

VAHSPH.RE.3 Engage in the process of art criticism to make meaning of works of art and increase visual literacy. a. Formulate written and/or oral response to works of art through various approaches.
VAHSPH.RE.2 Critique personal works of art and the artwork of others, individually and collaboratively, using a variety of approaches. c. Interpret the aesthetics and ethics of photography.

DIRECTIONS:

A. Read the attached documentary about the photographers who shot 9/11.
B. After reading the document, create a Google document and answer the following questions on the document:

1. Which photograph is the most striking to you and why?
2. Who is the photographer?
3. Insert the photo into your document.
4. After reading the accounts of the photographers involved with covering this catastrophe, which photographer's personality do you most identify with and why?
5. How, as a photographer, do you think you would have handled extreme fear and chaos?
6. Which photographer do you think that you would most be similar to in regards to the way you may have reacted? Explain your answer.

C. Do some Internet research and answer the following:

7. What is an iconic moment?
8. What is an iconic image?
9. What makes an image iconic?

D. Interview a single person in your life – a parent or relative or friend – and

10. Write about that person's experience on 9/11 or in other iconic events.
11. What images stick in their minds?
12. Why?

5. Submit your document via the Google folder. (Link sent via Remind).

6. Title your document as follows: Lastname_Firstname_911

The logo for 'American PHOTO' features the word 'american' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, positioned vertically to the left of the word 'PHOTO'. 'PHOTO' is written in a large, bold, uppercase, sans-serif font.**[Documentary](#)****9.11.01: The Photographers' Stories, Pt. 1 – "Get Down Here. Now."**



Todd Maisel's photograph of Lt. William Roberts of Ladder 113
Todd Maisel/NY Daily News

On a bright, clear morning in September, 2001, American Airlines Flight 11 was commandeered by terrorists and steered into the North Tower of Manhattan's World Trade Center. The initial impact occurred at 8:46 a.m. Within minutes, photographers were making their way toward Manhattan's financial district. With only a dim notion of what was going on, they pushed past throngs of escaping workers and into the annals of history.

Suzanne Plunkett: I was covering Fashion Week in New York for the Associated Press. I had shot the Marc Jacobs show the night before. On the morning of September 11th I was scheduled to cover the Donna Karan maternity wear fashion show. I awoke to my pager beeping "911" which was the code from the photo desk to call in immediately. I couldn't get through, so I turned on the television to check if there was a big local news story to cover. The first plane had hit. I scrambled to get downtown without speaking to anyone in the office.

Todd Maisel: I was on the [New York City mayoral] primary, shooting Fernando Ferrer in the Bronx. My next job was to shoot Governor Pataki at Columbia Presbyterian. I was going to grab coffee and send the pictures I had already shot, but I was monitoring the radio and it said a plane had hit one of the towers. Then an ESU [Emergency Service Unit] came racing by me, so I got in behind them and followed them down.

Allen Tannenbaum: I live six blocks north of the towers. My wife and I were in our bedroom, which has a view of the Twin Towers, or did. We heard the roar of a jet, as loud as if you were standing on the tarmac of an airport. We were holding each other and I said, "He's too low. He's too low." We looked out the window and we saw the explosion on the World Trade Center north tower. My wife started to cry right away, "It's terrorism, it's terrorism." I got dressed so fast I even forgot to put on socks. I ran out with my sneakers and started taking pictures around the corner from here, where

you could see the gash in the building, and the smoke and the flames of the Trade Center, the tower. It was unreal.

Spencer Platt: I had been at Getty about six months and had just moved into the slot that Chris Hondros had just vacated. I woke up slightly hung over in DUMBO [a Brooklyn neighborhood directly across from lower Manhattan]. I flipped on WNYC and they were reporting that a small plane had gone into the towers. I don't recall her exact words, but my then-girlfriend, now-wife said something along the lines of "Get your ass out of bed and check it out."



American Photography
Peter J. Eckel/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

Yoni Brook: It was the beginning of my sophomore year at NYU. I had done my first photo internship that summer in Memphis at The Commercial Appeal. I had my radio scanner and my car, and I would just drive into the Mississippi Delta and cover whatever came up: flipped over trucks, going into the sewer system. I did photo essays on beauty parlors and teenage marriage and all sorts of things. That was really great. I had taken a leave from Gallatin to stay on the internship for six months, but they cut the budget and so I had to come back and start school again. I was on my way to class when I passed some dudes listening to the radio saying that a plane hit a building downtown. I was like, "Whatever," and kept walking. Then I got to the corner of Mercer and Waverly, where you can see all the way down, and I could see the tower on fire. I figured the firefighters would put it out, so I kept going about my day.

Carmen Taylor: I worked in a photography store in Arkansas. I was in New York on vacation. That morning I took the ferry to the Statue of Liberty. The first plane hit on the other side from us. So we didn't see much at first, just a little bit of flame in the tower. The few people around me got to talking, and we decided maybe an office copy machine had blown up or something. It looked that insignificant for a few moments. Within a few more moments the clouds had started and the smoke started billowing up.

Thomas Dallal: I covered Gaza, and the first Palestinian Intifada. But I'd decided I was no longer the fearless, twentysomething, run-toward-the-gunfire type of reporter. I didn't want to do the bang bang

stuff any more. I was sitting at my desk checking my email when I felt the concussion. The first thing that I flashed to was getting rocked out of bed at 6am in Gaza in the mid-'90s by a suicide bomber. My phone rings and it's my agency, SIPA: "Tom, a plane flew into the Trade Center. We don't have anybody down there. You think you can go down?"



American Photography
Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Gulnara Samoilova: I was at home sleeping. I was woken up by the first plane crashing.

Mario Tama: I'd wanted to move to New York for years. I would come up to Getty every six months and show my book and bug them. Two months before 9/11 someone fell for it. I started on July 2nd, 2001. Jim Lowney, one of our editors at Getty, called me: "Yo, a plane hit the World Trade Center." I'm just thinking it's a Cessna. I'm getting my gear together and getting ready to go down there, when another of our editors, Mish Whalen, calls. She was getting out of her cab by the office and saw the plane go into the building. She was frantic, "A plane just hit the World Trade Center!" I'm still thinking Cessna. Then it rang one more time. Jim again. This is a hard-edged, hard-nosed, seen-it-all kind of guy and he's freaking out. "It was a 767. Get down here."

David Handschuh: I was working for the Daily News. I was sitting in traffic on the West Side Highway when my police and fire radio started yelling about a plane hitting the World Trade Center. I looked up and could see the smoke. A fire department company came down behind me, driving the wrong way, southbound in the northbound lane. I drove over the center divider and followed them down. I'd been covering the fire service for more than twenty years in New York City, so I knew some of the guys in the truck. They were waving out the back door to me. They didn't know they were going to their own funeral.

"I looked to my left. I heard this kind of a droning sound, and I saw a little speck of an airplane." Carmen Taylor

Spencer Platt: It was the early days of cell phones. My editor tried to call me, but the lines were all getting crossed because so many people were calling. I was trying to talk to him and I could hear other people on my phone saying, "The towers are burning." Then it just went dead. I forgot one camera body. I ran out with just my one; usually I have two. I didn't even have my wallet. I ran down Front Street up to the base of the Brooklyn Bridge. And God, I wasn't there ten minutes, you know. I looked up and it was just--my God--I didn't expect all that smoke coming out.

Mario Tama: I grabbed what Getty had issued to us, which I think back then were D30s or something, one of the original Canon D bodies. So it was two bodies and one was a 70-200mm and the wide was a Sigma 14mm, I think. That was my kit. I threw my laptop in my backpack and I remember trying to grab extra batteries and all the disks that I had. Back then we were shooting 256MB disks or something, which would just be absurd now. It would hold like five pictures today. I got my gear and ran out of my apartment, around to the corner, right at Chrystie and Delancey, and I remember at that point I could finally see the Twin Towers. I just saw this huge gaping hole in the north tower, really jagged and massive. I remember thinking—I'll never forget this—I just remember thinking, This is war. I had never seen war, but you know it when you see it.

David Handschuh: I had a Nikon D1. It was my third digital camera. I was the first full-time, all-digital photographer in New York. I think I had two bodies and I usually carried a 17-35, a 24-70, an 80-200. I think I had my 300 also. For some reason I took it out of the car and put that on my belt.

Todd Maisel: I had two Nikon D1s.

Yoni Brook: All my film was expired, old Fuji 800 that Bob Deutsch from USA Today gave me. Because I was assisting him and helping him shoot sports, so he'd be like, "You want a brick of film?" I was like, "Yeah I want a brick of film." "It's from '92, but it's been in my fridge. It seems fine." That's all I had.



American Photography
*Gulnara Samoilo*va/AP

Gulnara Samoilova: At the time, I had a bunch of black and white film in my refrigerator because I was supposed to go to Russia a few days before, on September 8th. But for a health reason, my doctor canceled my trip. I didn't go. So I had a bunch of black and white film that I was going to go and shoot in Russia, this personal project that I'd been doing for many years. I was using a film camera and I was shooting black and white but I did have one roll of color film, which I didn't know I had in the bag. So when I switched the film [at Ground Zero], I didn't even notice that. I was not a staff photographer at the time. I just grabbed my personal camera.

Carmen Taylor: I had a Sony Mavica. It wasn't brand new. I had learned digital photography where I worked, and they have a Sony Mavica, that's what I learned on, so I bought one for myself. In '01 this was not a new camera, this was about a year-old model.

Thomas Dallal: I opened my safe and packed my bag like I'm going to a news job. It's funny the things you remember. I put my 2x doubler in the bag. You go through the motions when you go to do different jobs. I was an equipment whore. I used to shoot with three systems: I was a Contax, Leica, and Canon shooter. So I've got my Leica. I've got my Canon with an 80-200mm with a 2x doubler. And I think I probably didn't bring my Contax, just two Canon bodies and a Leica. I throw this stuff in a bag, throw my clothes on. Walk down the stairs.

I open the door to Eldridge Street and it was bizarre. The Chinese were out in force on the street. And they're all talking a blue streak in Fujianese and Cantonese and Mandarin and who knows what else. But everybody's out on the street.

Spencer Platt: I was totally green to digital. I mean, we all were. I was using a Nikon D1. It was one of their first professional digital cameras. But it's amazing how the files held up from those days. I'd probably been shooting digital for a couple months at that time, if that. I'm still shocked that I had everything, like the right aperture, because it was still very foreign to me, that camera.

Allen Tannenbaum: I was using a Canon EOS-D30, which was I think the first digital SLR that Canon came out with. And I was using an EOS-1, which was a film camera. So I was shooting both 'chrome and digital.

Mario Tama: I tried to hail a taxi, but that was not possible. It was total mayhem. So I just ran down toward the buildings. I didn't know really where I was going. There's not really a direct path from Chrystie and Delancey down there, so I was winding through Chinatown. I remember going through one of those streets in Chinatown when I heard the second explosion. I couldn't see it because of those narrow streets. Down at the end of the block where people had a view, I saw them all kind of jump back as a group. I didn't know what it was.



American Photography
Carmen Taylor/AP

Carmen Taylor: I took a few pictures when [the north tower] started smoking. Then I ended up at the very front of the ferry, braced on some sort of a metal box with my feet up on the rail, just taking pictures. There's a helicopter to the right, the smoke, and the clear blue sky. I looked to my left. I heard this droning sound, and I saw a little speck of an airplane. In my pre-9/11 mind, I figured it was a TV or police airplane that would circle the towers and maybe take some pictures, or somebody would be able to get a radio report from that airplane.

I thought, "This plane is going to come right in front of the south tower, both towers. It's going to circle. The helicopter will be there. And I'm going to set this shot up to get it when it gets right in front of the south tower." With my little Sony Mavica, on choppy water, sitting there on a metal box with my feet braced up so my hands can be free, I sort of aimed at the tower and watched the plane approach. I really didn't hear the plane so much as felt the vibrations of it. When I think back, it probably wasn't the fact that I wasn't hearing it. I imagine every single human being that was anywhere near there afterwards was in some level or state of shock and did or did not think they heard something. But I did not hear the airplane. Since I'm not someone who knows a great deal

about airplanes and I wasn't thinking about it, I didn't think about what size it was. I was just trying to watch it out of the corner of my eye as it passed the towers—you know, as it got into position for me to click. Because as you know, on those cameras you get one try.



A fiery blasts rocks the south tower of the World Trade Center as the hijacked United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston crashes into the building. Spencer Platt captured this image as he made his way into lower Manhattan via the Brooklyn Bridge.

Spencer Platt/Getty Images

The first plane's impact into the north tower of the World Trade Center raised all the city's alarms. But as emergency workers and news reporters rushed to the scene, a second plane ripped into the south tower. New York City was under attack.

Allen Tannenbaum: First of all, you have to overcome your sense of disbelief that this is happening right here in front of you in New York City. Plus you have to keep yourself safe. And then, in what is really a chaotic and dangerous situation, you have to remember all your camera techniques. I was looking to shoot what I saw, one thing after another. As I moved towards the towers I heard the sound of another plane, a roar of engines, and there was a huge explosion, and the fireball. I was on the north side, just three blocks away, and this huge fireball came out the north side from the impact of the second plane. That was a moment I thought, "This might be my last picture." But after I took a few frames of that explosion I ducked behind a building and debris rained into the street.

"When the second plane hit, the whole complexion of the job changed." Todd Maisel

Spencer Platt: I went over the Brooklyn bridge on foot. All these cars had stopped. The taxi drivers were out, the passengers were out, everyone was just staring across the river. I didn't hear the second plane and I certainly didn't see it. I had put my camera up to take some more frames, and then it just hit. I got the whole fireball. I probably have like ten frames of that fireball, but it felt like it went on for minutes. I pulled my camera down immediately and scrolled to make sure I had the picture.

This taxi driver was looking over my shoulder and started screaming, "He's got it." As if that mattered. As if what happened in front of us wasn't real until it was actually captured. Then suddenly, I was overwhelmed with thirst. I was just shocked at everything, and my throat went dry. I remember this taxi driver gave me a couple bucks to get water. From there I ran over the Brooklyn Bridge.

David Handschuh: When only one plane had hit the World Trade Center, I was going to the site of an airplane crash and this horrible fire burning sixty, seventy floors up. There was no doubt in my mind that the firefighters, paramedics and police officers would put out the fire, rescue people, and everything would be okay. I was standing in front of the south tower when it got hit by the second plane and realized that what happened was very intentional, not accidental.



Twin Towers 9/11
David Handschuh

Todd Maisel: I saw the second plane hit when I passed Canal Street. Saw it right through my windshield. Then it was coming over the police radio and the fire radio that we're under attack.

Very few people actually realized that the first plane that hit the Trade Center was an airliner. When the second plane hit the whole complexion of the job changed. It was very scary. Throughout the day whenever we heard things above us I thought we were going to get hit again.

Gulnara Samoilova: I was watching the news when the second plane crashed. I saw it on TV and I heard it simultaneously because I was so close. I grabbed my [film](#), my camera and was there about five minutes after the second plane crashed. A lot of the police and firefighters were just arriving.



Spencer Platt
Mario Tama/Getty Images

Mario Tama: Outside the Millennium Hilton hotel, right at the east edge of Ground Zero I saw my first real victim. This guy had blood coming out of both of his ears and glass in his hair. He was kind of down on the ground and in shock. That was when I first started to connect with what had happened. Before then it was just this big building in flames. I didn't process it until I saw that guy. The police started to block us off at that point. Of course, the photographers were trying to get into the building.

Spencer Platt: There wasn't a lot of foot traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge going toward Manhattan. People were headed into Brooklyn. It wasn't until I got near the base of the bridge that I saw the first people that had been injured. People were in shock and crying. I vividly remember getting off the bridge and seeing a man and a woman. The woman was hysterically crying. I instinctively took a couple pictures of her and I was just totally confused at what was going on. I remember him telling me, "Don't shoot this. You can't shoot this." I don't even think I tried to argue.

Around that time I bumped into Mario Tama, another Getty photographer. By that time, there were tons of photographers and media. Tama and I were trying to get into the towers. It never even entered our imagination that these things were going to collapse.

Mario Tama: Spencer and I talked for a minute. Then I went with this other photographer who said he knew a way around the barricades to get back up to the towers. We went around Trinity Church [directly southeast of the Trade Center]. By then the smoke was really thick and black, whereas in the first photos that I took it was just white and hazy. That's not something I think I processed. But if you look at it now, you can tell it's getting a lot more intense.

Allen Tannenbaum: I went around to Church Street to the east side of the plaza. When I got around there I could see that both towers were burning. People were streaming out of the building in terror. I tried to get closer, but the FBI was keeping people away from the plaza. It was very dangerous, because things were falling, people were falling. You didn't want to be there really. I had photographed a lot of injured people, burned people, and people trying to get out of the buildings, until a cop said, "You should move back. It's dangerous."

I went back five years ago and I re-edited all my images and I found a chrome that I hadn't seen before. In that frame, you can see many people in the windows above the entry site, desperate for help. One guy is even clinging, way up on top, to the outside of the building. I guess they thought maybe a helicopter would come rescue them. Nothing ever did, and they were doomed. I look at that picture and it gives me chills to think that these people were desperately looking for help and it never came.

"That was a moment I thought, 'This might be my last picture.'" Allan Tannenbaum

Mario Tama: There was a really intense attitude coming from the police. As you got right on to the site they became really intense, kind of getting people back and keeping people away. They saved a lot of photographers' lives that day. Most photojournalists are just trying to get as close as possible. I don't even know what we were thinking that we wanted to do. But that's our mantra: "You're not close enough."

David Handschuh: There was no indication that the buildings were going to fall. However, there was a ton of debris coming down, so I was always looking up, making sure that it wasn't parts of the building crumbling or a person jumping. So you're actually keeping an eye to the sky as to what was

coming down, and keeping your eye over your shoulder and in front of you, trying to look for the best picture.

Todd Maisel: People that were further away were focused on the building itself, but because I was so close, the things on the ground were a big focus for me. Debris, injured people, people crying and screaming.

There were bodies hitting the ground, but we didn't realize it until Danny Suhr of Engine 216 got killed by one. The body exploded when it hit him. It was absolutely shocking. Did I shoot it? I shot him being dragged by his fellow firefighters. That I shot. You see something like that, your reflexes kind of get out of whack. I shoot firefighters and cops, that's what I've done for almost my entire career. But when I saw that it was one of the first times I took some pictures and then just started crying.



World Trade Center, NYC 9/11
Gulnara Samoilova/AP

Gulnara Samoilova: I saw a lot of people jumping but I couldn't take pictures of that. I just couldn't lift my camera. I couldn't believe my eyes that people had the strength to jump and die this way. And to me it was the most powerful moment because exactly a year before that I went on top of the World Trade Center for the first and only time, and I remember what I felt looking down, how scary it was and how high it was. Seeing these people, I was picturing them looking down, like looking down through their eyes. That's the only time that I didn't take photos. When I was walking back home, I took a photo from afar, with a lot of smoke. You can see there are two people jumping from the building, their silhouettes against it. But I didn't know until I saw it on my print.



The single frame Gulnara Samoilova shot of the south tower's collapse before she fled
Gulnara Samoilova/AP

The south tower burned for 56 minutes after the Boeing 767 ripped a hole between the 78th and 84th floors. The fires, fed by jet fuel, reached 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. At 9:59 a.m., the tower's steel support spine, unable to support the weight of the building, collapsed. Twenty-nine minutes later, the north tower did the same.

Spencer Platt: I took a picture of people looking at the burning towers and then I remember looking up and seeing the south tower come down. I took one or two frames of it coming down and then I was just running with everyone else. And I thought that was it, lights out.

Mario Tama: I was trying to go around Trinity Church and back up Greenwich Street to the south tower. As we rounded the corner about two and a half blocks from the south tower, I heard this sound. People have described it as trains colliding, but the one thing that always reminds me of it is when someone pulls down a grate on a storefront. That staccato rhythm, that was the first thing you heard. I looked up and the top third just went. Then the tower started to pancake.

In a moment, you go from observer and witness to just another New Yorker running for his life. I got jostled around, one of my cameras got knocked off of me. Everyone was just sprinting down Greenwich Street south and the thing was coming down. It was just pancaking. I'll never forget that sound for my whole life.



American Photography
Steve McCurry

Spencer Platt: I assumed that Tama was killed. I couldn't imagine how people could have survived that. We lost touch and cellphones weren't working. I remember coming back to the office. A lot of people had left, people were just freaking out. I said, "I think Tama's dead. I can't reach him; he was down there."

Mario Tama: It was incredibly terrifying. As I was running down I looked back over my shoulder. It was like a scene out of something from Hollywood. This huge cloud of debris tornadoing down Greenwich toward us. I suppose if I had stood there and really tried to shoot it, I would have gotten something. But I'm glad that I didn't. We ran down Greenwich as fast as we could and I dove around this corner where Greenwich ends at a parking garage. I dove and got down on my knees. Two other guys ran over and were next to me. Then the cloud just went whoomp over us.

"After a minute or two you could start to hear voices and shuffling sounds of feet. It was like ghosts were walking past. We just there in this vacuum." Mario Tama

It was pitch black and silent. I couldn't see my hand in front of me. Those two guys and I were down on our knees kind of holding on to each other. They're praying. One guy's praying in Spanish; the other guy's praying in English. I don't normally pray, but it just felt like the end of the world.

Honestly, at that point I didn't have any clue what had happened. Initially it seemed like just the south tower was falling. But then, when Manhattan has disappeared and you can't even see an inch in front of your face—we weren't sure if the whole island had blown up. It was terrifying.

But at the same time, it was extremely calm. Before there were all these sirens and yelling and a cacophony. Then all of a sudden it was just silent. Maybe there were some sirens way off in the distance. Then after a minute or two you could start to hear voices and shuffling sounds of feet. It was like ghosts were walking past. We just there in this vacuum.

I don't know how long it lasted—five minutes or twenty minutes or whatever. It felt like an eternity. All of a sudden you could vaguely start to make out the picture of what you were seeing around you. Slowly it became apparent that everything was still there. It had just been the dust from that tower. Almost immediately, I got up and took a picture of those two guys I had been kneeling with. I'm sure they were like, 'What's with this guy?' But it's just your reaction as a photographer, how you process what you've just been through. When you put that camera up to your eye, you're kind of shielding yourself from what you're in, and at the same time you're examining it. You're kind of trying to process it.



American Photography
Mario Tama/Getty Images

Todd Maisel: I remember walking around in a daze before the building collapsed. I probably didn't shoot as much as I normally would have. I took a couple of pictures of the cross of this Greek church with the Trade Center in the background. When I put my camera down I looked up, and the building was coming toward me.

All of a sudden the sky opens up black. You look up and for a moment all you see is something very evil. You say, "Run. You're too close." I ran to 90 West Street. I ran under the scaffolding and dove into the lobby. As I was midair, the building hit the ground. I dove onto the ground and covered my head, broke the flash right off the top of the camera. Concrete and steel were raining down all over the place. The whole room filled with dust so you couldn't even see. It was completely black.

Allen Tannenbaum: I heard the sound of the building coming down and took a picture of some people running away from that storm of debris. Again I had the thought that this might be my last picture. I turned to run but got caught in the debris. Everything went black. It was a suffocating sensation, because the debris immediately dried out all of the mucous membranes and breathing passages. It was pretty scary. I thought it was the end of the world.



American Photography

Allan Tannenbaum/Polaris Images/sohoblues.com

Gulnara Samoilova: When the south tower collapsed I was standing at the triage on Fulton and Church streets. I kind of instantly lifted my camera and saw the building coming down through the viewfinder. I snapped just one photo, then somebody screamed, “Run!” And we all began to run.

When the building hit the ground, I fell. That was the first time I thought that I would die. I thought people would just run over me. But nobody did, so I looked back and I saw this huge cloud coming toward me. I hid behind a car and went through this tunnel of dust. It was quite powerful. Then I thought that I had died again. It was very dark. I couldn't hear anything, couldn't see anything, couldn't breathe. When I was able to breathe and see, I started shooting again.



American Photography
Suzanne Plunkett/AP

Suzanne Plunkett: When I got out of the subway at Fulton Street I had about five minutes before the first tower came down. When people started running past me, I just froze and started taking pictures for a few minutes before I turned and ran as well. I remember, as I ran, wondering how on earth I was going to outrun a hundred-plus-story building toppling in my direction.

I ran into an office lobby full of panicked and crying people. I remember one Wall Street type clutching his dry-cleaning and shouting “We are all going to die! There is poisonous gas out there!”

I wanted to take more photographs, so I tied my cardigan around my mouth and nose and ran outside. The dust cloud was still thick in the air. I remember it being very quiet. After 30 minutes I ran into an electronics shop. As I entered someone inside said, “She is the last one, we can’t have the whole world in here,” and they locked the door behind me. I opened up my laptop and had enough power to send three pictures using my mobile phone.

My initial caption for the photographs was “People run from an explosion inside the World Trade Center.” No one knew what had really happened. As I was editing my photographs, a man inside the electronics shop looking over my shoulder even identified himself as one of the people in my photographs. He joked about how I should send him a print for his living room wall.

My colleagues didn't know if I was safe until they started receiving my photographs. I hadn't been able to make calls on my phone, even though, inexplicably, I was able to send photographs with it.

After I left the immediate scene, a firefighter who was going in asked me to use my phone because he wanted to call his wife. He couldn't get through. I was never brave enough to call the number in my phone later to see if he survived.



American Photography
Gulnara Samoilova/AP

Todd Maisel: I didn't panic. I just stayed down for a second. I decided, "Think of what you've got to do to get out of there." I backed myself out—because that's what firefighters would do: go out the way you came in. You couldn't see anything in the street. It was very dark and very full of dust. I pulled out a bottle of water that I had with me and cleared my throat. Then I put a bandana around my face and I was ready to go again.

I went back into the debris and took a couple of pictures. The first few were really dark and out of focus. There was nothing to focus on. It was just pure black. You could taste the chalk. I heard somebody screaming for help, but I didn't know where. I just started going into the debris field. I'm not the kind of person who runs away from danger.

"I covered firemen rescuing people on a daily basis for more than twenty years. That day, they rescued me." David Handschuh

I wanted to find out who was still alive. I had a lot of friends who went into that building—firefighter friends, my neighbors in Marine Park, Stuy Town people, the cops, the people I had photographed before the building fell down. I started searching around until I found a firefighter, Kevin Shea, in the debris. He'd lost his entire company. He was the only survivor. His captain had sent him out from the lobby to take pictures of the building. He was actually not even supposed to be working. He went out with his little camera to take a picture and he got blasted. He broke his neck and he lost a thumb, but he lived. All because he went out to take a picture.

When I found him, there was debris on top of him. I brushed it off and started screaming for help. A lot of guys came over. A couple guys from a private ambulance, Richie Nogan from Ladder 113 and a police officer I still haven't identified. He had a broken neck. I found an ambulance, but couldn't open it. I saw a second ambulance overturned, though, and was able to get the door open. I pulled the backboard out and dragged it back over to where Kevin was lying. The other guys loaded him onto it and we all carried it.

David Handschuh: I was standing in front of the south tower when it came down. I turned, started to run and got caught up in the debris, trapped under the collapsing building. I couldn't breathe because my mouth was filled with powdered concrete. Every breath I took I thought I was going to die. I was rescued by firefighters from Engine Company 217. They saved my life. I covered the firemen rescuing people on a daily basis for more than twenty years. That day, they rescued me.

After pulling me out from under the debris, they went on to help other people who needed it. They wound up losing two of their guys in the second collapse. So two of the guys who saved my life wound up dying trying to help others.

After they dug me out I actually took several frames—lying on the floor, lying in the gutter. I lost my glasses when I got trapped—and if I'm not wearing glasses I can't see the steering wheel in front of me when I'm driving. But I still managed to see some movement in front of me and take some pictures. My coworker Todd Maisel saw me getting carried to safety by a couple of firemen and he got pictures of me.

Todd Maisel: David was in bad shape. He wasn't going anywhere. So they carried him and I carried his gear, and we went to the deli inside Battery Park City. I'm probably alive today because I ran into him. If I hadn't found him I probably would have gone farther into the debris field and I'd probably be dead. I never found out what happened to those guys who went walking into that debris field that day, but it was the wrong way to go.

David Handschuh: I was lying on the floor of a delicatessen with my right leg shattered. It was pretty fortunate I didn't have my glasses, so I couldn't see what had happened to my leg. Then the second tower came down. I didn't see it, but I remember the noise and the rumbling. There was a cop named Jim Kelleher. He jumped on top of me in case the plate-glass windows got blown in. He would have been cut to death. The windows held, but we were unable to open the door because of all the new debris in front.

Todd Maisel: David was carried into a boat by the waterfront. He was in good hands with an EMS chief and a cop and a firefighter. I watched him go and went back into the field. I felt like I needed to go back in and look for whoever else was alive. And I started shooting. At some point I was looking around and there was this big cop there who said, "Why don't you put your gear down and help?" I said, "You're right." I went into Rescue 2's truck, put my gear down and put on a helmet on and gloves and started searching.



American Photography
Todd Maisel/NY Daily News

Allen Tannenbaum: After the cloud settled, I dusted myself off and went back down to Church Street. It was this incredible scene of devastation. I could see the top floor of the World Trade Center right in the street.

Mario Tama: I had no idea where I was. Even if I had lived in New York a long time I don't think I would have. Everything was just covered in ash, like Pompeii. You couldn't really make out which direction was which. I remember this firefighter running around saying, "Has anybody seen any babies? We heard there was a baby in a tree." I just wandered until I eventually found the Hudson. Then I knew that it was just north to Getty.



Sunrise over ground zero, September 12, 2001. By Steve McCurry, shot after his infiltration of 2 World Financial Center
Steve McCurry

As the sun sets over the horrific scene at Ground Zero, the photographers continue to document (and join) the recovery effort. Access to the chaotic scene is often hard-won.

Todd Maisel: After I left David I ran into Monika Graff—another photographer—in Battery Park. I'm a tough guy, but that's when I broke down and started to cry. I had to let it out. But once I got it out of me I realized that I had a very important mission that day, and for whatever time I had left on this earth. It's funny how photography can have that kind of mission. I don't know why, but it does.

Yoni Brook: I was down there walking around the site until maybe 5 p.m. I didn't have a way of calling my editors in Washington. Right at the beginning I got all this dust and stuff in my eye and couldn't see for a minute. I remember thinking, "Oh my God, I'm really here all alone. Nobody knows I'm here, there's no one around here." All of a sudden it occurred to me how vulnerable I was. More and more people showed up as the day went on, but if you were there in the middle of it and looked like you were supposed to be there, people didn't question you.



American Photography
(Yoni Brook/ybpix.com)

Spencer Platt: The first day it was chaos, and you could get past the barriers. But by the second or third day, they locked it down pretty well. And then they brought in the National Guard. But if you're a serious photojournalist, you needed to get down there. You needed to document this. There were cases of photographers dressing up like firemen. If that's the kind of unfortunate steps you have to take, then so be it.

John Botte: (As an NYPD detective, Botte was a 9/11 first responder.) I took my first shot about 5:30 p.m. on September 11 on my first trip out onto the pile. We had lost a lot of people. A lot of my friends perished, people I was just talking to an hour before. My eyes were burned and a couple of our guys were injured. But we wrapped our heads around it and got a strategy together, and everybody started going out into the pile. When we got out there the first time, the only words [Police Commissioner Bernard] Kerik he said to me were, "Do your thing with that camera." And whenever I was able to, in between my duties, I would look for that sliver, that sixtieth of a second, when I could compose a shot that would have an impact. I was with the commissioner and the mayor and the whole detail, so I had to be very, very discreet with the camera. You can't point it in someone's face. You see the composition, you previsualize it, bring the camera up, look through the range finder, compose it, click, put the camera back down, end of story. There was no "Hold that right there."

In my three-and-a-half months on the pile I photographed 56 rolls, all on Leica and all on black-and-white film. Most of that was photographed in the first 48 hours of the attack, while that smoke was thick and heavy and that smell and that 2,000-degree vapor was pouring from the pile, and the beams were so hot you couldn't stand still because they'd start to melt the rubber on your boots.



American Photography
John Botte

Allen Tennenbaum: I wish I had gotten closer...to the middle of the pile. I look at my pictures [from West Street] and I see what's in them, and I wish I had just gotten closer. But I really felt that I should leave and get the pictures out, to meet deadlines. So that's what I did. I went home.

The picture was the Daily News saying, "The horror of this day must not be reduced. You can't hide the terrible things that occurred." Todd Maisel

Steve McCurry: We shot down at Ground Zero until nine at night. Then I walked home, but I couldn't sleep. At 3:30 in the morning I got up and walked back down there. As you can imagine, there was serious security, police, firemen, soldiers. But it was very clear to me this needed to be documented; I knew I had to do whatever I had to do to. I found a way to sneak in by cutting through a fence, which allowed me to spend the morning of September 12 onsite. I eventually got removed by the police. They were really angry—the police, the firemen, everyone down there—emotions were running very high. One fireman threatened to beat my brains in with a shovel. I understood their position completely. From their point of view we were there as tourists or spectators, when really we were there to record history, to create a record of this evil deed. The record of photography and magazines and radio and television is how we're informed and how we know what's going on in the world. This was something that absolutely had to be documented.

And that was basically the end of my coverage. Other photographers kept going back, but I didn't. After I did my initial edit of my photos for the Times I didn't really look at them for several years, until I started doing a major edit through my entire archive. At that point it became more of a historical document.

Yoni Brook: Around 11 p.m. or midnight after 9/11, they weren't really letting people back in. I went back through Chinatown, looking for cops and then sneaking around them. I spent the night in 2 World Financial Center, overlooking the pile. In the morning I shot sunrise coming up over it, and that really stayed with me. It was so incredibly beautiful. All this steam and smoke, and then the sunlight coming through it. I was alone in this little room and about 9 or 10 a.m. this photographer came with a strange flash bracket and an assistant. I was like, "Who is this guy?" It was Steve McCurry. He was super nice.

Mario Tama: I met our colleague Chris Hondros the night of 9/11. He called me the morning of September 12 and said we could really use an aerial-type picture. So I kept trying to go into these different buildings. I finally got into one building and climbed up eight or ten flights. I remember looking down and to me it just summed up what the whole thing was all about: Even in the immensity of this evil and horror and destruction, you've got hope, you've got solidarity, you've got people coming together.

There's this stereotype of New York as a hard, cold, intense place of selfish people. But this was beautiful and incredible. Every hour or two some siren would go off, which would mean that a building was going to collapse, and all the workers would run off to the side. Then the siren would stop and they'd come back and they'd just be sifting through.



American Photography
Mario Tama/Getty Images

Spencer Platt: A couple of days later all the journalists were desperate to get down to Ground Zero. It took us the better part of six hours of slowly sneaking, block by block, to get down there. We got into a car park right near Ground Zero and hid under cars for around two hours until it was dark. Then we got out and snuck in.

It was surreal. Totally silent and black, with fires burning. It was something out of Dante. All the firemen were working in one main pit of Ground Zero. They had taken a break and we were walking around. There were probably just four or five firemen just kind of looking at the ground. We had about 45 minutes until someone kicked us out. But we were happy. We got our pictures.

Yoni Brook: I don't think I slept the first couple days. The night after my all-nighter at Ground Zero, Washington Post photographers—my idols—started arriving. They wanted to get down there, but they're all from D.C. I had done it twice already, so I kind of knew where the checkpoints were and how to get around them.

I learned a lot from Michael Williamson when I took him down there. He was like, "First we get the long lens shots; that way if we get kicked out at least we covered our bases." We went into this parking garage, with all these empty cars covered in dust with blinking alarm lights. There were no lights anywhere else. It was very eerie. And I remember he decided to get to this window. We had to break down a door to get to it. So he starts kicking in this door, and this piece of plaster falls. And I'm thinking, "I can't carry Michael Williamson out of here." He got the shot

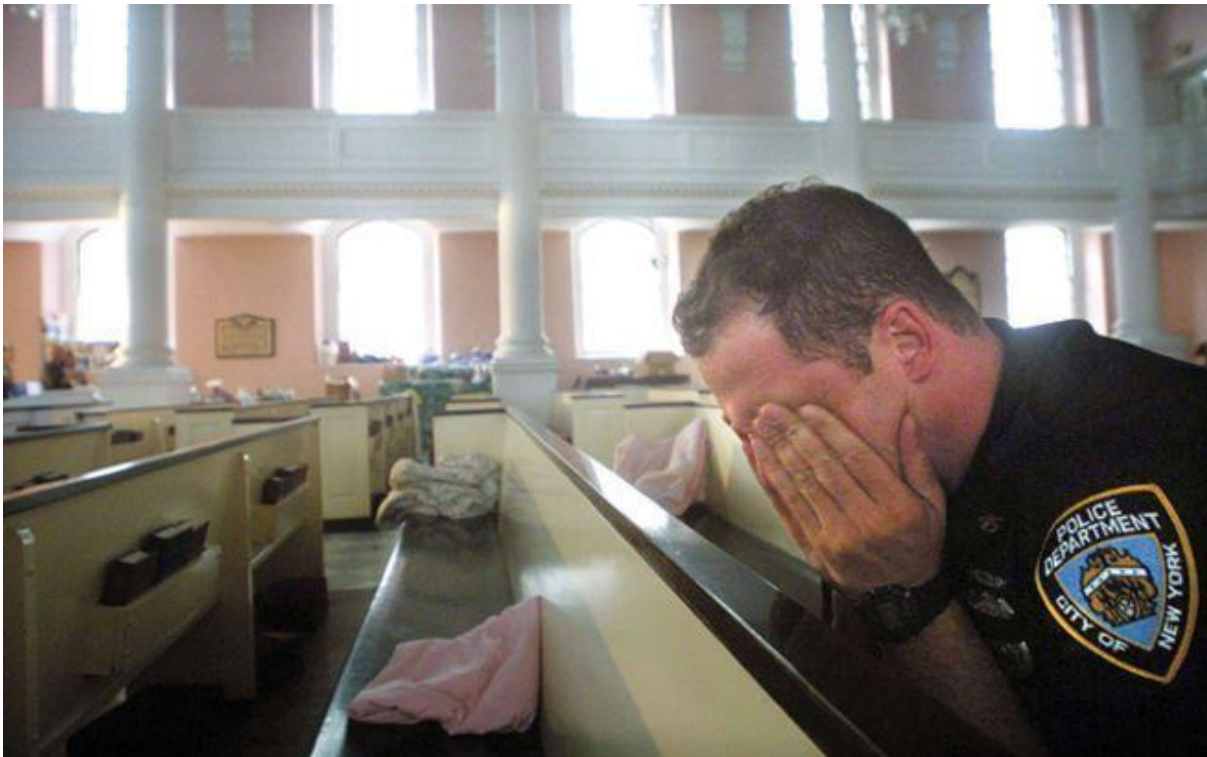


American Photography
Steve McCurry

Steve McCurry: I had just spent a very calm, contemplative, serene month in these Buddhist monestaries in Tibet, where it was very empty and quiet, so to wake up in the morning and have all of our lives change was overwhelming, very hard to deal with. The smell of the burning towers wafted up into my neighborhood for what seemed like weeks. In my neighborhood, the World Trade Center was part of the landscape. In Washington Square Park you could see the towers through the arch. For years I couldn't bear to look down to lower Manhattan and not see that landmark.

Suzanne Plunkett: This wasn't one of those traumatic assignments that you cover and then go home to your separate life with your friends and family. Everyone around me was very upset by the events, so there was no emotional barrier between work and home. I wanted to get away, yet I wanted to stay to cover the biggest news story had ever covered. Every assignment for the next year had some sort of September 11 connection—you couldn't escape it.

Yoni Brook: The other weird thing from that day that I really remember, more than any image, is the smell. I think smell connects to a deeper emotional pathway to your brain than even your eyes do. And it was like this volcanic smell—it must have been like what Pompeii smelled like or something. At my parents' house I still have what I wore that day, sealed up in a garbage bag. I've never opened it. I don't know when I'll open it. That smell encapsulated the day to me. It was just revolting, and a smell that I had never smelled before.



American Photography
Mario Tama/Getty Images

Mario Tama: I went to Afghanistan two months later. Then to Iraq. Then I did Hurricane Charley and Hurricane Katrina, and then the Haiti earthquake. Katrina was the first time I remember since 9/11 where I was able to focus on another domestic story that felt as important.

Usually, our domestic stories are just politics or don't have the same kind of gravitas and pathos. But after you shoot something where 3,000 people die in front of you, you don't match that intensity very easily. We're lucky to live in such a safe country where these kinds of things are so rare.

I feel like I became a New Yorker on 9/11 for sure. I was already in love with the city, but in a superficial way. It just formed a deep connection with the heart of who New Yorkers really are when you get beyond the veneer.

John Botte: People ask me if I feel bad or sad because I knew a lot of those firemen and cops. And I knew a lot of these guys for years. People say, "You must be heartbroken." And I say I don't feel sorrow for one single person. What I feel is pride. I am proud of every one of them. Because they gave themselves, and that's what you raise your right hand for. I served, and I served proudly. And I would do it again. I wouldn't hesitate one bit.

I chose to serve the people. And I wouldn't trade being a New York City cop for the world. I'm not even a registered voter. I have never cast a vote in my life. I'm not a Democrat, I'm not a Republican. I am a servant of the people. I don't care who you are, I don't care what you believe in, I don't care what your religion is, I don't care what color your skin is. I was there to serve, and I served.

I was supposed to be dead by now. I contracted lung disease from being out on the pile, and I still have a lot of setbacks. But I'm very tenacious; I don't give up. They gave me till Christmas of 2003, and I'm still here in 2011. So I'll just keep moving forward, and if I go tomorrow, I'll go with a camera in my hand and my shield in my back pocket. I had fun. If I'm on this earth another 15 years, then so be it. I'll try to see and do as much as I can.

"I went to war because of this. I had never gone to war before." Todd Maisel

David Handschuh: For a long time, [in my teens and twenties], when I was chasing news, it was easier to disconnect from a human that was injured or dying or dead. In the post-9/11 world, I'm more acutely aware that we're not just taking photographs, we're intersecting with people, often at a horrible point in their lives. So how we act, how we behave, what our ethics are, how we deal with taking a photograph of somebody who's very hurt or dying or dead — I've become more aware of those issues.

Todd Maisel: I went to war because of this. I had never gone to war before. I was always a street photographer. Fires, homicides—that was my thing. I would cover the inner city and the terrible things that went on. After 9/11 I was an embed in Iraq with the First Marine Expeditionary Force. The people I lost on 9/11 give me strength. I have their pictures on my dashboard. They ride into battle with me every day.

Allen Tannenbaum: I've been covering the progress of the construction at the World Trade Center site, as often as I can. Every chance I get to go down there I ...do pictures of the construction there, which is pretty amazing at this point. It's getting really quite big right now, so it's fantastic. It's finally visible from our place in Tribeca.

Todd Maisel: I think that we as photojournalists have a mission to keep history alive. The thing about history is, if you don't remember it you repeat it. And God knows I would never in my whole life want to have to go through 9/11 again—great photos or whatever the hell, I don't want to be there. I don't want it to happen again. But I guess if it would happen—I'd have to be there. That's just my mission.