PHOTOJOURNALISM

Photojournalism and Documentary Practice: When sometimes we turn away

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ABSTRACT

This paper is divided into two sections – essay and visual stories. Early in the essay photo-journalism and documentary practice are defined whilst responding to their association with the real. It acknowledges that when faced with stories of trauma, audience responses are often polarised between compassion for the subjects of the story and anger at the author for telling those stories. It questions whether our delight in knowing is diminishing or overwhelmed by the number of trauma stories told and re-told. Borrowing from a number of theorists it is argued in this paper that storytelling defines and maintains the boundaries that surround our communities. It applies the framework of Durkheim's Moral Community to suggest that media (print, electronic and social) have become the collective rituals ensuring an almost tribal adherence to notions of the profound and the profane. Questions as to whether or not compassion is finite and therefore limited and to whom it is afforded are addressed. The visual component looks at the work of the authors and seeks to identify alternative approaches to non-fictional storytelling.

Introduction

In consideration of this paper three ostensibly separate events occurring years apart have merged in our imaginations, each presenting as an amplification of the other. The first was a casual discussion on the merits of photojournalism with two colleagues. Given the state of the media in the latter part of the twentieth century, it was difficult not to be sympathetic to their accusations of constructed imagery, biased reporting, exploitative image making and the pretence at objectivity. The discussion ended on friendly terms, and in a gesture of conciliatory colleagueship we offered to lend them the *Time* magazine that had laid on the lunch table and had acted as the catalyst for that very discussion. Both our colleagues (academics and practicing artists) were/are highly visually literate. They had just argued that journalism (photo and text) created a false and imaginary world that fraudulently claimed access to the real. Our offer was rejected. Both were upset by the cover image depicting a deceased American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Each understood the image and felt deep empathy for the family but their healthy skepticism of journalism had evaporated and, for that moment, the image had become real.

The second event occurred at an exhibition featuring both our works, Blakely's on mothers whose children suicided, Lloyd's on hospice and palliative care. The work was made and published with the full consent and support of the participants. The gallery, as is its tradition, put out a visitors book to be signed by the attendees with comments allowed. The response was divided. Most (thankfully) took much from knowing the lives of others. Some however were livid. Their anger screamed in the pages and accused us of desecrating the gallery, exploiting the participants and forcing the audience to endure images about stories they did not wish to confront.

The third is more recent and ongoing. We are strong supporters for sentient rights, often contributing to funds that fight for abused and exploited animals. As such, our social media is littered with feeds of animals being abused and causes needing support. In most instances the video feeds are well scripted and constructed (multi cam and professional lighting) and often celebrities front the stories. It is heart-rending and soul destroying as to the depth of cruelty we humans can plunge. Nonetheless, we no longer click on these feeds. The algorithm that has swamped our pages with these stories has indeed been counterproductive.

The events above share two traits. The visual stories in each are read and experienced by audiences as being photojournalism or documentaries. Unlike fine art or creative advertising photography, these images are understood by audiences to be authentic, real and existing (or having existed) in some unembellished form. The second characteristic is that each of us will at times turn away from that which we perceive to be the truth. What follows is an attempt to

understand why.

Why Tell Stories

> 'Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure…' (Aristotle, Butcher 2000: 15).

Aristotle argued that deep within our nature is the desire to imitate. It is through imitation that we 'learn (our) earliest lessons and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated' (Aristotle, Butcher 2000: 15). The imitation to which Aristotle referred was not the mindless copying of another's actions rather it was, in part, the accommodation, distillation and assimilation each undergoes as we acutely observe phenomena. It is also the value we add through the meanings we attach to that with which we interact. Aristotle reasoned that such imitations allow us 'to know'. It's this 'knowing' that finds tangible form in storytelling, whether through poetry, literature, music, science and/or arts.

Storytelling underpins every aspect of our lives. The 'hello' greeting we make with friends serves as a social shortcut to asking them to tell their news/stories and to share ours. By doing this we are seeking, giving or withholding validation. It is through stories that we connect or disconnect with another. From very early in our education the environments of schools and universities are the reformatted storytelling of tribal communities in which the knowledge of one generation is passed to another. Ketelle (2017: 143-150) analyses storytelling as a pedagogical tool in higher education highlighting the cognitive processes involved in the telling of, and the listening to, stories. She argues that storytelling is deeply rooted in intellectual endeavour allowing us to reason, understand and explain the world from experience. Storytelling, she muses, 'opens up space for intersectional analysis (and) complex representations' (Ketelle 2017: 146).

Stories not only inform us of the world in which we live, they also qualify and validate our existence. Defense attorneys in Texas, a state prolific in applying the death penalty, employ storytellers to gather and carefully craft the life history of convicted persons into emotionally potent biographies. Professor Sean O'Brien (2009: 831-847) contends that these powerful narratives not only have the ability to create compassionate responses in juries and jurists but they are one of the most effective tools for defense attorneys.

Stories define us; whether it is in the every day greeting of 'what's new' or in the more formal applications of education, law, politics, etc. Storytelling is the process through which meanings are established, transmitted and shared and lives are altered. Through storytelling we come 'to know'. But 2500 years after Aristotle something appears to have changed. Not all take delight in knowing.

Defining The Frame: Photojournalism and Documentary Practice

Documentary practice presents a very specific discourse or language through which the world can be known. Arguably it was the discourse, rather than the stories themselves, that audiences find unsettling and from which some derived no delight. Fundamental to this discourse is the audience's awareness that whatever they view exists albeit in some unembellished form.

At the core of photo journalism and documentary practice is the notion of authenticity. It is within this notion that we can synthesise Aristotle's observations. He observed that we especially delight in the knowledge we gain from 'objects…when reproduced with minute fidelity' (Butcher, 2000: 15). Fundamental to the nature of photojournalism and documentary practice is the reproduction of an event that is observed and captured with 'minute fidelity'. For over twenty-five centuries, non-fictional storytellers have been perfecting the narration of eye-witnessed events and, in the nineteenth century, the journalist/documentist with their camera became that unimpeachable eye-witness.

In a spirited retort to John Hartley's (1996: 32-32) assertion that 'journalism is characterised mostly by its relationship with modernity', the contentious Windschuttle (1999: 182) traced

the origins of journalistic practice to that of history. In doing so, he presented journalism as one of the classic liberal arts – disciplines through which we come to know and learn to reason across time. He claimed that the writings of Thucydides (460BC-395BCE), acknowledged as the first historian, were applicable to journalistic reasoning, methodology and intention. Writing on the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides stated that:

> …I have described nothing but what I either saw myself, or learned from others of whom I made the most careful and particular enquiry. The task was a laborious one, because eye-witnesses of the same occurrences gave different accounts of them, as they remembered or were interested in the actions of one side or the other…My history is an everlasting possession, not a prize composition which is heard and forgotten. (Thucydides 433-432BCE 1,22 trans Jowett, B).

By example Thucydides established the first immutable principle of accuracy not only for the historian but most likely also for the journalists who were to follow. Is connecting the writings of Thucydides to the development of journalism a long stretch? Most likely. Are his writings and methodologies taught in schools of journalism? Probably not. But after almost 2500 years since Thucydides established these precepts they have become the raw material for most codes of journalistic ethics across the world. At the very least it is reaffirming to know that while journalism may or may not be a relatively modern profession, the notion of accuracy and the importance of eye-witnessing as fundamental to non-fictional storytelling have stood the test of time.

Extending The Frame: The photograph and the making of a documentary image

Roland Barthes, an eminent literary theorist and philosopher, mused at the opening of Camera Lucida (Barthes 1981: 2-8) that a photograph cannot be seen, for it is rendered invisible by its content. 'A specific photograph is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents) (Barthes 1981: 2). Succinctly, to view a photographic image of a relative is to see only that relative. The photographic component – tone, design, paper texture, etc. is rendered invisible or inconsequential. Susan Sontag (1977: 4) in her seminal essay 'On Photography' observed that 'photographs do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it'. Although critical of the subversive power of the camera, Sontag vented that:

> 'Photographs are, of course, artifacts. But their appeal is that they also seem, in a world littered with photographic relics, to have the status of found objects – unpremeditated slices of the world. Thus, they trade simultaneously on the prestige of art and the magic of the real. They are clouds of fantasy and pellets of information' (Sontag 1977: 69).

It is conceivable that had photojournalism and documentary disciplines been practiced in the time of Aristotle, he may have reasoned that their potency lies with their verisimilitude – real or imagined. That is, the photograph is perceived as life imitated with minute fidelity.

> 'Since the photograph is pure contingency and can be nothing else (it is always something that is represented) – contrary to the text which, by the sudden action of a single word, can shift a sentence from description to reflection – it immediately yields up those 'details' which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge' (Barthes 1981: 12).

The language of photography supports this default non-thinking position. We do not make photographs, we take photographs. Stand at any photo stall and you will hear people describe their images in terms of: this is my sister, this is the hotel in which I stayed, this is my partner, etc. And of course none of this is true, it is not in reality the sister, rather it is a piece of paper with dots on it. But because of the camera and the invisibility of the photographer in our lifetime we have stood on the grassy knoll and watched a president assassinated, manned barricades and protested inequality, fought wars, married a prince, travelled to the moon, and so much more, all without leaving home. Whether visually literate or not, very few of us have developed defense mechanisms for the photograph. When confronted with an image, the non-thinking default position is that the photograph is the object. It is more than verisimilitude, for a photograph allows the audience to stand at an open door observing (and participating in) events unfolding. It is no coincidence that the first image made with a camera was a document (Goldsmith 1979: 17), that

the first photo book published was a document (Talbot 1844, 2011), and that the camera has been the tool of choice for any discipline that seeks to access notions of the real – journalism, documentary, advertising, pornography, history, anthropology, medicine and selfies.

Of course in our more rational moments, we know that the photograph can be manipulated and although photographs may not lie, liars photograph. In order to ensure trust with audiences photojournalists and documentists have assimilated many of the principles inherent in the codes of ethics of print journalism and those demanded by Thucydides (1.22) of historians twenty-five centuries ago. While these codes of ethics may vary, common to all is that:

- The phenomena under investigation must exist irrespective of the presence of the photojournalist or documentist
- The phenomena under investigation must be eye-witnessed by the photojournalist or documentist
- The phenomena under investigation must be captured at the time of eye-witnessing
- The photojournalist or documentist must seek to be honest in the portrayal of the phenomena under investigation
- The documents made must be understood as an interpretation of the eye-witnessed event

Whether viewing photojournalistic and documentary imagery or simply reading the newspaper or watching the evening news, audiences receive these stories as eye-witnessed accounts of events that occurred. And yet sometimes our response is to turn away.

Finding Reason: The media to which we are exposed

Explicit in Aristotle's explanation of why we tell stories is the delight derived from knowing (Butcher 2000: 15). Yet for some subjected to journalism and documentary imagery, or for all of us at some point-in-time, no delight is derived in hearing and seeing the authentic stories of others in distress. Claims abound to already know these stories or that we are drowning in this type of telling or have grown tired of all the horrible images.

Most people schooled in Minority World culture understand the documentary discourse. They understand that the images shown in newspapers, nightly news and documentary exhibitions represented events that, in some unembellished form, exist. They understand these stories are not make-believe and they are not looking at fine art, or creative advertising images. They are schooled in picking up the cues that define the different disciplines. That is, we understand intuitively and cognitively the difference between fictional and non-fictional visual storytelling. And when dealing with the non-fictional, we know those stories to be, and expect them to be, eye-witnessed.

Therefore the claims of being overwhelmed by the constant reporting of tragedies at home and abroad seems, on face value, to have merit as to why sometimes we turn away. These stories can't be dismissed as fictional, the trauma exists. Compassion fatigue is built on the assumption that because this type of storytelling is so prevalent and pervasive in the media, and because it is believed to be true our compassion will be exhausted and fatigued by the need to expend more and more emotional and cognitive energy on never-ending-horror-stories.

To see if this could be correct, as an exercise a group of volunteers and ourselves undertook an informal audit of a large news agency in an attempt to find any image that could be considered visually graphic and upsetting or overwhelming to the senses of a presumed reasonable person. The audit found no graphic images of overt horror, pain or trauma, etc. This was not unexpected for the codes of ethics that govern media outlets encourage conservative presentations. When compared to the imagery found in news media in China, Russia, South East Asia and India, the papers of the Minority World are remarkably sanitised. In our media you will not see bodies blown apart, screaming motorists impaled on steering wheels, etc. The bloodless language used in western media make it easier to accept the trauma experienced by us and inflicted on others (DeGhett 2014). Nonetheless there were stories that referred to ongoing global national and local events that could be imagined as traumatic but none of this was explicitly present in the journals,

papers and magazines in the agency. Yet in abundance were images of, and stories about, celebrities, brides and sporting heroes.

Finding Reason: Compassion, pity and imagination

Compassion is difficult to endure. It requires action or results in guilt from inaction. It occurs only when the victim and the observer come to inhabit the same psychological space. In the writings of both Luc Boltanski (1999) and Hannah Arendt (1963, 2006) pity and compassion are differentiated on two significant grounds. The politics of pity (Arendt 2006: 85-95) exist within a distant frame of the fortunate and the unfortunate, the observed and the observer, the many and the one. In most cases the pitied are the many and are observed by the fortunate and the few. The observer's response is not specifically allocated to each of those observed but is generalised across the whole. Images that make the audience feel physically, psychologically and culturally distant from the subject elicit feelings of benevolence or pity. It requires no commitment Boltanski argues from the observer and no action (1999: 11), including that of continuing to observe.

Compassion Boltanski and Arendt reason is '… actualised to specific situations in which those who do not suffer meet and come face to face with those who do' (Boltanski 1999: 6). Unlike the politic of pity compassion does not allow for the loquacious, the talkative or the argumentative. It has no words rather its language is one of action, expression and gestures 'through which suffering becomes visible and audible to the world' (Arendt 2006: 86). As such the need to take action, imbedded with notions of social justice, becomes paramount (Boltanksi 1999: 5-20). Images that close the physical, psychological, and cultural distance between subject and audience more often elicit a compassionate response and a duty to observe, to act and, if possible, to change the circumstances.

Rarely are stories that negate the distance between the observer and the observed given space in newspaper print or time on electronic media. Especially if they are the stories from the Majority World. For the most part they exist as the personal works of journalists and documentists whose face-to-face encounters with the vulnerable have moved them to use their cameras as tools for social change. Though the politics of their stories can be universalised, the telling of the stories is always personal and particular. Examples included 'Keep Passing the Open Windows: stories of suicide and grief' (Blakely 2000), 'War is Personal' (Richards 2010), 'Chernobyl' (Fusco 2001).

Yet if it is fatigue we feel is it derived from the stories published or disasters imagined? At the time of writing, the world is experiencing a pandemic. Australia has enjoyed relative freedom from the horrors experienced by many other countries, yet protests to lockdowns abound, the media reports a rise in mental illness and feelings of vulnerability. It may be neither compassion nor pity that alone drives our sense of being overwhelmed. In addressing audiences' response to disaster stories, Adrian Piper (1991: 726-757) developed the theory of 'modal imagination' seeking to identify our capacity to envision what is possible in addition to what is shown. Could it be that our imaginations can be sufficiently nourished by sanitised media stories, inferred horror and catastrophes to imagine what is rendered invisible by that same media, but is paradoxically, real?

Extending Piper's position it could be that the perceived physical, metaphysical and tautological qualities of photographs, combined with the verisimilitude inherent in photo journalism and documentary practice, provide a powerful arousal mechanism capable of exciting the imagination and maybe creating this sense of ongoing disaster in audiences. This may at least and in part explain the exhaustion expressed by those who sometimes turn away.

Finding Reason: The moral community

Although we are rarely atune to graphic media stories exposing human excess when the visuals are carefully constructed to either elicit compassion or pity in the audience. Journalistic images made of such events occurring in the Minority World are most likely to individualise the subjects, use close viewpoints and include cues to which we identify – national flags, football jumper, camaraderie, etc. This approach imitates in minute fidelity the event that has occurred. In doing this it brings the audience face to face with the subject. Graphic images of the Majority World employ distant viewpoints, visual clutter, separation and absence of identifying cues.

An example of this is found when comparing the trauma images of the Rwanda Genocide (Nachtwey 1994) published throughout the Minority World with that of the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York (Nachtwey 2001). The images depicting the Genocide were full of visual clutter and in most cases did not individualise any of the heroes or victims. Even the famous 'Scared Man' (Nachtwey 1994) – an image showing the machete cuts across the face of a Rwanda Genocide survivor – gives prominence to the injuries, relegating the victim to that of a prop. Rwandan person or debris, each component was given the same visual real estate within the image. Whereas images that covered the destruction of the World Trade Center individualised and particularised the people within the context of that destruction. Heroes or victims each dominated the images either through the amount of image real estate used or through sophisticated design and positioning of the subject. It is worth noting that in the 'Falling Man' image (Drew 2001) – the photograph of the man who jumped to his death as the towers burned – the subject, minute by comparison to the buildings, is positioned to dominate in the image (Junod 2021).

In 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life', Emile Durkheim (1912, 1954: 47) observed:

> 'A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things…that are set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices that unite into one single moral community… all those who adhere to them'.

By the twenty-first century the glue that bound moral communities was no longer necessarily a belief in a particular deity or the ritualistic practices that expressed that belief. While shared notions of the sacred and profane remain as the bedrock on which communities are formed, these pillars now find form through culture, ideology, economics and the politics of privilege as mediated through storytelling. Media, both traditional (what remains) and social are the vehicles through which notions of the profane and the profound are expressed.

In '*Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*', Nick Couldry suggests that the rituals involved in digesting traditional media (imagined readings of the newspaper together at the same time each morning regardless of the geographic location) have replaced public worship (Sunday morning church services) as the mode in which social life makes sense (Couldry 2003: 2-3). While reading the paper may have replaced prayer prior to the turn of the twenty-first century, today texting and being ever-present on Twitter, Facebook or other social platforms have replaced reading the news. Whether it be through the rituals of watching the 6.00pm nightly news or buried in social media, it is the shared notion that we engage in rituals in similar spaces and at similar times that have become a new form of collective worship.

Adding to this is the radical changes to social media feeds. Initially social media was heralded as dismantling notions of the other (Johnson and Callahan 2013: 319-339) and blending the diverse. Today it has shown itself to be an ever-accelerating manufacturer of tribes or (moral) communities. In their paper 'Homogenizing Social Media' Merkovity, Imre and Owen argued that regardless of the flattening of social audiences Facebook has come to occupy a central position in the everyday socialising of hundreds of millions of users around the world. Simply put, through the architecture of Facebook and other social media platforms, notions of time, culture, politics and society have become homogenised though 'shaping particular forms of selfhood – the neoliberal self' (Merkovity et al. 2015: 3).

However as evidenced in the recent polarisation in Minority World democracies (the Trump Presidency, BREXIT and Climate Change) under this homogenised umbrella minute differences are magnified and exaggerated (race, politics, education, work, ideas and thoughts). Rather than form one mega-community, Facebook and other social media platforms apply sophisticated algorithms to ensure 'feeds' support the existing social sensitivities of the user. Effectively, these social platforms have become sorting houses for stories that are distributed to like-minded people who share almost identical notions of the profane and the sacred. These stories diversely applied to each virtual community are now the biblical truths that sustain them. They have become contemporary iterations of Durkheim's moral community. Such communities, that Tom Regan (Morris 1997: 39) claimed, are the social spaces of shared values and consensus and are dependent for their existence on exclusion. Each community is bound by a 'moral' code that accrues privilege to members and disfavour to non-members.

When sometimes we turn away

Suffering, Morris (1997: 40) observes is not a universally quantifiable and measurable commodity rather it is a social status that is bestowed upon a person depending on their membership or non-membership of the (moral) community. Suffering for community members is considered as a private tragedy. That is, because members occupy the same space (virtual/ geographical, political, social), compassion is generated for those in distress, action is required. Similar suffering experienced by non-members is conceptualised as being public, that is, occupying a different metaphoric time and space. Compassion is replaced by pity and the politics of pity requiring no action.

Stories that do not bring the audience and the subject to the same space are easier from which to turn. In doing so, they promote the 'other' and ensure a distance develops and is sustained between 'them' and 'us'. Is it this distance that allows us to sometimes turn away?

Finding Reason: Maybe it's me

Of the seven elements of news worthiness the three most important are: how the story will impact the reader (for instance a pandemic, will I be ok?); is the story current; and how close is the story happening to the reader. Put another way, is the story about me in the now.

In a scathing criticism of the media (and us for creating it), Richard Stivers, a distinguished Emeritus professor of Sociology at Illinois State University, states that the ideal human in western culture – independent and reason bound in the service of freedom – is transformed into a 'distracted, hyperactive, pleasure-seeking envious, emotion-dominated child who acts without thinking, is only capable of shallow relationships and is lonely with a need to conform to the peer group' (Stivers, 2020: 30). This he argues is achieved through a complex mix of media content, media advertising, media imagery, speed of information, propaganda without an ideological underpinning and ambiguity of language and politics (Stivers, 2020). Concisely he states that the function of corporate media is to manipulate the public away from reason and the service of freedom.

Stiver's position is the antithesis of the western ideal and positioning popular journalism as bringing about the destruction of the independent and reason-persons. In this critique each of us is reduced to a narcissistic consuming unit whose interests cannot transcend themselves or their consumption. Maybe when sometimes we turn away it is because the stories told are not me-centric.

It would be foolish to argue there need be only one cause to make those who turn away, turn away. Maybe we are drowning in a litany of horror stories, or maybe we imagine this to be so. Could it be that the stories told employ visual methods that create or exaggerate a distance between the subjects and the audiences and thereby lessen our emotional involvement. Or is it possible that we more easily turn away from stories that tell of trauma outside our community. Do we turn away because to do otherwise will require us to act or if we stay observing do we feel the weighty guilt of our inaction? Maybe Aristotle is no longer relevant in the twenty-first century and Richard Stivers is correct in assuming media has made us empty and shallow vessels. It is possible that fear has replaced exclusion as the bedrock upon which communities are based and that the chasm between the Majority and Minority Worlds has grown so wide that compassion is now too expensive to envisage. Regardless in the end, the desire to sometimes turn away comes because it is easier than to observe. Maybe in the twenty-first century the delight is in not knowing and not needing to act.

As documentists we employ the conventions stated in the previous section of this paper. Most of the time our stories begin with a simple understanding that 'it's not OK'. This heuristic beginning is more often a mix of care, notions of social justice, curiosity, shame and/or anger. We begin with the understanding that we don't understand. Our tools are respect, inquisitiveness, cameras, tape recorders, pens, friends and our collaboration.

In our practice we seek to challenge those modes of journalism and documentary practice that intentionally, or unintentionally, reinforce moral communities and the boundaries that surround and protect them. In doing this we hope to lessen the distance between the spectator and the subject and present these stories as also a collaboration between author and participant. We claim no objectivity nor do we attempt to remain impartial.

Through immersing ourselves in the lives of our participants, we become stakeholders. The stories are never solely about the subjects nor are they only autobiographical. Rather these stories are the stories of 'them' and 'us' and by extension become 'our' stories. Mindful of Boltanski's hope that compassion blends with justice and enacts social change, we seek a language that speaks affectively and conveys, as felt knowledge, the lived experience of all involved. It is hoped that the synopses of stories that follow combine with the text above and present our arguments both cognitively and affectively.

In the concluding comments of the paper 'Justice Denied' (Blakely and Lloyd 2009) we made the following statement. It remains relevant for this paper:

> 'Lawrence Langer, in his essay 'The Alarmed Vision' called for a new language to 'disturb our collective consciousness and stir it into practical actions that move beyond mere pity'. He argued that, 'we will get nowhere with this problem until we admit that the familiar verbal modes for approaching it have been exhausted by centuries of repetition' (Langer 1996: 47).

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Biography

Authors : Photographers

For over twenty-five years Angela Blakely's and David Lloyd's work has explored conflict and personal crises, both abroad and closer to home. Their collaborative documentary practice began in 1994 when they were commissioned by the History Section of the Australian Army to accompany the first rotation of troops to Rwanda and document Australia's involvement in that crisis. They returned again in 2006 and 2008.

They have also worked individually in crisis areas in Bosnia, Somalia and Malawi (east Africa) as well as working on a number of projects within Australia exploring: hospice and palliative care, suicide and grief, eating disorders, sexual deviancy, gender and body, consecrated sites, absence and loss, and working closely with local Indigenous agencies documenting substance misuse in the Mount Isa area. Together, they define their collaborative social documentary practice as a form of storytelling.

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