

The PHOTOGRAPHERS Lecture Series
Moderator: Phillip S. Block
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Joao Silva

Joao Silva is a photojournalist based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Silva has shot many assignments throughout the world and is known for his photographs of conflict and war. He has covered conflicts in Iraq, South Africa, Georgia, Kenya, Malawi, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Ghana among others. In 2000 Greg Marinovich and Silva co-authored *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War*. The book shares a factual account of a group of photojournalists who covered the violence in South Africa during the end of the apartheid era. In 2010 the book was made into a movie by the same name. Since 2000 Silva has been a contract photographer for the *New York Times*. In October of 2010, while on assignment following U.S. Troops on minesweeping patrol in Afghanistan, he stepped on a landmine and was severally injured. After months of recovery, Silva is back shooting for the *New York Times*. He recently covered the closing of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and President Obama's Medal of Honor Ceremony for Dakota Meyer.

There's a real need to show what's going on. Sometimes we do that at great risk. If we're with a Marine unit or a naval unit and they're taking fire, you're taking fire. For the most part, I find that the soldiers who we are embedded with understand. But I think the broader public has a skewed idea of what we do. And sometimes we are callous. Sometimes we're forced to step over corpses to make an image, or through pools of blood. But in doing that, we try to show the world the reality of the situation we're confronted with. You might not necessarily change the world with your images — in fact, I don't think I've seen one image that's changed the world — but if you've changed one single person's mind, I think you've accomplished something. —Joao Silva, interviewed by Michael Kamber in 2009

Joao Silva was born in 1966 in Lisbon, Portugal. He later moved to South Africa with his family. In 1989 Silva began taking photographs by chance. He accompanied a friend to shoot images for a graphic design class and realized he wanted to be a photographer. His career began while photographing for the *Alberton Record*, a local newspaper in South Africa. He free-lanced for Reuters, and in 1991 he began working as a staff photographer for "The Star," a daily newspaper in Johannesburg. In 1994, Silva joined the Associated Press. Silva began freelancing for the *New York Times* in 1996 and became a contract photographer with them in 2000. His book *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War* came out in 2000. He published *In the Company of God* in 2005. This work is a photographic book on the Iraqi Shi'a during the American occupation and fragile democracy that followed. He has won many awards, including the World Press Photo. Joao Silva's images are available from Picturernet Africa and the *New York Times*.

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