

AFFAIR GOES PUBLIC

A youth hostel is a place where people from all around the world come to share their lives and occasionally their pillows, even if it's just for a brief moment in time. Our contribution to this experience is *Affair*, the photography exhibition produced by fourteen students in Professor Becca Albee's photography course at The City College of New York.

Our countries of origin include Japan, Morocco, Iran, Hungary, Peru, Austria, Germany, Ecuador, Greece, Puerto Rico, and the United States. We were intrigued by the idea of showing our work in an environment with a continuous flux. The hostel is unique in the way it imposes relationships and connections between people, like that of a classroom. Within that quiet chaos, there is a strange bond one feels towards the guy with sleepy eyes and unkempt hair sitting next to you in the TV room. This is the idea of the show. Diversity is what connects us all.

Come join us, *Affair* begins on May 21st and ends June 22nd at Jazz on the Park, 36 West 106th Street (Between Central Park West and Manhattan Ave.)

For further information:
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EVI ABELER & SIRIN SAMMAN



EVI: Would you say, photography is your form of expression, your art form?

SIRIN: I'd say yes, because it always has been and it feels so good. That moment when you stand in the darkroom and your image is appearing in the developer . . . every single time you get that feeling of . . . accomplishment. Now I mostly shoot digital but it's the same concept, just more tailored to the whole instant gratification kinda generation. I try to make that moment my motivation when I hesitate; often I am so hesitant to approach people, who I want to photograph. I don't know why. I don't want to bother them. I don't want to impose. I try to think about that moment [WHEN YOU FIRST GET TO SEE HOW YOUR IMAGE CAME OUT] when I go up to a person and ask them if I could take a picture. If you just go and take their photograph they might get upset and I've seen this happen but you don't always want to ask them because that might change the whole image.

The family images, the thousands and thousands of family images I am taking they are OK but they don't fulfill this need of mine completely because they are so easy for me to take. I feel like I need a challenge.

EVI: I also feel that photography is my medium. The other day I was researching some artist residencies for printmakers and photographers. But then I felt that I wouldn't take printmaking as serious as my photography. In printmaking I am playing around, having fun and don't take my work very seriously but in photography I am very picky and serious about my work and would never present something that I am not absolutely sure about.

SIRIN: I am very very critical about my images. That's how I manage to edit out of hundreds of photographs. It is very difficult. This is why I don't have a website and this is

why I don't have a photo-blog up yet either because I am too critical.

I think, it is true and it is very important that you stick exactly to your passion. Because then you always will be happy doing what you are doing no matter how quick you are going to have any kind of success because you are doing something that you love. To me it's just the action of taking a photograph, developing them, doing a project, having a project finished and I'm happy . . . but that's my problem . . . because I never exhibit and I never submit anything [TO COMPETITIONS]. I have to do the marketing part, too.

EVI: What if you just pick your ten best pictures and send them out to open calls etc?

SIRIN: But they are all very different kinds of work. Some of them are part of a series they work as a whole they are not something to stand alone. And then I have millions of family pictures.

EVI: Why are you planning on having a photo-blog?

SIRIN: It's for me and also to share the best ones. I am already having the Ofoto albums for the people that I know but not everybody can see it. The photo-blog is more for people who enjoy looking at images. I don't know if the people that I am sending images to enjoy looking at 140 pictures in my Ofoto album. I should figure out the concept of the photo-blogs. Also I don't know who is looking at these photo-blogs. It is so hard to make a decision. Some of them are good photographs, others are maybe just interesting to me.

EVI: For me, if a picture does not work, I'll go shoot more instead of spending hours on the computer to fix it. If you have to manipulate so much in Photoshop, I don't know. For some pictures it is definitely worth the effort but if it is not striking or has enough potential in the beginning I don't want to waste my time.

SIRIN: My entire family, on my mother's side, is comprised of photographers. Even my great grandfather was a photographer.

EVI: They were mostly studio photographers?

SIRIN: Yes, that's why my family has so many old photographs, because there was always someone to take a picture. My great-grandfather owned a studio in Prague, I believe. My grandmother and my grandfather worked in a photo store. My great aunt was a film editor. My other great aunt is traveling through the whole world, she used to be a

flight attendant and can still fly for free or almost for free, so she travels all over the world, Himalayas, Antarctica, . . . always to the other end of the world . . . and she photographs everything in medium-format . . . she uses a Hasselblad. . . . My father also always took a lot of pictures.

EVI: There were no photographers in my family. My mother loves documenting everything in snapshot form. Every moment has to be documented.

SIRIN: I did not learn about my family's photography history until after I had already declared my future field of study, though.

EVI: I think it's because my mother took so many photographs all the time and carried her camera everywhere I wanted to take pictures as well. I always had a kid's toy camera. I got my first real camera when I was 14 . . . and developed my first print even earlier during summer camp.

SIRIN: Wow, at 14. . . . I only had a point and shoot for most of my teenage years. Often, when I look at those images I think that if I had had a manual camera and someone would have taught me how to use it . . . that would have been great. All those people that I took pictures of in Vienna. If I just had had more knowledge about photography . . . there were some pretty good shots I got.

EVI: Well, I would not say that I took many spectacular pictures during my teens. Most of my images were pretty cliché. But I already enjoyed taking pictures of details and spaces. I was an obsessive photo album maker . . . and when I have more time I would like to include photo albums in my art practice. I get very involved with them.

SIRIN: Well, I did plenty of cliché pics, of course. You know, the sunbeam coming through the window and such. My father did a lot of albums, too. We had millions of albums. Now it's payback time with my 140 picture Ofoto albums.

MERCEDES CUEVA AND FUTOSHI MIYAGI



MERCEDES: So how does your photography work? Do you think of the concept first, or does the concept come to you when you are taking the picture?

FUTOSHI: Concept first. Definitely.

MERCEDES: I think I'm the same way, when I came up with concept for my term project I was looking at a picture that I had taken of my dad last semester for a photography class. I realized that my concept was going to be to show the labor that immigrant parents go through so their children could have a better future. So I am going to take portraits to show the age and effect of the labor of the parents and show the product of their hard work which would be a portrait of their graduated professional offspring. So, how's your project for the exhibition going? What was it again?

FUTOSHI: It's called *Family Portraits*. First step is to go out on streets and ask strangers to take my picture in front of NYC landmarks. Then I enlarge them, frame them, and take them to a hostel and let travelers take my pictures to their home. Travelers are to hang the picture somewhere and take some kind of family portrait in front of it. I took 12 pictures to the hostel by now. But I haven't gotten any responses yet.

MERCEDES: Well you have a month until the exhibition.

FUTOSHI: Mmm. I hope I'll get some.

MERCEDES: Do you have any other projects going on?

FUTOSHI: Ah, for another class, I had this project. We were to recreate a container, and to reinsert that recreated object into the circulation of the original object, so I recreated a CD, a CD made of chocolate. I also created a website of an imaginary band and I distributed chocolate CDs from the website as free samples. And some guys actually requested copies, so I sent that CD to them.

MERCEDES: Are you serious? Did you get any responses?

FUTOSHI: Yeah. Actually people's responses are pretty hostile. I thought it was a cute little project.

MERCEDES: [LAUGHS] I probably would've laughed if I received a chocolate CD. You said that different things inspire you? Well if you had to do a photo shoot for someone what would you look at for inspiration? If you are working with a person, would you look at them for inspiration?

FUTOSHI: I think I look at works of my favorite artists, and try to get inspired by them.

MERCEDES: I noticed that is a hard thing, to look at someone's work and get inspired by it, because the first thing that comes to mind is 'I want it to look like that.' You see people's work and you can see how the influence of other artists shine through, 'Oh yeah it reminds me of so and so' and it doesn't look exactly like it, but it has a gist of it. I always admire that, because to see the fine line of what I can use and can't. But it's so hard, I think it is cool that you look at other artists, I love looking at other artists for inspiration for design. I love Art Nouveau; I love the curves and the detail. I was reading an article on this guy who's an artist/designer, he's Peruvian as I am, his name is Victor Lau and he's 24, and he's one of the top 30 designers under 30. He says that his culture inspires his work, which is weird because I always thought that my culture inspired my work, but then I realized I don't really have a culture, I have 3 of them. I was born in Peru and spent my early years in Venezuela, and most of my life I've been living in NYC. And he was like "I use bright colors," and I don't use bright color, I'm very muted when it comes to that. So do you feel like your background helps you, or that you know something about your culture that other people may not, or that you use in it your own work?

FUTOSHI: I try not to use the characteristics of my culture, Okinawan, like you I guess. Not bright colors but muted colors. My culture has pretty colorful palette too so I don't want to go and do that. But that means I'm fully aware of my own culture.

MERCEDES: Right, so you go for the opposite. I wish I could use more bright colors though, because I feel like my color palette is very similar. But do you feel like there's something about your culture that you always go back to?

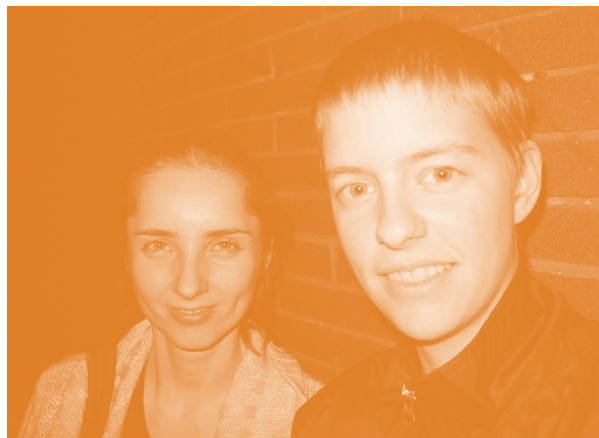
FUTOSHI: Yeah. Whether I'm fond of it or not, that's my home and it's not like I can just wipe it out.

MERCEDES: I use the Incan culture, like signs and graphics, but not so strongly. Do you have a favorite Japanese artist?

FUTOSHI: I think . . . Well the first person came up to my mind is that guy . . . Yasumasa Murimura. I like his humor and slight self-deprecation behind it.

MERCEDES: I like his work. I think he took it to the next level and I love that some people aren't scared to take it to the next level. That is what I love about being an artist. I am torn about calling myself an artist or a designer because I feel like I am both. I love the freedom that comes with being an artist.

JOYCE LARSON AND ZITA SZATMARY



Joyce Larson and Zita Szatmary met in a restaurant in the West Village. They know each other quite well and were brought together for this meeting and to unwind in a dark secluded corner, isolated from the other guests.

JOYCE: How's your project coming?

ZITA: Slowly, very slowly. I don't have many people who are interested in being uh . . .

JOYCE: Photographed?

ZITA: With the red nose on . . . [LAUGHING] . . . and so first I'm doing everyone who's very interested being in the project and in the mean time I'm convincing others that it's important . . . I am going to put a portfolio together to show that this project is serious and that I'm not making fun of them.

JOYCE: But you are having fun?

ZITA: Yes, I am. But it is hard to walk up to someone and say, "Hey can you please put this on and can I take a snapshot? I mean it still sounds pretty strange even though I got used to the idea. The contradiction is that the project seems so normal for me, there is nothing wrong with having some fun, but I see people's reaction on their face when I tell them my idea. They just say, "Oh interesting," but their eyes say: "just don't ask me to do it." How about your project?

JOYCE: I did different versions. I like this one better. I don't want it to be so rigid; I want it to be more playful. I don't think it's going to stay like this. Did you ever see Sophie Calle's layout?

ZITA: No.

JOYCE: Each picture had its own little frame with its own white border. They were hung next to each other—close together. I'll show you, I just have to look it up. They're framed with a simple black frame. I was thinking of using this frame with smaller frames around it, but I don't think it will fit in the space.

ZITA: Where is it?

JOYCE: The bathroom in the basement.

ZITA: Why do you want to put this in the bathroom?

JOYCE: Spying is an intimate act that you don't do it out in the open, you know. Also, the light is good there—that was the other problem. The images are already dark as it is, to put them in a dark place is going to make it even more difficult, and I thought that was the best solution. To put it where there was good light and it where was kind of private and where you have a chance to get up close to it. Waiting in line to go to the bathroom.

ZITA: You want to put it in the bathroom or . . .

JOYCE: No, between the two doors of the men's and women's room.

ZITA: Oh I see. Hum. What if you put it in one of the corridors . . . oh it's dark.

JOYCE: I think the only solution is to put it into the format that I want and to fit it where it fits. And not worry about that. I don't think that this work is dependent on the space.

ZITA: It's not the space, it's the work. I think it will work.

JOYCE: It's flexible.

ZITA: So we convinced you that this place is okay for an exhibition?

JOYCE: I wasn't thrilled about it at first, because it is so informal a place, and I didn't want a gallery, which is good.

ZITA: You didn't.

JOYCE: No. I wanted it to be something accessible, but I feel it's almost a gallery like half way. And then how cluttered it is . . . It's not easy to look up there and see something. It's so overwhelming.

ZITA: Well, yes. This exhibition is going to be site specific. Do you call yourself an artist or something else? Yeah like whatever, do you call yourself something?

JOYCE: Yeah I call myself something else. I say, "Hi, I'm something else."

ZITA: [LAUGHING] OK. I was waiting for the bus while preparing for this interview. I was cold and tired.

JOYCE: What do you think of yourself as?

ZITA: Who me?

JOYCE: Yeah you.

ZITA: Oh Jesus, I did think of answering these questions . . . I'm uh, a student at City College.

JOYCE: That's all?

ZITA: Yeah. I'm still looking.

JOYCE: Do you want to be an artist?

ZITA: No, but I want to create. And I always wanted to be that person who gives money to artists.

JOYCE: Like a sponsor?

ZITA: Like a?

JOYCE: A donator?

ZITA: I don't know the name. A person who gives scholarships.

JOYCE: I don't know what you call that.

ZITA: I always wanted to be that.

JOYCE: Well, you can.

ZITA: Oh yes. I just have to make some money first. I have a lot of talented artist friends with no money.

JOYCE: Why are you participating in this show? What's your goal?

ZITA: I love sharing my work even if it doesn't feel like I'm an artist in a show.

JOYCE: What do you mean by that? What do you think of an artist as?

ZITA: Someone to make artwork and to make the world better. You know...

JOYCE: What if you had an artist that made the world worse? Would they still be artists? Like if they went out of their way to make the world worse.

ZITA: I don't think artist makes the world worse!

JOYCE: I'm going to have to find some way to challenge you on that. I don't think it's clear-cut like that. You can make art that makes you feel weird.

ZITA: Yeah, but it's not about making you feel good, it's about making you feel somehow. And to make you think about it. It's not always good. I think have an effect on people and motivate them to think about certain issues—that's art.

JOYCE: What about somebody who doesn't make something physical? Are they an artist? What do they produce? Does it have to be an object, or . . . ?

ZITA: No. There are many great actors and cool performance artists.

JOYCE: Right. I'm reading a lot about this woman, Lygia Clark, who makes art that you can't see. And there's no one there to really guide you with it. It's called *Air and Stone*. It's this idea of the work being activated by the participant. It's this bag filled with air with this pebble resting on top. So the person picks it up. The work of art isn't activated until the person picks up the bag. It's not the work and it's not the person. It's the experience.

ZITA: I thought this about the Gates too. Like it was not about the Gates and it was not about the artist.

JOYCE: I didn't see it.

ZITA: It was unbelievable, there were hundreds of people all over the park, all age groups, everyone walking and talking to each other. And taking pictures. It was fantastic. The whole atmosphere was something special. It wasn't about the saffron color.

JOYCE: I guess you could say it was successful.

IOANNIS DRAGASAKIS AND SONIA ECHEVERRIA



Sonia and I had our interview/conversation at the Art Department's Gallery where the current show is the annual student photography exhibition.

IOANNIS: Sonia, you are an Electronic Design and Multimedia major, what do you consider yourself—a graphic designer or a visual artist? What do you prefer people to call you?

SONIA: First, I would like to combine traditional art with graphic design but I prefer to be a visual artist. Do you remember when I showed you my portfolio with these photos [THE PHOTOS IN THE SHOW]? This is a good example of how I like to use my own photos in order to make something graphic, like a book.

IOANNIS: Yes this is graphic design, you used your own artwork for that project, as a graphic designer you can use any artwork.

SONIA: I agree I like to create my own artwork for my graphic design projects. What about you, what do you prefer to be . . . ?

IOANNIS: Visual artist of course, for a job though, as EDM students, we have more chances. I believe we can do

both, and depends if you know a lot of graphic designers you can find work easier in that field. On the other hand if you know more artists you can easier do exhibitions in galleries etc. and sell your artwork. Look, a lot of photographs have been sold. Don't you think that most of the sold ones are more decorative with nice frames?

SONIA: Yes, I wonder how much they cost.

IOANNIS: See, the one here with the boy, which is sold, isn't it more decorative than this one with the man who has some make-up and a strange expression?

SONIA: Yes, the one with the boy has more dramatic light and it has more contrast than the other, this one looks more like a simple portrait of somebody. The one with the boy is expressive and cute.

IOANNIS: I agree, it is cute but not expressive, and again it is decorative. That means that you can put it on the living room's wall easier than the other one. By the way, I am thinking of framing my pictures for the exhibition in white frames referencing iMac Computers. If you remembered from my midterm's proposal, I wanted to mimic somehow the computer screen "click here for detail".

SONIA: You can use a gray frame, which also relates for the new G5. Are you using any Photoshop in your term project?

IOANNIS: I use a little, only "levels" and adjust the sizes of course. What about yours?

SONIA: Yes, I think my unrealistic project is very time consuming because I have to use a lot of Photoshop, but I like it very much. I hope to get good results.

IOANNIS: Are you using Photoshop, for example, to change the color of the sky or color of the water to a Surrealistic one?

SONIA: I'm thinking of that too, I'm not sure yet, I have to see if I like it with some color effects or natural as it is. So, Ioannis, as an artist what do you like to do?

IOANNIS: As you know, I'm a second-degree student and my first-degree specialization is painting. My paintings have non-representative and some representative elements, simple flat color forms, areas that are "busy" and abstract, and some areas with a naturalistic approach, for example, a recognizable outline of a figure.

[WE WERE WALKING AND STOPPED IN FRONT OF FUTOSHI MIYAGI'S PHOTO].

SONIA: I like Futoshi's picture where you can draw or write on it. I drew the horns, I will make them stronger.

IOANNIS: Ok. So do you like it because you can add something to it and be one of its creators?

SONIA: I think it is a very creative idea and he wants the audience to be part of it, which makes the audience have fun with it. Did you draw anything on it?

IOANNIS: No, not yet.

SONIA: Draw something.

IOANNIS: OK, I will draw an abstract motif here [NECK AREA].

SONIA: How do you see yourself in 10 years?

IOANNIS: I see myself trying to do better artwork. If I don't make enough money to survive with my art I'll probably (hopefully) work in an area close to art.

ANDREA NYIRADI AND KUMIKO SUZUKI



At the *Olive Garden*, the night previous to our interview, Kumiko and I toasted my birthday. Here we discussed how age is not important and only a means to judge. With that in mind, we had decided to disclose such information in our interview. The following night, I was a year older and hopefully a little wiser. Although my birthday night extravaganza left as poor, beaten and hung over, we managed to outwit our financial limitations by meeting at Virgin Mega-Store.

ANDREA: Kumiko, I know you're taking pictures of people for *Genres*, what will be your end product?

KUMIKO: I'm taking images of friends. Portraits of people connected with me in a way. Friends and friends of friends.

ANDREA: How did you decide on this?

KUMIKO: Since I have come into photography, I have been shooting my friends, but never completed a portfolio.

ANDREA: So you wanted a portfolio of your friends?

KUMIKO: Yes, that's my project right now, taking a lot of pictures of my friends.

ANDREA: Is there anything else you want to add?

KUMIKO: Ummm, should I add more?

ANDREA: [LAUGHS] No, not unless you want to.

KUMIKO: What are you writing down? [LAUGHS] Why I decided to make a portfolio right now, I know the story

is cheesy, because 2 years ago I . . . I always decided to make a portfolio of friends, [so I] shot a lot. But I couldn't succeed. I made it and I didn't like it a lot. After I broke up with my boyfriend I started shooting, so I decided to do it now. I know it's a cheesy story, but it's the truth. [LAUGHS]

ANDREA: Maybe you shouldn't date guys when you're doing photography. So what's next?

KUMIKO: So boyfriends and friends both affect your photo work, maybe it's true that breaking up and boyfriends effect my shooting.

ANDREA: I'd say it's true.

KUMIKO: That's why I am asking you if you feel that that story affects your work or life?

ANDREA: I don't know, any artist is influenced by exterior relationships. It's true with anybody having good or bad experiences, but ultimately if it affects our processes of thinking then it becomes a handicap getting in our way as an artist. Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! What am I saying, that's a bunch of bull crap. I think things should get in our way, that's life; we spend too much of our time boggled down with conceptual thought and not enough time breathing.

KUMIKO: Yeah, that's true.

ANDREA: Cool, so your ex-boyfriend could have been a good motivator for this project.

KUMIKO: And maybe, maybe not.

ANDREA: So what motivates your art?

KUMIKO: That's hard. I never think about it that way . . . My friends, my family, and people I meet, everything around me. That's why now I like shooting still lifes, the stuff around me.

ANDREA: I understand, I've been really digging Laura Letinsky's work lately. How does her work relate to yours?

KUMIKO: I'm focusing on daily stuff people don't pay attention to around me, and because put in some view it's so attractive, beautiful and [I] also rearrange some parts to make it look cool.

ANDREA: And that's what you're currently working on?

KUMIKO: Yes. So what kind of pictures are you taking?

ANDREA: I don't know. It's hard, I don't see that way, I'm not shooting for a genre. I am a photographer, I take pictures of everything.

KUMIKO: Let me know what you're doing in digital.

ANDREA: Umm, ok, I am taking pictures of myself in a deadpan style with high contrast . . . It's just too hard. It's not easy talking about what you want because what if it changes? We shouldn't talk of future projects.

KUMIKO: I agree with you, I know ideas are always changing. In my case, I said I'm taking portraits of my friends, but describing it is too hard.

ANDREA: Also, what if the interpretation is different? I don't want it to be just one thing or how I've envisioned, this way it can be anything. If I tell people what I want, it totally depletes the experience.

KUMIKO: Okay I will find out my own interpretation of your images at the exhibition.

**LEILA BELHASSAN-ALAOUI
AND SARAH NAKHOST-KARIMI**



Sarah and I met at a small crêperie in the East village. The place always made me feel as if I was in Paris . . . I thought Sarah would appreciate it since she lived in Paris for a few months.

LEILA: I feel that we have a lot in common as women who grew up in a Western society with a strong Islamic heritage . . . How has your upbringing as an Iranian in the U.S. affected you?

SARAH: Where should I begin . . . Well it was definitely crazy because I grew up in Northern Virginia, right outside of D.C. and we were maybe one out of two families that were not white and / or American on our street. So unfortunately I had to deal with a lot of prejudices when I was a kid. I hated everything about being Iranian. I was all messed up.

LEILA: Wow, but you seem to embrace it so much today.

SARAH: Now, of course! I'm very proud to be Iranian and I've learned to really appreciate and embrace my culture. No more self-hatred.

LEILA: I definitely get that feeling from your work.

SARAH: I guess it does come out in my work lately.

LEILA: I have had some awkward times dealing with my bicultural background as well. I always felt different. Today, I see my bicultural identity as a gift. I feel that being brought up within two worlds that sometimes contradict each other made me a more tolerant person with a more universal outlook on life .

SARAH: Your photos have very sexy and sensual undertones, so I didn't know if that bothered your parents.

LEILA: Well my mother is very open-minded and she appreciates what I do. My father has always given me the freedom to express myself fully, and to be who I am although he thought I was too rebellious sometimes.

SARAH: That's cool.

LEILA: Your work is very politically involved. Your Iranian identity is very often embedded in your work. Is this what inspires you the most in photography?

SARAH: Yeah, I feel very close to my heritage right now. Because I neglected that part of my identity in the past, I'm kind of reliving it now that I'm older. I need to make up for lost time and identity. But, I think more importantly the state of the world really scares me. I don't want to sit around and just watch everything deteriorate. I hate feeling powerless and hopeless. Of course the reality is that my work is not going to change the world, but it does feel better to know that I at least I stood up for something I believed in by putting myself out there with my images. I guess it's more like self therapy than anything else. But my work hasn't always had this political angle; it's just where I'm at right now.

LEILA: You showed me some examples of work you did with alternative processes. I really liked that style also.

SARAH: I love all aspects of photography especially playing around with liquid emulsions, Polaroid transfers and using my pinhole camera. Alternative processes are fun. Did I ever show you the series I did called "subway fantasies"—where I was dressed as a man? That was a fun project, not necessarily political, but I was trying to work with feminine ideas by pushing the boundaries of gender. I don't know, I guess at this stage of my life I like doing projects that have some kind of meaning behind them. I love making people question things when they look at my work.

LEILA: You like shocking your viewers?

SARAH: Well, I do like the "shock value" of things but that's not my purpose. I just like the idea that people might do a doubletake and actually think about things when they view my work.

LEILA: It's funny, because my work has turned out to be almost the complete opposite of yours.

SARAH: I've noticed you like doing fashion style portraits. Is this where you are creatively now, or is it a style you've always worked with?

LEILA: It's funny but I actually studied anthropology and film during my first 3 years of college. I wanted to become a documentary filmmaker. I was always against injustices

and always felt that everyone's voice could affect the world and lead to social change. Every single day I try my best to make the world a better place by expressing my views and trying to share my experiences to teach others. I guess as time passes I've become less idealistic and less involved. Anyway, I always loved photography. I took a studio lighting class 2 years ago and finally decided that I wanted to become a photographer. I transferred to the CUNY baccalaureate program in order to finish college by taking only photography classes. I was always fascinated with lighting, and it is what inspires me the most in photography. Even in cinema, I am always interested in the lighting. I love portrait/studio photography. I am not someone who likes to go out in the streets to take photographs. I like the atmosphere of being in a studio with one person and creating my own image.

SARAH: Do you think your background inspires any of your work?

LEILA: I am not sure how my bicultural background affects my work directly. But it does affect it in many ways, just as every element of my life has influenced me. I don't really see a lot of meaning in my photographs. I am more interested in trying to achieve an aesthetic style.

It took me a while to finally realize what I wanted to do. I have explored a lot of possibilities and was always too curious about the world and interested in too many things which led me to not focus enough in one direction.

So, how are you doing with your project?

SARAH: Well, I'm shooting with my brother this week in the studio. It's going to be kind of a trial run because I have to test out the body bags I'm planning on using.

LEILA: Did you have trouble finding them?

SARAH: Well, I researched the net for body bags and can I tell you how weird it is for anyone to randomly buy body bags? I mean, I need them for a prop, but why are other people buying them?? Hmm?? Anyway, the problem is the bags are either white or black and I need them to be translucent. I want the viewer to be able to see the bodies, so I bought this vinyl mattress cover. It's not completely see-through; it has a subtle foggy quality to it. The mattress cover also has a big zipper and I think I can make it look like a body bag, but we'll see what happens. I still need to figure out how I'm going to install my photos because I want them to be hanging on hooks. You know how the meat or carcasses are hung up in a butcher shop. AAAHHH . . . too much work!!

SEM SEPULVEDA AND MITSURU KOSAKA



SEM: What inspires you?

MITSURU: I like work of people that makes me go "Wow." I want to create works that make people go "Wow." I am inspired by beautiful things. It may be color, concept, composition etc. I am really inspired by artwork. I like to look at pictures, type, design from magazines, ads, movies and video.

SEM: Like who?

MITSURU: I usually don't get to know artist's work, which is bad and I'm working on it. I think of directors. I really like video. The only thing is that it is an expensive area, which is why I went into art. Also, the creativity can get lost with a lot of people involved. In photography it is the work of one person. I'm very selfish about my idea and concept, so it's really hard to cooperate with other people. I was impressed by Michel Gondry, the director of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

What is your goal?

SEM: My goal is to be true to myself and break free of the paths our society pushes on us. It's difficult because

a part of you wants the house and financial security. The other side wants substance. My goal is to achieve a common ground on both. I definitely want creativity to be a part of my life in some way.

MITSURU: I always want to be true to myself too. Well, what is your term project?

SEM: My project is of Central Park in the Northern Area near the Hostel. The images will be printed in postcards.

MITSURU: It costs a lot. But I really like your idea to present your work as postcards especially in the hostel, where people can take them.

SEM: That is my intention. To share my images, I want to share with visitors. I saw some of the images for your project, could you explain the idea and why? I think they captivate the eye. I love the concept, so I am looking forward to the finished work.

MITSURU: My color portraits are inspired from a musical short film I saw. I realized the color made the image change the mood and people's expression. I thought it's interesting to show the beauty of color, also how they may change the image itself. It's hard to explain. My intention is that I wish I could show the meaning of color when people look at my photograph. Also, I'm really interested in color psychology. So, I have researched it and combine these concepts. I thought it would be interesting.

SEM: It will. The group has some great dynamics and you add a lot to it. Good luck on your project Mitsuru.

MITSURU: Thanks, and same to you. !!!