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Nomads Occupy the Global Village: Left Political Timeline, 2001-2012.

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Fariba Hajamadi. Left: *Soldiers #2* (Nafar, 10th Sudanese Battalion, September 1898), National Army Museum, London, 2011. Left center: *Soldiers #9* (Zouave Uniform of the Fifth New York Voluntary Infantry, French North Africa, ca. 1860), National Museum of American History, Washington, DC, 2011. Right center: *Soldiers #8*, (Protective vest, shrapnel, and highway direction sign to Basra), National Army Museum, London, 2011. Right: *Soldiers #10*, (Vietnam), National Museum of American History, Washington, DC, 2011.

2011: Fariba Hajamadi's photographs, though appearing to be straightforward documents of museum exhibits, take on the double readings of self-referential queries. The questions being asked regard the assumptions that institutions pass off as objective facts and cultural codes when they really often perpetuate historically- and textually-relayed fictions and myths. In short, a Hajamadi photograph of a museum exhibit provides us the opportunity of a prolonged close reading of the exhibit's cultural and political assumptions, combined with some background provided by the artist that enlarge the disparities between the imagined culture and the real one.

Since the 1980s, art and ethnological museums have in the last three decades shed many of their colonial-era political and social assumptions. But Hajamadi has found that war museums in particular hold onto a marked bias in the valuation of differences between cultures and nations that had engaged in war. In the dioramas of The National War Museum in London and the National Museum of History in Washington, DC, that are represented here, Hajamadi reflects on the institutionalized resistance to postcolonial self-reflection that imbues the displays with persistent stereotyping, monolithic assumptions, presumed "otherness" at the expense of our sameness, and an erroneous equation of difference with polarity and opposition. It makes sense that the war museum would perpetuate such historical misreadings--the kind that would privilege the host nation at the expense of the represented nation especially when the host nation is a perceived winner of a war. Yet even when the host nation has withdrawn with questionable or no gains in a war, face-saving accounts of history fraught with factual misrepresentations, generalizations, and overall misunderstandings of the differences between the two sides mark the display labels and placards. Often the displays neglect the people whose country has been occupied if not rendered them entirely invisible to the display, such as the Basra and Vietnam displays here depicted.