

Everyone is a photographer now / Diffusion Festival Platform 1

8 May 2013

Fire Island

'Platform' is a series of events taking place throughout the Diffusion festival with a view to explore issues facing photography today. Platform 1 looked at the idea 'Everyone is a photographer now', focusing on work by Associated Press photojournalist, Matt Dunham. Below is an extract of Nic Finch's response to the discussion. The full article is available [here](#).

It feels as though everyone is obsessed with taking pictures these days. We feverishly document all that is in front of us, often without a conceptual filter. Everyone with a mobile phone has a camera in their pocket, and are therefore potential photographers, but that does that make us more aware, discerning and capable of taking outstanding pictures?

Iconic images, such as [Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima](#), by Joe Rosenthal or [Phan Thi Kim Phuc](#) that stick in our collective memory because they encapsulate a particular, defining moment in time. Such photographs are taken because somebody with the right equipment and know-how was in the right place at the right time; so by rights - the sheer number of extra eyes on the ground in the guise of the phone wielding public today means we should all be taking photographs that make the news.

So what makes 'official' photographers and their photographs of an event so special? Is it the access to areas that only a 'photographers' pass can get? Is it professional training, artistic ability, or just plain luck?

In the case of Matt Durham's photograph of [Charles and Camilla fleeing student protests](#), Matt claims he was essentially lucky and had his wits about him. He had seen what looked like a royal car coming his way so prepared himself to be as close as possible. Indeed those around him were also brandishing cameras, but few of them were looking for a shot to encapsulate the tension of the scenario with the added bite of showing the protest from the perspective of the privileged.

Being in the right place at the right time with a particular intent and professional eye is what bagged the image. Of course working for AP may have helped get it published in the papers the next day.

What then of 'citizen journalists' that are touted as the great news media democratizer?

There are incidents when mainstream press haven't been the first to deliver breaking stories. In the case of the recent Boston marathon, most official photographers had left the main race area to download their pictures when they heard the blast. The rolling news and the next day's front pages used images of the blast captured by opportune members of the public. However, it was photographs from determined photojournalists prepared to flout police lines in order to get pictures showing emergency services at work, intimate portraits of the injured and in shock that provided a more human view of the aftermath of the incident.

Many of us [live life through a screen](#) and many of us incessantly record what happens in front of us with no goal or objective. In terms of archiving modern living as a documentation of events, it seems we are all potential photographers, but it's the few key images taken that can tell a story beyond face value that become powerful signifiers of event and iconic images in their own right.

Nic Finch