

Large print guide

Storyteller:
Photography by
Tim Hetherington



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Tim Hetherington was an intrepid and innovative storyteller. From photojournalist to humanitarian, and award-winning film director, he was determined to communicate with audiences in a variety of impactful and challenging ways.

He chose to get closer to people and immerse himself in human stories from the frontlines and beyond. From these experiences he made multimedia work which reveals a personal exploration of conflict, presented in ways which are more thoughtful and visually captivating than the news we watch, read, or browse.

For the first time, from his archive now held by IWM, this exhibition brings together aspects of Hetherington's personal journey and perspective alongside his most engaging projects.

'... in these terrible moments people are still human and that for me is the redeeming factor of the human experience... it's important for me to make work that is connected to people.'

Tim Hetherington

The films in this display contain strong language and imagery

'This is about narrative. I'm very open to any visual concepts and any possibilities at my disposal to better explain to people the ideas I'm exploring.'

Tim Hetherington

Video: James Brabazon, Sebastian Junger, Mike Kamber, Stephen Mayes and Maya Mumma describe what made Tim Hetherington such an innovative image maker

3 minutes

Content warning: this exhibition contains graphic content including images of wounded people, descriptions of violence and death.

Project:

Civil war and peace in Liberia 2003 – 2007

The Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003) was Hetherington's first experience of an active frontline. Driven by his desire to explore the region he joined journalist James Brabazon to capture the story of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) as they marched on the capital, Monrovia, to force Liberian President Charles Taylor from power.

Hetherington initially photographed and filmed LURD combatants over five weeks, later returning to work and at times live in Liberia as it transitioned from civil war towards democracy.

He produced the photobook *Long Story Bit by Bit: Liberia Retold* over this period of great turmoil and change, along with video content for a documentary film, and contributed photography for exhibitions and magazine articles.



An Unconventional Approach

Hetherington chose to prioritise building connections with people in combination with having a long-term approach to his projects.

Photojournalists often spend just weeks in warzones before moving on to new assignments, but Hetherington wanted to engage more deeply with people, at times returning to the same places over several months or years to develop better connections and understanding.

He also broke with convention by dusting-off vintage film cameras to use on the frontlines, at a time when most photojournalists were using digital cameras. The effect of this was to slow him down, giving him more freedom to interact with people whilst challenging him to take more purposeful and carefully considered photographs.

LURD combatants leave the town of Tubmanburg for the Liberian capital, Monrovia. June 2003.

A lack of fuel and vehicles meant most LURD combatants walked over 35 miles to Monrovia. Their stated aim was to end President Charles Taylor's rule in Liberia.

Top right: A reflection of Tim Hetherington travelling with Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) members in Liberia. June 2003.

The Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003) was Hetherington's first experience of an active frontline. Working alongside colleague James Brabazon, he filmed and photographed LURD forces during their offensive on Monrovia.

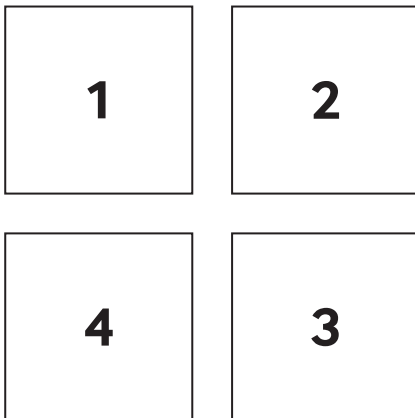
Bottom right: LURD Chairman Sekou Damate Conneh in Conakry, Guinea, from where he directed an offensive against the forces of Liberian President Charles Taylor. May 2003.

***The Guardian Weekend* magazine, 9th September 2003. Cover photograph by Tim Hetherington.**

In the town of Tubmanburg, members of LURD sit in front of a formation preparing to march towards the Liberian capital, Monrovia. June 2003.

'The young men have a cycle that they must break... yet another generation of younger fighters has now been weaned on guns and power... what will become of them when they are subjected to the law of the state.'

Extract from Hetherington's diary written in 2003.



1. A member of LURD wearing a stars and stripes bandana. June 2003.

Liberia and the United States of America (US) have a long and complex history. US cultural influence is evident in several of Hetherington's photos from Liberia.

2. A LURD combatant with an injured foot lays in a makeshift hospital in Monrovia. June 2003.

3. A LURD combatant with his partner during an advance on the Liberian capital, Monrovia. June 2003.

During the Second Liberian Civil War, Hetherington took photos that contrast with the violence and devastation often associated with war photography. He spent time engaging with people and carefully chose shots which show the humanity of conflict.

4. A LURD combatant is treated by medics during the offensive on Monrovia, June 2003.

A wounded LURD combatant is carried in one of the few available vehicles during the advance on Liberia's capital, Monrovia. June 2003.

Civilians flee as LURD forces begin firing to disperse looters near Freeport, Monrovia, June 2003.

'I do not set out to make a work of journalism, but rather a visual novel that draws upon real people and places.'

Tim Hetherington

A LURD combatant in Tubmanburg. June 2003.

In many photographs taken by Hetherington in warzones the subject is looking towards the camera, creating a clear sense of connection and awareness of being photographed.

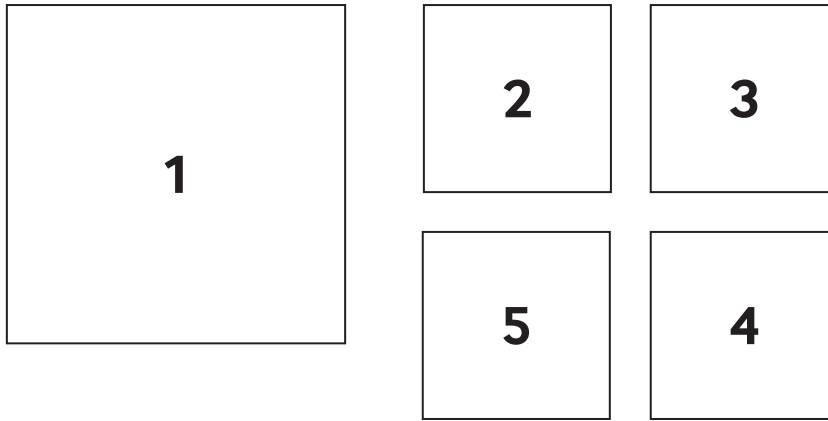
A Liberian woman carries cassava leaves to the central market in Tubmanburg during the Second Liberian Civil War. 2003.

Whilst working in areas of conflict, Hetherington strove to photograph a broad perspective of people's lives regardless of the trauma, drama, and politics of the conflict going on around them.

A LURD combatant, known during the civil war as Black Diamond. June 2003.

Hetherington traveled with LURD combatants over several weeks, resulting in photographs which capture a broader perspective of their individual character and experiences.

Through this deeper insight than we typically see on social media, in news bulletins or 24-hour TV news channels, Hetherington's work challenges our assumptions about conflict and those caught up in it.



1. Former LURD combatant, known during the civil war as Black Diamond, in Monrovia. September 2004.

At the end of the civil war Hetherington returned to Liberia, at times living there to photograph its long recovery and revisit those who had been involved in the fighting.

2. In post-war Liberia, the families of former combatants bring rockets and ammunition to a United Nations (UN) disarmament point. April 2004.

Following the end of the civil war in August 2003, the UN set up a special mission in Liberia to try and install a lasting peace. The resource-rich country was starting to turn a corner, but after years of war, corruption and poverty, Liberia's future remained extremely uncertain.

3. Post-war Tubmanburg. 2004.

Local artists sit with a portrait they have made of LURD

Chairman, Sekou Conneh, based on Hetherington's photo (below) of Conneh from 2003.



© IWM (DC 64026)

4. Post-war Monrovia. Liberians queue to vote for a new President. October 2005.

The ballot included veteran political figure, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and famous Liberian former footballer, George Weah. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became President in 2006 followed by George Weah in 2018.

5. Monrovia, Liberia. October 2005.

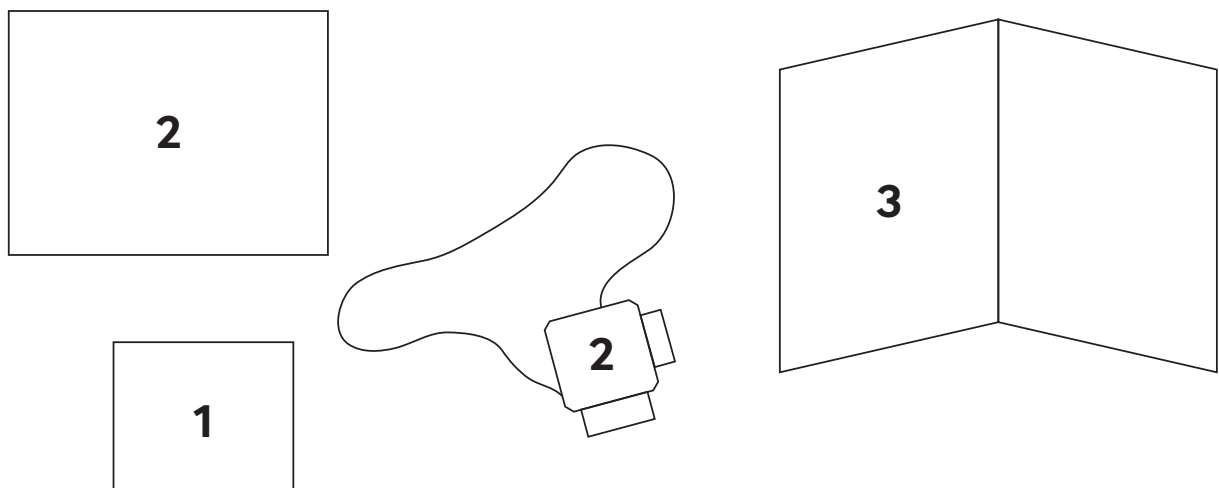
Former LURD Chief of Staff, General Sia Sherif, known during the civil war as Cobra, sits at his desk in his post-war role as Liberia's Deputy Minister of Defence.

Video: Unconventional approach

James Brabazon, Sebastian Junger, Mike Kamber, and Maya Mumma describe Hetherington's innovative and thoughtful approach to his film and photography work in Liberia.

3 minutes

Showcase



1. A **diary** kept by Hetherington during the Liberian Civil War in 2003.

As a prolific diarist, Hetherington's thoughts on his projects and experiences working in areas of conflict are well documented.

'No one speaks as we traverse the inky water. It's an awesome feeling and one border experience that will always remain with me... On the far bank I see torch

light. We are met by armed men.'

2. **Rolleiflex 2.8 FX camera** and **contact sheet** showing it being used by Hetherington.

To take photos with this Rolleiflex 2.8 FX camera Hetherington had to manually wind the film on with the side handle, look down through the view finder at the top and set the focus of the lens. This was a lengthy process, which at times he had to do under fire and whilst switching with using a video camera.

3. Hetherington's 2009 photo book, ***Long Story Bit by Bit: Liberia Retold***, combines photography, oral testimony, and personal writing to give a unique perspective on conflict.

Making a book like this takes a great deal of patience to uncover and piece together the many layers and characters of a story. It would not have been possible without Hetherington immersing himself in Liberia over several years and his ability to combine different styles of storytelling.

'I didn't want to pretend this was about the war in Afghanistan. It was a conscious decision. [It] comments on the experience of the soldier. It's brotherhood.'

Tim Hetherington

Project:

**Embedded with the United States
Army in Afghanistan
2007 – 2008**

In 2007 Hetherington travelled with author and journalist Sebastian Junger to photograph the frontlines of the war in Afghanistan. They joined up with a platoon from the 173rd Airborne Brigade based at a small and isolated outpost called Restrepo in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley. They were attached to and under the protection of the platoon as part of a partnering scheme for journalists known as 'embedding'.

Initially there for an assignment with *Vanity Fair* magazine, Hetherington and Junger took turns to embed with the platoon for periods of a 15-month deployment, eating, sleeping, and going on operations with the soldiers. Their work there resulted in books, news items, a video installation, and the multi-award winning and Oscar nominated 2010 documentary film, *Restrepo*.



Part of the Platoon

By living for long periods as the soldiers did at the Restrepo Outpost, Hetherington built a strong bond of trust with the men of the platoon. This allowed him to capture every nuance of how they behaved in this austere environment and during times of extreme tension, fear, vulnerability, exhaustion, and boredom.

He was interested in the nature of the bonds they formed, and his experiences of living with the soldiers led him to ask questions through his work about the nature of masculinity.

Photography covering the war in Afghanistan at this time tended towards news reporting, but Hetherington chose a completely different angle, focusing instead on the young soldiers he shared the frontline deployment with.

Above: A United States Army (US Army) U-60 Black Hawk helicopter landing on a village rooftop in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, as US military personnel wait alongside a journalist to be extracted. October 2007.

The embed system for journalists working alongside US forces in Afghanistan allowed reasonable flexibility of movement. However, Hetherington's long-term commitment to experiencing the conflict alongside a single platoon at the Restrepo Outpost meant others would more regularly come and go from the Korengal Valley.

Right: United States Army soldiers at the Restrepo Outpost in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan. July 2008.

'The soldiers look like something out of Vietnam. There is now no filter for the film. People just carry on as normal now in front of the camera.'

Extract from Hetherington's diary written in 2008.

Video: Operation Rock Avalanche

Operation Rock Avalanche, described through the voice and photography of Tim Hetherington. Supporting photography is by Balasz Gardi, capturing Hetherington during this eventful operation which took place in October 2007.

3 minutes

***Sleeping Soldiers* is a group of photographs taken by Hetherington showing soldiers at their most vulnerable; asleep in the Korengal Valley. Without their weapons and uniforms, he shows them much less as a part of the machinery of war, and more human.**

The Korengal Valley, Kunar Province, Afghanistan. September 2007.

A United States Army soldier conducting surveillance deep into the valley from an observation point at the 'KOP' (Korengal Outpost).

'Infidel' was a name used over insurgent radio channels to describe United States Army soldiers based at the Restrepo Outpost. Some of the soldiers responded to this ironically by having 'Infidel' tattoos. The word 'Infidel' was also used by Hetherington for his book about the soldiers based at Restrepo.

Having survived a bullet that might easily have killed him, this United States Army soldier had two winged bullets tattooed on each shoulder whilst in the Korengal Valley. He explained they were symbolic of the 'guardian angel' he felt was watching over him.

Tattoos were common amongst the soldiers based at the Restrepo Outpost, and soldiers were even inked during deployment. Their tattoos can be seen as part of a shared or 'warrior' identity.

Some tattoos related to their time in Afghanistan - others were made in memory of those they had served with, or were symbolic of military traditions like the Battlefield Cross.

Having a 'Spartan' tattoo inked at the 'KOP' (Korengal Outpost), Afghanistan.

The platoon that Hetherington was embedded with collectively called themselves 'Spartans'.

An illustration made onto a table at the Restrepo Outpost in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan.

'Damn the valley' was a phrase often used by the soldiers based at the Restrepo Outpost.

Top: A United States Army (US Army) soldier practices his golf swing at the 'KOP' (Korengal Outpost) in Afghanistan. April 2008.

Bottom: US Army soldiers at the Restrepo Outpost in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan. June 2008.

'In the end it has little to do with the war, and a lot to do with being men... or in the case here, becoming men.'

Extract from Hetherington's diary written in 2008.

United States Army soldiers at the Restrepo Outpost in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan. April 2008.

‘There’s a social dynamic which is very strange on the one hand and very seductive on the other. It’s one of the most enjoyable things to be around... this sense of brotherhood, of being men together.’

Extract from Hetherington’s diary written in 2008.

Top: United States Army (US Army) soldiers in the Korengal Valley. October 2007.

Many of the photos that Hetherington took in Afghanistan are intended to show how young soldiers behave and relate to each other in the extreme circumstances of frontline deployment.

Bottom: A US Army soldier in Afghanistan. September 2007. Winner of the World Press Photo award in 2008.

‘For me, this image isn’t about a nation, or an idea. It’s about a young man stuck on the side of a mountain in Afghanistan. His world has become the four dirt walls he dug by hand. A quarter of his platoon has been killed or wounded, and he knows that he may never see his wife again.’

The picture is also about how I felt. I lived with these soldiers. I went on patrol with them. I ate their food and slept out on their cots. Like them, I felt exhausted during battle, and laughed when it was all over. I too was terrified at the prospect of being overrun by insurgents.’
Extract from Hetherington’s award acceptance speech.

Top: United States Army (US Army) soldiers based at the Restrepo Outpost during a firefight with insurgents across the Korengal Valley. June 2008.

The Restrepo Outpost was built by the hands, shovels and pickaxes of the US Army soldiers who were based there. It was located at the outer limits of US military presence in Afghanistan and within an area known by some as ‘the valley of death’, due to the extremely high rates of combat and casualties for both sides.

Bottom: A US Army Captain with an adopted local dog at the ‘KOP’ (Korengal Outpost) in Afghanistan. September 2007.

The ‘KOP’ was the main operating base for the 173rd Airborne Brigade and resupplied the much smaller Restrepo Outpost by helicopter.

When at the KOP, the soldiers enjoyed many more home comforts such as hot showers and phonelines to

friends and family back home. Restrepo, on the other hand, had very basic living conditions and was more vulnerable to attack.

The platoon fill sandbags at the Restrepo Outpost. June 2008.

At the start of the embed, Hetherington made photos showing the intensity of the fighting, though he later became much more interested in the relationships between the men of the platoon.

He writes in his 2010 book, *Infidel*: 'I saw this image, I thought more about the very male atmosphere that existed up at the outpost. I saw there was a special kind of bonding going on – something forged in the extreme circumstances.'

A United States Army soldier in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan. October 2007.

***Photo District News* (PDN) magazine, Volume 29, Issue 8. An article on Hetherington's work in Afghanistan by Daryl Lang.**

Project:

Healing Sport

1999 – 2002

Healing Sport explores the consequences of conflict in African countries including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Angola. The project used an approach to storytelling Hetherington described as a 'trojan horse', because it drew audiences into engaging with challenging themes of conflict through the more familiar subject of sport.

A member of the Liberian football team the Millennium Stars, at a training pitch in Monrovia, Liberia. May 1999.

Early in Hetherington's career he got the opportunity to photograph a team of young footballers, including former combatants from Liberia.

Top: Members of the Liberian football team the Millennium Stars pray before the start of a training session in Monrovia, Liberia. May 1999.

Bottom: A young Liberian footballer carrying refreshments for a match in the United Kingdom (UK).

In September 1999, Hetherington toured around the UK with the Millennium Stars, taking photographs which explore sport as a means of rehabilitation from conflict.

Top: Young Liberians gathered by the side of a football pitch in central Monrovia, Liberia. May 1999.

'Despite the social breakdown that transpired during the war [in Liberia], football has always remained an

important way to bring the youth together.’

Tim Hetherington, June 2006.

Bottom: Members of the Liberian football team the Millennium Stars take timeout between matches at a video game arcade in the UK. September 1999.

Top: The Siaka Stevens Stadium, Freetown, which became a displacement camp during and after the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002). December 1999.

While working in Sierra Leone, Hetherington made photographs showing the lasting impact of conflict on civilians who had taken refuge inside the stadium. Despite the circumstances, athletes continued to train where many were forced to live.

Bottom: Freetown, Sierra Leone. December 1999.

Hetherington decided to combine his photographs of athletes training inside the Siaka Stevens Stadium with those of the Millennium Stars football team to create his first major project, *Healing Sport*.

A photo story by Hetherington from his *Healing Sport* project, featured in the book *Tales from a Globalizing World*, edited by Daniel Schwartz. Published by Thames & Hudson.

An amputee footballer at a match in a war veterans' camp on the outskirts of Luanda, Angola. June 2002.

Hetherington's *Healing Sport* project would ultimately encompass several countries, sports, and arenas across Africa.

Closing the Distance

In 1999, Hetherington began work on his first fully recognised project, *Healing Sport*. Over a decade later, in April 2011, he was mortally wounded whilst working on a new project in Libya. Both projects, at either end of his career, sought to close the distance between his audience and the human stories of conflict he explored in his work.

We can only look at clues provided by written ideas he left behind, his photographs from Libya and his previous work, like *Healing Sport*, to help us understand how he might have developed this project further.

Unfinished Project:

Libya

2011

During the Arab Spring, a wave of anti-government protests and armed uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East in early 2011, Hetherington embarked on a new project photographing combatants fighting to end Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya.

Before leaving he wrote a brief suggesting he wanted to 'produce a staged feeling for the photographs' he took there. He then hoped to develop this further into 'work that highlights how modern conflict has also becom[e] a performance, and how the desire in the media for a theatrical version of conflict shapes our understanding'.



An anti-Gaddafi combatant, Libya. April 2011.

Many of Hetherington's photographs from Libya are brightly lit portraits. The often inexperienced combatants in them appear at times to be aware that they are being photographed, even performing for the camera.

Video: The dangers of the frontline

Sebastian Junger, Tim Hetherington, and Steven Mayes talk about the risks of working in extremely hazardous environments, such as the Libyan Civil War in 2011.

3 minutes

Above: Anti-Gaddafi combatants on the highly contested Tripoli Street in Misurata, Libya. April 2011.

During the Arab Spring in Libya, Hetherington embarked on a new project photographing combatants fighting to end Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya. He was mortally wounded not long after this photo was taken.

**Right: An anti-Gaddafi combatant in Libya.
April 2011.**

**A mourner crouched at the gate of a cemetery
draped in the national flag of Libya. Libya,
April 2011.**

**An anti-Gaddafi combatant with a convoy of
pickup trucks, Libya. April 2011.**

‘... people are conscious of the camera and want to tell
us something more – they want to perform for us.’

Extract from Hetherington’s diary written in April 2011.

**Above: A civilian man with two children holding
munitions on a street in Misurata, Libya.
April 2011.**

**Right: An anti-Gaddafi combatant in the Libyan
desert. April 2011.**

Hetherington believed we all carry an ‘image library’
in our heads, which might in turn mean combatants
and photographers reproduce images from one war

to the next, blurring the lines between war, memory, fiction, and reality.

Hetherington was a prolific diarist and kept this **diary** during his time photographing the conflict in Libya. Inside he records his experiences and thoughts on subjects such as the ethics of conflict photography.

The last entry in the diary, dated 19 April 2011, was written the day before he was killed alongside photojournalist Chris Hondros in a mortar attack.

Touch the screen to explore a selection of the diary entries

An anti-Gaddafi combatant in an abandoned office on Tripoli Street in Misurata, Libya. April 2011.

This previously unpublished photograph is just one of the many thousands taken by Hetherington that are in the IWM archive and are now publicly accessible.

A vehicle belonging to pro-Gaddafi forces destroyed by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) airstrike in support of anti-Gaddafi combatants on the ground. April 2011.

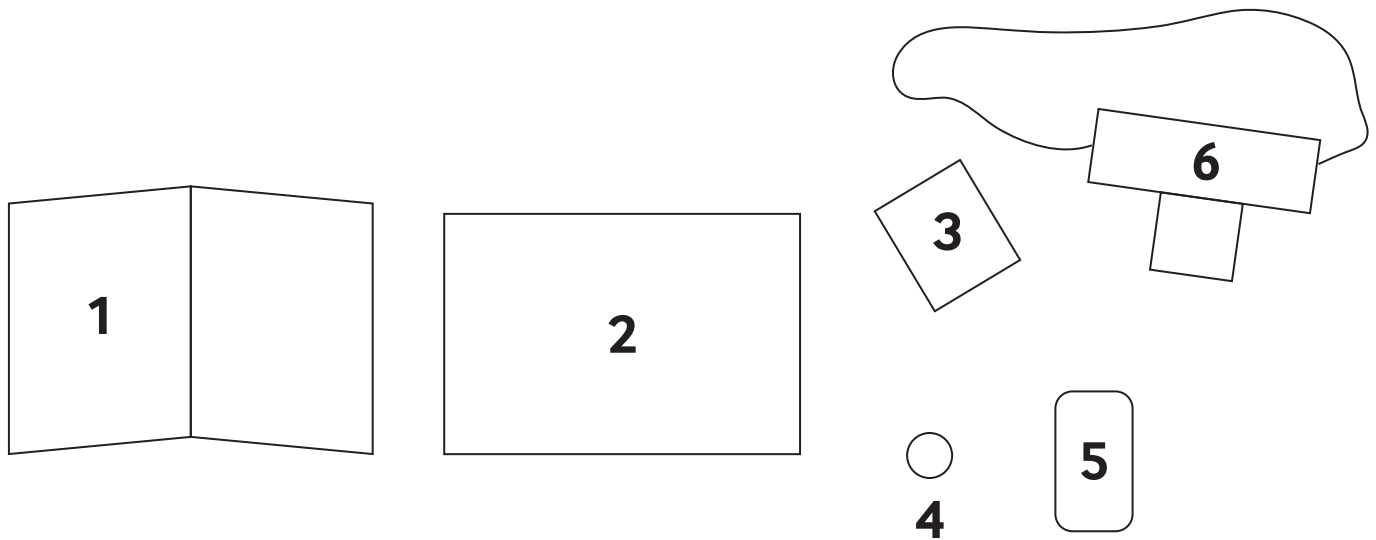
An anti-Gaddafi combatant mans a heavy machine gun fitted to a pickup truck in north-eastern Libya. April 2011.

Award winning photojournalist Chris Hondros photographs a group of anti-Gaddafi combatants in a pickup truck, Libya. April 2011.

Both Chris Hondros and Hetherington would later be mortally wounded by a mortar explosion in the besieged city of Misurata.

An anti-Gaddafi combatant in a pickup truck, Libya. April 2011.

Showcase



1. Notes and a hand-drawn storyboard for the *Healing Sport* project in a **diary** kept by Hetherington in 2002-2003.

Similar sketches feature in several of Hetherington's diaries. They provide an insight into his thought process and approach to developing his projects.

2. Millennium Stars UK football tour 1999 - **Souvenir Programme**, produced by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

3. **Vivitar flash gun**, used with Hetherington's Mamiya 7 film camera to make brightly lit photographs.

'People asked me what sort of camera kit I had today and I described it as if I was here for wedding

photography...Whatever happened to the use of flash?'.

Extract from Hetherington's diary written in April 2011.

4. A **badge** made in support of the anti-Gaddafi movement in Libya, picked up by Hetherington whilst photographing the conflict in 2011.

It is likely that Hetherington found this badge in Benghazi where large-scale anti-Gaddafi protests were taking place in March 2011. The colours represent the Libyan national flag and 'A Free Libya' is written across the middle in Arabic. The image is of Omar al-Mukhtar, an icon of the 2011 uprising.

5. **iPhone** used by Hetherington during the conflict in Libya, 2011.

Today, smart phones are a vital tool for journalists working in conflict zones. They are used for a huge range of applications, from recording news reports to storing and transmitting safety information, such as GPS locations and medical data.

Some of these features are more contemporary than when Hetherington was in Libya, though he was already experimenting with using photo apps and posting about events on social media.

6. Mamiya 7 film camera used by Hetherington in Libya, 2011.

Despite working with a digital camera in Afghanistan (2007–2008), Hetherington chose to go back to using a film camera for his photography work in Libya. This type of camera can produce images with a different aesthetic to the digital cameras being used by photojournalists working in the news media at the time.

‘Diary is a highly personal and experimental film that expresses the subjective experience of my work, and was made as an attempt to locate myself after ten years of reporting. It’s a kaleidoscope of images that link our western reality to the seemingly distant worlds we see in the media.’

Tim Hetherington

This film contains flashing lights and graphic imagery

**Self-portrait by Tim Hetherington, Libya.
April 2011.**

Hetherington was at the beginning of a new project when he took this image. Of the many self-portraits he made throughout his career, this was his last.

**Video: an edited version of Tim Hetherington's
film *Diary*, 2010.**

The full film can be seen on the IWM website at this QR link.

5 minutes



Storyteller: Photography by Tim Hetherington
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Explore further

Discover more of Tim Hetherington's work in the Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries at IWM London.

The full archive of Hetherington's work, including other projects and films, can be explored on the IWM website:

