

IACC Article – Stuart Dryden, (Presenter, November 8, 2018)

“Anything can be documentary photography” said Stuart, who spoke passionately of his experiences over decades of work as a photojournalist. Club members were treated to a wonderful presentation on documentary photography.

In recent years, Stuart has crossed over into video. He shared a video of his documentary “Record Land” about a record store in Calgary, with >1M vinyls in inventory for sale, which also serves as a *retail museum*.

Using the “Record Land” video as a demonstration tool, Mr. Dryden provided the keys to documentary photography – know the subject, tell the story, interview and do your research. He detailed his process of photojournalism, starting with a “scene setter” or locator (wide angle shot to provide the where of the story), get into the subject (portray the characters, use environmental portraiture), add some artsy imagery (wide, medium and tight shots to isolate the subject), where composition and light control are key. Stuart also advised on the use of artistic angles, leading lines, and focus to ensure everything in the frame tells a story. In video, there is an ebb and flow between talking and images, with a rhythm that leads through the story. Additionally, he advised to be consistent (e.g. flash vs. natural light).

Stuart then provided his photojournalistic vision through a personal project (portrait photojournalism made into a book), and gave further commentary on “how” to approach sensitive subject matter. His insights included caring communication and interaction, “a dance” with the subject, producing a record of events that that does not offend. In these stories content and detail are important. Stuart’s book project included appropriate details, tight shots, and key event shots that were hallmarks of the journey in his book. His many years in photojournalism shone through in his speaking of the soft skills – approaching the subject matter, reacting and interacting appropriately, and setting up at the start with good preparation.

In the Q&A dialogue, many members asked questions about video editing and tips, storyboarding, black and white versus colour, and equipment used for audio. Stuart presented an engaging window into the world of documentary photography, providing club members with great learning opportunities and insight into photojournalism.