

Artist Statement

Small Arms—Children of Conflict is an exhibition about children dealing with the impact of social, political, and economic conditions dictated by adults. It is an attempt through photography to unite subject and viewer in a sometimes comfortable and sometimes uncomfortable manner. In many ways the lives of those who view this work have directly or indirectly affected the lives of the subjects in the photographs. These photographs reveal the faces of children and what they are facing.

We are constantly exposed to imagery that seems so mundane it doesn't merit a second look. It does not challenge us to ponder why it was recorded. As the means to do photography is simplified by digital cameras, we seem to value it less as a medium for communication and expression. There is much more picture taking but much less picture making.

Photography can be a transformative experience, both for those who take the images and those who view the images. It may introduce us to new people and places, make us think about things in a new way, remind us of what an experience was like, and deepen our attachment to the subject in the process of examining and reexamining it. Good photography bombards the senses and thought; it motivates us to view the world in a more enlightened manner.

Virtually every photograph I have ever taken has a person in the composition. Each person I photograph causes me to reflect upon my life and theirs. The photographer and subject are united intensely yet briefly. This union, when done well, brings the viewer into the relationship. As a photographer and photojournalist, this interaction among photographer, subject, and viewer motivates me to communicate sincerely.

A photograph makes a scene luminously clear, yet when the viewers' own experiences are different from the subject's—sometimes radically so—they need to ponder the implications of what they see. When I look at great photography with a human subject I ask myself “what was that person doing or thinking?” I often wonder similar things about the photographer: “Why did the photographer take this photograph and why does it merit my attention?”