



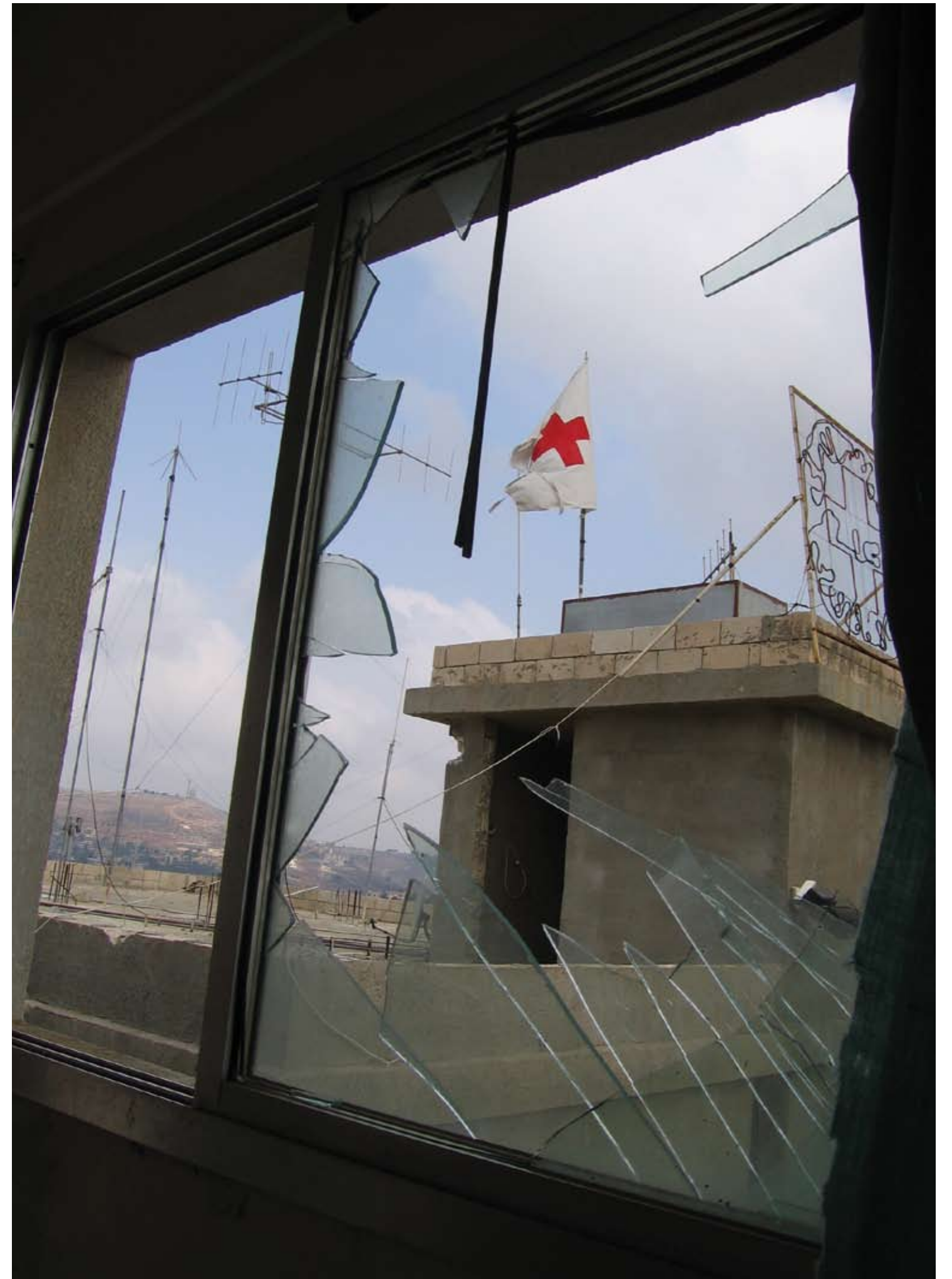
The story of a Lebanese civilian

Meet Carol Mansour, the woman behind the award-winning camera

She's worked as a director, editor, producer... the list just goes on. This prolific talent has so far made four documentaries that deal with the plight of men, women and children from the Middle East and around the world. The latest one, *A Summer Not to Forget*, opened the Jordan Short Film Festival earlier this year and has won awards from Canada, Spain and America, the most recent of which was the Best Short Documentary at the International Documentary Film Festival in New Zealand. But how did the psychologist turned director get the nerve to film a war? Here she let's Skin on her secrets:

What was your first directing project? How did it come about – and what did you learn from it?

I worked at a TV station for many years as an editor and later a director on different shows. My first personal project was *100% Asphalt* a documentary shot in Cairo about street children. It all started after I happened to visit a friend who ran an NGO that worked with street children. A year later, I decided to make the documentary. I was amazed at the fact that despite living amongst us, we know so little about the complexities of street kids. I now see them in a different light: young children victimized by the difficulties of life. >





“A Summer Not to Forget was an urgent and personal documentation of my lived experience”

As someone born and raised in Lebanon, how much of your environment made it natural for you to cover stories in the region?

The fact that I was born and raised in Lebanon definitely contributes to my choice of the subjects that I work on and how I see them. If I were born in Geneva, I don't think I would be prone to make a documentary on the war, street children or migrant workers, since I would deal with topics relevant to that region.

Within just 27 minutes, the documentary shows a huge number of bloody and mangled bodies. How essential was this to the story you wanted to tell?

Unfortunately for us, “a huge number of bloody and mangled bodies” was the essence of the horror we lived in for 34 days in the summer of 2006. My showing this was as essential to truly show the crimes committed.

Are you morbid by nature...?

I am not a morbid person, I live in morbid times.

You used mostly facts and figures in your narration; how did this help the message? Why did you yourself do the narration?

The use of statistics and numbers was a way of quantifying the tragic destruction that Israel imposed on Lebanon. I narrated the film because it was my story, the story of a Lebanese civilian. I also wanted the narration to be done in a sort of calm and composed voice so that the images in the movie would speak for themselves. The narration provides statistical information while the film shows the emotional truth.

What went through your head as you held the camera and dodged the bombs? Were do you get the backbone?

Much of the footage in the midst of war was the work of brave journalists. In the times when I was filming, I can't say that my pants weren't drenched in sweat by the time I made it safely out of danger.

How did this documentary differ from your previous three? Which one of the four best informs the direction of your career?

Though I live the story of each film I work on, *A Summer Not to Forget* was an urgent and personal documentation of my lived experience. The four documentaries all critically inform my career and are in the same direction of social and economic justice.

You first got a BA in psychology before getting into the film industry. How has this – if at all – helped your filmmaking?

It helped me realize that I did not want to work in psychology! After my degree, I got my training in camera and editing and found my true calling.

Will you only be covering stories in the Middle East? Where else would you like to take your camera?

As a citizen of the world, working anywhere where there is a true human story inspires me. I hope that I'll be able to cover such accounts from people living in the east and west.



“This time, I am focusing on the Lebanese voices”

What are the topics you'd like to bring to public awareness?

The world is becoming such a sad place that we need to be aware of many things. It is important to expose wherever there is no fairness or justice.

What are you working on now?

Besides the projects that bring food to the table (which are so many at the moment: TV spots, documentaries for UN agencies, etc), I am working on a second documentary on migrant workers commissioned by the International Labour Organization.

How will it differ from your previous film, *Maid in Lebanon*, which was about Sri Lankan workers in Beirut?

It is very challenging because that documentary received lots of attention. This time, I am focusing on the Lebanese voices. I have filmed many hours of footage and now I am working on putting a 35 to 45 minute piece.

What does success mean to you?

Happiness and money, only if they go together. I don't want to be rich if I am not happy.

Will future technologies have an impact on your work?

I have been in the film industry for 15 years and technology has moved at a lightning speed. It definitely has been interesting to be in this industry during this time. For now, I will still be able to film and edit with the equipment that I have for a while. When I will feel dépassée, I will buy new equipment!

Define art.

Art is anything that moves me. I need to understand what I am seeing and feel it.

What's your favourite thing to do after you've completed a documentary?

Usually there is so much to do after finishing a documentary. I would already be working on another film, which means that I don't even have time to enjoy the finishing of the first... But if I ever do have the time to relax, I would love to have a massage with a glass of champagne.

Where would you like to live in the world?

Unfortunately the world has become a dangerous place. I just want to live in peace, sun and beach.

If you weren't in the film industry, what would you be?

I spent eight years of my life after finishing my psychology degree doing odd jobs, things like painting houses, selling popcorn in cinema theatres, working in supermarkets. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do with my life, until the day I followed a workshop on camera, script writing and editing. At that moment (I was already 30 years old) I discovered what my true passion was. I don't see myself doing anything else.

Describe the world in a metaphor

My grandfather used to say: life is a play with a series of unrehearsed scenes. ●