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Consider how image makers have utilised digital
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Example 1 : progression of cameras

To show how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore conflict , we should look at the progression of photographic equipment , specifically cameras from past war times to the present day of 2020. In the Civil War , equipment for image making consisted of large format cameras and stacks of glass plate negatives. This photographic method that was used to document history was branded as revolutionary. There were limitations of course , with image makers unable to capture the 'height of the action'. This is due to the long exposures the cameras required. This also limited to only being able to shoot before and after battles. This method of photography was a lengthy process. Image makers could not afford to mess up an image created by these cameras.

"Imperfection of the images produced- representative of the chaos and obscured visibility of real war experiences - are better able to capture the audience's attention than the clear cut shot of the professional". (Tamar Tembeck, 2015) I liked this quote from an international symposium held in Montreal Canada , although the equipment back in past war times weren't as sharp and clear as our resources now, we can't deny how it shows a sense of rawness in the images.

In the 1930s-40s , small pocket sized 35mm film cameras such as the 'Leica' were a popular choice among war and conflict photographers. They allowed image makers to stay unnoticed and undisguise. There are obvious disadvantages or cons to these cameras , they were heavier than our digital camera's used today, and purchasing and developing film was a continuous cost. Another con was that the film had to be developed before viewing which could result in poor looking photographs without the photographer knowing.

With digital cameras in 2020 getting better each year with top companies such as Canon bringing out new photographic equipment, the resolution of cameras is at its highest. In the late 1990s, professional war photographers and amateur image makers slowly gravitated towards the digital world. Digital cameras now have the ability to change the film speeds between individual images. In modern day, everyday cameras such as point and shoot cameras are generally way lighter in weight than film cameras. What comes with more modern technology comes with more manipulation of images. Image makers with access to a laptop or a smartphone can easily edit and manipulate images to whatever they like. This method of art can be a positive or negative thing , depending on the situation.

A photographer who uses software such as photoshop or lightroom to enhance the lighting or colours of their images to appear more dramatic, are just , in my opinion utilising the great digital technology we are lucky to have access too. What comes with the ability to edit and manipulate any digital image, comes with false information and allows anyone to create a seemingly real image, which in reality is false.

This has caused much controversy among photojournalists such as Don McCullin who believes it to be “A totally lying experience”. He believes that photography has been “Hijacked” because “the digital cameras are extraordinary”. I don’t believe that digital technology is killing photojournalism , more specifically conflict photography. Using more modern and complex cameras and equipment isn’t glamorising a terrible situation. I think that a bold and dramatic image brings beauty and light to situations. Digital Images we view in the present day are very accessible to viewers, an image that is bold and striking which is generally edited and manipulated in some sort , are most effective at grabbing the viewers attention, resulting in providing a narrative and drawing out emotions. Artist’s of all kinds should be entitled to use different methods of communications as art, using modern cameras and digital technology is a form of creative expression. I don’t think we can even begin to compare the use of analog style conflict photography and our modern technology used to shoot today, both were totally different eras with different styles of working. Not to mention all of the technology that wasn't available back then. Many iconic conflict images from famous photojournalists have shaped the industry that digital artists work in presently.

Example 2 : use of smartphones and editing apps

Mobile phones were available to purchase back in 1999. Back then many people were unaware of their potential for image makers and the difference this would make. Anyone with a modern smartphone can now share top quality images on social media apps such as facebook or instagram. For some , these images go viral and trigger debate and public awareness. An example of this would be the three bombings in London underground, quickly sealed off, which resulted in images only taken by those of the London travellers. A situation like this is unlikely to have a professional photographer in that moment ready with their equipment. The reason why the images were so raw and captivating was because they were taken by the very people in the horrible incident. Composition and lighting were not thought about in the moment.

Today anyone can take out their phone and get an image that pops like slide film, without having to edit or manipulate controls. Most professional image makers in 2020 do not have to worry about a darkroom issue costing them a job , producing images in minutes from a technical standpoint that replicate the great photographer's of the decades past. Using a smartphone as part of your photography equipment or solely just the phone , I personally think is no longer regarded as an amateur thing, in fact a tool for the redefinition of photojournalism skills. Simply being somewhere at the right time and taking a snap could potentially go viral. Back a couple of years ago, it was quite unheard of to have images on the news or printed on newspapers that were taken by regular people and not professional photojournalists.

In 2020, many conflict images captured are by civilians themselves. The use of smartphones used to make front page news changes the game for photography.

'Photojournalism history was made last week. For the first time, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran photos on their front pages made by citizen journalists with camera phones.' (Dennis Dunleavy, 2012)

Damon Winter's project 'A Grunt's Life' depicts the soldiers of Afghanistan on the front line. These images in his project are shot on a mobile phone and edited on the mobile app 'Hipstamtic'. "People may have the impression that it is easy to make interesting images with a camera app like this, but it is not the case. At the heart of every solid image are the same fundamentals: composition, information, moment, emotion, connection. If people think that this is a magic tool, they are wrong. Of hundreds of images taken with the phone over those six days in Nahr-i-Sufi, only a handful were worth reproducing" (Damon Winter, 2012). I like that Damon Winter had this to say about his project , as many believed this was an easy project to build due to a phone being used. He took into consideration all of the aspects he would have taken if he was using a professional camera.

None of Damon Winter's images portray any visual conflict, mainly everyday mundane lives of the soldiers which include them resting , doing maintenance work and engaging in their leisure activities. In an article in Lens, the New York Times photojournalism blog, Damon winter explains that the smartphone used to take his photographs would be impossible to shoot with a canon 5D. He believes it would have scattered the moment, and was known to be laughed at when he raised his professional camera.

For Damon Winter , his smartphone was well suited to his situation to stay informal and capture his raw images. If Damon Winter had used a different medium to create his images for his project such as a large professional camera, his subjects may have acted differently, creating a fake unrealistic view on the situation. I think this is more important than the fact that he used an edited filter overlaid over his images.

I believe Damon Winter really utilised the technology he was working with, an iPhone to create these images and agree that the vibe would be heavily different if he had shot with a large invading DSLR. This award winning project has caused controversy because of its 'non traditional source', it's faux polaroid edited filter. "The Hipstamatic app interferes with the pure view through the lens that provides the truth of the moment" (Chip Litherland , New York Times) I don't have a negative view of these images at all, in no way do they seem edited in a way of rearranging or planned scenes. Unlike other war photographers such as Alexander Gardner or Mathew Brady who in the 1860s manipulated war scenes by moving bodies and objects into their planned shots. Although I do not believe that using a smartphone such as an iPhone is better than using a professional camera in terms of quality, using a phone in conflict photography or in situations where you must be secretive or discreet is definitely utilising the newest technology.

Another artist who started using mobile phones as part of their photographic equipment is Benjamin Lowy. He is called the pioneer in photojournalism for his documentation in Libya and Afghanistan with only his smartphone. Benjamin Lowy is known for being one of the first photographers to use such a tiny device in war zones. He experimented with Sony Ericson KF50 circa 2005 then moving onto the iPhone in 2008. Much like Damon Winter , he also used the mobile app 'Hipstamatic' which was frequently used by the public before Instagram became an app. When asked why he uses an iPhone to shoot conflict images , Lowy explains "it produced images in a visual style that people weren't used to seeing. That is important to me. There is so much information out there these days, and it's very hard to capture the attention of a – for the most part – apathetic public. By showing important images of a war or social issue to people using a unique aesthetic, I believe I can capture their attention and shine a light on some of these stories." (Lowy, Feb 5 2013)

The images we view today have evolved from television coverage to digital devices such as mobile phones and anyone with access to these can virtually look at anything they search or type in. I believe as a result of this evolution, this changes our views and perception of conflict. With more artists and journalists now using smartphones to capture images in war zones, the narrative is widespread within minutes thanks to social media such as Instagram and Facebook. Using the newest technology for conflict photography gives the public a more raw understanding of what's going on.

Third example : use of drones

My third example on how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore conflict is the use of drones. With the revolution of consumer drones over the past couple of years, it is now possible for conflict photographers to create very striking photos showing a wider perspective on conflict zones. Modern drones enable photojournalists exploring conflict to capture their photos with a new perspective and allows them to cover narratives & stories that are too dangerous to shoot up close. They are able to access an extensive area of land much quicker than simply walking or running around all day.

There are things that conflict photographers using drones a camera of choice would have to keep in mind however such as, before beginning their drone project, they must first check the location guidelines and see if drones are not permitted & not fly over 400 feet to avoid collision with other air traffic. They also have to physically keep an eye out for the drone in the air, not relying solely on their drone camera.

I looked into some photographer's that used this type of medium to document conflict and war zones. Joey Lawrance, known as Joey L uses drones to create super dramatic wide angled conflict shots. He also shoots portraits on his drones, which I think is such a unique way of creating these types of images. "Aerial photography that was captured with the most basic, cheap consumer drones that are available to everybody now. I mean, to think about even doing this kind of image making with this level of quality for so cheap even three years ago was just unheard of. So, in the past, you'd have to ride in a helicopter, which is an extremely dangerous or expensive thing, in a war zone. Or be like the NGO photographer George Steinmetz and literally strap propellers on your back and fly around. But nowadays you can do these things with a \$1,000 drone." (Joey Lawrance, 2018) Joey's quote shows the progression of technology and how even an amateur photographer can easily get hold of the necessary equipment to create images.

Another artist, Gail Orentein who has been photographing for over 20 years has incorporated drones as part of her photography equipment for shooting conflicts for the past three years. Her work has been widely distributed by news outlets such as The Guardian, The BBC and CBS News. Gail started incorporating drone photography in war zones after a very close call in Syria in 2014. After concerns for her safety , using only her feet to get to A. to B. got increasingly dangerous . To Gail, it was an obvious choice to take, now with her drone she can soar above zones with less risk.

Overall, I think that with the use of modern technology such as modern day digital cameras , smartphones, drones and the use of editing software, has significantly enabled image makers to explore the world of conflict. Modern digital camera's have sorted out many technical issues that war photographer's years ago had struggled with. Images which can now be stored by the thousands on small SD cards can be manipulated/edited outside of a darkroom, on a computer which can be reversed over and over. The much popular use of smartphone photography can be used to document subjects and be used as front page news images for newspapers or go viral on social media platforms. Drones can now be used for photojournalists who need to get close to unsafe situations such as war zones and have a wide view on a subject.

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