

Body of Work



*Covering the World:
Paula Bronstein's Photojournalism
(2016 - present)*

Introduction

Paula Bronstein is an American photojournalist whose four-decade career has spanned over four decades, establishing her as one of the most respected photographers in the field of conflict and humanitarian visual reportage. Since beginning her career in 1982, she has consistently focused on documenting humanity in war zones, regions of political upheaval, or communities affected by natural disasters. Based for many years in Bangkok, she has worked extensively across Asia, including long-term coverage of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

Bronstein's career began in American, in newsrooms from Providence to Chicago. In the late 1990s, she moved to Asia to freelance before joining Getty Images in 2002 as a senior staff photographer, a role in which she covered global crises of the early 21st century. Now she works and publishes independently. Much of Bronstein's work mixes journalism with advocacy and human rights. For example, her book *Afghanistan: Between Hope and Fear* bears witness to those most affected by war, especially women and civilians whose stories are often overlooked. This is a linking theme in her work. Across the years she has photographed refugees, political unrest, and victims of conflict and violence (including sexual violence). Not flinching away from suffering, she confronts viewers with honest and stark moments from people and communities on the margins of mainstream coverage.

Bronstein's work has been recognized through numerous honours, including being a Pulitzer Prize finalist and winning the Overseas Press Club's John Faber Award. She's received many prizes and nominations from: National Press Photographers Association, World Press Photo, China International Press Photo, and more.

How to study Paula Bronstein's photojournalism

Bronstein's images document humanity under all kinds of duress: from war and violent conflict to climate change, to natural disasters, to social and technological upheaval. The central theme running through all of her collections is the resilience and determination of ordinary people under duress. Even in the harshest settings – conflict zones, refugee camps, extreme environments – people struggle to live, engaging in daily rituals, bonding in tender moments, or looking after children or the elderly. Her treatment of war and conflict is not traditional: war is not glorified nor photographed for spectacle, but for insight into how people adapt, survive, and endure.

While men are present in many of her images, more often her photographic essays feature women, children, and victims of violence. These people are often pushed to the periphery of conflict reporting – Paula's images push back, giving a presence to those whose lives are overshadowed by larger events. The invisibility of women is a long-term theme, and you'll find images of women from places such as Afghanistan, where cultural constraints, conflict, and poverty frequently push them out of sight. Paula takes her camera into domestic spaces, clinics, and refugee shelters to bring to light stories that would otherwise be concealed. She captures the effect of loss on widows, the strain on mothers trying to preserve normalcy for their children, the anger or resignation of victims of sexual violence. Her perspective challenges the traditional focus on fighters, battles, and destruction that dominates mainstream news coverage.

That's not to say that Paula overstates the human capacity for survival. Her pictures reveal her subjects' vulnerability as well. Often they are photographed in precarious places, framed against landscapes and backdrops of ruin, devastation, and danger. In these cases, juxtaposition (of a playful moment or quiet determination) contrasts subject and setting. From image to image, symbolic details recur. Hands, eyes, items of clothing, and the daily implements of survival play a role in conveying meaning to the viewer. These images remind us that without seeing the impacts on women, children and civilians, war's full cost cannot be understood. Instead of showing us action, her lens lingers on the aftermath: wounds that need healing, disfigurements and scars that will never heal. Both remind us that suffering stays long after the headlines have moved on.

This booklet contains a selection of images from Paula's extensive collections for you to get a taste of her photographic style and subject matter. To study her work in depth, I recommend you choose a single photo-essay to explore as a discrete Body of Work. From her long-term project *Afghanistan: Between Hope and Fear*, to the plight of displaced people in *Rohingya: Stateless and Unwanted*, to the toll of conflict on the elderly in *Left Behind By War* – choose the essay that speaks most strongly to you. After studying the images, draw together your ideas and answer the following three study questions:

1. How and why does Bronstein use human images and human-centered moments in her photo-essays?
2. How does Paula Bronstein's approach and choice of subject matter challenge mainstream narratives or engage with overlooked issues?
3. What are the impacts of photographic choices – such as position and proximity, angle and framing, or lighting – on the viewer's understanding of the images?



From *Afghanistan: Between Hope and Fear*



From *Ukraine's Elderly: Left Behind By The War*



From *Ukraine Ballet: Dance During Wartime*



From Rohingya: Stateless and Unwanted



From *Lesbos: The Refugee Migration*



From Silent Victims of a Forever War



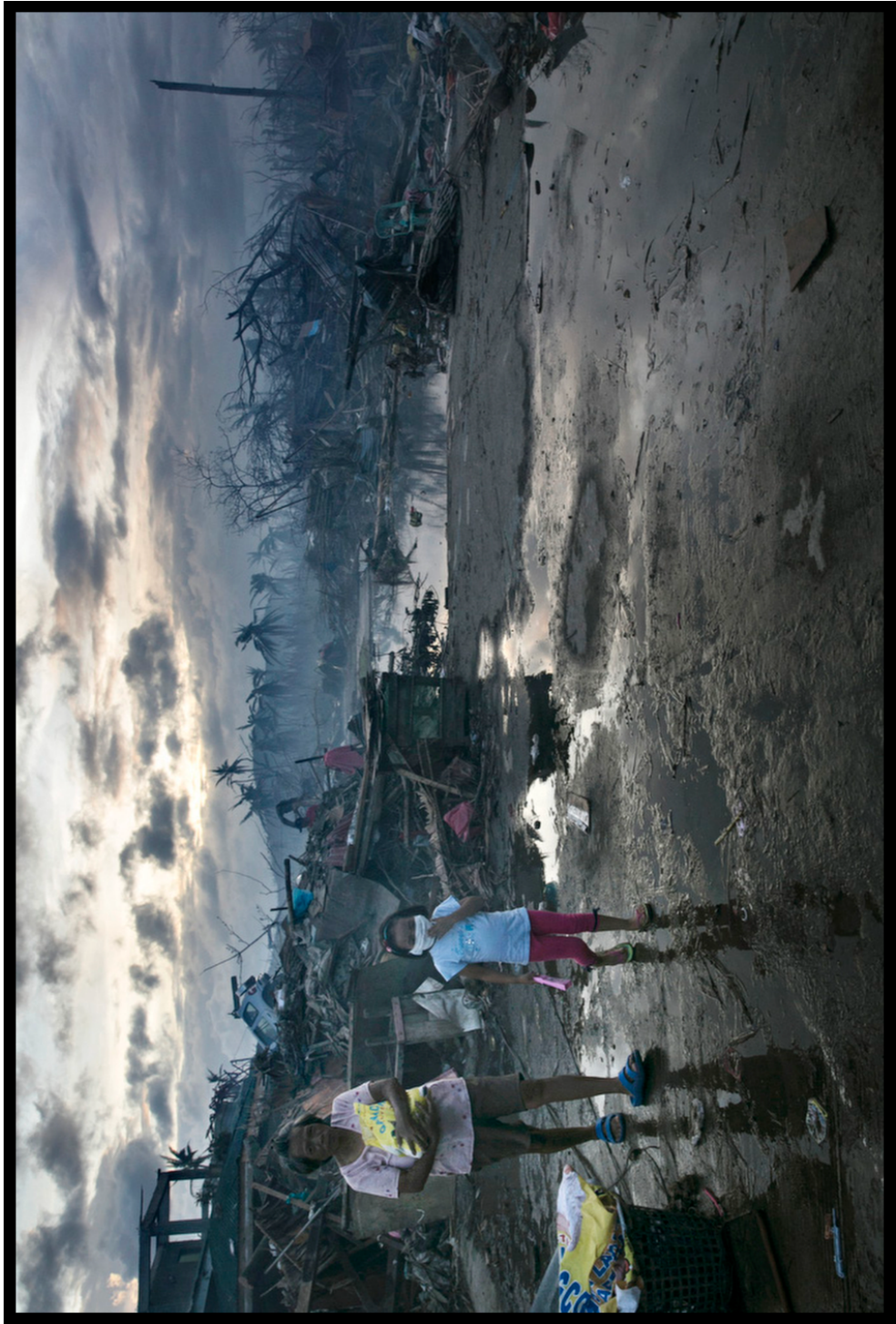
From *Female Marines in Afghanistan*



From *Acid Violence: Stolen Faces*



From *Mongolia: Changing Landscape*



From *Climate Change: Natural Disasters*



From *Displaced by War South Sudan*