

How Photography Connects Us



track 2-12

▲ Jou Jou, a chimpanzee, reaches out its hand to Dr. Jane Goodall. The moment was captured by *National Geographic* photographer Michael “Nick” Nichols.

ONE DAY SOME YEARS AGO, David Griffin was at a beach watching his son swimming in the water. **Suddenly**, a big wave caught the boy and started to pull him out to sea. As Griffin ran to help his son, time seemed to slow down. The scene froze. Griffin can still remember what the moment felt like. “I can see the rocks are over here,” he says. “There’s a wave about to crash onto him. I can see his hands reaching out, and I can see his face in terror, looking at me, saying, ‘Help me, Dad.’”

Griffin was able to help his son out of the water and both were fine. But Griffin will never forget the details of the event. For Griffin, it is an example of a “flashbulb¹ memory.” In a flashbulb memory, all the **elements** of an event come together. These elements include both the event and the viewer’s **emotions** as the event is happening. In these situations, time slows down and details become very clear, he says.

Today, Griffin is as an award-winning photography director. He believes that a great photograph is like a flashbulb memory. It copies the way the mind works when something important is happening. It shows the event, and also the story and feelings behind the event. “I believe that photography can make a real connection to people,” says Griffin. In other words, we do not just see the event in a photo. We also feel an emotional connection with it.

On the following pages are some examples of how photographers make an emotional connection by capturing moments in time.

¹ A **flashbulb** is a lightbulb attached to camera. It lights up a scene for a very short period of time.

In India, more and more people are leaving the countryside to live in cities. Many of these migrants live in poor city areas called slums. Photographer Jonas Bendiksen traveled to India to record life in Mumbai's Dharavi slum. Although life in the slum is hard, Bendiksen was able to show the spirit and strength of this community. In this photo, he shows a Dharavi street coming alive for a Hindu festival.

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The image below is by amateur² photographer Elmar Rubio. As a storm approached, he caught his two daughters throwing their coats into the strong wind. Griffin **points out** that amateur photographers, not just professionals, can capture a special moment. “The **quality** of amateur photographs can at times be amazing,” he says. “Everyone has at least one, maybe two, great photos in them.”

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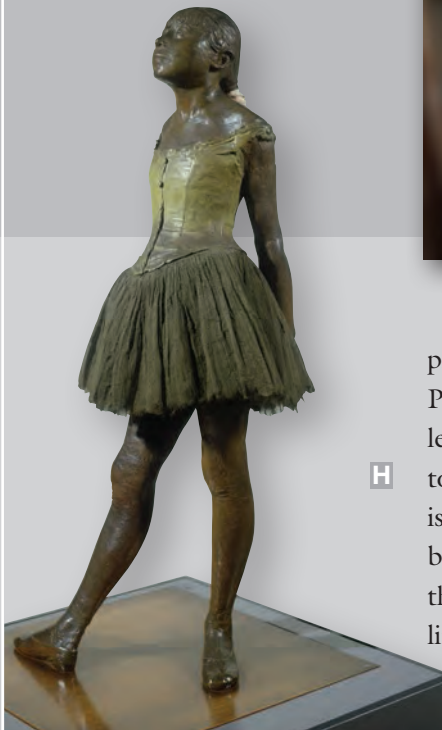
The best professional photojournalists, says Griffin, “create a **visual** narrative.”³ That is, they know how to use pictures to tell a story. Two examples are shown here. The top photograph, by Brent Stirton, shows villagers carrying a 500-pound (225-kilogram) silverback gorilla from Virunga Park in 2007. The gorilla, called Senkwekwe, was one of several gorillas **illegally** shot by unknown gunmen that year. The bottom



photo is by underwater photographer Brian Skerry. It shows a thresher shark caught in a fishing net near Baja California. A recent study found that up to 73 million sharks are caught each year, mostly for their fins. After they saw these photographs, people around the world became more aware of the dangers facing these wild animals.

² If you are an **amateur**, you do something as a hobby and not as a job.

³ A **narrative** is a story.



In 2005, Randy Olson traveled to central Africa’s Ituri Forest for a photo story. His goal was to photograph a pygmy tribe called the Mbuti. Pygmies are some of the shortest people in the world—most **adult** males are less than 4 feet 11 inches (150 centimeters) tall. They are also very difficult to reach, as they live deep inside the forest. In the foreground of this image⁴ is a blind, young Mbuti boy. He is getting ready for a **ceremony** to mark the beginning of his life as an adult. Behind him is a young Mbuti girl. “I love this photograph because it **reminds me of** Degas’s bronze sculptures of a little dancer,” says Griffin.

◀ Statue of a ballet dancer, by Edgar Degas (1834–1917)

⁴ The **foreground of an image** is the area in the front of the picture.

To see more of Griffin’s favorite photos, see “David Griffin on how photography connects us” at <http://www.ted.com>.