



# **Ethical representation in documentary photography**

Marina Project as a case study

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## ABSTRACT

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In this thesis there is an intense study about the morals we have created for documentary photographing and question our way of following them. This thesis will go back to the creation of the documentary photography field and the pioneers behind it. My own fascination with the ethics has grown during my own photography career and I felt the need to dig deeper for the very existence of the matter. How we have created the moral line and why we cross it in the name of art. I compare two different photographers and their values in their photos and ponder over the fact that is the compassion needed for photographing real events and issues. I want to question the choices I and other photographers have made when taking photos of someone else.

I present an installation for the final exhibition to company my writings in this thesis and to test my own judgement on the topic of this research. The installation and the whole exhibition were presented during November 2020 in Tampere and is also presented online on the exhibition Atomic Jungle's own website. The installation is inspired by one of the most well-known Finnish photojournalists Meeri Koutaniemi and in the documentary photography project I follow my friend's life story before being adopted from Russia to Finland. The project included travels to St. Petersburg and nearby areas. The making of the installation took two years and the process is presented in this thesis report. During making of this photography project I get to think about my own way of understanding the ethical documentary photographing.

To back up my research I will gather information from various photography books, for example, 'A History of Photography' (Newhall, 1982) and photographers' biographies. I will present some website knowledge on the topic of taking photos in the field of documentary photographing. In my research I discuss for example, the cases of Dorothea Lang and Kevin Carter and my own artistic part of the thesis. My own fascination for ethical thinking is the focus around these philosophical questions that have existed as long as documentary photographing.

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Key words: documentary photography, moral ethics, installation

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In my thesis the goal is to understand morals and ethics in documentary photography. How do we know when we are telling an important story or invading personal space when we are documenting someone's journey and life story? I will ask these questions with this writing part and also with my final exhibition piece. The question of privacy in the name of art has been an on-going topic since the early 20th century. Storytelling itself has been one of the key elements in the field of photography. We do not only create stories but we also want to explore people's lives and problems through creation. Even though we have the approval from the subject we still need to respect boundaries without violating privacy which can cause resentment. In my research I focus on the ethics in documentary photography.

Photography has been part of my life for a long time. So long, that I wanted to create my work around my passion. One of the hard parts is to know the best and most fitting field in photography. My fascination with people's lives has been around as long as my interest in taking photos. While seeing a lot of articles and exhibitions about different groups of civilization there is almost never questioning about the storytelling or how the photographer created that photo series. Is there always moral behind for showing struggles we don't know or is the display only to benefit the artist? We would not ever understand other life forms without experiencing visual representation but is the best interest to educate or boost themselves own ego? These questions gave me the idea to pursue this topic further with this thesis and with my own final exhibition work. I want to understand more about photographers' motives behind photographs and if a benefit to the subjects exists. I am going to explore the history of documentary photography, the ethics we create for this form of art and also two different kind of photojournalists who have been bringing up some issues. I want to ponder over the dilemma of doing the morally right thing and creating unique photojournalism. I also presented the Marina project as an installation in the Atomic Jungle degree show 2020.



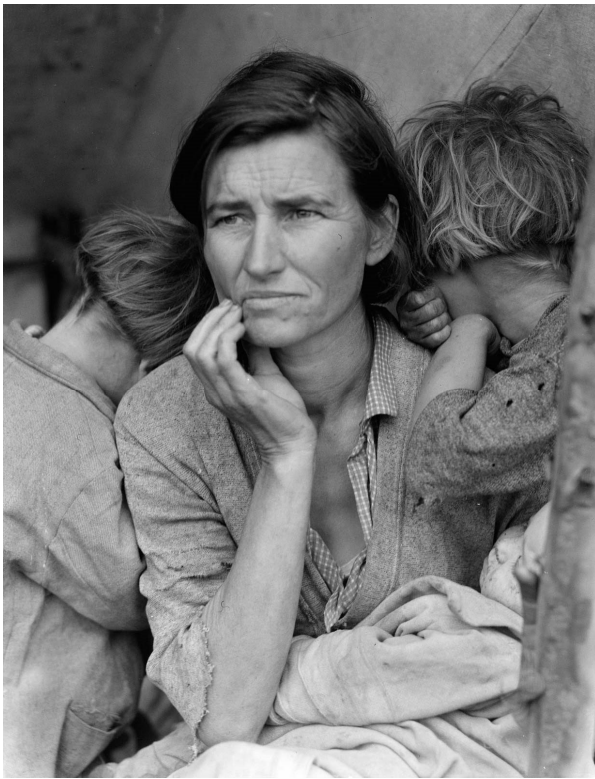
## 2 DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHING

### 2.1 In general

Claire Davis wrote on her article about documentary photography used as a tool for spreading knowledge; "Now more than ever, artists are using their work as a platform to further educate audiences on the issue, thus bringing political works to the forefront" (5 artists tackling the refugees crisis 2017).

Documentary photography started as a tool for reportage and plain accurate presentation of the world. It was a way to share events (wars, for example) to a wider audience. Once the art field started to expand to different areas and media, documentary photography became a part of it. Artists started to use this tool to shine more light on unjustified events and happenings that were not just wars and political issues. This way of documentary photography started to move further away from photojournalism. Common people were able to see more of what those in power wanted to hide. The problems of society could now be judged by a greater field of citizens. Documentary photography was forming to its cast in the USA during the Depression in the 1930's. Many photographers and artists reacted to the on-going situation and wanted to take part in documenting the real life struggles the Depression created. During those times the government also saw the potential help they could get from artists, and as a result, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) was created. FSA hired photographers to spread the feeling of compassion through their photographs. One of the hired photographers was Dorothea Lange who in 1935 took the well-known photograph 'Migrant Mother' (Picture 1.).

The documentary photographers started showing the problems common people were struggling with. One good example is Lewis W. Hine who photographed immigrants in America. His photos of exploited children led to the eventual passing of child labour laws (Picture 2.). People were able to create opinions easier and with more judgement. Creating compassion and empathy, artists and people were helping each other during those dark times. Beaumont Newhall states in his book, 'A History of Photography', that substitutes have been suggested for the word "documentary": 'historical', 'factual', 'realistic'. While each of these qualities is contained within "documentary," none convey the deep respect for fact coupled with the desire to create the basically subjective interpretation of the world in which we live that marks documentary photography at its best (Newhall, 1982).



PICTURE 1. Dorothea Lange's famous photograph Migrant Mother (1936)



PICTURE 2. Lewis W. Hine's Girl Worker in Carolina Cotton Mill (1908)

## 2.2 Contemporary art

When photography developed and became a more common practice, the questions of the morals of taking photos of everyday life arose.

“Documentary photographers have been compared to photojournalists, however one must not necessarily be a professional in order to tell a visual story with a camera”, is written on the Masterclass website about photographing (Tips to create compelling documentary photography 2020).

Still one of the main points of documentary photography is that it is no staged or faked. The idea is to follow your subjects, observe them and film what you see in the moments they create or live in. Roy E. Stryker, head of Farm Security Administration (FSA) and a “father” of the documentary photography movement of the FSA once said that documentary is an approach, not a technique (Newhall 1982). The shift from technical working also gave more opportunities for different kinds of storytelling inside the USA. The more fascinating the composition or the subject in the pictures, the more interesting the photo was. The old way of showing the world needed to step back and give space for a more free style of taking photos. After the camera became more common and was available to a greater audience, the rules of photography changed. Taking photos of people no longer was the secured thing to do but now you could face the camera light on your everyday walks on the street. Photojournalism stayed as a form of breaking the news to people but documentary photography started to manipulate art creations and storytelling. Especially after the Depression in the USA, photojournalism shifted to documentary photography and photographers were able to create photo stories more freely. Hence, a new era of photography took its place and spread across the world.

A key rule to documentary photography that remains is the sense of realness in them. The name of the practice already implies the need for documentation over staged art photography. But how does one take documentary photographs of something fascinating without being intervening or disturbing? That has been a problem since photography was taken to the streets and cameras were pushed in people’s faces. The idea of creating something new and appealing started to quickly take a toll on the people, and the scene was almost already ruined before even properly starting. The focus was too much on the people and the act of photographing without consent started to be more harassing than creating art. Also the unwanted attention was not what people wanted to go see in exhibitions. They needed something to ogle and wonder about.

Diane Arbus was one of the visionaries who took documentary photographing to a new level. She turned the focus from the streets and dull sceneries to something totally different and shocking. Her photographs of strippers, dwarfs and carnival folks were a way to stare with permission. But that was not what Arbus was had in mind. She wanted to normalize different people. Her goal was to give more light by creating representation of a wide range of groups (Picture 3.). Arbus was able to create these moments and photographs because her approach to the subjects was not the ordinary way of exploiting. She started by spending time with the folks and befriended them. As a result of showing kindness and actual curiosity for them and not for their looks, she was given the change to take photos of the subjects in their safe environment (for example, their homes).

Arbus showed the folks who were considered freaks in a new, friendlier way. The photographs show normal people in their everyday life and the sense of vulnerability is present in the photos. Arbus' photographs were giving a feeling of identity as a part of society. This interactive way of documenting something different gave her name and recognition. She once said; "a photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know" (Bosworth 2005).

When television and films started taking up a steadier place in people's lives, photography started to become a less and less interesting way of viewing the world. This way it had a chance to drift from streets to galleries and evolve in the hands of contemporary artists. On the Tate website it is stated "Putting these works in a gallery setting places the work at the centre of a debate surrounding the power of photography and the photographer's motivations. Their work raises questions of the documentary role of the photograph today and offers alternative ways of seeing, recording and understanding the events and situations that shape the world in which we live" (Art term, documentary photographing). Nowadays the documentary photography field is more open for criticism and discussion about the reason behind the photographs. The world has shifted to a more aware and critical form of thinking than the documentary photographing even started. It is not easy to go on and just take a photo of a person on the streets without any consent. The motivations for creating photographic stories have to reflect on itself and make sense to a wider audience, as well as also give a reason for its existence.



PICTURE 3. Diane Arbus' photograph Three female impersonators (1962)

### 3 EXPLOITING THE SUBJECT

#### 3.1 Meeri Koutaniemi

The biggest inspiration for this thesis topic is Finnish photographer and journalist Meeri Koutaniemi. She is known for her controversial photography journals about different social issues such as female genital mutilation which might be her most known photography work. Koutaniemi is a big advocate for empowerment, minorities, equality and human rights.

Her passion for the world's different issues started when she was 19 years old and went to India to photograph local life. Now she is an awarded journalist and has had many exhibitions worldwide. Koutaniemi is also big media person in Finland and it is often more difficult to find information about her journalist career than her and her musician husband's life and life story.



PICTURE 4. Portrait of Meeri Koutaniemi

Koutaniemi's approach to subjects is passionate but delicate. Her ability to build trust with the people has created unique chances to get a closer look at certain issues. In her photojournal, "Taken", Koutaniemi is given a chance to be present during the Masai tribe's tradition of female genital mutilation in Kenya. The pictures are a raw presentation of two 14-years old sisters Nasirian's and Isina's day during this tradition, as they are due to be married after a year. Black and white pictures show closely the pain and suffering girls go through the operation (Picture 5.). There is no anesthesia or pain killers due to the rural and remote location of the tribe. Koutaniemi herself wrote about the operation; "One of the ladies revealed an ordinary razor blade in her hand. This small tool would accomplish the mutilation. Nasirian cried and the floor was streaming with blood. The more she leaked, the more she screamed" (Award winner, Taken 2014).

This photojournal has been awarded around the world and has been one of the key intros to end female genital mutilation in Africa but also in Finland. The reason my admiration of Koutaniemi is big and essential for this thesis is not only because she photographs these human rights-gone-wrong-moments but because she also is a very big speaker on behalf of these subjects. She has been one of the key speakers for ending female genital mutilation in Finland and shines light on India's women who are victims of acid attacks. Inside Finland she has released campaigns against domestic violence and sexual abuse. Koutaniemi does not just take photos but she really stands behind what she does and says.



PICTURE 5. Photograph from Koutaniemi's photojournal Taken (2014)

### 3.2 Kevin Carter

The cruel nature of wilder documentary photography is visible with the life and work of Kevin Carter. Carter was a South African photojournalist who won Pulitzer Prize for his photographs of famine situations in Sudan in 1993. He went with his friend João Silva to Sudan to report civil area and it's causes to the area. Silva was given this task by UN Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) department and in turn told Carter about the trip and the chance to further his career. Due to their young age and career focused life the two men were apolitical about the mission and only wanted to photograph. Soon the shock of famine situation created by rebel groups and soldiers hit Carter and Silva and so one of the famous pictures of third world country found its way to reality. Carter saw a young girl who was mostly skin and bones at this point. The girl was tired and trying to find her way to the food centre. Behind the girl was a vulture waiting for the exhaustion take over and the life to escape from girl's lungs. Carter stood there, shocked, but only to take a photo and to then shoo the vulture away. He then left (Picture 6.).



He told Silva about this shocking and sad moment but probably didn't think of it further. Little did he know of the massive impact this specific photo would have. The photograph was published on The New York Times on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1993 and soon after its release the newspaper was overwhelmed with the incoming phone calls about the girl's faith. People's concern for this girl was bigger than expected, if expected at all. The paper released Carter statement about how the vulture was chased away and the girl continued trying to get to the food centre but the rest of the story is unknown. In April 1994 Carter received the Pulitzer Prize for Featured Photography but his mind was not at ease. The depression created by this journey and this photo sadly took a crushing toll on his life and in July 1994 Kevin Carter committed suicide. He left a note that stated "I am haunted by the vivid memories of killings and corpses and anger and pain" (Starving child and vulture 2020). In 2003 the father of the girl in picture spoke about the moment. The girl was actually a boy and he made it to the food centre but unfortunately died 14 years later due to malaria fever.



PICTURE 6. The Vulture and the little girl, Kevin Carter (1993)

This story only brings up more questions about its timeline and process. If Carter would have stopped to help the child to get to the food centre would it have made any difference in the long term? Would helping one suffering person had helped Carter deal with the self-hate and doubt he was suffering from? If he and Silva went to Sudan with more purpose than just to take photographs would that have any difference in Carter? Maybe he would have taken more caution to the cause and spent rest of his life speaking on and spreading awareness about African famine. There is no right way of determining these hypothetical outcomes but it makes one wonder about the what ifs. How often is there a moment where a photographer changes their way of thinking from selfishness to embracing the role of an advocate? Does it make it easier to face those horrific situations with passion and sympathy even though the cause is detached from your own life experiences?

### 3.3 The Moral

These two photographers, Koutaniemi and Carter, perfectly represent two totally different times and ways to create documentary photographs. Both without a doubt make people talk and ponder about social issues that exist but would not be seen without these journals. Carter admitted the pride and selfishness in his mind when agreeing to photograph the on-going conflicts on this trip to Sudan. He only wanted to personally benefit from the situation and he emotionally detached himself from the topic. Carter's actions were described as inhumane and most people agreed that he should have helped the child. Some would go as far and say the regret he had on his shoulders was karma for what happened. But it should never be too late to feel remorse and show sympathy to those in need. Carter eventually was a shining light on one of the biggest problems in the world but at what cost? The photographers are in charge of what they show but are they in charge of the events surrounding the act of photographing? Documentary photography is specified to be of real events without staging anything. But does that rule also hint that it should stay the same way outside the photograph and after the moment of capturing the photo?

On the other hand Koutaniemi represents another style of living as a documentary photographer. She does not limit the story to just the photos she takes but she continues to raise awareness of the issues by being a spokesperson. In her perspective it is not enough to show the wrong in the world but also tell more about it and maybe even figure out solutions. With Koutaniemi's works people are able to learn the political and traditional issues there are in societies outside of ours. In order for us to be a better population on Earth we need to create better places and opportunities for others. This is the sort of message you get from Koutaniemi's photographs from all around the world. But avoiding the status of hypocritical she also takes time to educate about social issues people face abroad and inside Finland. From Finnish homelessness to the Mexican HIV clinic for men Koutaniemi does not shy away of problems but faces them and is able to create beautiful and delicate views of people.



PICTURE 7. Kevin Carter and African rebel soldiers



## 4 MARINA

### 4.1 The story behind Marina project

For the longest time I was really interested in my friend's past and history before her adoption from Russia to Finland. Her life sounded like it was out of a movie. She became an orphan at the age of four and lived in two orphanages before being adopted at the age of seven. Her little brother was also adopted by the same family. The rumour is that her biological mother and father were in an argument and it ended badly for the father and the mother was taken to jail. It was said that her birth mother had passed away in jail until few years ago when it was found out that the mother was in fact still alive.

During this discovery new information also came out that Marina has two older siblings that she did not know about. I have known my friend for many years and still sometimes I wonder how she is a sane person after everything she went through there. The conditions and the treatment children received is awful to hear about. They were put to work there and rarely were able to shower. The food was not something you would call food and you did not have anything that was only yours to keep. Sometimes children were suddenly shifted between orphanages and as a result, the kids could not see their siblings or friends anymore.

I told Marina I wished to make a photo story about her life and to my surprise she was onboard with the idea. When I was getting to know her all those years ago she was little bit more protective of her past but over the years she has started to open up and even herself to think about her identity through her history. I was happy and excited when she finally agreed on the idea and her father was also interested in creating a visual storyline for Marina.

Marina's adopted father started to plan a trip back to Russia to meet the birth mother and from that I had an idea to be part of this unique journey. For me the main focus was to follow Marina and document the story of her past with respect and dignity. We discussed with her and her dad about how the photographing will be done and what places I want to include in the travels, as well as what areas she wanted be included. During time the project started to expand and at some point I realized that this could be my thesis project and also something to exhibit in the future. In 2019 I started to think even more of the possibility to write my thesis around it and then my focus on the story itself grew.



PICTURE 8. The road to Marina's old hometown (Joutsen 2018)

#### 4.2 The Travels

In 2018 I travelled with Marina and her adopted father to Russia, especially around St. Petersburg where she lived before adoption. We made plans to visit at least two neighborhoods where Marina lived as a child before settling to orphanage. This travel also included a second meeting with Marina's birth mother and big sister. We tried to include a second orphanage to the visit list but unfortunately the staff did not answer our emails and we did not want to make an unsettling surprise visit. In Russia they are quite precise with the public image that is shown about the local orphanages. The trip was only two days but it was filled with emotions. Marina's memories pre-orphanage were vague but still attached to the core. The houses we set to see did not do much but she still had a slight recognition for the feelings those places brought to her. When we tried to find the orphanage we got a little bit lost and Google Maps did not know the route in such a remote area. Suddenly when we passed one particular road Marina said that it reminded her of something. We took a turn and went down that road and to our surprise it was the road to the children's home. Marina had no idea how she remembered it but still the memory was somewhere deep in her mind. And even though we did not get to go inside the gates to the building, we still roamed around the gate and Marina's mind was filled with memories. After 20 years there still was a fresh recollection of all those happenings.

In 2019 I knew I wanted to have a second trip to collect more photographs and maybe try again to get inside the orphanage. Once again the trip would include Marina, I and Marina's dad, who was a great translator and already knew St. Petersburg well enough for us to roam around. Like in the previous trip we would go look around Marina's old neighbourhoods before the orphanage and try to find the "old lady" who was taking care of Marina and her brother after the incidents. We also wanted to try to get into the orphanage again because it is really big part of Marina's history and she had not been there after leaving.

So we made plans together. Everybody was looking into their calendars and we set a date for a weekend in February 2020. I needed to think of a photo list and we created the schedule around it. Marina's dad agreed to try to contact the orphanage again and we hoped maybe we would be lucky enough to get inside this time. I felt that the time spent there would be quite an important part of the memory lane for my friend and her ponders over her identity. Somehow we were luckier than last time and the director of the children's home answered and welcomed us there. The excitement was really big for me, especially because I have never been into an orphanage before - not even in Finland. I felt like I was going to some movie set because I kind of got my idea of children's homes from films. It was quite naïve way of thinking.

When we made our way to the orphanage they had one rule for us. I was not allowed to photograph the staff or the children. A kind of understandable procedure but also little bit shady considering how Marina used to describe the place and the way of living there. But of course I had to go along on behalf of us even being there. When we got to the place there was one of the caretakers greeting us at the main door and through the corridors she led us to the director's office. On our walk down there all the other caretakers were wondering about our presence. No wonder because usually "outsiders" go there only to possibly adopt a child and nothing more. No children were to be seen anywhere. Marina said that it was because the orphanage wanted to show an image of neat and blissful home so the children had to go into their own areas away from the public eye. Only if someone was adopted then you would see the children. She told me how they were always wondering who would be next to be adopted when the children were waiting in hiding. Inside the director's office Marina and her dad were talking and recalling the adoption. The director happened to have been in charge already 20 years ago when Marina and her brother were living there and she remembered Marina.

The director took us on a little tour to the areas inside the children's home. The hallways were so small that only one adult at a time was able to walk through. She showed us some study rooms and a music room. I took some pictures of the rooms but I was not quite happy with the results. The director was really specific of what she would show us and was carefully following what I was photographing. On our way to the backyard I just felt that I did not get what I was after. The polished image was not what I felt like capturing and I needed something more. So when one of the caretakers walked pass us I took a really quick picture of her walking down the hallway. I needed to have something real and alive from there just to tell a better story. In a way I broke the rule of no photographs of the staff but you cannot see her face in the picture so I granted myself permission to take the photo. The tour ended in the backyard. The director said her goodbyes and went back to work. We stayed in the backyard for a while to look at the toys and the area overall. I took pictures of different spots Marina told stories about. On our way back to the car we saw a curtain move in one of the windows. There was a little boy staring with his big eyes through the laced curtain. I felt the need to snap a really secret picture and zoomed to the car before anyone noticed it and would say something. But now that I have the picture of the little boy, I do not know if I want to publish the photo anywhere. Not because of the staff's rules but just to keep the little boy safe somehow.



PICTURE 9. The “forbidden” photo of orphanage’s staff (Joutsen 2020)

### 4.3 Invading personal space

The only concern with this documentary photography journal I had was the idea of exploiting this story. I was more than thrilled to have this great opportunity to do something like Meeri Koutaniemi or Diane Arbus. I had a chance to photograph someone’s life story and it was a wild story. From there I started to wonder if I had the right reasons to do this project. Did I only want to be like the photographers I admire or did I really want to help my friend to get this story out? Marina’s brother did not want to have anything to do with this project and respecting his wishes I left him out of the story. But still I was wondering if I was pushing this to be done or did my friend really want to explore her past again? Because it was my idea and my motion to do all of these trips and meetings I felt like I was taking over this story and being selfish. But with the help of pushing this idea forward Marina also started to have new realizations about herself and was able to reflect her personality to these past events.

Also with this idea she was able to go again to old neighbourhoods and places in Russia after 22 years. She had the chance to pick up pieces of her past and understand her personality and self-being in a new light. The realization of this therapeutic photography journey did not hit me until the second trip in February



2020 when we also had access to the orphanage. I started to see more of the story through my friend's eyes and felt proud of what she is now after all the horrors she went through. Maybe the idea of helping someone find the answers to their questions or raising their confidence after traumatic experiences is what should keep moving the documentary photographers to do more without selfishness. The idea of raising awareness to the public is the righteous way of doing art and photojournalism.



PICTURE 10. Marina outside of her old home (Joutsen 2020)

## 5 INSTALLATION

This installation and exhibition overall were a wild ride. From the beginning I knew I would like to do a photography exhibition for obvious reasons, but I also ended up being one of two producers for the final exhibition for our class. In October 2019 we started the preparations for the final exhibition that was assumed to happen in the spring 2020. When I was visiting the gallery to see our exhibition space I suddenly had this idea of a room. An old 90's styled living room with a television and photographs. I remembered that Marina showed me a home video of the days where her and her brother were adopted. I felt like I should do something bigger than just photos on the walls. I wanted to create my own space for the story where people can take time and process what they learn. With the permission to use clips from the home video, I started to sketch out the living room. Furnitures and decorations surrounded by photographs. A life story in a room.

Unfortunately Covid-19 started to outbreak really harshly in Finland and with the government closing down a lot of places the gallery for our exhibition was not safe. So we had to cancel the exhibition and move it to the near future. Instead

of a physical one we created online exhibition with our own website for the works and artist statements. Personally I was really bummed out for this solution after coming up with the idea of a living room. But I had to use what I could. The idea for the website was not only to show the works but to show also what the space for them would have looked like. I had to use my own living room as an example of the exhibition space but my one-room apartment didn't quite do the job as well as I hoped. So I only used one wall in my home as an exhibition wall. Took a picture of the wall and I edited the photographs using Photoshop in different sizes onto the wall to demonstrate the whole look. I did not want to publish the video online because I wanted to save something new to the physical exhibition. Also, because I used only one wall for the demonstration I did not put all the photographs that were meant to be used because it would just look too full and the harmony would break down. When we had feedback day for our website and the spaces I was given the idea of asking Marina to write down her thoughts about the travels so the idea would come out more clearly. It was a good additional idea because with the photographs only it was hard to communicate this complex idea.



PICTURE 11. The demonstration of the exhibition for the website (Joutsen 2020)

Finally in the late summer time it was announced that we will have the physical exhibition in November. During this time I went to the gallery to see the rooms that were given to us just to see how much space we would have and just to think a little bit already about who would be in what area of the spaces. During my visit I saw that the current artist built a room inside a room. It was more than welcomed idea for my living room and I asked the gallery staff if it would be possible to not remove the walls. Fortunately they had not planned on it and so I had an actual room to close down my works in its own space.

Now I had to start to collect furniture and to find an old TV for the space. The sizes of photographs was decided in a way to take space on the walls but not to be too crowded and then the other stuff would fill the room nicely. The only

problem was to find furniture that was old but in good condition without paying for them. Little did I know the classmates in charge of equipment had a deal with YLE decoration department for borrowing some of the furniture they have in their storage. Because of all the TV shows and movies YLE produces they had many furniture from many different eras and in different styles. We were able to use them for free. We went to the storage spaces and just picked the ones that served the idea. I found delightfully nice furniture to create a more 90's looking living room and additionally took some decorations from home to complete the design. An old, working TV was the only one hard to find and it was until one day before the exhibition opening that I found one (also for free). The living room's design is really simple and some might say empty but the idea was to have it like that. It reminds of the stories from Marina since the orphans did not have anything to themselves. The orphanage was quite a cold and ugly place to live, especially in the 90's, so I had to include that feeling to the space itself.

I was personally pleased and proud of my own work space but of course the whole exhibition was a success. Because my part of the exhibition takes time to see and prosper in the viewer's eyes it was nice to have closed area. Inside people can be in a quiet area and take a break on the sofa and just be. The idea behind the living room was to give people place to breathe and proceed in their own time. The story is harsh and sad so it is good to secure the area for progress.



PICTURE 12. Marina exhibition space (Joutsen 2020)





PICTURE 13. Marina exhibition space 2 (Joutsen 2020)

## 6 CONCLUSION

For this kind of topic there is no one certain conclusion that can be drawn out. The questions go near philosophical line and still no right answer is given. In the book *Image ethics* in Beauchamp and Klaidman's papers it stated that "The search for 'truth' fades and becomes a search for a preconceived 'moment,' a biased hypothesis that captures the 'essence of truth' in the mind of the documentary maker" (Gross, Kratz, Ruby, 1988). Photographers create the moment of objectivity with art in mind while stepping on people's rights to themselves. There is a need for defending when creating art by exploiting others. But without exploitation how we have these moments and stories to tell if we don't step out of our own familiar nest and make our way to other's surroundings. Making someone into your own subject photographers face many ethical fences and boundaries and not always they are not followed righteous way. Sometimes people are not fully informed about their participation to a project or simply is not informed about it. Does that make documentary photographing somehow more complex because the rules are not followed just to get that photograph? I know I didn't follow the rules precisely in the orphanage because I wanted to have that certain photo, the essence of truth. Is it now an illegal photograph or am I forgiven in the name of art.

While reading sources for this thesis I was almost forced to make new opinions about the photographs I have seen and was familiar with. The Migrant Mother named Florence Owens Thompson got a promise from Dorothea Lange not to publish the photo she took but Lange did send it to FSA and from there it made its way to the newspapers. Lange never asked Thompsons name and even though promised to send a copy of the photograph to Thompson she never did it. With the help of the photography alone government sent food to the area



where migrant workers were staying and photograph taken but Thompsons already left the place with her children before the food arrived. Her identity was unknown for over 40 years and when she was finally found she only said that she wished Lange never took the photo. Even with the greater good still one's self-determination was violated.

Of course my own decisions were questioned in my mind about my documentary photography journal. I made my friend come out as an adopted child from poor circumstances and not the woman she is nowadays. And even with hiding her 'new' name and only going along with the birth name I still revealed her face and feelings. In the beginning and during the travels I made sure everything I was doing was okay for Marina and I was not crossing any boundaries. But when the time was to do something with the collection of photographs I only listened to myself. Because it was my artistic creation to have the photos in certain way and the living room as it was, I couldn't run everything through her. I wanted to be able to do what I visioned and because I was the one with the studies in art field I didn't think her opinions would make such a difference to the presentation. Did I exploit my friend still when though we decided everything together when this project started. Or was I using my artistic point of view to tell the story in the best possible way. In the Image Ethics book Howard S. Becker writes "Appeals to morality simply do not solve problems. ....even when the principles are generally agreed to" (Gross, Kratz, Ruby, 1988).

So can we ever create the one moral and ethic rule to cast light on to documentary photographing or is it simply in artist's best interest to think for themselves and do what is right in their minds. The overall moralising will never work but it also has created discussions. Dorothea Lange didn't do righteous act towards Thompson but with the photograph was able to help feeding the hungry workers. Kevin Carter's story ended in tragic but with his photographs he brought the awful famine situation in Africa to outsider's knowledge. You could say with one rightful act the selfish act is abolished but does that still give a free pass for photographers to do and go for their own interest if it might eventually help greater good. That was the question I had when I started this thesis but it's the question I am still left with. With many examples in the field of documentary photographing there is no one comfortable solution. We as artists and documentary photographers should create our own message that we want to tell about and it should be morally and ethically right. We are responsible to show in our photographs the problems of the world we live in.

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Picture 3. Diane Arbus' photograph Three female impersonators (1962)  
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Picture 4. Portrait of Meeri Koutaniemi  
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