

INSIDE THE MIND OF
ALDONA KMIEĆ



Invisible Lives, 2017
Artist: Aldona Kmiec



Now working between Ballarat, Melbourne and Gippsland, the award winning, Polish-born photographer Aldona Kmieć has made a name for herself through extensive projects and exhibitions. Taking a moment to reflect, Aldona provides insight into her career, work and approach.



Aldona Kmieć at her home studio, Soldiers Hill

What were the initial motivations for your work when you started working within the photography industry/field?

Great set of questions! Artistically, my initial motivation was to explore my imagination and express my feelings, thoughts and ideas.

Commercially, to take great photos for people and exceed their expectations.

I'm cultivating a job that facilitates the kind of lifestyle I want to have. I want to learn as much as I can on how to be savvy as a business owner and to succeed in my field.

Is innovation within your work important to you?

Absolutely. Right now, as COVID has entered our world and all work has been put on stop, it has never been more important to be innovative in photography, social media, the ways you present your work online and how you connect with your clients. It is important to use this time to tidy up or completely rethink processes, to try something new (within the constraints of our homes) and perhaps see the world from a completely different angle.

The photography industry is ever-changing with technology, law and ethics. It will never be a stagnant profession, it'll probably become even more precarious in the future.

Do you care to focus on how your work is perceived, or do you try not to worry about it?

I care that people read my message the way I'm presenting it to them, look for hidden symbolism and "feel my photographs". I cannot, however, change anyone's perception of my work so worrying about it makes no sense. If people cannot understand the images I'm creating, then it gives me something to think about for the next time.

Do you aspire to be an influential figure within the art & portrait photography scene, through your work and/or approach?

I hope that if the work is strong enough, it'll speak for itself and it is important to know the reasons why we do what we do. I love photography and appreciate the opportunity to let my images "talk" to people, to convey some of my ideas through my work and elicit empathy through my images. I also value reaching out to other photographers to connect and discuss our work and collaborate. It is important to make sure that photography, as an art form, is appreciated and understood as much as paintings are too.

What does the work that you produce represent to you?

It has an intrinsic value to me and it represents freedom. Purpose and meaning really do matter. I see my images as a manifesto, that represents values that I believe in, which are open-mindedness, equality, commitment and compassion.



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"In The Process Of Healing" Exhibition view, Ballarat Welcome Centre
Photography by Aldona Kmiec

Does your work convey any distinct messages?

To answer this question, I'll give you an example of my last exhibition titled 'In The Process Of Healing'.

My artist statement read: "My vision is to give hope. To document the invisible lives, drowned by society's attempts to maintain normalcy through keeping their eyes shut, pretending that lives don't exist, referring to them as numbers."

My work consisted of two immersive site-specific installations of photography and sound, which tell a story of hope and survival of one local family seeking asylum in Australia and separately, survivors of clergy sexual abuse. With their faces hidden, the images conveyed a sense of fear and hope towards the healing journey.

Through this work I wanted to create a new photographic exhibition experience and to pay my respect to all survivors. My exhibition was supported by the Ballarat Welcome Centre and Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council.

"In The Process Of Healing" (Invisible Lives 25)
Photography by Aldona Kmiec



What aspects/s of your job do you enjoy the most?

Making a decision to go with an idea that you have is really exciting and scary at the same time. Also, commercially, working on a brief and meeting the people involved and work collaboratively to achieve a goal.

What is the most difficult part about being a photographer?

To be honest, it is a very difficult profession, one that is highly competitive and time-consuming. As a photographer, behind-the-scenes and research work takes up about 80% of the time, and the actual performed photography takes the last 10-15%. So having motivation to do the more mundane tasks is key.

Having to constantly adapt to the technological changes within the photographic business can be challenging. Knowing how to 'switch off' from work is not always easy.



Are you interested in experimentation with current and upcoming photography trends?

I'm always dreaming up new ideas and new ways of doing things. I think I was born very curious which really helps in being a photographer. I don't pay too much attention to photographic trends, but I am curious about the way people pose for selfies on Instagram etc.. I'm interested in these trends from a more social and documentary perspective.

What are your hopes for the photography industry after the various impacts and changes of 2020?

I hope that the world recovers soon and, undoubtedly, the world will always need images to tell people's stories - but it's crucial that these stories are told with as much ethical consideration as possible.

Thank you.

