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## Art Review

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By Jonathon T. D. Neil

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...OUT OF HERE: *The Veterans Project*, 2009-11 (installation view), seven-channel colour video with sound, 8 min 20 sec loop, dimensions variable. © the artist. Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

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## Krzysztof Wodiczko:

*...OUT OF HERE: The Veterans Project*

Galerie Lelong, New York

12 February – 19 March

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Painting has long given up the ghost on the Renaissance metaphor of acting as a window onto some other world; it now has to battle it out as just one more screen among many. Yet it is surprising how few of those other screens have taken up this metaphor for themselves. Of course Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) made the case for cinema as voyeurism, and along less mainstream lines, both Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) and Richard Serra's *Frame* (1969) probed the limits of fenestrated filmic perception and cognition. To my knowledge, however, no practitioner of the camera arts has equated the screen with the window, has literalised this metaphoric relationship, quite as effectively as Krzysztof Wodiczko.

*...OUT OF HERE: The Veterans Project*, first installed at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art in 2009 and updated for its current deployment, is only the most recent in a series of deft multimedia installations that construct for their viewers an architectural enclosure that is described, visually at least, solely by video projections which, simply put, serve as that enclosure's windows. For *...OUT OF HERE*, those windows appear as multipaned factory windows placed high on the wall, the kind that are meant to provide light but not views. This visual restriction is a key component of the work – and of others, such as Wodiczko's 2009 Venice Biennale standout, *Guests*, and his *If You See Something...* from 2005, where in both cases the windows appear frosted – as it places greater emphasis on the audience's aural space and soundscape, which is constructed by a multichannel soundtrack.

The work's 'story' unfolds over roughly eight-and-a-half minutes, at the beginning of which we hear, off to one side, President Barack Obama delivering a speech about the war in Iraq. The skies visible through the windows are mostly clear, with some scattered clouds. We hear children kicking a ball, which jumps up and breaks one of the window panes; and we hear the growing sound of a Black Hawk helicopter, which appears through the windows on the other side of a room. There is radio chatter, and voices of soldiers nearby, and then those voices sound as if they are in the space itself. There is rifle fire. Bullets pierce the glass. Explosions rip gaping holes in the windows and smaller ones in the walls below them. There is a lot of smoke. A dog is barking, and then, after a rifle shot, it is not. Finally the soldiers' voices move away. They are replaced by the anguished cries of civilians, but not of children.

All of this audio material is drawn from veterans' accounts of their tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet it is clear that the point is not to offer the audience some veridical recreation or reenactment of those accounts, but to put them forward in a way and a manner that might remain unmarked by the cynical reason that mars so much contemporary politics and its ideals of representation. *Jonathan T.D. Neil*