Barnouw doesn’t really deal with this concept at all

Others use terms such as “reconstructions” or “reenactments” - Are these better?

The definition of documentary developed by the Motion Picture Academy seems to allow for this...

Films dealing with historical, social, scientific, or economic subjects, either photographed in actual occurrence or re-enacted, & where the emphasis is more on factual content than entertainment. The purely instructional film will not be considered.
Development of the Form

- Non-fiction film evolving into new styles in late 60s, early 70s
- Docudrama parallels Truman Capote’s nonfiction novel - In Cold Blood
- David Wolper defines docudrama as “the creative interpretation of reality” -- admits term is problem

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Development of the Form

- Wolper’s You Were There; Jack Webb’s Dragnet; Alan Funt’s Candid Camera
- Watkins’ The War Game (66) for BBC
- **Key**: Events portrayed as recreated or reconstructed -- trying to accurately present events as they really occurred -- based on fact and verifiable

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Development of the Form

- Becomes a staple on TV in 70s
- Roots (1977) -- many others follow
- Today an explosion: Cops, Unsolved Mysteries, America’s Most Wanted, Real World, Movies of the Week, etc.

All playing with the “feeling” of realism or reality ... the buzz that “this really happened”
To what extent is a docudrama a documentary?
What standards do you use?
How are the facts interpreted?
Why is dialogue invented?
Should there be docudramas at all?

Issue of selection in all documentaries:
Where do you point the camera?
What do you choose NOT to shoot?
What shots do you edit together?
What shots do you leave out?
How much manipulation through juxtaposition of shots? Music? Narration?

Justifications for Docudrama
- All films subjective to some extent
- Docudrama provides access to subjects that can't be reached any other way
- More interesting ... maybe as realistic at certain level
- Closeness to documentary may be based on accuracy, proof, verification of sources
Suggest a range from “pure” -- (based on trial transcripts or verifiable investigations)  
To “recreated events” -- using the lives of actual persons or historical events with some fictionalization

Hoffer’s Categories
1. Monologues which recreate events or lives of actual person
2. Court-room dramas based on actual trial transcripts
3. Biographical docudramas
4. Current events of topical relevance created from lives of actual persons

Hoffer’s Categories
5. Shows drawn from contemporary or historical settings .. but not identifying actual person’s by name --- “documentarized fiction”
6. Characters & events verifiable & real, but embellished with degree of fiction to assist in dev. of story - “fictionalized documentary”
**Hoffer’s Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>Documentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Verifiable</td>
<td>More Verifiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Docudrama</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Examples**

**Errol Morris:**

*The Thin Blue Line* (1988)

Very subjective

Criticised for propagandizing

Criticised for Philip Glass score

Case reopened -- defendant exonerated and released

**Peter Watkins**

*Culloden*  
(1964)

Made for the BBC. The Battle of Culloden as if modern tv cameras had been there.
Examples

Peter Watkins

The War Game (1966)
Initially banned by BBC
Well-researched, but very propagandistic, opinionated, fictionalized

Edvard Munch (74) - another example

“Reality Television”

Much more blurring of fact & fiction
Cheaper type of show for television: less expensive writers, actors, production values
Hence: Cops, Street Match, Real World, Supernanny, Kid Nation, The Bachelor, etc.
To what extent documentary?

Docudramas or Reality TV

Back where we started ---
To what extent is a docudrama or reality television show a documentary?
Would you accept a docudrama in the documentary category of a contest? A “reality show?”

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