

EMPATHY[™]



Al-Qa'ida Torture Devices

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Al-Qa'ida Torture Devices is an *EMPATHY™* production
in cooperation with *Roodkapje*.

Roodkapje – Center for Urban Culture, Art & Design

<http://www.roodkapje.org/>

Roodkapje organizes exhibitions, performances and interdisciplinary projects
focused on contemporary developments in art, with work from upcoming and
experienced national and international artists.

EMPATHY™ consists of Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, Jonas Staal and
TINKEBELL.

<http://www.empathy-research.com/>

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with thanks to Kasper Oostergetel for his invaluable assistance.

Co-financing by *Roodkapje*, Rotterdam NL; *Amsterdams Fonds voor de
Kunst*, Amsterdam NL; *CBK Rotterdam*, Rotterdam NL; *Stichting Doen*,
Amsterdam NL; *VSB Fonds*, Utrecht NL; *Stichting Stralen*, Delft NL.

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Introduction

The exhibition *Al-Qa'ida Torture Devices* comprises a presentation of a selection of typical western household appliances, tools and other instruments, such as electric irons, drills and cutting torches, which Al-Qa'ida has been using as torture devices on captives.

Historically, Osama bin Laden, a current leading figure in the Al-Qa'ida network, used to be an important US ally during the Afghanistan war (1988) against the former Soviet Union. During the last few decades, this relationship reversed completely: Al-Qa'ida is now 'protesting' against what it perceives as the intervention of western (American) countries into the Islamic world. However, it is interesting to notice that, despite their disgust of western influence, they have employed basic western products, i.e. household appliances and other tools, in order to fight and combat the 'intruders' and other enemies of their choice.

Our western society has not only provided part of the social and cultural context for Al-Qa'ida to operate in, it has, moreover, provided it with the tools to do so more effectively.

On April 24, 2007, American soldiers searched a so-called 'Al-Qa'ida safe house'. They found a collection of explicit hand drawn pictures¹, possessing a certain 'art brut' quality, that presumably has been used as a guide to the torturing of enemies. The products and their description that have been depicted in this collection form the basis of *Al-Qa'ida Torture Devices*.

In the same house, the American soldiers found a captive, hanging in chains from the ceiling, that had been tortured in a fashion suggested by the drawings.

The seemingly 'innocent' tools that are on display, obtain in perspective of the exhibition their violent content, that has been suggested in the aforementioned drawings. This ambiguity inherent to the tools and devices is representative for the double position that Al-Qa'ida occupies in relation to the western world, both as (former) ally and (current) enemy.

1 <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/years/2007/0524072torture1.html>

Torture Device #1
(drilling hands)



Torture Device #2
(*eye removal*)



Torture Device #3
(blowtorch to the skin)



Torture Device #4
(clothes iron to skin)



Torture Device #5
(*whipping*)







(previous spread)
Torture Device #6-#16
unidentified

Torture Device #17
(severing limbs)



Torture Device #18-#19
unidentified



Torture Device #20
unidentified



Torture Device #21-#23
unidentified



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