

Homicide

In 2015 Baltimore had 344 homicides, and most of them were from gun violence. Since, I have moved here in 2008, there has been a strong stigma about the safety of Baltimore. From day one in the city, people informed me to “never walk alone.” Comments like these made me feel uncomfortable to move around in my own community and get to know people. Baltimore is charming for many reasons, and one of them includes all the small communities or neighborhoods we have inside of the city. This city is the first place in which I have lived where I feel that I belong to a community. Moving to Hollins Market in West Baltimore has influenced my feelings and opinions about urban living and government. My community is example of people looking out for each as well as working hard to be noticed by the city for support. I have a strong interest in the data gathered in police reports and newspapers, because I feel that it offers an opportunity to see who is affected by violence.

My interest in collecting homicide data started in my neighborhood association meetings over seven years ago. The meetings would begin with the past month’s crime report of our community. It was interesting to hear what was going on in the neighborhood. I started to hear a pattern happening every month. It seemed that being a black, male between the ages of 18-30 years old was a dangerous demographic in southwest Baltimore. That made me think about Baltimore's homicide rate as a whole, and how it differed from the County.

My current project, “Homicide” is a series of illustrations and installations that examines the police report data from 2015 to present. I gathered data based on the victims’ location, race, gender, age, time, name, and cause of death. I also gathered data from outside the police reports like the weather and moon phases for the year to observe how other factors could influence the visual data. My goal was to create an image that could be easily understood by the viewer as well as have a strong aesthetic. The Homicide project is still in its early stage, and I am making new images when I feel that I have enough information for it. Usually, I will wait until I have a full year’s worth of data. This is a new and exciting process for me as a digital artist, because I enjoy the social science aspect of it. I started with making vector sketches that have a chart like quality to them. The vector files are brought in a variety of digital fabrication tools from the CNC router to ink jet printer to create the final product.

My goal is to continue collecting data for five years in order to see the data over a long period of time. The goal is to bring attention to the violence in Baltimore and whom it affects. This work is didactic in nature, but offers the viewer another way to enter into the conversation. My work in the past has focused on social issues and visual culture in mostly urban spaces through photography. I felt that the photographs were often too much and I need to simplify the content I wanted to share with the viewer.

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