Ever since I can remember, I have been drawn to performance. Not the act of performing, but rather, performance’s ability to take abstract memories and emotions and form them into something meaningful.

To me, theatre is the strength of the muted voice, the facility of change, the potential of empathy, and the ability to show the human condition how we wish to see it. When done well, theatre has the unique ability to break down the boundaries of everyday life and show our hearts what our minds are often afraid to think.
I first experienced this in college when I saw Pina Bausch’s *Cafe Muller*. Prior to this, I was interested in physical theatre, but never truly realized that movement has the ability to explore complexities that language often omits. What I saw on stage was liberating. Pina effortlessly made unclear ideas lucid by combining lyrical choreography with the subtle pedestrian movement. Before she died, her work would investigate complicated issues such as emotional fragmentation, memory, gender politics, and trauma. She would do so by focusing on the subtle aspects of everyday movement and spatial relationships. By focusing on what is often invisible Pina was able to unearth emotional truths rarely explored.

“I'm not interested in how people move, but what moves them.”

-Pina Bausch
What is important about Boal and Ganguly is that they do not export their own ideological aesthetic on a given community when creating art. Rather, they trust in the creativity of individuals they work with. By involving those traditionally excluded from public discourse into a creative process, dynamic new solutions to cyclical communal problems are brought to light on stage.

I saw this function first hand in West Bengal and can attest the participatory methods used by Boal and Ganguly create change I once believed impossible.

Ganguly once told me that when an individual engages in the artistic process they experience a basic human right.

This sentiment drives me to work alongside individuals/communities do not openly think of themselves as artists.
Everyone has a film that takes their breath away. For me, *In the Mood for Love* holds this special place. I remember watching this movie in film school and being changed completely by the experience. Through Doyle’s work, I realized that being a cinematographer was exactly like being an actor on stage. To be successful, you need to be an open vessel and make formal choices based on what you experience in the room.

Doyle picks up on real time subtleties of his subjects and shoots them in a fashion that his camera feels almost like a character on set. His cinematography ultimately colors and complements the interior life and emotional arch of his subjects.

“I really think music and movement - dance, you know - The relationship between me, the camera and the actor is always a dance.”
The Left Bank filmmakers of the late 1950s and early 1960s influence how I view documentary as a vehicle of truth. With a tendency to question the efficacy of historical representation, Alain Resnais, along with his Left Bank counterparts, famously create films that blur fictive and non-fictive elements to question if film is a medium that can render reality.

The opening of Resnais film, Hiroshima Mon Amour, is perhaps the most powerful and captivating example of how traditional documentary footage can blend together with elements of narrative filmmaking to illustrate what Werner Herzog calls “ecstatic truth.”

The idea of “ecstatic truth” comes from the notion that the very process of observing impacts and alters what one observes. Therefore fabrication, imagination, and stylization in documentary might be a more “truthful” way to represent reality over a verite style. The opening of Hiroshima Mon Amour is a perfect rendering of this concept and I am inspired to create documentaries that function in a space somewhere between “reality” and imagination.

Trinh’s early work functions as an “interrogation” of traditional ethnographic study. Given that I have decided to spend my life documenting the experiences of others, her films, especially Reassemblage, is an exemplar on how I want to ethically and creatively approach ethnography.

“I do not wish to speak about, only to speak nearby.”
Barbara Koppel

Being a Michigan boy from a working class family with strong union ties, it would be impossible for me to not be influenced by filmmakers like Michael Moore and Barbara Koppel.

What I find most inspiring about Koppel’s work is her ability to create vérité footage while acting as a character in her films to change and disrupt the events that she is filming.

Like Michael Moore, Kopple tends to create a classic US versus THEM rhetorical strategy to sell her ideology. However, Koppel uses an extremely nuanced approach.

Through clear editing and a strong cinematography strategy, Kopple creates distinct visual borders between union workers and the industry that these workers are striking to change. Her visuals in this film created and embodied feeling of being on the picket line with the union workers, an experience that I will never forget.

Maya Deren

I learned how to edit by watching the experimental films of Maya Daren on repeat. Whether shooting the body, objects, architecture, or landscapes, Daren effortlessly choreographs complex movement on screen to create a visual experience that always puts me in a place where I unconsciously feel her edits.

I always find myself coming back to her films for this reason, especially A Study in Choreography for the Camera.

“The task of cinema or any other art form is not to translate hidden messages of the unconscious soul into art but to experiment with the effects contemporary technical devices have on nerves, minds, or souls.”
Ballen’s documentary and fine art photography creatively addresses the marginalization that has developed under Apartheid South Africa.

His documentary and fine art photography “take[s] your eyeballs and turn[s] them around in your head, [so] things can happen.” Like Diane Arbus, Ballen takes on the taboo in his work, and by doing so, lets us look deeply within ourselves.

His work is uncomfortable, and something in me is fascinated by this dynamic. Maybe this is because his subjects are “your cousins. You're related to them. You are seeing a picture of your insides.”

“The best photographs are the ones there are no words for, that penetrate the inner being before the conscious mind can react.”
When I first looked at Foglia’s collection, A Natural Order, I said to myself “I wish I could shoot films like this!”

Foglia’s aesthetic blends diametric opposites. His photos are raw yet warm, familiar and wild, vulnerable yet silently strong. His work brings up feelings of nostalgia in me even though my life experience is drastically different from the subjects he shoots. His photos get at what it means to be human.

That is all I could ever ask to achieve when creating work.

Like Foglia, I am drawn to the aesthetic and emotion of Christopher Anderson’s work. His “book projects” (above), influenced how I think about documenting moments of extreme emotion.

For the past fifteen years Anderson is probably known best for his war photography, however, his ability to capture humanity in times of extreme struggle are what influence me most.
Most documentary work created for the web is trite and gimmicky. The formal aspects of web art usually are inspired by the latest “cool” thing programmers can do with Java, HTML, or CSS.

The works below do not adhere to this convention and serve as a wonderful example of how artists can formally present work in ways that embrace the limitations of the internet.

- **Question Bridge**
- **Reinvention Stories**
- **18 Days in Egypt**
- **Gaza/Sderot: life in spite of everything**