

## DEADLINE EVERY SECOND: ON ASSIGNMENT WITH 12 ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO- JOURNALISTS

produced by Ken Kobre and John Hewitt. 58 min. Film website: <www.deadlineeverysecond.com>.

Reviewed by Amy Ione, Director, The Diatropé Institute, Berkeley, CA 94704, U.S.A. Email: <ione@diatropé.com>.

Ken Kobre's *Deadline Every Second* introduces the viewer to 12 Associated Press (AP) photographers on assignment as they cover breaking news in eight countries. The variety of images is compelling. Sequences show them recording war, political clashes, financial markets, natural disasters, sports and human-interest stories. It is hard to ignore the power of the images of battle zones in Afghanistan, protests in Israel, terrorist attacks in Pakistan, wildfires in California, the Tour de France and the events of 9/11 in New York City. The impact that this work has on AP's large audience is equally compelling. Over a billion people a day see the photographs that AP generates, which number over a million images a year. The shots are disseminated through 15,000 news outlets throughout the world, and I expect that, like me, viewers will find many of the images in the film familiar.

Part of the success of the film comes from the aesthetic dimension of the work's overall organization. Photojournalism often brings to mind *On Photography* by Susan Sontag, where she argued that our capacity to respond to images of war and atrocity in our rapaciously media-driven culture was

being dulled by the relentless diffusion of vulgar and appalling images. Twenty-five years later, in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she reversed her position, maintaining that images turned us from spectators of events into witnesses. I found that Kobre's fast-paced and collage-like presentation somehow seemed to allow for both responses to exist side by side. One reason for this, and for the documentary's success, is that Kobre not only presents images but also introduces us to the people behind them because he was given access to these 12 photographers while they were actually shooting the stories presented here. As a result, we are able to act as witnesses of more than what a single image conveys. We glimpse them waiting for events to happen, see the risks they take, feel the pressures behind each "perfect shot," learn how they wrestle with danger in the field, and appreciate the challenge of processing images in unusual environments.

What it means to be in the middle of things is reinforced as each photographer discusses his or her approach to the complex activity that photojournalism is. For example, while many spoke of how they try to focus on the raw events without embellishing, several also mentioned the need show sensitivity to human suffering in the midst of heart-wrenching events. This is mirrored by the way the more emotional images are artistically compelling yet make powerful statements. Indeed, one of the most effective messages of film is that it offers various vantage points on humanity. We see that the dangers the photographers face when covering war and wildfires are not at all abstract. We also learn of the backstory on many images we know.

For example, Richard Drew, a photographer who produced a number of striking photographs on 9/11, talks at length of how it all happened. He was covering a fashion show that day and received a call from his editor telling him to go down to the World Trade Center, something was going on down there, enabling him to take many of the now iconic pictures of the buildings collapsing and people jumping out of the windows. Speaking about it, Drew conveys that he was able to "find"

the incredibly wrenching photographs within the chaos because of his internal impulse to capture the story. One image he speaks about is known as "The Falling Man," one of a series of images of a man who jumped out of the North Tower that day. The image won a 2001 World Press Photo award and became the subject of a 2006 documentary film.

Ken Kobre, who is a filmmaker, award-winning photojournalist, author and head of the photojournalism program at San Francisco State University, used five episodes to structure his fast-moving and focused presentation. The divisions are: (1) News, From Routine to Extraordinary, (2) Earthquakes and Wildfires, (3) Bicycling and Basketball, (4) Presidents to Pilgrims and (5) Combat and Clashes. The progression reiterated to me the degree to which images have defined our reality in recent years. I liked the way the script conveyed the complex stories behind images. To my mind, we need to have more critical dialogue about how our images impact our world. This kind of production opens the door because it operates on many levels. I was glad to see that the film is often shown in public venues with panel discussions following the screen-

ings. This seems important because when I went to write this review, a few weeks after viewing the movie, I realized that my mind more easily recalled the dangerous and tragic portions of the film. Why was it easier to recall these segments rather than those on sports or the photographs of the wax figure of President Obama being delivered to the San Francisco's Wax Museum?

This production benefited from having someone who is a photojournalist scripting the project. Kobre traveled three continents to film these outstanding photographers. As a "one-man-band operation" he acted as lighting and sound technician, director, producer and cinematographer all at once. According to Kobre:

When shooting a documentary by yourself, it's hard to control all the technical activities and ask questions simultaneously. The automatic focus and sound level features on the camera allowed me to shoot but still concentrate on my subjects. On automatic, the camcorder itself made excellent exposure decisions.

All in all, this documentary is perfect for the classroom, and it is the type of work that should appeal to people in all walks of life. Going into the field with the photographers demonstrates that photojournalism is often fast-paced and can be dangerous. I was quite taken with the mixture of compassion and objectivity expressed by many of the photographers. In sum, I highly recommend the movie and strongly recommend seeing it with others so that a conversation can unpack it after the viewing ends.