

BEHOLD

Superheroes at Super Moments in History

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Greenham Airfield, England. June, 1944.
Agan Harahap.

“I love history,” states Agan Harahap on his FlickrR page. What it means to him, however, is something entirely unique. The Jakarta-based artist rewrites, or rather, re-creates, history by incorporating superheroes such as Superman and Spider-Man into famous imagery from the 20th century.

How come we never learned that the web-slinger was there during the Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II? Or that Batman was a close adviser to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro? In fact, it’s odd that no one ever mentioned how Darth Vader (a villain, indeed) had paid a visit to Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin at the Yalta conference in 1945.

Harahap’s Photoshopped “Superhistory” presents the past as if it were a comic book, seamlessly integrating pop culture icons into the photographs that build our collective memory.



Neuschwanstein, 1945.
Agan Harahap.

Ironically, video games, not comics, inspired him for this project. Harahap's friends are all fans of *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honor*, two games that base their scripts on World War II battles.

"I'm always interested in anything World War II-related," the Indonesian photographer explained in an email, and he mostly learns about history through movies. For the "Superhero" series, however, he researches the circumstances around a specific photograph before rewriting his "own story," inserting the comic book characters that seem appropriate for each shot.

Though Harahap's "Superhistory" isn't anything close to the truth, the project itself does evoke some actual falsification practices that existed long before Photoshop. Under Stalin's Communist regime, those deemed "enemies of the people," like Leon Trotsky, were not only killed but also erased from official photographs, as if they'd never existed. Harahap's work is a reminder of how easily the public can be manipulated. In its own way, his series pays homage to real facts and, indeed, to history.



Yalta Conference, 1945.
Agan Harahap.



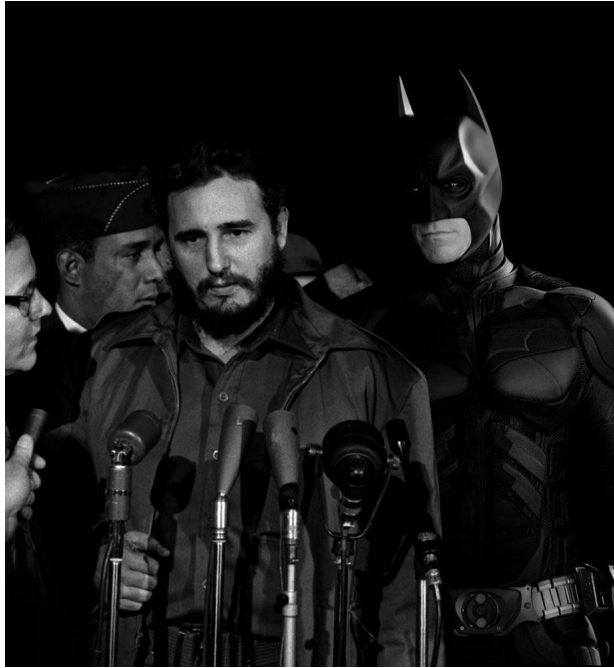
Cherbourg-Normandy, 1944.
Agan Harahap.



Remote post defense, Moscow, 1941.
Agan Harahap.



Siegburg, Germany.
Agan Harahap.



MATS Terminal, Washington, 1959.
Agan Harahap.



A Camp Near Minsk, 1941.
Agan Harahap.