

Design Research Report

GDN4002 Realise : Making Public



London

Introduction

Knife Crime in London has become one of the most crucial, effective, and ongoing crimes. Knife Crime is mainly seen among youngsters carrying knives for fun and those carrying them for their protection. The thought about deep diving into the Knife Crime concept goes way back to January 2022 during my 2nd week in London where I got mugged. It was the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to me, and it still sends me shivers when I think about that day. The feeling of being unsafe and vigilant made me think about London's crime rates and whether was this a usual perception.

This project aims at showing the more emotional side of the concept of Knife Crime and how Knife Crime has taken a serious toll on the youths of today.



Fig : 1 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

This project is a photographic narrative that gives out a Memorial to all the victims of Knife Crime, remembering them and their families through the hardships that they went through. Many were those that were affected or traumatized by being at the wrong place at the wrong time or being threatened and bullied by a knife to do a crime that is illegal, or vigil marches being held for the gruesome and emotional death of their son. Incidents that create or show the solemnity of the situation regarding Knife Crime in London.

Young people's experiences and perceptions of Knife Crime have increasingly changed the whole outlook on how Knives can be used as a medium of safety and crime. (Skarlatidou, A., Ludwig, L., Solymosi, R., & Bradford, B, 2021)

Context and Research

Focus Group

Recently, Official National statistics show that knife crime victims are generally male victims who are mostly under the age of 24 (Muncie, John. Youth and Crime, 2021). Male victims and male criminals are the most crucial component of the whole Knife Crime perception in London. Knife crime is being committed by kids who have possession of sharp objects like knives, scissors, or blades at their homes, local stores, and schools.

The need for awareness of Knife Crime among the youths has already been done and is also continuing. The subject of noticing and targeting the youths of today for Knife Crime is because of the increasing number of criminals under the age of 20 that are increasingly rated as the most feared age.

Context and Research

Initial Research

After figuring out the cause and the focus group, it was then trying to convey the importance and cruelty of Knife Crime to the public in a way not portrayed as a campaign but more on the aftermath of the crime. Campaigns such as Lives, not Knives, and Ben Kinsella Trust have been talking and helping out victims, criminals, and students of the youth on the importance and need to stop Knife Crime.

An article on Neuroscience, Empathy, and Violent Crime states that creating and tackling the emotion of empathy creates and deepens the value of a theory being stressed. (Saladino V, Lin H, Zamparelli E and Verrastro V, 2021).

The whole perception of taking on the emotional side of Knife Crime thus came into place after realizing the best way to show the public the importance is to touch on the emotional side of Knife Crime relating it with trauma, families, friends, community, and how the topic of Knife crime is not cruel but rather an emotion.

Researching and reading many articles was the first step in getting to know more about the stories that are unheard of by the public or the community. These stories gave it a meaning, the meaning of how normal Knife Crime is in London that not all the stories and incidents of Knife crime are not registered and known to all. This shows that Knife Crime has become a normalization stage in London.



Fig : 2 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)



Fig : 3 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Inspiration and Development

After figuring out the book's concept, it was time to finalize how the book can be expressed. Keeping it simple, straightforward, and emotional was the objective the book should be able to overcome.

The 'Verdant' exhibition during the summer of 2022 was the fortitude of the concept of Photographic Narrative. The Exhibition I displayed the perception of feeling Unsafe. The content is written extremely minuscule because the viewers could feel uncomfortable while reading a message about a crime that happened on the streets of London.

The Inspiration

The photomontage is the idea of cutting, gluing, rearranging, or overlapping two or more photographs into a new image. (Wikipedia contributors. 2022, October 9)

One such photographer that caught my eye was Zhou HanShun a Singapore-originated Photographer who accomplished the art of portraying culture through overlaying monochrome photographs. (HanShun, Z. 2021). One of his project statements called 'Layering Life' was the project that inspired to keep overlapping images as the core of the project.

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Pictures that do not exactly represent reality outright but portray the message metaphorically were the direction the project aimed at. It is quite important to touch on the emotion of the topic but also rather quite important to keep it mellow and not brutally strong as it is quite rather a bleak topic.



Fig : 4 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

But how can emotion be shown through the technique of Photomontage?

Bringing out the emotion of the incident was truly a challenge as the crime has already been done and bringing out the solemnity of the work could be a tackle worth fighting. Barbara Levine and Martin Venezky used the art of combining juxtapositions to create sliced images to create one image as a whole. Most of the pictures were not of their own but of from different sources. (Horizon - By Martin Venezky and Barbara Levine - LensCulture. 2017).

Importing the idea of Photomontage and Combining images was bringing out the culminating experience to portray an emotion of an incident that happened in the past. This is the stepping-stone for the potential outcome that the book Memorial could approach on.

Experiments

After figuring out the potential outcome that the project could approach. It was time to collect stories that speak a voice and is powerful. London is a place where Knife Crime has gone out of hand, and it has become hard to stop. Researching stories or incidents regarding Knife Crime there was quite a lot on the net regarding the crime that happens in London almost every other day. Looking into the deeper stories and incidents we tried getting in contact with victims or families affected by Knife Crime. It was hard for them to open up to us.

One such story sprouted when talking to my batchmates where his brother was a victim of the Knife Crime. His family has gone through hardships and his brother is more closed up than before. He feels that Knife Crime does not just affect the victim, but it also breaks the family and their closure.

This statement was the backbone of the development of the book.

It was now time to experiment with a certain concept under the Knife Crime section to give the project a start and one such approach was the focus on vigil marches. The reason behind these marches is the aspect of the term emotion shown as a community depicting love and togetherness. This focus was perfect for initiating the foundation of the project targeting sweet farewell in other words 'The Memorial'. The title Memorial was the bedrock of researching victims and the main focal point in each of the narratives.

Experimental Research

Focusing on the objects placed in vigil marches as a sign of remembrance was the key point intended to focus on for the concept of Photomontage. (Fig1.2) shows the vigil march object used to remember Anas Mezenner. Although this particular image has a voice, it does not bring out the aim of the book which is depicting the narrative through images that acts like a bridge that connects the image and the viewer.

Focusing back on the words, series, and recreating I researched the back stories of these victims to see what else or were there any routes to this story other than the already definite and clear ones. Deep diving into the stories of some of the victims made me realize how Knife Crime has affected not only friends, families, and victims but also the community. As a designer one of the key points in researching is the more you get involved in the topic at hand the more you understand and the more you would feel the need to experiment.

Experiments

Categorizing the topic of Knife Crime is thought to be a good start. The topics 'Wrong place at the wrong time' came into place when researching more about Anas Mezenner. His incident of helping out a friend in the middle of the night truly brought another branch of an experiment that could conceivably be a starting point for the book. (Sylvie Wilkinson, 2021).

Knife Crime can not only be seen as a weapon to physically harm someone but rather it could be a source that teens in school use to threaten or bully someone. One such story was Ben's story. This was a case study that talked about Ben and the struggle he faced. The title Crime used for Crime then took the book to a 2nd narrative. (Jarett, D. 2017).

Bringing in a 3rd narrative gives it a voice that tells the strong point of the solemnity of the matter at hand. Going back to the foundation of the book which is the topic of the vigil march caught the attention of not just recreating the vigil march but rather focusing on the objects placed on the vigil march and what is the significance or inner meaning of these objects. Tashan Daniel had the most emotional vigil marches.

The family tried to be strong in front of the community regarding Knife Crime, the speech Tashan's dad spoke at the ceremony was the key point that brought me to take up Tashan's narrative. The people that knew or did not know Tashan all came in for the march in solidarity towards Tashan, his family, and Knife Crime violence. (Clifton, K. 2019).

This then created the foundation of the book, the 3 narratives had a voice, an emotion, and a power to sustain the photographic book.



Fig : 5 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)



Fig : 6 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Collection of Images

Creating and collecting images was quite the task. These 3 victims had so much in common and that was the fact that they were victims of Knife Crime. The way this statement need to be conveyed was quite the task. Creating a storyboard was the 1st step.



Fig : 7 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Anas Mezenner

Talking about the statement 'Wrong place at the wrong time' was the first step. All Anas wanted to do was help out a friend in need and later found himself in the streets of Willow Walk, West Green Road, Turnpike Lane, London.

Retracing back the steps of that day 19th January 2021, I clicked the streets and signs of Willow Walk that Anas felt was just going to be a casual interaction with his friends. Experimenting with different angle shots and the use of props (eg: Rose) were the initial stages of the photographic experiment.

Ben

The question that arose for this incident is 'How to make the incident less brutal' as it involves a minority. Ben would have been left astray and would face the unfortunate from his bullies if his teacher did not find him crying in the bathroom. The statement 'Crime used for a Crime' is what made the possibility of this incident to be shown less brutal.

Focusing on the key incidents that took place with the objects being the Knife, the bus, and the phone was the storyboard that this narrative focused on. Expressing emotion of Ben the feeling of being left outcast, stranded, and bullied where the objective of this narrative, overlapping images that show the emotion that Ben felt could be depicted through these objects overlapped with places where he felt stranded.



Fig : 8 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Tashan Daniel

The climax of the book was Tashan's Story. The most emotional incident where the vigil march played a huge role in the foundation of this narrative. Chandima Daniel, the father of Tashan during the prayer vigil march held for Tashan truly brought life to the narrative. Quotes from his speech became the texts that the narrative was carried upon.

The community brought in various flowers depicting Tashan's purity, innocence, honor, and remembrance, and went soon through flowers like Chrysanthemums, Gladioli and Lilies also carried out the elements needed to be used on the images.



Fig : 9 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Development

The establishment of the storyboard made the initial draft design development lot easier. Collecting the images that would fit well with the context and the clicked images of the streets created the outline of the prospective final image that could bring out the journey of experiencing the emotion felt by each of the victims.



Fig : 10 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Anas Mezenner

The outline of a man running away from his phone gave the start of the narrative a little more exposure to the journey the viewers would feel when learning more about the story, the context of the picture felt it would need a certain personal emotion with the text more detailed out in the words of the family as they remembered the night it all went wrong. His brother states that he was at home all day long and that he left his home after he got a call from his friend.

The tube signs in the 2nd picture expose the emphasis on the station and the feeling of late-night forlornness. The 3rd picture portrayed the dark side of the night it all took place on the lively streets of Willow Walk now transformed into the dark side where people would be remembered the horrendous night. The clock overlayed on top of the streets and the dial highlighting the time of death made the 1st narrative of the book reach its turning point.

The capstone of the 1st narrative evokes when the road sign became the highlight of the narrative. The road sign overlays the trees that know the story of what happened here on the streets of Willow Walk where Anas was left crying out in the cold.

Ben

The Incident of Ben probably every kid in school could relate to as it related to the whole concept of the issue of bullying. Ben felt he was left abandoned and not cared for in school as well as outside school. Portraying the topic 'Crime used for Crime' was a bit challenging as the story conveyed the issue regarding a minority. As the topic was sensitive it was really important to use the images quite sensitively.

The 1st image focused on the emotion Ben felt when he felt that he was walking towards a dark road when he goes into the school, this picture centered on the word outcast. He was cornered outside his school by older boys and felt quite targeted.

The 2nd image abstracted the overlaying image of how the older kids used to bully him on the bus on the way to school and outside school. He feared stepping outside his home. The 3rd image continues the emphasis on the whole topic which is threatening Ben with Knife to steal mobile phones for them.

Although Ben was given support to him after one of his teachers found him in the bathroom crying, he was still traumatized by the incident, and he felt the need to shift to a whole different place and that's what the 4th image talks about. The concept of bullying terrifies kids but the cruelty Ben endured in the incidents reached a point where it didn't feel like he was shifting to a new place for his safety whereas it felt like he was forced out of a place he was once called home because of his induced trauma.

Tashan Daniel

The storyboard for Tashan was quite emotional to create. The story and speech of Tashan's Dad truly were very sentimental. Focusing on the vigil for this narrative felt the need to be the cogency of this incident. The unique point of this narrative was the whole narrative not only focused on the march and the context that happened during the march but also on the main subject of interest in the march which is the flowers.

The Flowers left outside Hillington Station were not only left as a symbol of Farewell but also rather represented the characteristics of Tashan Daniel as a friend, brother, and athlete. The narrative starts with the place where it all happened, Hillington. The flower represented in this image is that of purity and innocence. Tashan's dad started his speech by expressing his feeling toward a large crowd that know Tashan came from the march.

He felt a mixture of emotions, he felt proud of what his son had reflected on all the people that attended the march. The 2nd image focused on the posters brought in by the community on the seriousness of this situation and that Tashan was murdered in broad daylight in front of tons of witnesses. The flower Gladioli has spoken about is also a symbol of honor and remembrance. The 3rd picture depicted Tashan's childhood pictures and the flower Chrysanthemums symbolizing how he was gone too soon and that he was loved by everyone who knew him.

The narratives all created a valuable point, but the essence of bringing a photographic book together, to produce the objective of the book which was the emotional concept of holding a memorial was the one point the book was missing quite liberally.

The section on name-shaming the murderers that have committed Knife Crimes felt the need to be included in the centerfold of the book. Although the list is quite endless, Knife Crime takes place in London every other day.

The perception of bringing the information for students exposed to Knife Crime brought in the idea of the short narratives of the seven-year-old and six-year-old who brought in a knife and blade with the intention to kill a classmate and threaten his teacher respectively brought out the importance of using these incidents as a medium of importance to the matte that kids are being exposed to Knife and blade quite liberally.

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Fig : 11 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Branding

As the book spoke about the topics relating to crime, murder, knives, bullying, etc. it felt the need to be shown as what a gravestone would remind a person.

The book’s objective was emotional, so the layout of the book was intended to be quite minimalistic and surreal. The narratives showcased the consistency of layout images. The climax of each narrative also brought in the theme of darkness and made each narrative showcase the breaking point of the incident.

Highlighting the crucial parts in the overlayed images showcased the value point of the image. The pink illustrated and gave the finishing touch to the image. While the importance was illustrated in pink, the main theme was black, which portrayed darkness, loneliness, and death.

The fonts used in the book also depicted emotion. The fonts of the book needed to show both sides of the concept, the brutal as well as the emotional and sensitive side of the topic of Knife Crime.

The headlines showcased the more cruel-gruesome outlook whereas the subheadings, and descriptions of the book gave out a more sympathetic and apologetic outlook. It produced more of a human touch to the contexts when families and friends talked about the victims.

The Font used for Headline

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
123456789**

The Yorkten Slab font was designed by Jeremy Dooley.

Font used for Sub-headings & Description

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
123456789

The Serenity font was designed by Rian Hughes.

Animation

The book intended to be a solo outcome for the project but after the completion of the book, it sprouted the perception of creating a preface film to show the viewers what the book upholds before viewing the book. The sound effects of the book represented the objective of the book. The mixture of emotions faced by the victims where the sound effects placed in the video, the panting, the heartbeat, and the sound of the Knife being slashed onto someone created a dark and disturbing emotion.

The pictures slow down in parallel to the sound effect of the heartbeat, giving the viewers a sense of connection when analyzing the video. The viewer's heartbeat also unconsciously slows down when listening to the sound effect, which makes it a great advantage to make the viewers more interested in the subject. Creating a dark emotion truly brings out the intention of the book.



Fig : 12 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

Conclusion

In conclusion, I certainly feel that I accomplished the project's intention and have shown Knife Crime's importance. The fact that the project entirely began from the beginning of the master's related to my mugging experience truly brought out an understanding of the concept of unsafe spaces which led to Knife Crime.

I believe that this book has accomplished in achieving its goal of creating a voice for Knife Crime in the public. Creating images from the past was quite challenging but the technique of using Photomontage made the book speak out the emotion of Knife Crime.

Clicking and collecting the images truly was quite a difficult task as in the case of traveling to different places and understanding the emotions the families and the victim faced. It truly brought an emotion in me as a designer to research and understand a dark topic for the project.

I truly went out of my personal space and experimented with various prospects the image could be shown, learned, and understood different techniques that could be prospects of the images created.

I strongly believe that one strong outcome, which is the book 'Memorial' speaks a thousand words with the short film that give the viewers a kickstart to bring a sense of anticipation when viewing the book.

Down the lane, I see the book 'Memorial' holding various series as the sad truth of Knife Crime takes is that it takes place every other day in London, and it has gone out of hand. There are more campaigns about Knife Crime than actions taken place to stop Knife Crime. 'Memorial' can be seen as a prospect of a Campaign or that part of a 'Welcome Collection'.

The future of Memorial as a design outcome sure is bright but is a sad truth.

Academic References

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Photographic References

Fig 1: Jacob. K, 2022 'Streets of Willow Walk', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 2: Jacob. K, 2022 'Vane Close', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 3: Jacob. K, 2022 'Alleyway Aldgate', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 4: Jacob. K, 2022 'Scissors Photomontage', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 5: Jacob. K, 2022 'Overlay Experiment – Part 1', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 6: Jacob. K, 2022 'Overlay Experiment – Part 2 ', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 7: Jacob. K, 2022 'Anas Mezenner – Time of Death', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 8: Jacob. K, 2022 'Ben – Outcast and Bullied', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 9: Jacob. K, 2022 'Tashan Daniel – Vigil March, Photography', Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 10: Jacob. K, 2022 'Anas Mezenner – Willow Walk', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 11: Jacob. K, 2022 'Seven-year-old Story', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 12: Jacob. K, 2022 'Memorial – Fore Film', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 13: Jacob. K, 2022 'Rose – Memorial: Part 1', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.

Fig 14: Jacob. K, 2022 'Rose – Memorial: Part 2', Photography, Middlesex University – MA Graphic Design.



Fig : 13 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)



Fig : 14 (Kevna Jacob, 2022)

MEMORIAL
2015 - 2021

MA GRAPHIC DESIGN
2022