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WAR DAMAGE

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This past February, while on patrol in Afghanistan with the 75th Cavalry of the American army, Giles Duley (pictured), a British photographer, stepped on a bomb and instantly lost three of his limbs. After nearly 20 operations and nine months of intensive rehabilitation, Duley is getting ready to go back to work. A retrospective show, "Becoming the Story" at the KK Outlet Gallery in London, marks his comeback.

Born in London in 1971, Duley began his career as an editorial photographer in the fashion and music industries in Europe and America. Ten years before his trip to



Afghanistan, he had a change of heart. Tired of the flimsy, narcissistic world of celebrity culture, he started to concentrate on humanitarian projects, working with charities such as Médecins sans Frontières, the International Organisation for Migration and UNHCR. He funded trips to war-torn regions himself, documenting the people he met and telling their stories through his images.

The venue has an odd name and an even odder concept. The KK Outlet is a somewhat vague multi-purpose centre that combines a communications agency, a gallery and a bookshop. It is designed for the development of innovative brands and products alongside displays of art, photography and design. The conceit is both grand and vapid. But the plain exhibition space serves to heighten the power of Duley's photographs. Packed tightly into a small space, his works are unframed and untitled, and casually pinned to the walls with simple silver clips. Other than the short captions beneath each photograph, they appear fully exposed.

The images are arranged by location: Angola 2006, Bangladesh 2008, South Sudan 2009. Mainly black and white with occasional bursts of colour, they are beautiful in composition and hideous in content. Many offer a glimpse at the horrors of war: a skeletal man, abused children, survivors of acid burns, a stillborn baby. "I don't photograph victims, I photograph victims of circumstance", writes Duley in a note about the photographs. After many years of chronicling the stories of others, Duley has added his own injuries to his catalogue of war.



Tucked away at the back of the gallery is a room with a warning sign that might give visitors pause before entering. The walls feature images of Duley taken by David Bowering, a Canadian photographer, moments after the explosion in Afghanistan. Duley initially kept these photos private, but now he sees them as an

important chapter in his story. A transcript reveals the minute-by-minute exchange between him and the paramedics and aircrew who took him away for treatment. "Sometimes a photograph can't truly describe a scene", Duley observes in the explanatory text for the transcript.

The show ends with a large and frank self-portrait, one of the first he has taken since suffering his injuries. It suggests that Duley is as uncompromising about himself as he is about others.