I am documenting the *Unfinished Stories* of people that we have known for twenty years, and who survived the Khmer Rouge Genocide of 1975-1979. Despite suffering appallingly at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, they positively dedicated their lives to education. This is a multi-faceted project, with photography, text, voice recording, a book, zine and video.

**History**

April 17th, 1975, the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh. Within 24 hours, the city was emptied. In the Genocide that followed, 1.7-2 million people died. Virtually everyone lost family and friends.

Prince Sihanouk led Cambodian independence from France in the 1950’s. He was overthrown in 1970 by US-backed Lon Nol. In 1969, the US secretly started bombing Cambodia in an effort to dislodge the Việt Cộng, killing thousands of innocents. This, plus public impatience with the corruption of the Lon Nol regime, provided fertile ground for the rise of the Khmer Rouge.

In 1979, Vietnam responded to Khmer Rouge attacks and invaded Cambodia. Hun Sen, today’s Prime Minister, had defected from the Khmer Rouge in 1977, and helped lead this effort. Even though Vietnam stopped the Genocide, the US and most of the world backed a Sihanouk-led coalition in exile, which included the Khmer Rouge. The UN would not give the Vietnam-backed Government Cambodia’s seat.

This history is important for an audience who might not know what happened.
The Schools Project

Despite the invasion in 1979, and the eventual exit of Vietnam in 1989, parts of the country remained under Khmer Rouge control for twenty years, until 1998, when Pol Pot died. Even now there is little legal closure with Khmer Rouge leadership. Few have been prosecuted, after decades of UN work. And despite the best efforts of NGOs, the UN and Government, education is not where it needs to be.

In 1994 we made our first visit to Cambodia. We became determined to understand the Country, and we started to see the impact of the Genocide.

In 1999, Ingrid and I founded a major primary school program in the Khmer Rouge Reconciliation Areas, administered by Save the Children. It was a collaborative project, with the full support of the Cambodian Government. On the opening visit, in 2000, we noted that Khmer Rouge villagers had built a grass roofed school at Sen Sam, near Trapeang Prasat. Teachers only had primary education themselves.

We have stayed in touch with everyone. Three characters are central to my story. Keo Sarath, originally of Save the Children and now with the Ministry of Education; Beng Simeth, of the World Bank; and Ung Sereidy, of the Siem Reap Provincial Education Office.

From the beginning, we worked with Khmer Rouge. We were the first non-UN/NGO ‘civilians’ to do this. Cheat Chum was Governor of Trapeang Prasat District, an ex-Khmer Rouge Brigadier, and another character in our narrative.

**Time**

It is a 50-year time frame, from before the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia and declared Year Zero, until today. Our personal history is 25 years, and direct involvement is 20 years.

The capture of previously untold stories from Sarath, Simeth and Sereidy has been the work of the past 18 months of the MA. Here is how I currently visualise the narrative elements:

![Diagram](image)

**Fig 2. Unfinished Stories Narrative**

There are four blocks of work, which will feature in public presentation, to varying degrees.

- **Cambodian History.** This sets the scene for an audience that does not know the country, including the lead up to the Khmer Rouge and what then happened.
- **Unfinished Stories.** This is the central work featuring personal narratives.
• The Schools project. Our involvement, coming up to the present day.
• Modern educational activities from Sarath, Simeth et al, expressing hope for the future.

Whilst telling the painful historical facts, FMP will also highlight success stories. For example, Chinet Metta was a young pupil in that grass-roofed school, unbeknownst to us. He is now doing a PhD in Japan, in Law.

The Audience

There are two audiences for the project.

First, in Cambodia, I want to contribute to further opening-up examination of this painful subject. The Genocide is rarely discussed, and I am deeply aware of the cathartic impact on Sarath and my other friends as they tell their stories. The book is central to this.

And, second, internationally, I want to reach an audience who may have forgotten (or not even know) about the history of the Genocide. An installation and online activity, supported by the book, is the key.

For both audiences, the project is not memorialisation or reconciliation. Rather, I am seeking to appeal to audience imagination, to engender reconsideration, and to draw lessons.

My Practice

The early Cambodia photography was indexically based, and often rather detached. Whilst a useful archive, I started the MA with a desire to create more emotive, impactful work that helps audiences ask questions about the people depicted. I feel a strong sense of duty to the people photographed, seeking intimacy without exploitation.

My work is in the style of Susan Meiselas (Kurdistan) and Allan Sekula (Fish Story), connecting documentary images and words, history and present day, and taking a position on what is happening without being too aggressively political.

Meiselas and Sekula’s work was research intensive, creating rich narrative - in Sekula’s words, ‘critical realism’.
My CRJ includes research on documentary, atrocity, aftermath and dark tourism. I am also studying imagination, realism and ethics. In going back to re-create what happened, I am also much influenced by Sophie Ristelhueber who defined the aftermath genre in *Fait*.

![Fig 3. Sophie Ristelhueber. Fait #46. 1992.](image)

An early series for the MA, ‘I Missed my Mother’, told of Sarath’s midnight walk through the jungle, evading wolves and the Khmer Rouge, using metaphorical traces.

![Fig 4. Mick Yates. 2018.](image)
Whilst it had intellectual integrity, it lacked visceral impact. Taking things further, I experimented with digital negatives. Negatives are a representation of the hidden, which without developing we cannot see.

Negatives require thought, interpretation, and study to extract meaning. And negatives, in the Cambodian context, are an allegory for an appalling history. This was the subject of another WIP, and Landings. Originally, I worked on two parallel tracks – the Genocide and the personal stories. However, in questioning whether images alone are enough to tell the story, I have started to merge these ideas.

In 1977, Paula Luttringer was kidnapped and held in a secret centre in Argentina. Eventually she was released, and years later she went back.
She photographed the cells and included personal testimony from victims. Her work really involves the audience in the mutual process of understanding.

Paul Seawright’s *Sectarian Murder* combined a present-day landscape with details of a past murder committed at that spot, in a single image. He successfully connected past atrocity and present normality.

Judy Glickman Lauder used a mix of black and white, negatives and infrared in her work on the Danish Exception to the Holocaust. The intuitive, aesthetic process she employs has been inspirational. Her aesthetic adds to narrative power, rather than disrupts it.

In the most recent Work in Progress, I also used Infrared.

![Image](image.jpg)

“*The Village Chief was sorry for the young children; he said that they were all probably going to die*”

**Fig 7. Mick Yates, 2019.**

The overall effect of the work is ghostly, eerie and has a melancholy sense of time. It also confirmed to me that black and white is a powerful way to deal with atrocity.

My aim was to create images which only give up the horror of place when studied, so engaging the audience without being overly literal. The eye should move from image to text, and back again. Each of the images stands alone, although the series narrates a story.
The work involves paradox, with haunting images, possibly even beautiful ones, uncovering personal suffering and social atrocity. Each image is ‘asynchronous’, as the text does not immediately explain the photograph, asking the viewer to ponder.

In the FMP, I expect to mix historical colour, stories of black and white, infrared and negatives, and some present-day colour.

Over the past twelve months, I have secured professional quality video interviews, for use in installations. This is the first time my friends have made such videos, and it has been quite emotional but cathartic. Even Sarath’s 88-year-old mother wanted to get involved.

I have started going through my archives. We recorded everything about the project, with full cooperation from the Cambodian Ministry of Education. I have all the slides, negatives and notes.

The Book

We plan to print and market a book in Cambodia.

One of our daughters, Victoria, is a professional designer. We have already looked at a range of inspirational work and created first design drafts. The book will cover a short history pre-Khmer Rouge, the personal stories, and what has happened in education since.
The Minister of Education has agreed to write the foreword.

Whilst quality might be hard to control, I am determined to make this locally available to the widest audience, whilst supporting local artisans.

Ethics

I am separately researching new ethical frameworks for photography, building on current best practice.

First, the photograph itself. Whilst a photographer always comes at a project with a point of view, I have always tried to present things in a factual way. I thus do not see ethical concerns with my mode of composition, processing or presentation.

Second, the subject matter. Genocide and then children in primary schools is hugely sensitive. Since the beginning of our work in Cambodia, we have always taken photographs with respect and permission – either by the subjects themselves (Sarath et al), or with the agreement of the schools, teachers and families. During the school project, we also supplied copies of images, especially as Khmer Rouge families had little photographic record.

Third, cultural perspectives. Cambodia reflects its deep Buddhist roots. By taking a respectful approach, never portraying either the culture of the subjects in an ‘othering’ light, this has led to a very good local reception of my work. I have constantly ‘checked in’ with local views on my photography.

Fourth, impact of change. In programs like the school activities, there are ethical dimensions. To what extent does the change agent push against norms? In our school development program, this was clearly the case. By working openly and in partnership, change was received enthusiastically by the Government, local authorities and families concerned.

In the FMP, the intention is impactful education. Whilst this must challenge the perceptions of the audience (e.g. to what extent was US bombing responsible for the rise of the Khmer Rouge and thus Genocide), my intent is to encourage new, legitimate self-reflection.

Fifth, power relationships. I have been treading carefully in Cambodia, to be sure that the subjects of my work do not fall foul of any kind of backlash, Governmental or otherwise. Our personal reputations in Cambodia are quite strong, and we have always dealt with the issues in nuanced ways, starting with working with Khmer Rouge rather than blanket condemnation. This led to Ingrid and myself receiving medals from...
Prime Minister Hun Sen, who frankly has a poor international reputation. Still, I am conscious that this is an important story and it needs to be told powerfully without sugar-coating terrible events.

**Six, social networks amplify concerns.** We have witnessed the Khmer Rouge Reconciliation areas going from zero connectivity with the world, to Facebook sharing. All of our work in Cambodia, educationally and photographically, has been online since 2000, and we have not once had concerns raised or misinterpretation of our work. That said, whilst the photos taken of children when younger were within the context of approval by schools and family, things are changing. The same children have grown up to be connected online, and I must be careful to respect any claims they have to curating their digital identity.

**Seven, the roles** in photography – photographer, editor, media owner etc. Part of publishing a book in Cambodia is to respect local industry. However, all editing and writing will be undertaken independently of local publishers, whilst seeking full agreement of our collaborators. I see no conflicts of interest.

**Eight, the law.** My work raises no unusual legal issues.

**The Installation**

The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (BRLSI) is confirmed for a December 4-20 installation. spacious venue, suitable for exhibiting all kinds of photographs, books, video and other artefacts. Here is a first layout:

![BRLSI Floorplan](image-url)
This is more than a gallery space. It an imposing building, with modern facilities, and they have a very active multi-disciplinary talks program. The clientele of BRLSI are an inquiring audience, well suited to the subject matter. BRLSI is a well organised, spacious venue, suitable for exhibiting all kinds of photographs, books, video and other artefacts. I will be visiting soon to start the process properly.

Recent shows such as Susan Meiselas and Laia Abril were instructive on audience engagement strategies.

Meiselas combined maps, books, interactive reading matter, photographs, current and historical, video and slide show. The installation was artistically interesting and historically thought provoking, without having a ‘strident’ viewpoint.

Work by Edmund Clark is also intriguing. Somewhat mirroring his Guantanamo work, in early modules of the MA I experimented with ways to physically show what happened during the Genocide – life-sized cells, real-time ‘mug shot’ picture taking and so forth. These and other ideas will be explored.

I intend that the central sequence will be large-scale infrareds with captions, to illustrate an engaging ‘single story’ from Sarath.

As noted, I have a wide range of archive and current photographs. A major job will be reviewing these - curating, scanning and printing. There are many editorial decisions needed, both content and style.
The installation will include video interviews, possibly a slide show, and a book collection to peruse. I will also establish whether we can include artefacts or historic documents from Documentary Centre Cambodia (DC-CAM).

A simple zine will also be created as a take away, as well as the book being made available for sale.

BRLSI has a range of rooms for talks and movies. We are considering inviting Sarath from Cambodia to give a talk as guest, as he is a most engaging speaker. Live events and radio will be pursued. We are also investigating airing movie(s) by Rithy Panh, Cambodia’s Oscar-nominated film maker.

As much as practicable, the work will be available online via my various websites – I have also registered UnfinishedStories.Com as a possible dedicated site.

Over the past 12 months, I have been invited to several local speaking gigs – including as it happens to the BRLSI. I have more planned and will showcase the FMP project.

I will participate in an upcoming RPS Contemporary Group magazine, featuring my latest work, and will seek other opportunities. I will be making various local and national contacts to see what sponsorship, marketing or other support opportunities exist.

There is a lot to do – here is the indicative timeline:
APPENDIX 1: FIGURES


Fig 2. Unfinished Stories Narrative. Based on Lewis Bush model. 2019.


Fig 5. Mick Yates. 2018. A Prayer from Hell.


Fig 8. Book Inspirations.


Fig 9. BRLSI Floorplan, modified by Mick Yates.

APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY / REFERENCES


APPENDIX 3: BOOK CONTENTS

- Foreword - 2 pages (Minister of Education)
- A short history of the Khmer Rouge years - 6 pages
- Personal Stories of families, pre-war - 10 pages
- Personal Stories during 1975-1979 and after - 60 pages
- The school’s program, which defines Sarath’s career and also our personal connection.
  10/15 pages depending on archive / new imagery used
- A visual appendix - 4 pages
- Timeline - 2 pages
- Bibliography – 2 pages
- Index - 2 pages

Please read the Risk Assessment Guidelines before completing this form which contains further resources, available from The Photography Centre.

- Please save a copy of this form to your computer
- You will need to attach a risk assessment form to your Research Project Proposal and your Final Major Project Proposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photographer’s Name:</th>
<th>Mick Yates</th>
<th>Date(s) of Shoot:</th>
<th>2018 - 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistants’ Names:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor / Supervisor:</td>
<td>Jesse Alexander – Wendy McMurdo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Cambodia - UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of work:</td>
<td>Unfinished Stories - Documentary in major cities and countryside, in public places, archives, historical sites and educational facilities. Book production in Cambodia. FMP Installation in UK.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Persons at Risk
Identify all those at risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Staff:</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Academic Staff:</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contractors:</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>General Public:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning Staff:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Emergency Personnel:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Admin Staff:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Estates Staff:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen Staff:</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Library Staff:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other: Keo Sarath & Family
Especially at risk:

Check list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Flash/tungsten</th>
<th>Stands/tripods</th>
<th>Hot lights</th>
<th>Smoke machine/fire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flammable materials</td>
<td>Risk of Fire</td>
<td>Welfare of Assistant</td>
<td>Welfare of model</td>
<td>Working at Heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Transport to location</td>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Vehicles/traffic</td>
<td>Weather conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Confined spaces</td>
<td>Derelict Buildings</td>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tides</td>
<td>Compressed Gasses</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>Chemicals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRIMARY RISK ASSESSMENT
Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD</th>
<th>RISK OF</th>
<th>CONTROL MEASURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical whilst in Cambodia</td>
<td>Unexpected Illness whilst on location</td>
<td>Usual precautions with local food, water etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insurance, travel and medical cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAZARD</td>
<td>Book Production</td>
<td>RISK OF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL MEASURE</td>
<td>Clear Contracts, via properly registered companies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAZARD</td>
<td>Weather, traffic, terrain in Cambodia</td>
<td>RISK OF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL MEASURE</td>
<td>Continual vigilance Check forecasts Appropriate clothing Insurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAZARD</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>RISK OF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL MEASURE</td>
<td>In Cambodia on a tourist visa Stay away from political events, public political comments Carry “Medal of National reconstruction” (Royal Cambodian Govt., 2002) Seek permission to photograph where needed (schools, Govt. offices etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAZARD</td>
<td>Personal theft</td>
<td>RISK OF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL MEASURE</td>
<td>Reputable hotels Continual vigilance Accompanied by local Cambodian friends and guides American Express Emergency Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAZARD</td>
<td>FMP Installation</td>
<td>RISK OF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL MEASURE</td>
<td>Proper fixing of all materials, electrical connections etc. Clear route to and from fire exit, free of all installation material Installation invigilated by BRLSI staff and other volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On site risk assessment: these are control measures that arose on your shoot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Information and Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical Expertise</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Procedure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical Treatment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evacuation procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incident/accident reporting</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment carried out by

- I have ensured that I have reviewed the hazards and risks associated with this project and taken necessary steps to remove hazards where possible or reduced the risks associated with the remaining hazards to a minimum.
- I have recorded the main hazards, risks and control measures in this document.
- I have ensured that those working with me have been briefed on the nature of the tasks they are to perform, and are aware of the hazards associated with the task and the measures in place to reduce the risks associated with those hazards. (if applicable)
- I will continually assess hazards and risks ‘live’ on site to ensure that nothing has been overlooked or has changed since initial assessment.

Signed:  

Date: 20th June 2019

Assessment reviewed by