира, будь аккуратна, не влезь никуда...а то мы знаем тебя||



ukropp_afisha

Кули луля тули лим!



Leave a comment...

• • •

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue puffy jacket over a colorful patterned scarf, standing in front of a large pile of food supplies. She is surrounded by plastic bags filled with bread, fruits, and other provisions. In the background, there are more people and tables with supplies, suggesting a community aid station.

Follow

annaliutko

1 month ago · ♀ Євромайдан

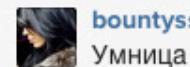
This is my war too... #euromaydan #evromaydan #kiev #kievblog #ukraine #maydan #war #civilwar
#freeukraine #евромайдан #helping



heart [jamesljacobson](#), [keksisonfire](#), [nikolsol](#) and 58 others like this.



sellir



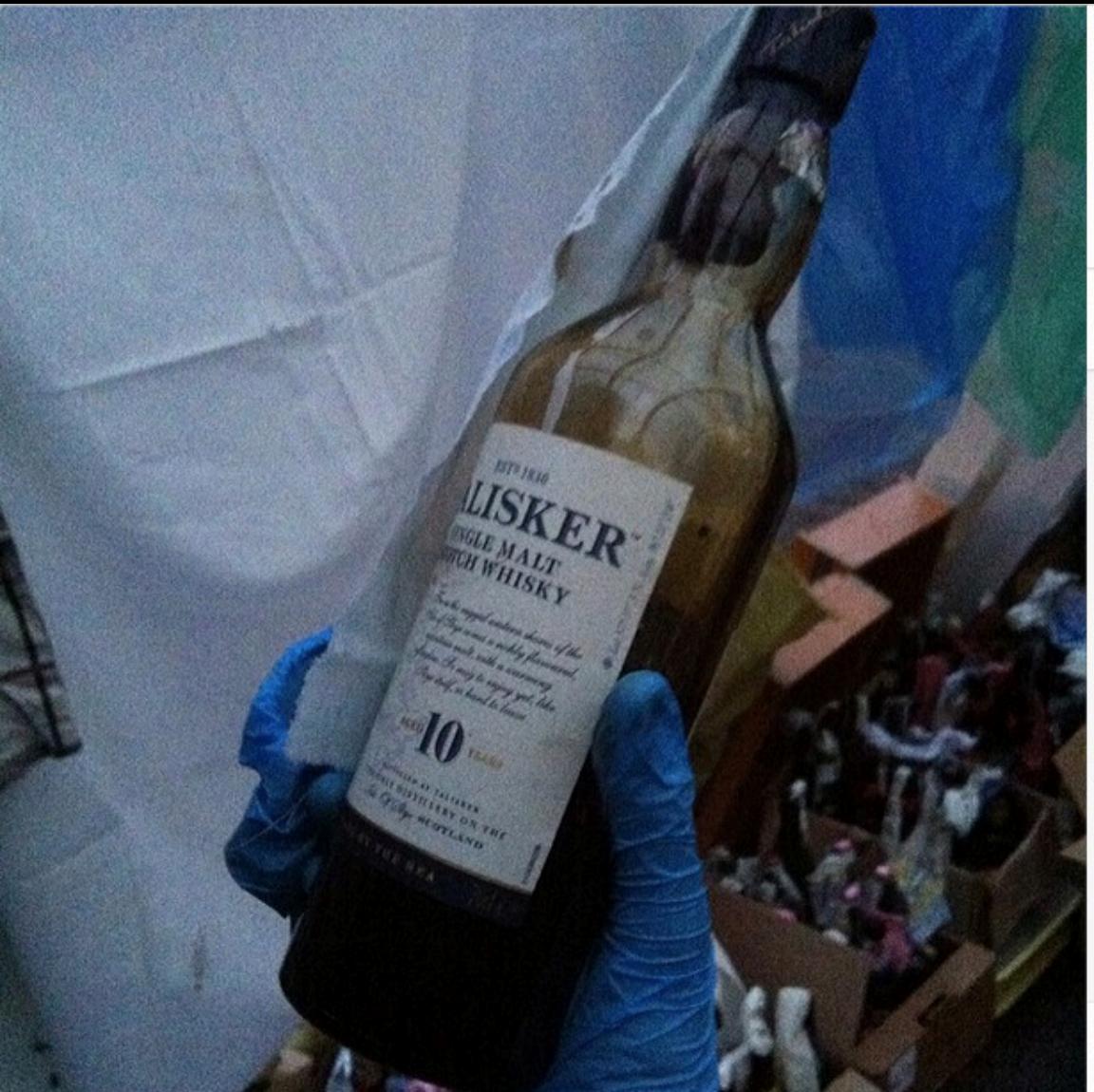
bountysss

Умница



Leave a comment...





sothefoxsays

1 month ago · ♀ Zupinka "Maidan Nezalezhnosti"

I address this postcard from the capital @ quabber , because he seems to have to assess the quality of capital to a cocktail party. Hi everyone else, too, still good dies, eeeep



mewman , julia_draganchuk , enoteua and 25 others like this.



quabber

Mmmm, Talisker, the activists have a taste



snapkovad

Take care of yourself, KiSyunya



sothefoxsays

@ Snapkovad sho me that would happen. I have to kiska golovi



snapkovad

*



enoteua

Anka pulemetchitsa now officially. Palis not there much.



symonenkoa

@ Sothefoxsays Anya, what you molodets.spasibo



Leave a comment...

...



entonyua

1 month ago

📍 Майдан Незалежності / Maidan Nezalezhnosti (In...
#maidan #kiev #ukraine #molotov

Follow



mila_volotovskaya, kroliha, innakatryk and 22 others like this.



entonyua

Тыл.



alenka_chu

Коктейльчики



Leave a comment...



Follow



ira_sayko

1 month ago · ♀ Євромайдан



anastasia_yahnovska, maksymaksy666, beloschuk and 58 others like this.



ira_sayko

#euromaidan #ukraine #revolution #kiev



nosachm

Моя ты молодчинка)))



ira_sayko

@nosachm присоединяйся))



vikyasha

Я тоже хочу бутики)



ira_sayko

@vikyasha приходи на Майдан))



katerina_baranova_kb

Угости моего папу;)) он Щас там))



ira_sayko

@katerina_baranova_kb а я уже в больнице скорой помощи помогаю))



katerina_baranova_kb

@ira_sayko молодчинка))



Leave a comment...

• • •

A photograph showing a large pile of various bottles, likely alcohol, and some cash scattered on the ground. The scene appears to be outdoors at night or in low light. A person's legs and feet are visible in the foreground, suggesting they are standing over the pile.

Follow

alreadystolen

1 month ago

Стажировалась на бармена.. #evromaidan #cocktail
#revolution



yarikosaur, ann_duma, mishaprodaja and 25 others like this.



nameapolinaria

@alreadystolen я хотела научится, но туда куда ходила, девушек не пускали(



guoone

Хулиганка)



Leave a comment...

• • •

Follow



urabo

1 month ago

♥ [oksanagrisan](#), [olya1708](#), [ana_stasiyakobenko](#) and 11 others like this.



lena_lapyshka

Я смотрю тебе дома не сидится:)



urabo

я тобі в контакти відпишу)



Leave a comment...

...



ddanisimov

1 month ago · Evromaydan

Thanks @ [olgashm](#) , useful) # Sochi # sochi2014 Kiev # # revolution

Follow



[anna_weizen](#) , [energiaenalma](#) , [svetlanamuhina](#) and 66 others like this.



mtsel

Damn, Dan, how are you?



valeriya

when you home already??



cherniyazova_1

Take care of yourself, please



olgashm

It would be better if they are not useful, and so always
please) hold



frauderwinde

Only Olympic gloves not enough for the entirety of
the image



rashpil133

scratched?)



ddanisimov

@ Rashpil133 cigarette cauterized XD

[rashpil133](#)



Leave a comment...

...



anton_kray

1 month ago

📍 Майдан Незалежности / Maidan Nezalezhnosti (In...



mille____maria, amiran335, elechkak and 85 others like this.



kutuzovaliza

какой ужас(



nyashka888

Туда все едут как на экскурсию ?)))



karinatigra

|||



aogarkov

A kaski gde s AK?!!))



flashka22

Ребята! Там же пиздец! Как оттуда выбираться будите?



zlobello

Ох... И как вы там?!



giotop

|||



danya_krasnov

Смело...



Leave a comment...

• • •



ddanisimov

4 months ago · Evromaydan

The protests are ready

Follow



khilkomary, katrin_ermolaeva, mchumakova1920 and 52 others like this.



daryaryzhikova

LAIK, Danek ☺ ☺



hergeraldine

Front Line)



ddanisimov

@ Hergeraldine))))



vera_trueheart

You're beautiful ☺



rashpil133

You're late!



ddanisimov

@ Rashpil133 felts still be)



almozza

@ Ddanisimov and weak without?)



ddanisimov

@ Almozza and that if I did not weak? XD

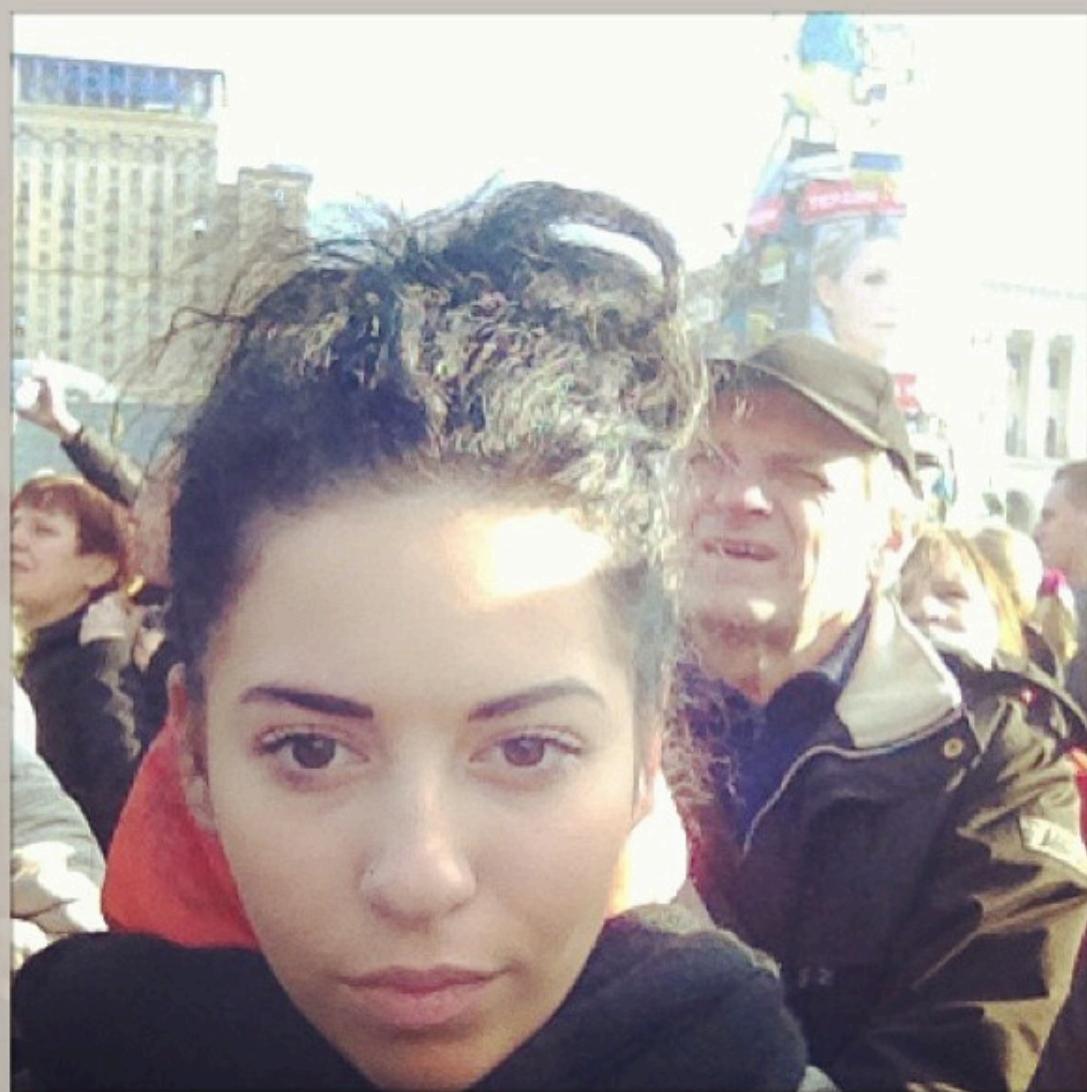


almozza



Leave a comment...





nastyabondarenko_

1 month ago · Maidan Nezalezhnosti

Finally I'm here! Soul quietly!

Follow



vania_karchevskiy , tishencko , kristina_elin and 13 others like this.



sandra1930

What you have there is going on??? In an Internet horrific video!



nastyabondarenko_

@ Sandra1930 well, words can not convey course trouble! yesterday and the day before yesterday was chaos! snipers shot people and not only! very many dead! well today troops drove away peacefully until all hope for the best ...



Leave a comment...

• • •



polinashamenkova

1 month ago · ♀ Evromaydan

On the Western Front

Follow

• [snipervashe](#), [tisachniy](#), [julia_tutun](#) and 36 others like this.



morychokok

Desperate



karina_manson

Such as you are listed as the most idiotic photo with evromaydan. Well, like m, all the cases



polinashamenkova

@ Karina_manson damn, why not put the Huskies to comments



karina_manson

@ Polinashamenkova □



lisuscheesus

helmet where?



polinashamenkova

@ Lisuscheesus that we have porridge eat in between fights



Leave a comment...





100luchnost

1 month ago · Evromaydan

The condition is very ambiguous there today! ☺☺☺

Follow

● [bema4ka](#), [popilo15](#), [anetka_I90](#) and 10 others like this.



popilo15

what you went there? ?? O_o



lebedusik

What terrible!



100luchnost

@ Popilo15 products pass!! All together we are not pobedimy! ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺



popilo15

done, Pasha! ! :)



Leave a comment...





irina_lyzhnik

1 month ago · 9 Євромайдан

Follow

♥ irina_lyzhnik, sevalad, vikysya_nechyporenko and 2 others like this.



fivefox

Какой ужас на заднем плане!!!



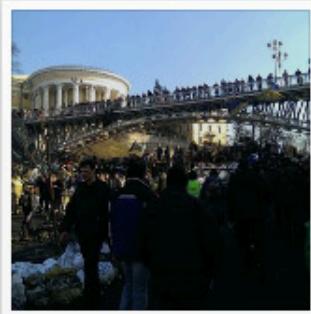
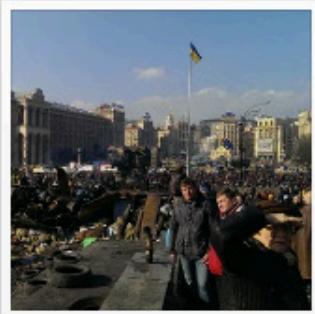
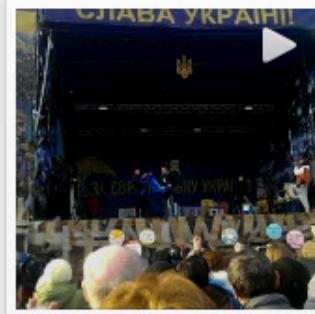
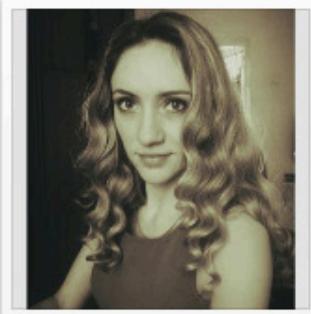
irina_lyzhnik

Да, высокую цену мы платим за независимость, справедливость, свободу. Слава Україні!



Leave a comment...





What's going on here?

A few questions.

- When the main function of social images is the formation and communication of individual identity, how does this function change when these images double as historical documents?

- How does history change when the intended audience of an image is a network of involved peers, not the dispassionate gaze of future generations?

- How is our view of a distant conflict changed when the photographer, subject, and primary audience collapse into a single individual?

The Selfie

- To better understand social images, let's take a closer look at the ultimate social image, the selfie
- Social imaging includes selfies, but is not limited to them
- In "Art at Arm's Length: A History of the Selfie" Jerry Saltz defines and unpacks the form

The Selfie

“A fast self-portrait, made with a smartphone’s camera and immediately distributed and inscribed into a network, is an instant visual communication of where we are, what we’re doing, who we think we are, and who we think is watching. Selfies have changed aspects of social interaction, body language, self-awareness, privacy, and humor, altering temporality, irony, and public behavior. It’s become a new visual genre—a type of self-portraiture formally distinct from all others in history.” –Jerry Saltz

The Selfie

- It's a new genre not dominated by artists
- They are not accidents, they are reviewed before being shared. This points to “control as well as the presence of performing, self-criticality, and irony”
- Similar to “methexis” in ancient Greek theater, when the performer addressed the audience directly

The Selfie

- There are selfies that seem to be in poor taste
- Teens take selfies at funerals often enough that there is a blog dedicated to them
- Other questionable selfies include:
 - while touring a gas chamber at Auschwitz
 - Dealey Plaza
 - In front of a car wreck
- Taking pictures of shocking things is not new, the twist with selfies is that we are in them

The Selfie



The Selfie

- The most famous selfie has never been seen
- President Obama, British prime minister David Cameron, and Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt taking a group selfie at the memorial service for Nelson Mandela (the ultimate funeral selfie)
- Saltz imagines the three leaders thinking, “It is totally incomprehensible, even to us, to be us ... being here.”

- Social images in remarkable circumstances are first a way for the photographer/subject to use an image to comprehend herself in the moment
- The image is archived and shared so that this self comprehension can transcend the moment through memory and community

Are similar things happening
elsewhere?

“The Syrian protesters are recording their own death.”

-Rabih Mroué

Pixelated Revolution

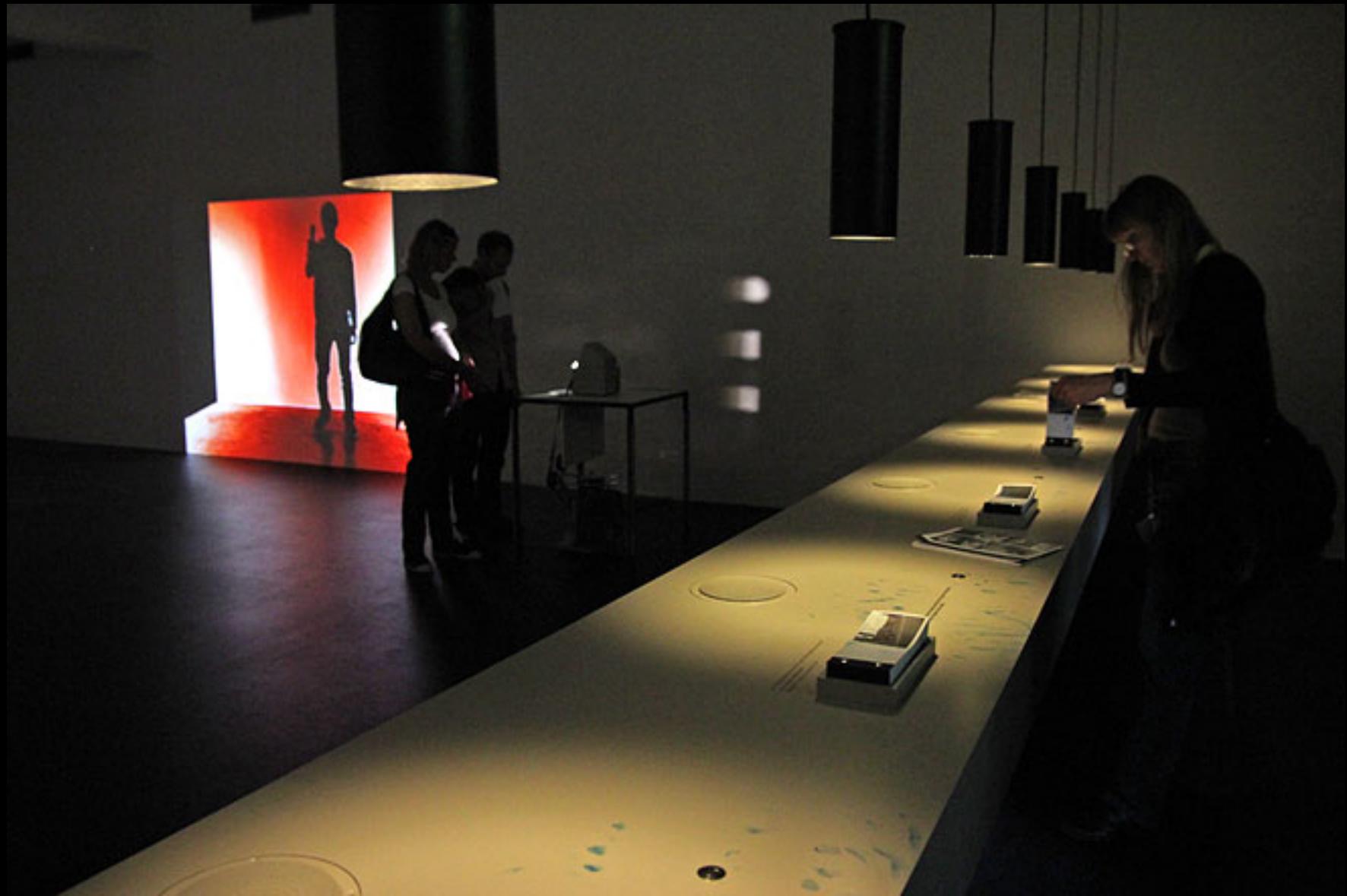
- In 2011 and 2012, Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué presented a lecture/performance called “Pixelated Revolution”
- It was presented with an installation at Documenta 13

Pixelated Revolution

- Mroué found several YouTube videos of Syrian's accidentally filming their own deaths
- This was the beginning of the civil war, when Assad's forces first began using deadly force against demonstrators







Pixelated Revolution

- The videos are typically shot on cell phones
- They feature shaky, frantic pans
- They end with an exchange of eye contact between the videographer and the killer
- Mroué calls these videos “double shootings” (Fasshauer 2012)

Syrian Protester video taped his own death.
Posted by SyrianregimeCrimes, 2011.

The Syrian opposition has shocking video footage released from the city of Homs. The images show how a man from a roof films the firefight in the streets.

Link to YouTube video below (warning, disturbing content):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_du9X3wkVKU

Pixelated Revolution

- In the lecture, Mroué compares these videos to the Dogme95 film movement (Downey 2012)
 - Dogme95 began in Denmark in the 1990s
 - Low budget films were made according to a strict manifesto
 - Filmmakers eschewed special effects and other production techniques in favor of grit and veracity

Pixelated Revolution

- The exchange of tactics among Syrian protestors functions as a parallel manifesto

- In an interview, Mroué says:

“In Dogme 95, there is this instruction that you should not use a tripod. And for the Syrians, it's not a choice - it's still very, very, difficult to use a tripod to record their reality. And there is another issue in Dogme 95, where it stipulates that you should not record violent scenes, or weapons, because they don't want to fake these things. So it's not necessary to use them. For the Syrians, they add to this dictate insofar as the violent scenes being recorded are actually for real and the stipulation is also correct - do not record violence - insofar as the weapon could kill them and the scene of killing is thereafter real. There is no attempt to fake death here - it is all too real.” (Downey 2012)

By giving people a voice, social media will
amplify democracy, right?

Assad on Instagram

- Bashar al-Assad, Syrian president widely considered to be a war criminal, has his own Instagram account
- It features patriotic rallies, diplomatic meetings, and humanitarian work by the first lady



syrianpresidency

2 months ago

"You have always been, and continue to be, a considerable source of strength for me; I am here with you today because together we are stronger in the face of adversity." President Assad, Ommayad Square – January 2012. #Syria #president #middleeast #Assad #tbt #throwbackthursday #flashbackthursday

jaz_alassad, sabri_alassad, moom79 and 1,226 others like this.



osad37

Assad lost his legitimacy



dark_days_ever

Сирия, мы за тебя всем сердцем! Это вопрос правды и чести! Держитесь Сирийцы! Многое в Ваших руках!!



pirog13

Русские с вами!



haidaralkhars

الله محبى الانسد بشار



fatzhassan

God Bless Al Assad!



Leave a comment...

...



syrianpresidency

Follow

5 months ago

من إحدى الزيارات السبلقة للسيد الرئيس بشار الأسد والسيدة عقيلته لذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة. #سورية#بشار#أسماء President and the First Lady to the people with special needs. #syria#Bashar#Assad

noOotme, 12roody1435, almunasabatweddings and 738 others like this.



proudlysyria

يرجى من الجهات المعنية ملاحقة ومتابعة هذا الازهلي المجرم على هذا الحساب @nuraljihad



proudlysyria

يرجى من الجهات المعنية ملاحقة ومتابعة هذا الازهلي المجرم على هذا الحساب @nuraljihad



proudlysyria

يرجى من الجهات المعنية ملاحقة ومتابعة هذا الازهلي المجرم على هذا الحساب @nuraljihad



anlblkn

Our prayer with ou besar Esad supporting from turkey



majeed_a

الله يحفظ سوريا أرضا وشعبا وقيادة ويحفظ ويسدد الدكتور بشار حافظ الأسد



alainyacini

Macha allah.ameen.amin.



Leave a comment...

...



syrianpresidency

8 months ago

Numerous mobile kitchens have been set up by community-based groups to prepare meals for internally displaced families. The First Lady joins volunteers from Melody of Life group in preparing the Iftar meal, 4 August 2013 #Syria #Asma #Assad #سوريا #الأسد #إمساك #إفطار

cemkar1, hayooona__q8, hlooo81 and 1,196 others like this.

waltermeramelo
propaganda

esmasahin06
Oh what a charitable killers!

nadiaeram
Dirty bitch burn alongside your murdering cunt of a husband

leslothicus2
You know what the sad thing is, these people were probably promised a free meal in exchange for appearing happy and supportive of the regime in these photos. #fakeasfuck @syrianpresidency

amerawad111
ما اسهل التقاط الصور و ما اصعب كتابة التاريخ . لن يرحمك التاريخ يا



Leave a comment...

• • •

Assad on Instagram

- Writing in the New Yorker, Emily Greenhouse considers the ethics of this
- She asked Instagram about it, “What does a social-media company do when a user known to be attacking civilians is blasting out feel-good content?”

Assad on Instagram

- Instagram won't comment on specific users
- In general, they will ban users promoting violence
- This determination is dependent on context
- “Context” is limited to content on the site

Tactics without Ideology

- In the Washington Post, Neil Ketchley observes that revolutionaries share tactics through social media regardless of ideology
- Recent Muslim Brotherhood protesters in Egypt have studied tactics of the Ukrainian protesters

Tactics without Ideology

“The Ukrainians know how to make big molotovs, so we watch how they use them and in which situations so that we can better defend ourselves against the police. We don’t care about the situation in Ukraine; we only hear a little about it on the news. But they know how to use molotovs to hold their square against the police.”

–Anonymous Muslim Brotherhood protester

The IDF on Instagram

- A November 2012 assault by the Israeli Defense Forces on Gaza was documented in real time on multiple social media platforms, including Instagram
- Huw Lemmey investigates this in his essay “Devastation in Meatspace”

The IDF on Instagram

- Propaganda synthesizes a community that excludes others and protects you (the intended viewer)
- The IDF employs a “visual regime based around firmly entrenched, conservative branding techniques”

The IDF on Instagram

- Updates came at each stage of the assault
 - Announcing the killing of key enemy combatants
 - Statistics on rocket strikes
 - Warnings to Palestinian civilians to stay away from Hamas operatives for their own safety





Ahmed Jabari

Planned multiple terrorist attacks that killed Israeli civilians

Commanded the operation to kidnap Gilad Shalit

Ordered Palestinian terrorists to fire thousands of rockets at Israel

ELIMINATED



ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES





Gaza Strip Land Crossings Activity During Operation Pillar of Defense

Sunday, November 18, 2012

64

trucks of food
were transferred
from Israel

16

trucks of medical
supplies were
transferred from
Israel

26

patients in need
of medical care
entered Israel
from Gaza



ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES

The IDF on Instagram

- The accessibility and familiarity of Instagram puts war on a “consumer scale”
- Filters visually remove the images from the present and contextualize them in the historic narrative of Israel
- The retro look also relates the images to past wars that are already morally justified







The IDF on Instagram

- Lemmey characterizes the aesthetic, imaging it saying:
- “These are the photos you would take if you served in the IDF. We are just like you, and these military decisions are the ones you would take, if you were in our situation.

The IDF on Instagram

- Personal and political images collapse into one
- The distance between us and the soldiers is reduced, while otherness of the Palestinians grows

The Third Meaning

- In *Image Music Text*, Roland Barthes identifies three ways images communicate meaning
- 1. Informational, the objects and people in the image
- 2. Symbolic, what the information signifies through a shared understanding of the meaning of signs

The Third Meaning

- 3. The Obtuse Meaning
 - “*Signifiance*”
 - An incomplete sign, we are not able to give the signified a name
 - We can't be sure about its intentionality
 - It points at a meaning that escapes language

The Third Meaning

“The third meaning also seems to me greater than the pure, upright, secant, legal perpendicular of the narrative, it seems to open the field of meaning totally, that is infinitely. I even accept for the obtuse meaning the word's pejorative connotation: the obtuse meaning appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information; analytically, it has something derisory about it: opening out into the infinity of language...” -Barthes

- Social Images from violent conflicts are most revealing in the aspects that are beyond their intended meaning
- As they blend self-referential and documentary purposes, they gain an obtuse meaning that escapes the intention of the maker

Thank you!