american
PHOTO ON CAMPUS

NOVEMBER 2009

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STRANGE VIEWS

NEW VISIONS FROM
SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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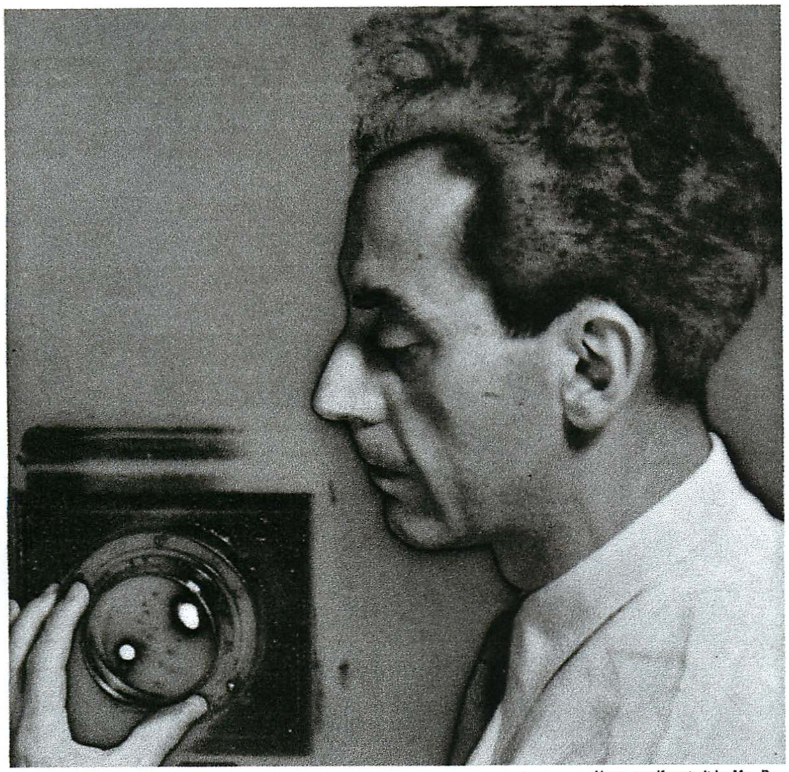
ON THE COVER

A photograph from Savannah College of Art and Design student Chris New.

Editor's Note



Above, a self-portrait by Man Ray.

A NEW VIEW

From American Surrealist Man Ray (see Exhibitions, page 14) to Becher disciple Andreas Gefeller (see Master Class, page 22), this issue of *APOC* is about the power of photography to transform the familiar—whether a human face or the floor plan of an art school—into something extraordinary. The mechanism of that transformation can be technical manipulation, as with Man Ray, or the systematic application of an unlikely point of view, as with Gefeller.

Part of a photo teacher's job is to help students grasp that power to transform. They often do this through assignments that ask students to use photography in ways that may at first seem prosaic. You'll see what we mean if you turn to Assignment (page 16), in which four photo teachers share some of their favorite classroom challenges. These range from photographic scavenger hunts to creating a single image with 25 separate frames.

Such lessons clearly have not been lost on the students of Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), to whose work we devote this issue's Student Portfolios. As you'll see, their photography ranges from whimsical fashion to discomfiting post-apocolyptic tableaux.

Finally, we report with great sadness that Bobby Model, the adventure photographer whose arduous but ongoing recovery from a calamitous accident we chronicled in the September issue, died unexpectedly of a brain hemorrhage shortly after we went to press. Model was fearless in his photographic mission—and his loss is a reminder that risk can be as much a part of art as it is of life itself.

Russell Hart

RUSSELL HART, EDITOR

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ART AND LAW

Sometimes copyright isn't enough to fully protect your photos. To be safe, you need to *register* them.

This is a good news and bad news story. The good news is that you own the copyright to a photograph at the exact moment it is recorded on your memory card or film. You create it, you own it. The only exception to this rule is if you are shooting the picture (or creating any other work) for your employer, or if you have signed a "work for hire" contract.

The bad news is that unless you register your copyright with the United States Copyright Office within a specific time period, you don't have the full protection of copyright law if someone uses your photograph without your permission. And chances are good that most of you reading this either have not or do not regularly register your copyrights.

If you have unpublished images that aren't registered, you can register them now and still get full protection. Those of you who have published photographs without registering them, well, read on to find out what you might have given up.

Under current copyright law, registration is considered "timely" if it is done within 90 days of publication or before any illegal use of the image occurs. Timely registration gives you the option of choosing a statutory damage award in a copyright infringement lawsuit. Statutory damages are defined by the Copyright Act as ranging from $750 to $30,000 per work for an innocent infringement or up to $150,000 for willful (knowing and deliberate) infringement. If you choose statutory damages, you don't have to prove that you've lost potential income or other value due to the infringement. In addition, you can ask to be reimbursed for your legal fees if you win—and legal fees in a copyright infringement case can be quite substantial.

If you haven't registered the work in question in a timely fashion, you can't seek reimbursement for your legal fees. And you can sue only for actual damages, which you are required to prove, plus a percentage of any profits made from the illegal use of your work. Actual damages are usually much less than statutory damages, because courts define them as "the extent to which the market value of a copyrighted work has been injured or destroyed by an infringement." A case in point is Jack Mackie v. Bonnie Rieser; Seattle Symphony Orchestra Public Benefit Corporation, 296 F.3d 909 (9th Circuit, 2002). Mackie, an artist, was commissioned by the city of Seattle to create a series of sidewalk installations that he called The Dance Steps.

The Seattle Symphony Orchestra published a photograph of one of the installations as part of a promotional mailing sent to 150,000 people in the U.S.—without Mackie's permission. Mackie had not registered the work before this infringement, though, so he sued for actual damages. He could not prove that the value of his work had been damaged, so he testified that he would have "demanded a royalty of approximately $85,000 in a putative pre-infringement negotiation." The court awarded him only $1,000—the amount it decided that a "willing buyer would have been reasonably required to pay a willing seller for use of Mackie's copyrighted image. —MICHELLE BOGRE

DO IT NOW: HOW TO REGISTER YOUR COPYRIGHT

Registering your photographs or other work isn't complicated. The U.S. Copyright Office website, *copyright.gov*, contains all the information you need. Basically, you fill out a form, pay a fee and submit a copy of the work, which you can do either online or by conventional mail.

▶ Register online through the new Electronic Copyright Office (eCO). The fee, currently $35 per submission, is lower than for mail-in applications, which cost $50 to $65.

▶ Don't panic if you've already multiplied $35 or $50 times all your images. The copyright office allows you to submit a "collection" of images as one submission for which you pay a single fee rather than a per-image fee. The collection has to conform to certain rules, which are clearly explained on the copyright website.

▶ The eCO is accepting only basic registrations at this time, of a single work; of a collection of unpublished work by a single creator; or of multiple published works by the same creator if they are contained in the same piece, such as a CD of songs. Other, more-complicated submissions can be made by mail.

▶ Submit only photographs taken in the same year for each application, and don't mix published and unpublished images, even if they were created in the same year.

▶ Don't worry if you don't receive your certificate immediately. Your copyright registration is effective on the date the copyright office receives an accurate and completed application, whether submitted online or by mail.

▶ Make registration part of your workflow. Some photographers register their work monthly, some quarterly and others annually. It depends on how much you produce.

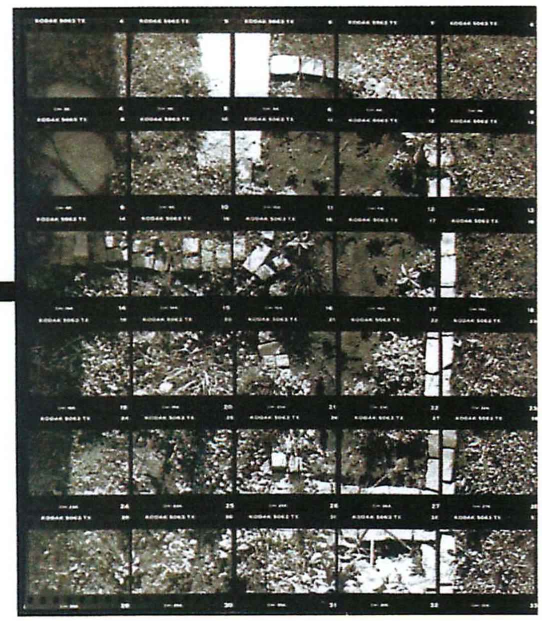
ILLUSTRATION: ©DOUGLAS JONES

ASSIGNMENT

PLAYING FAVORITES

FOUR PHOTO EDUCATORS DESCRIBE THEIR MOST PRODUCTIVE INTRO-LEVEL ASSIGNMENT—AND WHAT IT TEACHES STUDENTS.

When photo teachers get together, their conversation usually centers on what they love most about their job: being in the classroom. And they often trade assignments that they feel have particularly inspired their students. Here, four teachers from around the country tell us about their favorite assignment for first-year photo students. BY MICHELLE BOGRE



JORIE TAPPA

◀ COLLEEN MULLINS: THE BIG PICTURE

Colleen Mullins, an active photographer and book artist, is now the academic director of photography at the Art Institutes International Minnesota.

Even professional photographers would be puzzled by the first assignment Colleen Mullins gives her beginning photo students. She calls it The Big Picture. Students have three weeks to shoot 25 consecutive frames on one roll of film so that the frames form a single image when printed as a contact sheet in a grid—five rows of five images. "The assignment makes students think about the 'frame' and its challenges," says Mullins, who credits a friend from graduate school, Peter Lindman, as its original source.

Some students meticulously plan their final result by first shooting its 25 components with a digital camera. Others work more organically. One of Mullins's favorite solutions is an image constructed by a student who methodically photographed her garden frame by frame, looking straight down. The resulting "big picture" resembled an aerial photograph. "At first, I wasn't sure what I was looking at," Mullins recalls. "But then I saw the photographer's footprints."

Subjects chosen by Mullins' students for The Big Picture have included a garden (above right) and a shopping cart (right).

◀ DANIEL OVERTURF: THE PHOTO POSTCARD

An author, artist, and commercial photographer specializing in editorial portraits, Daniel Overturf is a tenured associate professor in the Cinema and Photography Department of Southern Illinois University Carbondale's College of Mass Communication and Media Arts.

SARAH HYDE

On one of the occasions Daniel Overturf gave this assignment to his beginning photography class, he received a warning from the United States Postal Service. The assignment, called The Photographic Postcard, requires students to create a photo-based postcard shaped in any form that can be mailed through the postal system. One student mailed Overturf a photograph in a glass jar. In our post-9/11 world, this made Post Office officials nervous. "Someone from the Post Office called me and told me not to do that again," says Overturf.

Overturf's challenge comes toward the end of the semester, as a break from assignments that emphasize photographic skills. His idea is to challenge students to think about non-digital ways of transmitting images.

"Although creating photographic postcards is a time-honored tradition among older photographers, most of these students have never considered them," says Overturf. "The assignment forces them to think of the image as a unique object."

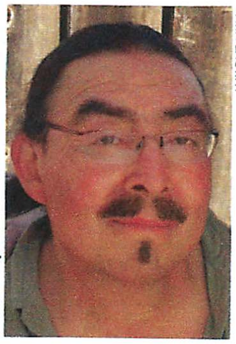
Overturf keeps an archive of the work past students have created in doing the assignment, and shows it to each class for inspiration. In response he has received postcards that are sewn, glued, and mechanically constructed; postcards with panels that have to be peeled open and closed; multi-panel postcards folded like an accordion; and postcards that glow in the dark. Some of the postcards have even played music. "One of my favorites plays a J. Giles Band song," says Overturf. "It's called Freeze Frame."

DARA SWOIK

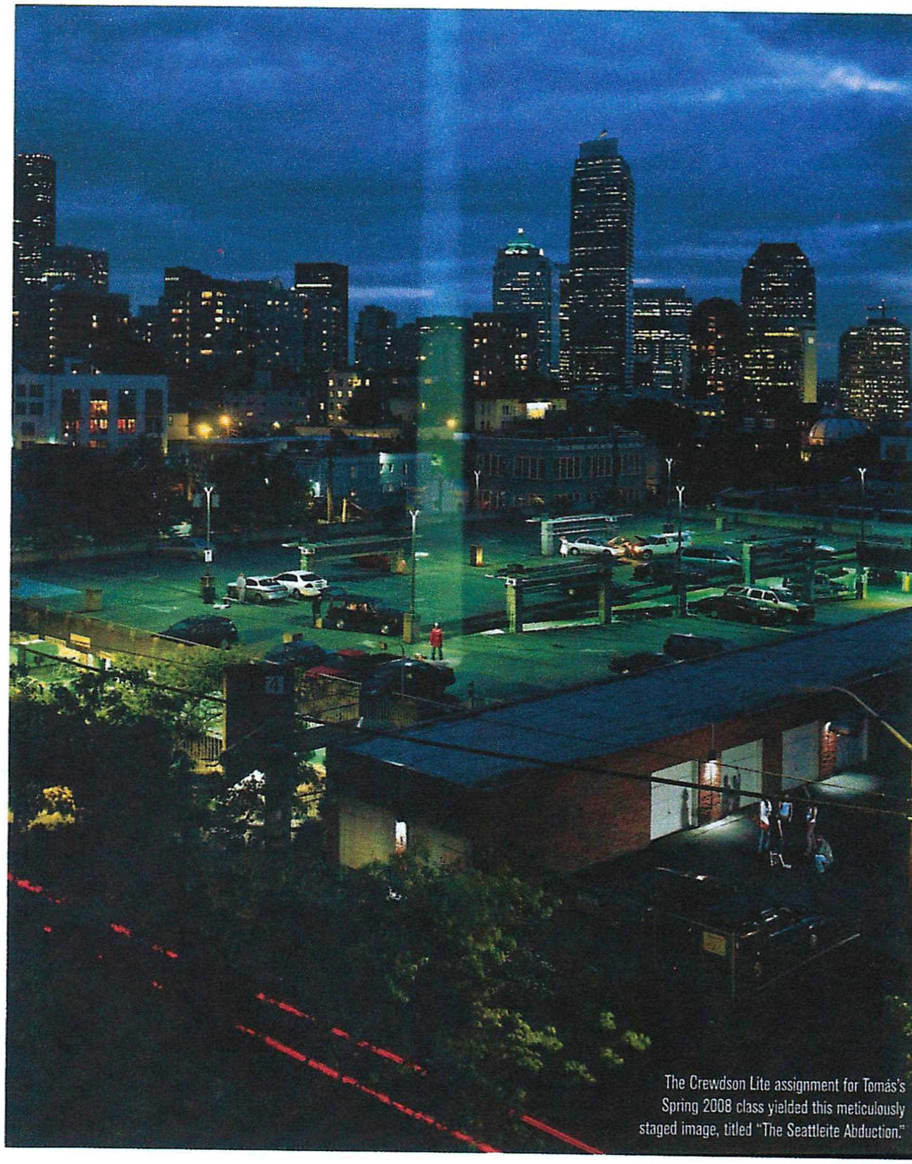
JOHN BRENNAN

SARAH HUMPHREYS

Blue jeans, sparkles, and Polaroid transfers have been some of the ingredients used by students for Overturf's The Photographic Postcard assignment.



TARA LAUKAT



The Crewdson Lite assignment for Tomás's Spring 2008 class yielded this meticulously staged image, titled "The Seattleite Abduction."

▲ TOMÁS: CREWDSON LITE

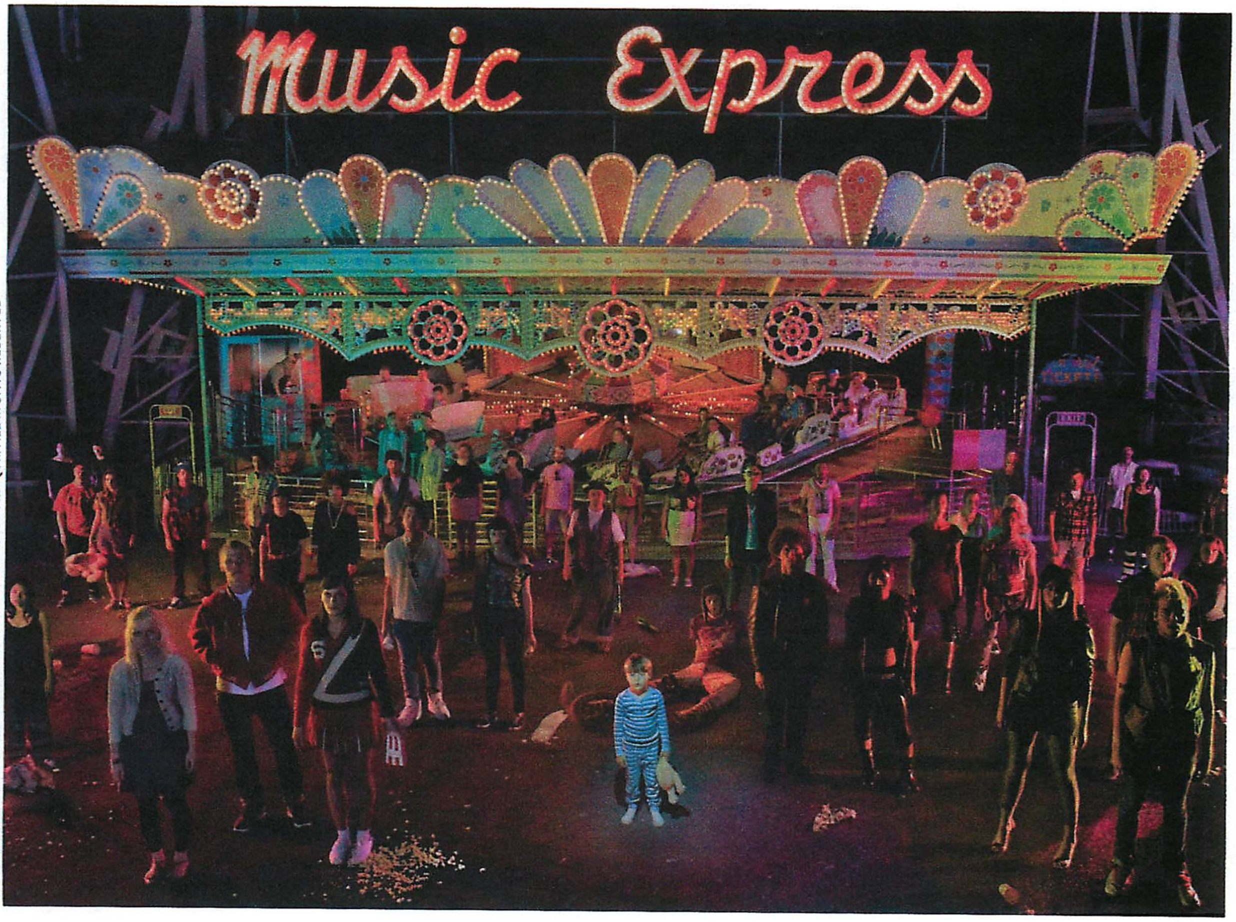
Alejandro Tomás (known to friends and colleagues as just Tomás) is an internationally recognized artist who serves on the senior faculty in the Commercial Photography Program at the Seattle Central Community College's Creative Arts Academy.

Tomás's favorite assignment, which he calls Crewdson Lite, is the first location shoot done by students taking his Location Techniques class. The collaborative assignment requires students to produce a single film-based large format image with high production values—hence the reference to the elaborately staged tableaus of photographer Gregory Crewdson. "In our two-year program, my challenge is to teach students that creativity needn't be limited by the available resources," says Tomás. "I want them have the production skills needed to shoot anything, anytime, anywhere."

To prepare for the assignment, which must be completed in four weeks, each student scouts and chooses a location in which to shoot. He or she also works out that site's logistical details, such as what times it is available for the shoot; how equipment will be brought in; where staging areas and bathrooms are located; and whether using the location requires a permit or insurance, then presents all this to the class. The class votes on the best location. Then each student visits the chosen site and develops a concept for the photograph, all of which are presented to the class for another vote. Students must factor in production cost because they are responsible for raising the needed money. The student whose location is chosen becomes the "producer"; the one whose idea is chosen becomes the "creative director." The producer creates separate teams to handle technical and logistical aspects of the shoot, such as lighting, props, wardrobe, finding models, security at the site, and digital support. The creative director's teams handle aesthetic matters, such as the positioning of models and the quality of thc lighting.

The winning location and concept for the Spring 2009 assignment both came from the same student, Todd DeJarlais. The final image, which cost $1,500 to produce, is titled "Music Express," and was taken in front of a ride at the Fun Forest amusement park in Seattle Center. (See page 20). Shot at night, it required four lighting zones with separate schemes for each, all keyed to the placement of its 63 models. Those models stand, looking upward as if hypnotized by something we can't see, dropped popcorn bags and soft drink containers at their feet. A small boy in pajamas stands in the middle, spotlit, a teddy bear dangling in his hand. Are we about to witness an alien abduction?

ASSIGNMENT



When Tomás gave his Spring 2009 class the Crewdson Lite assignment, they produced "Music Express," another alie abduction scene that requirec 63 models but was shot on a budget of $1,500. (See page 18 for details.)

MICHAEL MAZZEO

◀ MARK MALLOY: SCAVENGER HUNT

Mark Malloy, a nationally exhibited artist, is assistant professor of photography in the Department of Technology at North Carolina's Appalachian State University.

In the third week of his Photo Design I class, Mark Malloy sends students on a photographic scavenger hunt. The students are assigned to one of three teams designated by lens focal length: wide angle (in the 35mm format, 35mm or wider), normal (50mm) or telephoto (85mm or longer). "During the critique, when we put the images side by side, students clearly see the difference in the way each lens type affects apparent perspective, depth of field, and point of view," says Malloy.

The teams have two days to shoot the list, and can work in either color or black and white. Each student on each team has to shoot and share images from the entire list, and then his or her team chooses which member's image to present for each item on the list. The team presents the final edit to the class as a whole, and receives one grade. The students naturally discuss each other's work during the team editing, which introduces them to the process of critique so important to studio art classes.

"The main idea of this assignment is not so much about focal length, but rather to get students to forget about technical problems they've been having and use the camera simply as a recording device," says Malloy. "At the beginning they roll their eyes when they hear scavenger hunt, but it quickly becomes a competitive game that they enjoy."