
Cyborg Theatre in Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension* (2007)

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Abstract

Technology changes every aspect of our lives. Recently, our bodies and technology have been thoroughly interwoven. This became clear through our reliance on computers, mobile phones, prosthetic devices, and internal mechanical heart valves. One of these significant shifts is the concept of the cyborg, which combines elements of synthetic and technological materials with those of an organic, living body. Bilal, who had been traumatized by the killing of his brother in Iraq by a US drone that had been controlled by US soldiers in Germany, has manufactured a cyborg in his performance *Domestic Tension*. Through the theory of Cyborg theatre as illustrated in Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) and Jennifer Parker Starbuck's *Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal/Technological Intersections in Multimedia* (2011), this research investigates how Bilal uses Cyborg Theatre in his performance *Domestic Tension*. This paper explores the overlap between technology and new online performances. It also examines the concept of cyborg as it is expounded in Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985). I attempt to investigate how Bilal blends man with machine in his performance *Domestic Tension*.

Keywords: Cyborg, *Domestic Tension*, Donna Haraway, Robotic Gun, Wafaa Bilal.

1. Introduction

Wafaa Bilal is a contemporary Iraqi American artist, writer, and professor. He was born in Najaf, Iraq, in 1966. Bilal is best known for his innovative and thought-provoking artworks that explore topics such as the impact of war, violence, and surveillance on individuals and society. Bilal's work often incorporates elements of performance, installation, and new media. One of his most notable projects is called *Domestic Tension* which took place in 2007.

In *Domestic Tension*, Wafaa Bilal performed what he called a live art installation in the FlatFile Galleries in Chicago in May 2007. In this piece, Bilal lived for about a month in front of a webcam mounted on a paintball gun that could be accessed and operated via a different web page. It was left up to the discretion of potential participants whether or not they wanted to "Shoot an Iraqi" by signing on, observing, and firing the paintball gun at Bilal, though it was left open for them to decide not to. It may be more appropriate to say that they were "incited" to do so. Bilal recorded a little video journal and posted it online, outlining what happened each day. The concept started slowly but gained momentum as word spread online. In response to participant requests, the website launched a chat room feature after nine

days. Now, anyone can sign up, watch, shoot (or not), leave comments, ask Bilal questions, and chat with him and other users.

Two personal experiences of Bilal served as inspiration for his piece *Domestic Tension*. First, he had to leave his family behind who were still residing in Iraq while he was living in America, his so-called "comfort zone," Bilal sought to establish a connection with his family, who were dealing with comparable stress while going about their regular lives, by creating a conflict zone for himself. In his book *Shoot an Iraqi*, Bilal says that the project was the product of "my intense need to connect my life as an artist in the comfort zone of the United States to the terrors and sorrows of the conflict zone in which my family and so many others were living out their daily lives." (Bilal and Lydersen, 87)

The second reason was his brother's death. Bilal is aware of war machines and technology especially after the death of his brother Haji at the hand of an unmanned drone in 2005. He decides to use the same technology in his performance. In his book *Shoot an Iraqi: Art, Life, and Resistance Under the Gun (2008)*, Bilal states that he comes up with the idea of *Domestic Tension* after hearing a story about a young soldier in a military camp in Colorado, who operates drone strikes in Iraq. Bilal writes:

The reporter asked if she had any doubts or remorse about what she was doing. She perkily answered that she trusted the orders and information she got from her superiors . . . It struck me that Haji's death had been orchestrated by someone just like this young woman, pressing buttons from thousands of miles away, sitting in a comfortable chair in front of a computer, completely oblivious to the terror and destruction they were causing to a family--a whole society--halfway across the world. (Bilal and Lydersen, 326-9).

Bilal finds a sanctuary in the arts and literary texts to express his activism, whether in his hometown in Iraq or the US. He is known for his unique approach of merging technology, performance, and theatre to create immersive traditional forms of artistic expression. So, unlike many researchers whose studies overlooked the point of activism or cybernetic theatre, this paper investigates how Bilal blends man with machine to resist Iraqi war. Furthermore, the paper explores the overlapping between technology and new online performances. I attempt to contextualize Bilal's interactive performance within technology.

This paper uses a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to analyze *Domestic Tension* by Wafaa Bilal from the perspective of cyborg theory. In particular, it incorporates theoretical frameworks from Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's concept of cyborg theatre *Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal/Technological Intersections in Multimedia*, (2011) and Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto (1985)*. By placing Bilal's performance in these frameworks, the study investigates how the intersection of human and machine in his artwork critiques war, dehumanization, and the ethics of remote violence.

The researcher also closely reads *Domestic Tension* to examine the interplay between technology and human experience. This involves analyzing the physical setup of the performance, including the robotic paintball gun and live-streaming interface, and their symbolic implications. The study examines the psychological and physical effects of Bilal's

extended exposure to the robotic gun, as well as how he used digital technologies to interact with a worldwide audience.

The analysis of this paper incorporates primary sources, such as Bilal's personal reflections in *Shoot an Iraqi: Art, Life, and Resistance Under the Gun* (2008), video recordings, and live-stream archives of the performance. These materials provide insights into the artist's intent, audience interactions, and the impact of the performance on both participants and viewers. Secondary sources, including scholarly articles, reviews, and critiques, are also utilized to contextualize the performance within contemporary debates on war, technology, and surveillance.

2. Literature Review

Researchers indicate a strong interest in examining Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension's* (2007) performance from various angles. Pederson (2010) examines the artwork of American artist Douglas Edric Stanley, born in France, Iraqi-born Wafaa Bilal, based in New York City, and Peruvian artist Rolando Sánchez (2007). He examines how video games affect cultures differently and how artists are using the medium's widespread appeal to enhance their assessments of the current status of the globe. It features artistic creations that address armed conflict and violence using a range of mediums, such as internet performances, video games, and installation art.

Zylka (2010) examines Wafaa Bilal's interactive performance show, "*Domestic Tension*," which took place in 2007. By focusing on aesthetic practices, he explores the insights that the creative arts provide as a subject of ethnographic inquiry. This specific project offers an additional illustration of the global context of Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism, and the War on Terror, together with the emotive registers of these potentials as they are mediated by interactive technology.

Hicks (2012) focuses on Wafaa Bilal's exhibition "*Domestic Tension*." The author analyzes this work as a translation of Bilal's personal experiences of war into an artistic framework. This analysis highlights how personal narratives can be transformed into broader societal discussions about war.

Ingram (2012) identifies four components of experimental geopolitics: staging, dynamic interaction, modulation, and emergent effects. By analyzing how Bilal's project incorporates these elements, the paper illustrates the complexity of geopolitical assemblages and the importance of adaptability in response to participant interactions and unforeseen challenges.

Chambers-Letson, J (2016) utilizes Melanie Klein's theory of projective identification to analyze how members of the dominant culture project their fears and negative effects onto radicalized bodies, particularly in the context of Bilal's performance in *Domestic Tension*. This theoretical lens helps to understand the dynamics of racialization and the construction of the "homegrown terrorist" figure.

Altomonte (2017) critically analyzes the digital performances that are influenced by the violence that endures in wartime. It examines how virtual trauma has changed since the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the Persian Gulf War.

Abdelfattah (2021) examines "*Domestic Tension*" as a performance of abjection, utilizing Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. This approach highlights how Bilal's performance evokes

strong emotional responses from viewers, forcing them to confront their feelings of disgust and complicity in violence.

The above-mentioned literature reveals that there is a lack of research about the blending of activism with technology. Thus, this paper examines how Bilal uses his personal experience during the war to resist the Iraqi war and to open conversations about the American violence against Iraqi civilians, which was committed through modern technology.

3. Discussion

3.1. Cyborg

It is important to have a glimpse of the meaning of cyborg and the rise of the term before discussing the term cyborg in *Domestic Tension*. In recent age, the term “cyborg” was coined in 1960 by Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline to "describe human-machine interconnectedness which could adapt to new environments, specifically space travel"(Clynes and Kline, 1960, p 14). However, “cyborg” was as old as Descartes who made a robot that resembled his deceased beautiful daughter. Descartes and the robot were inseparable, and he took it with him on all his journeys. This story first appeared in the eighteenth century and made Descartes an iconic figure in representing the integration of man and machine.

In the twentieth century, Donna Haraway comes to the forefront of the interconnectedness of humans and technology. She offered what is now the most prominent definition of the cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway,2013, p. 70). She claimed that she is a product of science and technology, nothing special or different. In the modern-day age, humanity has become so woven in with technology that it is hard to know where the line that divided them is. As humans advance as a society, Haraway explains that all boundaries between humans, animals, and technology have been breached. This breach leads to hybrids and more complexities. The cyborg represents this fusion "as a human-machine hybrid, showing that our identities are shaped by technology and artificial constructions rather than being strictly human"(Haraway,1985, p. 46).

Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension* adopts the term cyborg of Donna Haraway in many directions. Firstly, Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* envisions the cyborg as a hybrid entity that defies the conventional boundaries of human, machine, and animal, as well as the binaries of nature and culture. In *Domestic Tension*, Wafaa Bilal adopts this cyborg framework by integrating his physical presence with a robotic paintball gun controlled by a virtual audience. This hybridization mirrors Haraway's vision of the cyborg as a social and political construct that challenges oppressive systems.

Secondly, according to Haraway's idea, cyborgs dissolve the boundaries between humans and machines, creating new forms of identity and interaction. In Bilal's performance, the robotic gun becomes an extension of both Bilal's vulnerability and the audience's agency. The robotic gun's duality—both a weapon and a tool for engagement—reinforces the cyborg's capacity to embody contradictions. "I felt as though I were watching my relationship with the gun. I despised it,

cursed it, I never wanted to see or hear it again. But in that situation of isolation and stress, it was my steady companion, constantly alive and in motion. When it was silent, I felt lonely and abandoned". (Bilal, 2013, p. 46).



Figure 1: The Robotic Gun Wafaa Bilal *Domestic Tension* (2007)

Figure 1 illustrates how Bilal and the robotic gun become companions. Bilal develops a relationship with the robotic gun, expressing loneliness when it is silent. This emotional connection highlights the gun's role as more than just a weapon; it becomes a companion in his isolated environment, reflecting the complexities of human-machine relationships in contemporary society.

Thirdly, Traditional hierarchies, such as those based on submission and control, are rejected by Haraway's cyborg. In a similar vein, *Domestic Tension* challenges power relations by giving international players authority over Bilal's surroundings while preserving Bilal's ability to elicit thought and discussion. The cyborg's capacity to oppose and reinterpret repressive systems is demonstrated by this dynamic interaction.

In this performance, Bilal depends completely on his personal experience in wartime concerning the death of his brother Haji and his father in his hometown of Kufa, his movement from Iraq to the United States, and his life in refugee camps in Kuwait. In a taped interview promoting his book *Shoot an Iraqi: Life, Art, And Resistance Under the Gun*, Bilal spoke of the 2004 deaths of his brother and father. "Since then..."I was thinking of building an art project that engaged people... using the media that's available to us... the Internet." (Bilal & Lydersen, 70). He decided to transfer his cruel experience in the conflict zone to the participants in the comfort zone. He wanted to present the difference between actual and digital spaces and "engage audiences by changing their role from a passive viewer to an active participant" (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008, p.76). In his article "Invisible Mirror," he stated:

Technology has not only allowed us to democratize access to art but also the very nature of the production of art, turning it into a collaboration between artist and participant that produces not an object but rather an emotional and cognitive experience that is constantly regeneration itself through an invisible mirror. (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008, p.8)

Bilal's performance also mirrors Haraway's cyborg's political critique by tackling topics like as Islamophobia, distant warfare, and monitoring. The anonymous users' control over the robotic pistol represents the dehumanization and disinterest that characterize technology-mediated violence, especially drone warfare.



Figure 2: Wafaa Bilal Domestic Tension (2007)

Bilal aimed to explore the psychological and physical effects of virtual and remote-controlled violence. The performance highlighted disconnect between the realities of war and the detached, voyeuristic experience that technology enables. It also raised questions about the ethics and consequences of engaging in violent acts from a distance, blurring the boundaries between the virtual and the real. He succeeded to create the same conditions of people under gun. As shown in fig 2 He attempts to put the American spectators in the place of the American soldiers to immerse them in the conditions of war.

The signs of physical and psychological deterioration considered aspects of his cyborg identity. The physical pain from paintball shots and the psychological impact of being subjected to the viewers' whims further complicate his identity, merging the physical with the digital. His view from a webcam was eerie. He gained much weight; dark circles formed his eyes; his clothes were disorderly; His hair, beard, and nails were getting long, and he intended to let them grow for the duration of the project. "Like the rest of me, my hair and beard don't just lie down peacefully. They insist on sticking out and making themselves known, engulfing me in a bushy mane. I'm looking progressively wilder and more unkempt"(Bilal and Lydersen, 58). His room also looked dirty; the dull yellow color from over sixty-five thousand paintballs saturated the gallery behind him.

Bilal succeeded to transmit the status of people who live under war to all peaceful areas around the world through his online performance. On the 21st day of *Domestic Tension* Bilal discusses the physical and psychological consequences brought on by the steady assault of paintball shots filling the gallery space while wearing safety goggles and a plated vest.

Through an online confessional, he speaks to viewer-participants logged onto his webpage, www.wafaabilal.com.

Things are going good and bad. The good thing I see that in the end only 9 days to go. But the bad thing is that I start to have a lot of health problems. Skin rash, heavy breathing, then I start showing post-traumatic syndrome... nightmares...as you can see the shooting has not stopped, in fact [it has] intensified. (Bilal, paintball project day 21)

Concerning his psychology, Bilal was subjected to live fire from a paintball pistol by internet viewers, creating a situation where his physical pain was linked to the whims of an audience, intensifying feelings of vulnerability and helplessness. Bilal describes the shooters as if they want to open multiple browser Windows on their computer in order to fire him. They loved it. Someone in Milwaukee open 19 Browser and starts firing away; he tells me he has giving me a 19-gun salute. Some participants also hacked the site and turned the gun into a machine gun.



Figure 3: Wafaa Bilal Domestic Tension (2007)

Bilal personalizes the state of people who live under gun. As shown in Fig 3, Bilal sits in front of the camera, messily eating a sandwich, staring warily at the gun as he stuffs pieces of food into his mouth and chews violently. When he watched the video later, he said, "I looked like a caged animal, cornered and aware he is being watched" (Bilal and Lydersen, 90).



Figure 4: the paintball project day 11 (2007)

Bilal was a very tired and agitated by the participants especially, when one of participants killed the lamp. He stated I glance at the chat room: " Estonia, good job, you killed the lamp." I hope you regret this act," I tell the video camera. (Bilal and Lydersen, 41). The lamp has significance here because of years of war in Iraq and consonant danger in the refugee camps has left him with post to traumatic stress disorder. He can no longer sleep with any light or sound, at home he sleeps in total darkness with an earplugs and cloth over his eyes. But in the gallery, he cannot let himself fall into a deep sleep, or else he might forget where he is and sit up putting his head in the line of fire. So, in order to remind himself he is in dangerous place, he has been leaving the lamp on at all times.

Drawing from Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto, *Domestic Tension* exemplifies how the integration of human and machine can challenge societal norms and provoke critical discourse. The performance redefines the role of technology in art, transforming it into a powerful medium for activism and reflection. By embodying the cyborg, Bilal illustrates the potential of performance art to bridge the physical and virtual, the individual and collective, and the human and technological.

3.2 Cyborg Theatre

Today, the theatre has greatly benefited from the rapid advancement of technology which opens a venue to explore new topics. Now with advanced technology, the audience can participate in the performance with the actors from any place in the world simply by pressing their computer's power button. So, the main goal of interaction today is not between a group of live spectators but rather between technology and performers. Writers now can use internet, video, film, electronic sound effects, microphones, and computer programs to immerse their viewers in the condition of the text.

One of these developments of theatre is Cyborg Theatre that is a term by Jennifer Parker-Starbuck (2011), is described as "metaphorically integrating on-stage bodies with the technologized, digitized, or mediatized, to re-imagine subjectivity for a post human age" (Palgrave Macmillan 2011). Cyborg theatre is a distinctive kind of performance examines the interaction between technology and the human body and provides a forum for critical discussion of contemporary issues.

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's cyborg theatre explores the intersection of live bodies and technology in performance art, where technology becomes an extension of the performer and the audience's engagement. This concept is vividly realized in *Domestic Tension*, in many aspects one of them is the integration of human and machine. The robotic paintball gun, operated by online users, serves as a technological extension of the audience throughout Bilal's performance. This is consistent with Parker-Starbuck's concept of cyborg theatre, in which technology becomes a co-performer rather than just a tool. The robotic gun represents the disembodied aspect of technological violence, while Bilal's body is at the center of the performance, bearing the physical effects of the paintballs. This integration illustrates the blurred lines between the human and the machine in cyborg theatre.

Cyborg theatre frequently tackles political and social issues. Bilal in *Domestic Tension* criticizes the dehumanization that comes with remote warfare and the part that technology plays in perpetuating violence. The robotic gun serves as a metaphor for drone warfare, where operators are distanced from their targets, paralleling Parker-Starbuck's idea of technology as a lens to examine power and control.

Parker-Starbuck emphasizes that Cyborg Theatre redefines the relationship between performer and audience by incorporating technology as a medium for interaction. In *Domestic Tension*, the audience's ability to remotely control the gun transforms them into active participants, bridging the gap between the physical and virtual. Bilal succeeded to create this virtual atmosphere during the 30 days of performance. As shown in figure 5 mounted camera captured his daily interactions in order to record and provide viewers with updates on his physical and psychological condition. A live webcam that was aimed towards the gallery's living quarters gave viewers access to the space and Bilal's location.



Figure 5: EZIO devices, *Domestic Tension*, 2007

Throughout the entire performance, Bilal's residence was the gallery itself. He built two clear divisions in the space: on one side was the living area, furnished with a desk, chair, computer, light, and table. Bilal installed the EZIO board and paintball gun all over the living room (Altomonte, 2017, p.69).

The technology also allows Bilal to interact with participants and listen to their comments. The website has a chat room in which Bilal and participants from all over the world could interact, speak, and discuss the project. Bilal in this performance shed light on the negative implications and deteriorating conditions that can arise from the intersection of technology, surveillance, and human interaction. The mediated interaction highlights the ethical and emotional detachment enabled by technology, as participants are distanced from the consequences of their actions—a theme central to Cyborg Theatre.

Another important hallmark of Cyborg Theatre is embodiment and vulnerability which appear clearly in *Domestic Tension*. Bilal's physical suffering is a critical element of the performance, emphasizing the human cost of technological violence. This embodiment of

vulnerability contrasts with the anonymity of the online participants, creating a powerful commentary on the ethical implications of human-machine interactions.

Moreover, the performance space in *Domestic Tension* is both physical and virtual, with Bilal restricted to a room while the audience engages online. This duality exemplifies Parker-Starbuck's concept of Cyborg Theatre as a space where technology reconfigures conventional performance boundaries.

In *Domestic Tension*, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's idea of cyborg theatre is eloquently realized. By fusing technology and live performance, Bilal subverts conventional ideas of theatre and turns it into a forum for critical discussion of moral and political concerns. The performance demonstrates how cyborg theatre may be used to examine the intricacies of audience agency, human-machine relationships, and the effects of technology on art and society.

4. Technique

Domestic Tension is abundant with techniques that contribute to the elucidation of the Cyborg Theatre and the interconnectedness of man and machine. Such as, programming, colour, robotic gun, clothes, sounds and voices.

In Wafaa Bilal's performance *Domestic Tension*, the colour of the robotic gun played a significant role in conveying meaning and evoking emotional responses. Blood is a sign of injury, which inspires thoughts of murder and battle. Bilal utilizes yellow-colored pellets in the robotic pistol to remind the shooters that he is engaged in a game and not portraying a snapshot of real life. Consequently, Bilal uses "Brecht's alienation effects to disengage the viewers/shooters from fully indulging in this game and allow them to think about the reality of war without having any illusions" (Abdelfattah, 2021, p.8).

Both Bilal and the audience were psychologically affected by the performance's use of colour. The bright and aggressive colours associated with the paintball shots created a sense of unease, discomfort, and danger. Through the strategic use of colour, Bilal effectively conveyed the physical and psychological effects of violence, created a visually engaging experience, and encouraged contemplation on the consequences of conflict and the role of technology in remote-controlled aggression.

Bilal also used a robotic gun as a prominent technique in his performance of *Domestic Tension*. *Domestic Tension* explored the psychological and physical effects of war on civilians in Iraq and the role of technology on humans. To achieve this, Bilal transformed a room in a Chicago gallery into a living installation. In this room, Bilal installed a robotic paintball gun, which was connected to a camera and controlled remotely over the internet. He invited people from around the world to visit his website and participate in the performance by firing paintballs at him.

The viewers could see Bilal through the camera feed and aim the gun at him using a crosshair on the website. They could then click to fire the paintball gun, which would shoot a paintball at Bilal in real time. The impact of the paintball on Bilal was documented and streamed live on the website. I think that Bilal's use of a robotic gun in *Domestic Tension* was a symbolic and artistic choice. The intention was not to promote violence but rather to create a platform for dialogue and raise awareness about the consequences of war and the role of technology in shaping our experiences.

Bilal also used his clothes as a technique in his performance. He wore a plain white T-shirt

during the performance, which served as a canvas for the paintball marks and symbolized the physical and psychological toll of violence and endurance. The plain white t-shirt, often associated with simplicity and neutrality, contrasted with the act of violence directed at Bilal. It represented vulnerability and the objectification of the individual in the face of conflict. The accumulation of paintball marks on the t-shirt throughout the performance became a visual representation of the artist's endurance and the impact of violence on the body and psyche.

Furthermore, Bilal wore a kufiyah in his *Domestic Tension*. Kufiyah holds significant cultural and political symbolism in the Middle East. It has been historically associated with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and has become an emblem of solidarity and resistance against oppression. Bilal's wearing of kufiyah in his performance *Domestic Tension* symbolizes his connection to the struggles and narratives of marginalized communities, his stance against oppression, and his engagement with issues related to the Middle East and its political landscape.

Moreover, In Wafaa Bilal's performance *Domestic Tension*, sounds and voices were employed as powerful techniques to enhance the overall experience and convey specific messages. Bilal depends on sounds and voices to transmit the experience of war to online participants. During the performance, Bilal used a live audio feed that let the audience and performers hear what was happening in the room where he was confined. This audio feed served as a direct connection between Bilal and the participants, immersing them in the environment and intensifying their engagement. Participants could hear Bilal's reactions, movements, and any noises resulting from the paintball shots, creating a sense of immediacy and empathy.

The sounds of paintball gunshots and the impact of the paintballs hitting the room's surfaces were also crucial elements in the performance. These sounds added a deep and realistic dimension to the experience, heightening the tension and the sense of danger. The sudden, sharp sounds of the paintball shots reverberating through the room created an atmosphere of conflict and aggression. Bilal also incorporated voices and commentary in the performance. Sometimes, he engaged in conversations with participants who accessed the live-streaming website, discussing various topics related to war, violence, and the performance itself. These voices provided additional layers of dialogue and discussion of the reason for the Iraqi war . Through the use of sounds and voices technique, Bilal aimed to evoke emotional responses, create a sense of presence, and provoke contemplation on the consequences of violence, war, and technology. These auditory elements played a crucial role in immersing participants and viewers in the performance.

5. Conclusion

This paper examines Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension* from the perspective of cyborg theory, specifically referencing Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's idea of cyborg theatre and Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*. It demonstrates how Bilal's integration of human and machine goes beyond traditional performance boundaries, creating a powerful medium to critique war, dehumanization, and the ethical dilemmas of remote violence.

Bilal's performance transformed the audience from passive viewers into active participants,

forcing them to confront the physical and emotional costs of war. Through the robotic paintball gun—a symbol of technologically mediated violence—Bilal not only exposed the detachment of drone warfare but also blurred the lines between the virtual and the real. His art challenged spectators to sympathize with the victims of violence by shedding light on the psychological and physical vulnerabilities of those affected by war. The paper highlights how Bilal uses his experiences as an Iraqi refugee to symbolize the broader human impact of conflict, emphasizing the need for conversations about the violations faced by Iraqi people due to war.

Moreover, the research investigates how Bilal blends technology with traditional forms of artistic expression. It contextualizes his interactive performance within the realm of technology, showcasing how the use of a paintball gun controlled by viewers exposes the disconnection between virtual and real worlds, illustrating the detachment of violence when mediated through technology.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes cybernetic theatre is importance as a forum for activism and introspection. By merging technology with personal narrative, Domestic Tension serves as a poignant reminder of the human cost of war and the ethical challenges of modern technological advancements. It invites us to rethink the boundaries of art, technology, and human identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

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