

Simon Hamalienko — *Independent Journalist Guzelian, UK, June 2016*

A photographer has created a unique book to reflect and potentially bring new light to a case of a missing American girl.

Virgine Rebetez, from Switzerland, has combined photographic imagery and information on the unsolved mystery of the disappearance of Suzanne Gloria Lyall to create the project, *Out of the Blue*. Suzanne, who was aged 19 at the time, has been missing since March 2 1998 in Albany, New York, after exiting a bus at around 9:40pm to 9:45pm at Collins Circle on the University at Albany Uptown Campus. She was a sophomore at the University of Albany and was on her way back to campus after work at Babbages Software in Crossgates Mall.

Rebetez has been working with Suzanne's family on the project, which collates images such as portraits, family archives, landscapes, police leads and photographs and drawings from different psychics involved in the case.

She was also allowed to photograph Suzanne's belongings and clothing, as well as take portraits of her parents.

"When I met Suzanne's parents, it was obvious I will work on her story. I felt a connection and I don't need more as a confirmation to continue a project," said Rebetez, 37. "Their story really touched me and actually Suzanne would be one year older than me today.

All the material they showed me was incredible and quickly I found the different use of the photographs of Suzanne by all the different people involved in the case quite interesting. "For example, the psychics used the portraits of her not for the representation of her but as an object they handled and touched in order to get a connection. I wanted to mix all of that material and create new images in order to give another angle, another perspective to this story. Suzanne disappeared in a time lapse of four minutes: The distance between the bus stop to her university campus dorm."

Rebetez decided to never clearly show Suzanne's face in the book, except three "age-progressed composites" made by a professional forensic artist in 2015, showing her at her current age of 37.

Suzanne's parents, Mary and Doug Lyall were more than happy to help with the book, as they have never stopped searching for their daughter.

The Lyall's also created The Center for Hope, where they help families of missing children, which has helped them connect and continue raising awareness for others.

Unfortunately, Doug passed away last year before he was able to see the completed project. Rebetez said: "The family were really happy for me to work on the project, happy that the story of Suzanne is told again. I just came back from New York where I spent some time with Mary Lyall, Suzanne's mother. She is an amazing woman. "I stayed in her house for several days, talking about the book, having dinner, sharing feelings and making new images. It's really important for me to share the project with the persons involved. I also had the chance to meet Suzanne's sister, Sandy, and the main investigators of Suzanne's case."

Rebetez came up with the *Out of the Blue* after working on a project in Los Angeles during 2009, which was on unidentified people.

She started checking different police related websites about missing and unidentified people, when she made the decision to concentrate on a specific case.

Rebetez said: “In all my projects I am interested in the invisible, the meaning of identity, the traces we leave behind after death, unfinished stories, in the materiality we, as humans, need for closure. “I use photography, in a way, to give consistence to the invisible, to give a shape, a form to the absent.”

Redetez has launched Kickstarter in order to finish the book project and bring the case of Suzanne Gloria Lyall to new audiences.

She added: “Suzanne was really next to me for two years. Thinking about her and even dreaming about her. Making a project like this, looking at family pictures, reading Suzanne's poems, meeting family and friends, hearing memories, you get really intimate.

“It was the first time, in my projects, I was dealing with the family of my subject and it was very interesting to find the right balance in telling their story in a different way.”

For more information, visit: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1819685745/out-of-the-blue-the-book-a-portrait-of-a-missing-g?ref=category_location

www.virginierbetez.com