

Next week **Bodies in a River** opens at Wheaton College. I'm some what jittery showing these paintings at a religious institution that has such a profound investment to the central story of this work. Three of the five missionaries attended the college and are held as martyrs in the cause of the Gospel. They were family members of some who might attend.

I've spent 4 years working through and around a story where five lives were lost and a whole people's culture was irrevocably changed forever. I have my own judgements but no solid conclusions - because my perspective changes each time I encounter another angle of the story.



Questions:

Did the best intentions of the missionaries make any positive difference in outcomes for the so-called *Aucas* (Huaorani)?

Was contact, encroachment and assimilation inevitable?



The story and contexts shift as I listen to the observations and impressions of those who view my work - as I find out more details about the Huao and their contemporary struggle.

A good friend and colleague sums up my own feelings with the work:

"There is something quite emotional about the images in your show. I couldn't help but feel conflicted about that history – drawn to it and wanting to keep it at arms length at the same time."

I'm hoping it draws the viewers in more than keeping them at arms length.