THE ALEPH

a journal of global perspectives

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the

Aleph

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Volume IX, 2010

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Editors' Notes

This journal takes its name from, and is inspired by, the 1945 short story "The Aleph" by the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. In the story, the narrator finds "a small iridescent sphere" in which, "without admixture or confusion, all the places of the world, seen from every angle, coexist." Borges's story resonates with the experiences of students who have crossed cultural borders. *The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives* provides space for students to explore the ways in which their encounter with other cultures may have influenced them. For the reader, the journal serves as a window into the lives of students as they navigate cultures and identities. Contributor and reader alike are challenged to comprehend "all the places of the world, seen from every angle..."

For this year's *Aleph*, the editors have tried some new things. In the past, we have grouped written work into sections more or less describing the kind of writing, from short, poignant vignettes (Moments) to longer, more reflective essays (Lessons) to in-depth explorations of another culture (Crossings). This year we added descriptive introductory pages to these sections, explaining the rationale behind the category and noting some of the excellent narrative "moves" made by the writers whose work is featured. Think of it as a very long "letter from the editors," spread throughout the journal. We are pleased to include in this issue a submission by a student from St. Lawrence University. Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Union College and St. Lawrence University are members of the recently formed New York Six Liberal Arts Consortium, along with Colgate, Hamilton, and Skidmore. We hope to include the perspectives of our consortium colleagues and their students in future issues of *The Aleph*.

For this volume, we also changed the way we organized the images, which have always been a very strong narrative element in the journal. Rather than sprinkle them freely in the text (which admittedly created some nice juxtapositions and reso-

nances) we have tried this year to group them according to their photographic strengths.

You'll find in these pages several portfolios of images that illustrate specific rules about photography, ranging from Robert Capa's maxim "Get closer!" to the infallible "rule of thirds". Collectively, these concepts make up what we call the "recipe for a photograph." We hope these portfolios help the reader understand a bit more about how photographic composition works, as well as provide our students with inspiration and instruction that will help them "make" more compelling images.

Meditations on Barry Ross Smith's Queen Elizabeth with a Maori Moko, New Zealand [Abby Rudman]

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

making vs. taking photographs

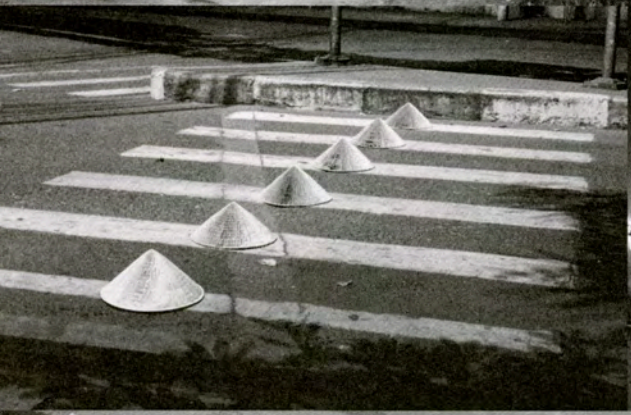
Ansel Adams once said "You don't take a photograph, you make it." Photos are not sitting there like fossils, waiting to be plucked and put into a collection. They are not found or taken; they are constructed by the photographer out of space, time and light. With each of these, the photographer has to make decisions. Photography is a creative process, and it is not objective.

Space: What angle do you photograph from? How do you arrange the elements in the frame of the photo so that the relationships between them are understood? Most importantly, the photographer has to answer the question: what do I show and what do I not show? Frame sizes are very small—most of photography is about exclusion.

Time: When do you trip the shutter and record the image? Do you want to freeze a particular moment or record several moments in time in one frame (blurring the motion)? Timing is crucial.

Light: The medium of photography is light. To be a great photographer, one must understand light, and how to work with or maniupulate it in the service of telling a visual story. What light is best for this subject? What time of day should I try to photograph? How can I arrange myself to best take advantage of the natural lighting in this space?

Clockwise from top: Hats on a Bridge [Kelly Biggs], Portrait with Hats [Margaret Wilson], Hats on a Beach [Lauren Brown], Hats on a Fountain [Brittany Simon], Hats on a Crosswalk [Andrew Heitmann].


Hanoi Motorbike Taxi (Xe Om) Driver Reading the Paper, Vietnam [Stephen Wolff] and *Busy Shopping Street,* Hong Kong [Melody Acosta]

MO•MENT

n. [1.] very brief period of or exact point in time [2.] a particular stage in something's development or in a course of events

This section includes stories that focus on a specific experience of study abroad or cultural immersion. While these stories don't communicate the whole experience—that's not possible even in much longer pieces—they do suggest the essence of the experience.

Can you tell a story that gives the reader a sense of what life was like as a student in Senegal, by simply relating a time you hosted tea? Christa Levesque's Moment proves that you can.

Notice: Christa punctuates her piece with the ritual instructions of the tea preparation.

The next two Moments offer personal variations on a singular experience: standing up on a surfboard for the first time. For Andrew Shumway, the Moment is really about a journey of cultural and spiritual significance, and for Samantha Lesser the Moment is all about an inward struggle for self-improvement. Both are hefty themes to be carried on the back of a surfboard, but both Moments work.

Notice: Andrew's story focuses on Matiu, his Maori surf instructor, and Samantha's story is driven by dialogue and self-deprecating humor.

Moments I

Jaay ma Suukër ak Warga

I ANXIOUSLY WALK into Pathé's room, prepared with *warga* (tea leaves) and *suukër* (sugar) in hand. He greets me with the common salutation "*Yaa ngi si jàmm?*" Do you have peace? I reply, "*Jàmm rek, alhomdulilah!*" Peace only, thank God! Two months ago these words had no meaning for me, but now they envelop me in peace and happiness. I feel at home.

Pirogues belonging to the fishermen of Saint-Louis, Senegal line the shores of the *Langue de Barbarie* [Christa Levesque]

It is my first time making *attaya* all by myself. Making tea is about being social. My friends and I talk as I try to concentrate on the art of *attaya*.

Pour water into the kettle and plug in the hot plate. Wait for water to boil. Add half a packet of warga and wait for the water to boil again.

"A woman sat on me today!" My friends in the room look at me strangely and I willingly explain my funny story. I was in a *car rapide*, a common mode of transportation that can sometimes transport thirty people at one time. I was sitting on a bench that usually fits six people, but has a maximum capacity of five when the people are a bit larger. We squished as much as possible and only got about a 6-inch space in between me and a woman sitting next to

me. A woman about twice my size got onto the *car rapide* and thought that she could fit herself in this little spot. I looked up at her, she looked down at me and proceeded to sit right on my lap!! I burst out laughing and then said "*Bonjour!*" and the whole *car rapide* burst out in laughter. We had a little conversation in Wolof, eventually a spot opened up so the woman could have her own seat, and then I got off and we went our merry ways.

Add in sugar. About 18 cubes. Pour tea into glasses and pour back into kettle—mixing all the ingredients. Let boil.

As the laughter dies down from my story of the woman sitting on me, the subject changes to cultural differences between the United States and Senegal. Here in Senegal, the emphasis is placed on the social. Pathé explains that if a friend comes to visit you, you talk with him or her even if you have a lot of homework. You would never turn someone away because you are in the middle of an assignment. This person chose to spend time with you; how could you turn him or her away? My thoughts turn to HWS and how I am always busy, how I could never take three hours out of my afternoon to make tea. I sigh and wish our two cultures were not so different.

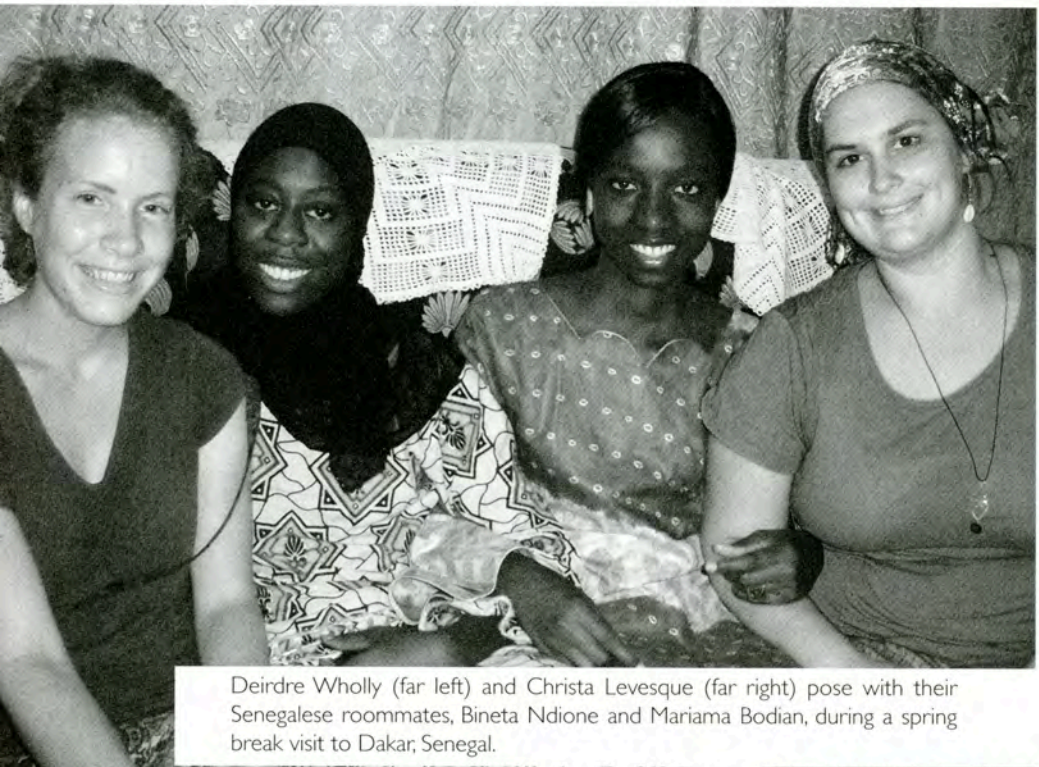
After tea has boiled for fifteen to twenty minutes, pour one glass almost to the top. Attaya can continue to boil as the glass of tea cools. When cool enough, start making mousse by forcibly pouring tea from one glass to another. It takes a lot of practice to make good mousse.

As I sit making the mousse, my friend Demba asks me why I am not married. I wonder why the conversation always turns to marriage. It just seems to be one of those "hot topics" here at Université Gaston Berger. I ask my own questions. What is your opinion on polygamy? After all, polygamy is perfectly legal in Senegal. "I am not opposed to it, but I could never do it," Demba replies. If you did have more than one wife, would you have them stay in one house or would they have separate houses? "Same house," he answers quickly. "So the children could all play with each

other." Clearly he has thought about his options. Do you think it is unfair that women can only have one husband but men can have four wives? "No. If a woman had more than one husband, how would you know the father of the child?" Huh. That's the first time someone has given me a sensible answer to that question.

When the mousse is finished, serve the attaya. Share with friends and neighbors.

They ask me about my teaching in town. I tell them about how I am teaching at an all-girls high school, Ameth Fall. I do not really enjoy teaching English; I have found that I do not have much passion for the language. However, my girls are hilarious. One conversation I had with a class was particularly funny—it was on the topic of marriage. We were talking about traditional marriage ceremonies in Senegal—I learned a lot and they practiced speaking in English. Then we talked about the roles of husbands and wives. The girls thought that roles for a wife included cooking,



Deirdre Wholly (far left) and Christa Levesque (far right) pose with their Senegalese roommates, Bineta Ndione and Mariama Bodian, during a spring break visit to Dakar, Senegal.

cleaning, and taking care of children. Roles for a husband included working, sleeping, eating too much, watching tv, and doing nothing! I like teaching in an all-girls school!

Start the second glass—add the rest of the warga and twelve cubes of suukër. Bring to a boil.

As I start my second cup, I develop this aching feeling that I might never see these friends again. It scares me and I start to tear up. It's not like my friends at HWS where I only have to drive six hours to see them... The Atlantic Ocean divides me and Senegal. Pathé notices my change in mood and starts explaining how Senegalese people do not usually leave their homeland. Families live in the same villages, in the same houses, for years and years. I think about my first days in Senegal with Professor Joseph. We were walking through the busy streets of Dakar, near where he used to live, when he saw the same man who used to clean his car each week. The man was in the same neighborhood decades later and recognized my professor! I did not appreciate what this meant at the time, but this exchange gives me hope. People never leave Senegal. All I have to do is physically come back and keep the phone numbers of my friends and I will see them again. *Insh'Allah*, God willing.

Make mousse again. Serve attaya and share with friends and neighbors.

I talk about the things I will miss about Senegal. The warmth of the people. *Taranga*—the hospitality the Senegalese show. The cows, donkeys, goats and horses roaming around campus. The call to prayer five times each day. Senegalese music. The endless expanse of stars in the night sky. Philosophical discussions with my best friends as we share tea.

I start cleaning up my materials, dumping the used *warga* in the trash and rinsing the glasses.

I miss the warm smiles that wished me goodbye. I will think of them every time I make *attaya* in the future. *Ba baneen yoon, Insh'Allah.*

—Christa Levesque

Moments II

Just Stand Up

I'LL ADMIT THAT academics were not the primary reason I went to New Zealand. It's long been a goal of mine to learn how to surf. It was more than a goal; call it an urge or a yearning, and that might begin to describe the feeling. The ocean calls me. My search to learn how to surf was a spiritual one that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

The first experience I had with wave riding took place at Mt. Maunganui in New Zealand's Bay of Plenty. The beach stretched up towards the mountain, "The Mount" as it is otherwise known. The Mount jutted up over the sand like a watchful parent, its green foliage a stark contrast to the white sands and blue Pacific. My teacher was Matiu Ratima, a Maori professor who taught "Maori Culture and Society" at the University of Auckland. Accompanied by Professor Kelly of HWS, we met Matiu's brother-in-law Jamie, who provided the surfboards.

Matiu and Jamie greeted each other with the *hongi*, the traditional Maori greeting, in which they press their noses together and exchange *ha*, the breath of life. Family is the most important thing in Maori culture, and in the Polynesian-Pacific world in general. Elders of Maori *iwi*, or tribes, can trace the ancestry of the Maori people back through the generations, all the way back to their origins in the *atua* (gods). Everything is connected: the earth, the sea, the people.

He greeted me with a hearty handshake and the friendly "*Kia ora!*" Jamie is a Maori artist and had painted the surfboard he brought for me to use that day. It was an

eight-foot hybrid, which suited my six-foot-two frame. Before he let me go out, he explained what he had painted. On the underside of the board was a portrait of his family in linear form, with his head at the nose, his wife's head on his chest and their son between her legs. He explained that his family was the most important thing to him and that from them he got his strength and inspiration. On the top of the board he had painted at the nose *Tangaroa*, the god of the oceans and seas.

The feeling that board gave me is indescribable. Understanding the importance of ancestry and the *atua* in Maori culture, I was honored to be trusted with such powerful imagery on my first attempt at surfing.

The waves weren't huge that day and we were alone on the beach; Matiu said it was perfect for learning. We waded into the frigid Pacific. He first taught me how to lie on my stomach on the board. After an embarrassing slip on my first attempt, I got the hang of it. Then he taught me how to paddle (It's like being a paraplegic turtle because you're not supposed to use your legs).

When Matiu saw the first set of small waves coming in, he explained how to catch a wave. *Watch the wave, pick the one you intend to ride, point the nose towards the beach and start paddling as fast as you can a little before the wave reaches you. Timing is everything.* The first time we paddled to catch a wave, I managed to catch it and ride it in on my stomach for a brief moment. Matiu had stood up on his board for that ride, and when the wave had passed he shouted, "Great job, you rode that one! How'd it feel?" Even though it was only about a one-and-a-half-foot wave, it was one of the most exciting things I'd ever done. "Awesome!" I shouted back.

We waded and then paddled out again to wait for another set. That day I learned about two big parts of surfing: timing and waiting. As we waited, I asked him about the Maori perspective on surfing, since it was their Polynesian ancestors, the Hawai'ians, who invented surfing. He explained that there was a great connection to nature in

surfing. Man cannot control, master, or tame the ocean, and surfers learn that they have to wait for what *Tangaroa* offers and not take anything on the waves for granted. Then he smiled and chuckled, "but there were days when my father or my grandfather would ask me, 'You were out on the water for three hours? And you didn't bring anything home? Waste of time.'"

Matiu taught me how to see when a set was coming in, and eventually we saw one as good as we were going to get. I'll never forget how he taught me to stand up on my board. He said, "Just stand up!" While I didn't successfully get up that first day out, a result of the small waves and my fear of total embarrassment, I learned a lot not only about surfing, but also about the people whose country I was fortunate enough to share for those four short months.

I did stand up on my board, finally, in a small surf town called Whangamata. I was with Kiwi friends who didn't surf, so I set out on my own in the hope that *Tangaroa* would help me achieve my dream. The waves at Whangamata were significantly bigger than my first attempt at The Mount. I paddled out, wary of the few other surfers around me. I kept what Matiu taught me close with me and when I saw a sizeable wave coming, I turned my nose in towards the beach and paddled as hard as I could. As I felt the board catch the wave, I looked over my shoulder briefly as the ocean folded on itself over me. I turned back around, smiled and remembered what Matiu said: "Just stand up."

—Andrew Shumway

Whale Shark off Tofo Beach, Mozambique [Rachel Forster] and *Sea Lion Sleeps in the Galapagos,* Ecuador [Shannon Mahoney]

Moments III

Catch Waves, Conquer Fears

I WAS FIVE the first time I swam in the ocean. I got caught in a rip current and almost drowned. The second time I swam in the ocean I was twenty, and participating in a study abroad program in Australia.

I had gotten it into my head that I wanted to take surfing lessons while in Australia. Why I wanted to do this, I have no idea. I am not a strong swimmer and am terrified of the ocean. Part of me wanted to face my fears; the other part thought I was crazy.

A bunch of us went to the Gold Coast one weekend. Five people signed up for surfing lessons. We practiced standing up on the board while on the beach. This gave me a little bit of confidence. The instructor then started explaining what we were going to do next.

"We will go out into the water. We will not go very deep, maybe this high," indicating the depth of the water by leveling his hand about chest high. "For starters I will give you all a push to catch the waves. After you have mastered standing up with my assistance, you will learn to catch the waves yourselves. Let's go!"

We all picked up our boards and waded into the water. It was icy cold. Once it got up to my waist, I started shaking in nervousness. The waves, while not large, were not small either and the force they exerted pushed me back towards the shore. Soon I was a good distance away from the rest of the group.

The water level was chest high, but we kept on trudging deeper and deeper. I am a short person, so when the instructor indicated chest high water, he was referring to

a level comfortable to him, not to my smaller size. When he finally stopped, the water was at my shoulders. I used my board to block the incoming waves. They continued to batter at me, threatening to push me under the water and drag me back to shore. With all of my power, I managed to remain in line.

The first person climbed on the board. She lay there, waiting for the instructor to give her a push. The wave came and she was off.

"Stand up!" yelled the instructor. She started to get up, and slid off the board. She cheerfully got back up and came back to where we were waiting. I stopped watching everyone else, and remained focused on remembering how to stand up. Eventually, it was my turn.

I shakily climbed onto the board. My hands gripped the side and I was too far forward. The instructor corrected me, and then before I was ready, I was off.

"Stand up!", I heard from behind me. I pushed up with my arms and knocked the board off balance, plunging me into the icy water. I knew that I would not be able to stand up on the first try, and turned around to get back in line.

The second time I tried to stand up, I fell off again. I swallowed a huge amount of water before the board knocked me in the head, sending me back under the water. At this point I decided that if I continued, I would surely drown. Dragging the board behind me, I headed towards shore.

When my feet hit the sand, I felt a pang of shame. Why couldn't I stand up when everyone else seemed to be at ease in the water? As I slowly walked up the beach, I could feel tears forming in my eyes. I paused to take some deep breaths. Someone came up behind me and I turned around to see who it was.

"What's going on?", the instructor asked. I didn't say anything, afraid that if I talked, the tears would start flowing. "Everything okay?"

"No," I said, and the tears began. "I can't.....I can't....."

but the emotions were strong and soon I was struggling to make coherent words. "The ocean doesn't like me," I managed to say.

The instructor was obviously confused. "Can you swim?"

I shook my head, deciding that was an easier answer than explaining my fear of the water.

"You should have told me. I've taught people to surf who don't know how to swim."

"But," I said, "the water was too deep out there. I'm a small person!"

"I'll take you to a spot where the water level is more appropriate to your height," he said. I nodded.

Where he brought me to was much better. The waves weren't as high, and the water wasn't as deep. Yet he was also close to the rest of the people, who were catching their own waves at this point.

He calmly explained again how to stand up. I climbed up on the board, and after a word of encouragement, he pushed me off. When I fell again, my knees slammed into the bottom and I knew I was no longer in over my head.

"Hurry back!", the instructor yelled, "let's try it again!"

After a couple more times, I managed to get both my feet in position before falling. Then one time, I didn't fall. I was able to get up, get my feet in position, and actually stand. I was so surprised that I lost my balance and tumbled into the water. But it didn't matter, because I had stood up!

I practiced a few more times with the instructor, managing to stand up a couple more times. Then he told me to catch my own waves. I was able to catch the waves, but would always go at an angle, so as soon as I tried to stand up, I fell. Before the lesson was over, I had done the impossible. I caught a wave and rode it to shore, standing up! While I haven't overcome my fear of the water, this excursion has proved to me that it is possible.

—Samantha Lesser


the decisive moment

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

the decisive moment

Henri Cartier-Bresson was a 20th century pioneer of photo-journalism. He was the consummate naturalist, using simple cameras with available light—no flash. To Cartier-Bresson, "*le clic*" was the most important aspect of photography: when you push the shutter button and the camera records the image. He called this "the decisive moment". Cartier-Bresson wrote:

> *There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative: Oop! The Moment! Once you miss it, it is gone forever.*

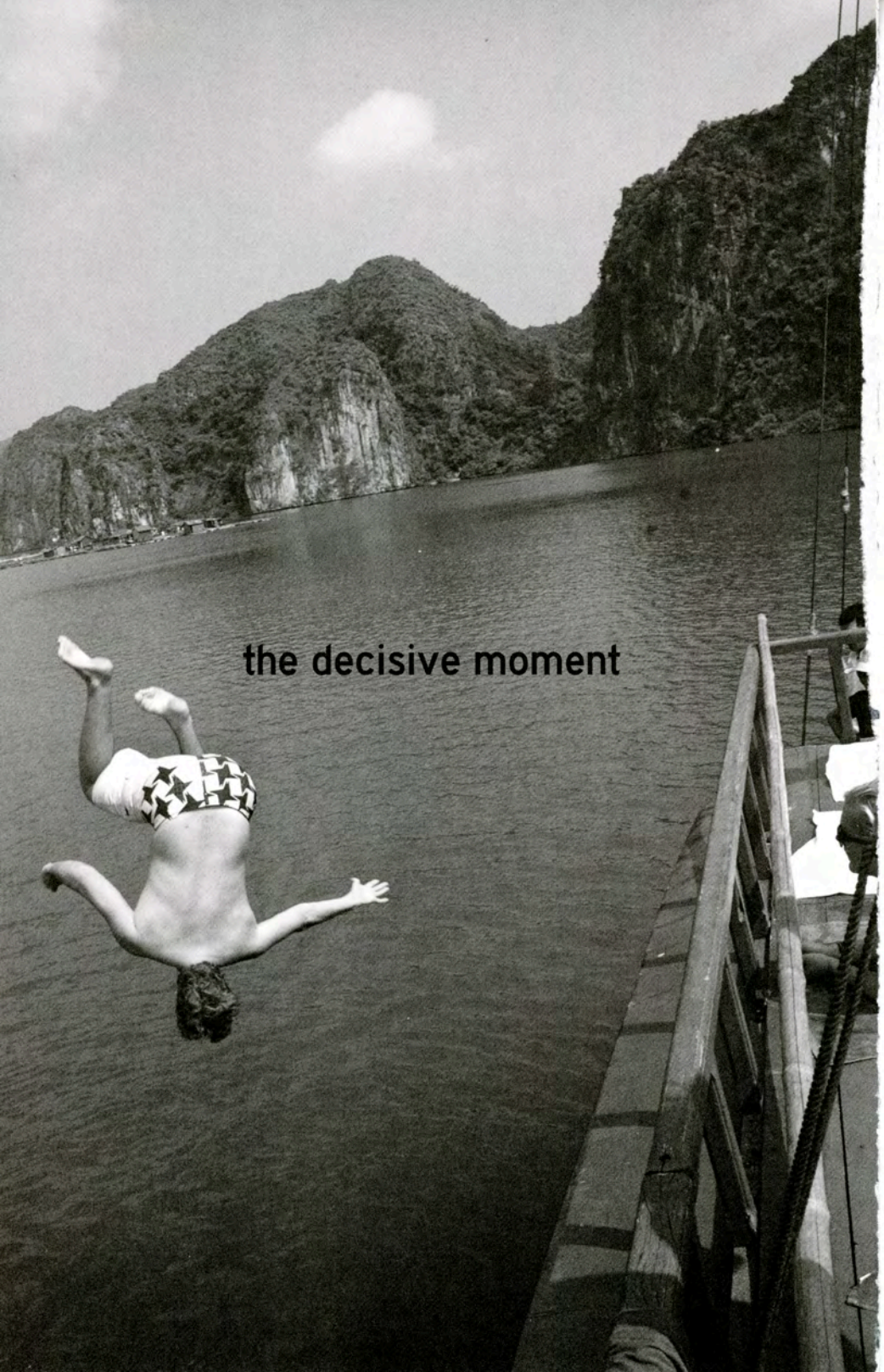
Photographers today have technical advantages that Cartier-Bresson could only have dreamed of (though he probably would have turned his nose up at them): auto-focus, fast frame rates, highly-sensitive digital cameras you can practically use in the dark. While you are developing your intuition at identifiying the decisive moment, follow this advice: make more than one image of any subject. One of the most common mistakes is to make one image, and then move on. You're not paying for film, so shoot a lot. Look at the images you just made, and change some of your creative decisions. Make more images. Photography is creative work.

Brittany Flaherty (overleaf) used a fast shutter speed to catch the person jumping off a rock on the Coromandel Peninsula in her photograph *Defying Gravity*. Lucia Berliner's dyptych (two photographs paired and meant to be shown together) of fellow student Walter Cruz at a Roman soccer game (facing) focuses on the changing energies and expressions of two people in two close moments in time. The dyptych tells more of a story, with the man to the right of Walter becoming one of the characters in the story as well.


ITALIA

Clockwise from upper left: ***Portrait Portrait***, Bologna, Italy [Camille Berjoan], ***In Transit***, Florence, Italy [Elizabeth Culp], ***Saigon Construction,*** Vietnam [Margaret Wilson], and ***Festival in Florence's Piazza della Repubblica,*** Italy [Phillip Lambert]

the decisive moment


the decisive moment

Facing: ***Jumping into Ha Long Bay,*** Vietnam [Alexandra Gollner] This page: ***Venice, the Sinking City,*** Italy [Sarah Bates]

FIELD JOURNAL

Description, Reaction, Analysis #28: Cremation

DESCRIPTION: It is 7am on our first full day in Varanasi. The sun is already heating the cool morning air along the banks of *Gangaji*, as many Hindus refer endearingly to their great river, the Ganges. We step off the wooden boat onto the muddy and trash-filled shore. Hiking up the *ghats* (long flights of steps that bank the river) to the top of the cremation grounds, the smell of fire and smoke begins to envelop us. As if parading through the streets, large wooden logs line the roads. We round the corner and the group arrives at a small balcony overlooking the burning grounds. Below us directly on the banks burn the fires of loved ones passed, the reflection of their last flames washing away with the ebb and flow of the waters. Smoke billows into the air, twisting and turning as it passes around and through the families sitting beside their loved ones, and our group watching from above. White cloth, signifying an older male body, covers the skull of the body directly below me and remains the only recognizable part of the human, the rest intertwined between the logs and flames. I alternate between watching the mesmerizing flames of this male, and the bright red-covered body of a young woman being prepared slightly to the left. A man lays her body down on top of a log bed, resembling more of a wooden raft than a cremation pyre. He removes her red cover, revealing her head and kisses her forehead gently. Meticulously and slowly he replaces her cover and pats it gently. As I look back to the male body, the sound of his skull popping echoes into the air as his fire continues to crackle. The woman's pyre is lit, and her soul starts to release as well. Further to the left, almost out of my sight there is a much smaller pyre with substantially less wood. The gender and age of the body is

unrecognizable, as I can't make out the color of the garment it is wrapped in. A small crowd stands around the fire as the body slowly burns. This fire does not have its own "space" on that *ghat*, nor does it seem to have enough wood piled up next to the fire like the others do.

REACTION: I had no idea how I would react to seeing the cremation *ghats*. I had studied them last year for a paper in class, watched videos that disturbed me and read accounts that seemed more scary to me than peaceful and releasing. The smoke immediately filled my eyes and tears started streaming down my face, yet they were just tears from the smoke. I had previously thought that I would either burst into tears or not be able to handle it and need to leave. Having dealt with death many times on a personal level in the past few years in my own life, I was nervous to face this. Yet, it was surprisingly peaceful. I remember a past participant of this program telling me that at first she didn't know how to react to the *ghats*, but that she found the same sense of peace that I did. She went back to the *ghats* to watch whenever she could. And when I saw them for myself, I finally understood how she could do that. Although not a happy sight, there is a calmness to it. Maybe that's because I have no emotional connection to the bodies being burned. I imagine that if I knew the person on the pyre, my reaction would be different. Nonetheless, the experience was memorable and my own reaction surprising to me.

The next day, at the last stop on our pilgrimage, I was struck by something. From the temple we could see the river and smoke rising from the bank. There were no *ghats* down this far, and yet there was a small cremation pyre and a family sitting beside it. "That family is either too low-caste to go to the *ghats* or does not have enough money to go there," Ranaji told us.

ANALYSIS: It is interesting that there is such a commotion today about the cremation of bodies along the Ganges.

It is such an integral part of the Hindu religion and lifestyle, yet it is being strongly challenged on environmental grounds. According to Professor B.D. Tripathi in his "Environmental Cleanliness and the Ganga" lecture, at Varanasi alone 300 tons of partially-burned flesh is thrown into the river each year. It is understandable why families choose to cremate their loved ones on the *ghats* instead of in the one government-supplied electric crematorium: they believe they need to release the soul and the remaining ashes into the Ganga. Yet, it is puzzling why, when the electric crematorium costs only 300 rupees, as opposed to at least 1800 rupees for a traditional, wood-fired cremation on the *ghats*, more people do not choose the former.

Not only is the crematorium cheaper, it is also more efficient. The electric crematorium utilizes 95% of the energy it produces in burning the body and so very little is wasted. The pyres on the *ghats*, conversely, waste 95% of the energy heating the air and earth around them. Professor Tripathi revealed to us that the cremation workers on the *ghats* often pay the operators of the electric crematorium to say that the facility is not working. This way, the workers on the *ghats* can continue to make money. According to Professor Tripatha, "The burning of dead bodies is an industry and many people are associated with it. They don't want to use electricity." Yet, if people are using electricity to cook and to light their homes, why not use it to cremate their loved ones' bodies, too?

Concerns have been raised about this practice, and its impact on both the health of the river as well as the people's right to practice their religion. The Ganga is a goddess and will always be pure, yet she is quite environmentally polluted. Should Indians be asked to sacrifice their religion and what they truly believe in to help the environment? Solution after solution is offered and tried, yet people find loopholes everywhere, motivated either by self-interest or belief. Even the practice of burial seems inconceivable; with the increasing population, space would soon be scarce, leaving no land for agriculture and the sustenance of the living.

—Lisa Phillipone

A Quiet Moment at Agra, India [Francesca Antonucci]
Indian Patriotic Display at the Border with Pakistan [Lisa Phillipone]

LES•SON

n.[1.] a thing learned by experience [2.] an occurence that reveals, warns, or enlightens

Lessons describe a *process of change*, how our thoughts are shaped by the things we sense (see, hear, smell, touch, taste) and do while we are abroad. Lessons often chart the journey home, when many students are faced with a culture that should be welcoming and familiar, but often seems oddly alien and unwelcoming.

Martin Michaels went to Jordan and found a Middle East far different from the stereotypes he saw on TV and heard about from peers and family.

Notice: Martin divides his essay into before, during and after, and smoothly moves from one to the next.

Shanelle France's Lesson starts with coming home, and then moves backwards in time. Her experience in South Africa forced Shanelle to confront some unpleasant truths about her own country.

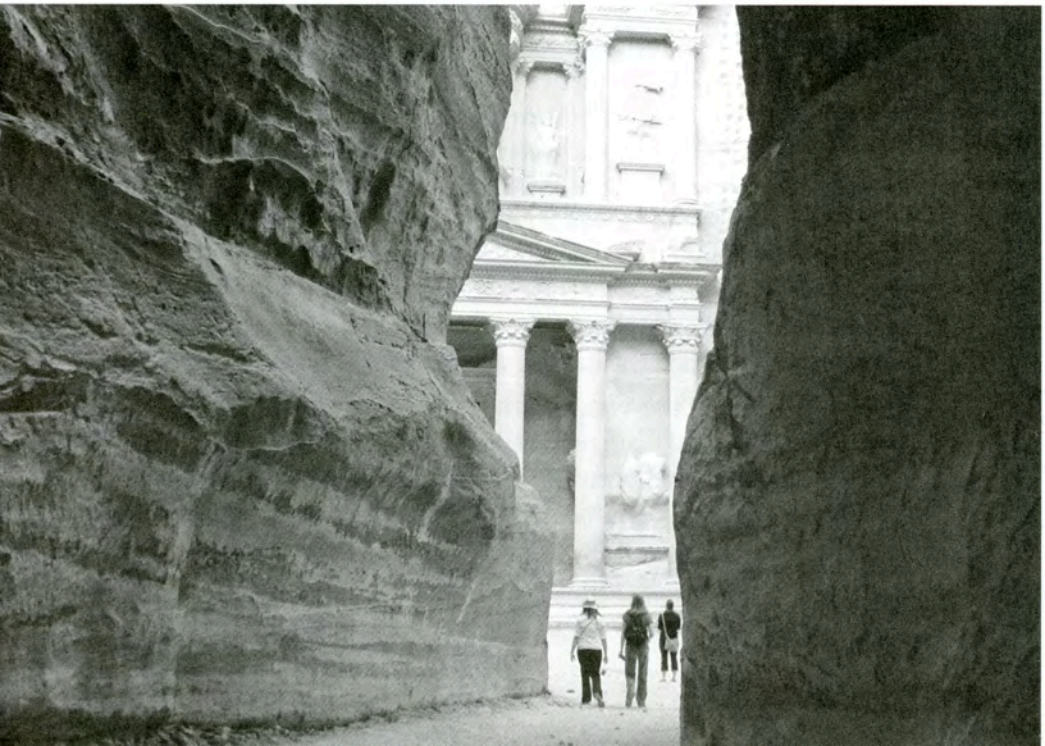
Notice: Shanelle uses the African concept of *ubuntu* to conclude on a hopeful note.

Claire Leavengood Boxer's journey to find out why Denmark is such a "green" country, and her description of it here, is at once temporal, spatial and mental.

Notice: Claire is very conscious and intentional about what she needs to explore at each step of her journey.

Andrea Rocchio imparts a Lesson about the weather. This one, like a Moment, focuses on a very specific thing. It's not an earth-shattering revelation, but it gives us a sense of the mundane things we learn that nonetheless stick with us and sometimes come to represent a much deeper and larger experience.

Martin Michaels at the Badia School in Al-Keno, Jordan and ***Students Approach the Lost City of Petra,*** Jordan [Martin Michaels]



Lessons I

Leaving Jordan

APPREHENSIVE DURING THE days that loomed before my departure, I pondered what lay ahead. Sitting at my house during the coldest, darkest New York days I began to feel that nagging doubt creep into my head. The skeptic that emerges at my most vulnerable times to ask me what I am doing. Not just me, but everyone who surrounds me.

Each one a product of the post 9/11 landscape, warning me, jokingly: *Watch your back*! *Don't get kidnapped*! The ones that really want to mess with my head say, "'Been nice knowing you." My neighbors, friends, and family all living in fear, their minds closed to the possibilities of exploration in the Middle East.

Yes, I studied in the Middle East, Jordan in fact. From the moment that Royal Jordanian Flight 262 touched down in Amman, I felt a warmth that made me forget the skeptics and the unforgiving New York winter. "*Ahlan wa'sahlan*"—from day one a harbinger of meetings and many welcomes to come. *Perhaps we have met before?* I don't recognize the face, but the conversation is kindled. Through chain-smoked cigarettes and endless cups of Turkish coffee, we chat. We eat *mansaf* together and laugh when Waseem and Nabil crack jokes. We drive through the cacophony of Amman's streets and talk about everything from Obama to Russian girls in Syria (he has the connection if I want it.)

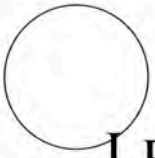
How *harram* is this? We sit in the rural *badia* unencumbered and detached from materialism. Love unobstructed by anything in the modern world, shining through in a most beautiful way. Genuine hospitality like I have never seen before in my life. When a Bedouin says, "my home is your home," he means it in the most literal sense.

The kindness pours from the small town of Al'mkefta like the cup of tea that sits before me; never ending. Not the syrupy, glossy finish that is forced from the mouths of some Americans—the kindness of family. I sleep blissfully on the floor of the Al Durzee home next to the heater. Feeling warm, comfortable, at home, peaceful. I feel not like a visitor but more like a part of this beautiful family—in this home and in every home I come to in Jordan.

Back in the commercial landscape that is New York, I think every day of Jordan and the people I met. My mind spans cultural bridges, two worlds apart, both at the forefront of my consciousness. Perhaps the biggest lesson I learned is that after you break through all the misconceptions, you find people...Arabs, Muslims and Christians with identities apart from politics.

I study macro-issues relating to International Relations in the Middle East. These issues are important but necessarily are simplified heuristic devices we can use to debate the wars, the international crises, and refugee movements. However, it is along my own path that I learned not to forget the problems of the world, but to take some time to step away and get to know people as people—not strictly as Jordanians or Arabs (although these identities are important). The path I walked in Jordan was one of kindness and love. For those that I met and those that showed me the best of their country, I am forever grateful. *Inshallah* I will return soon. To return to the places I know: Amman, Salt, Al'mkefta and beyond to new undiscovered paths in Jordan, my second home.

—Martin Michaels



Lessons II

There, and Back: Coming Home

I RECENTLY RETURNED to the United States after spending five transformational months in Cape Town, South Africa. As much as I would like to say that my re-entry to the American way of life was smooth and comforting, I am afraid that it has been anything but. Living in South Africa was refreshing, exhilarating, and life changing. It forever altered the way I look at the world, my native America, and myself. The lessons I learned have shifted the paradigm of my perspective on what it means to be American. So now I return to my motherland with conflicted emotions and a new awareness that I feel compelled to share with my fellow Americans. The lessons I learned and insight I gained will forever remain with me, which is perhaps why it is so hard to readjust to American culture.

Being an American overseas was certainly trying at times. It was frustrating being the default spokesperson and embodiment of the US — both good and bad. When others discovered my country of birth, they would often say, "Oh, you're American?" And their inflection was not the most endearing, embodying a tangled web of assumptions and stereotypes. The more I heard this response, the more I questioned people's reaction to me, and to the US.

I studied at a university where white exchange students were few and far between, therefore accentuating our "otherness". I took two classes on the practice and theory of development at the University of the Western Cape. Being a foreigner in these classes was challenging and enlightening. There were several moments of embarrassment and shame, for which I later found myself entirely

grateful. One day, during our Women and Development module, the day's topic of study was "Globalization" and we were going to watch a documentary called *Mardi Gras: Made in China*. Before starting the film, the lecturer asked the Americans in the room to explain Mardi Gras and the concept of beads to the class. She looked directly at me, so I took the plunge. Ashamed, I explained to sixty South African students how, during Mardi Gras, women bare their breasts in exchange for beads. The following forty-five minutes revealed the debauchery of American Mardi Gras juxtaposed against the horrible working conditions of young Chinese women working in sweatshops to create these beaded necklaces. It was then that I realized how our everyday decisions and actions meant something far greater in terms of our global impact.

I feel so blessed by the opportunity to gain a global perspective that is so foreign to my comfortable American existence. By living, studying and interacting with people in South Africa, my world expanded and my heart grew larger. While the temptation for many Americans is to view our nation as the standard, it is, in fact, the differences in countries, cultures, and lifestyles that make our world enriching and beautiful. Despite my undeniable Americanness and the often harsh initial reaction from people, the sense of community and connectedness I felt in South Africa is entirely indescribable. Archbishop Desmond Tutu came closest:

> *Africans have this thing called UBUNTU - the essence of being human. It is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being able to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours. When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself.*

The solitary human being is a contradiction of terms and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in belonging.

Our world would benefit if we all could apply this principle and awareness in our own lives. As I re-enter an at once familiar and unfamiliar America, this is the challenge I pose to myself and to you, my fellow brothers and sisters. We are all human; now is the time we start treating one another as such. As easy as it is to live comfortably and ignorantly of what is happening around the rest of the world, it is the challenges and uncomfortable situations that wipe away the blinders of selfishness to a perspective of authentic, genuine care for others, which is *ubuntu*. We must remember that life is also elsewhere.

—Shanelle France

Contrasting Houses in a Danish Eco-Village [Ben Ahearn]

Skogskyrkogården, the Woodland Cemetery, designed by Gunnar Asplund, Sweden [Evan Amato]

Lessons III

Memories of Green

COPENHAGEN: THE CITY of biking, windmills and minimalism, the poster child for sustainability. My home for the next four months, learning to live as the Danes do. Prior to traveling to Copenhagen, I had only heard one thing about this quaint city, the capital of Denmark—it was "the green city". As my airplane made its final descent and a cluster of roughly one hundred windmills (or more accurately, wind turbines) came into view along the coast, I knew I was there.

Denmark is known as one of the most sustainable countries in the world today. We tend to throw the term "sustainability" around casually, but what does it REALLY mean? What does a sustainable lifestyle entail? I decided I would dig deeper, immerse myself in the Danish green culture, and with any luck, come back to the U.S. with a new perspective.

I spent the majority of my time in Copenhagen, but found it important to extend my travels outside of the city to study the way Danes live in various settings. The first of these scenery changes was a weekend bike trip to Samsø, a Danish island off the coast of Jutland. About ten years ago this predominantly agricultural island won a government-sponsored competition to become a model renewable energy community. Today, they no longer rely on coal and oil sourced energy from the mainland, but on their 21 energy-producing wind turbines. Extra energy is then sold back to the mainland. The majority of their heat comes from solar and biomass energy, and many households burn the island's excess straw in nonpolluting straw burning furnaces.

How does such a dramatic shift occur? In the case of Samsø, it was the pure determination of the island's inhabitants—everyday people who came together on behalf of

their environment and the future of their home. One such man was Jorgen Tranberg, a farmer who purchased his very own wind turbine, which now stands behind his home. He relies on this turbine to cover his own energy needs and sells shares of the excess energy to other islanders. Mr. Tranberg gave me and my fellow biking brigade a tour of his farm and allowed us to climb to the top of the wind turbine. Sitting at the top of this massive energy-producer allowed me to see vast expanses of farmland punctuated by spinning blades.

Later that night, while taking a leisurely bike ride along the coast, another hallmark of energy sustainability became apparent—a lack of street lights. Riding in the dark allowed me to feel a greater sense of unity with my environment, less mitigated by technology and energy. The island is easily bikable, and there is little need for cars or busses.

The following morning, the bike tour stopped at our last destination: the island's organic beer brewer. This family-run business grew all the necessary ingredients, from hops to barley, in the fields behind the brewery, and used wind energy to power the beer production process. With unique and local products such as this, the island has been able to become somewhat resource-independent from the mainland, creating an even greater level of sustainability.

There is now an energy academy on the island, serving to educate the numerous visitors that swarm Samsø every year curious about the community's success. The 4,000 or so inhabitants of the island invested their own money, time, and resources into renewable energy. Burning straw for heat, utilizing energy collected at a solar farm, and the many wind turbines are a daily reminder of their commitment. What makes their story so inspirational is that they are everyday men and woman- not scientists, not an elite. They have changed their lifestyle to one which is simpler and more sustainable.

Samsø is a small rural area with lower energy needs and whose inhabitants can more readily use alternate forms of transportation. But what about those of us not living in such convenient circumstances? Upon returning from Samsø I found myself wondering how to relate their lifestyle with my

own daily life in mainland Denmark. I decided to dig deeper and visit Dyssekilde, an eco-village.

Less traveled by tourists, this commune in the north of Zealand feels remote, yet is accessible by a local train from Copenhagen. The community formed in 1997, united by a common goal—living a socially and environmentally sustainable lifestyle. Each member of the community bought a plot of land and designed their house to support the sustainable lifestyle set forth by the inhabitants of the commune—creating some rather unique looking houses. Homeowners typically utilized recycled building materials, thick insulated walls, south facing facades to utilize natural lighting, green roofs, and solar panels. More recently, homes are beginning to employ geothermal heating and cooling options. Some homeowners have also invested in compostable toilets, whose compost is then used as fertilizer in the community-run farm.

In fact, Dyssekilde maintains many communal operations, including a bakery which also provides heat for the laundry dryers, a car share program and a community recycling and reuse center. And like Samsø, the village's energy demands are more than met by their wind turbine, located on the outskirts of the community.

When first getting off the local train, empty green fields greeted me and caused me to second guess whether this in fact was the location of the eco-village I had researched. As I walked away from the train station, treetops emerged, and then the roofs of houses were visible—I was there. I walked along a narrow dirt path beside free-roaming chickens until a distant wind turbine was visible between a break in the trees. I continued in the direction of the large, white circulating blades until I found myself in the center of the small, intimate community of Dyssekilde. I exchanged 'hellos' with friendly neighbors as I wandered from one unique house to the next. The intimacy of the community was clear, as was its common goal of creating an environmentally and socially sustainable lifestyle for themselves. The inhabitants don't live on a small island; in fact they are just close enough to

Copenhagen to consider themselves a suburb of the city, and yet they have found a way to truly maintain the title of "sustainable".

Upon returning to the different scenery of downtown Copenhagen, I took a moment to observe the sustainable culture that had been in front of me for months: a population of walkers, bikers, and public transportation users. Here, when looking both ways to cross the street, one is often more concerned with bike traffic than motor vehicles. Buildings keep their traditional facades but are renewed within with energy-saving features. As the winter months emerged, and Denmark's darkest and shortest days arrived, the 2009 Climate Conference began and the sustainable city of Copenhagen became an exhibition for all to see. The city was awash with tourists, protesters, and billboards demanding a change in the way the world views energy.

But what is it that makes the daily lifestyle of Danes so fundamentally different from ours? It is everything from their daily routines to their shopping habits. It is how they are raised, since the day their parents load them in the front basket of a bike and pedal them to preschool. They are not a country of mass consumers, but creators of thoughtful design; they don't believe that "bigger is better", but instead favor a smaller scale. They are not victims of high gas prices because they utilize cars minimally, and they rely on local and natural products in place of massive grocery stores. From Samsø, to Dyssekilde, to the streets of Copenhagen—the Danes are bikers, composters and wind-collectors, but most importantly, they are minimalists.

The United States has different values and different lifestyles. We cannot directly replicate Danish "sustainability". What we can do, however, is learn from them. We can take bits and pieces of their success and implement them into our everyday lives. We can bike more, use less energy, and buy locally. There are ways to change our daily lifestyle and still be content—the Danes live green and have been named the happiest people in the world.

So here's what I ask of you: *See. Learn. Listen. Pass it on.*

—Claire Leavengood Boxer

Lessons IV

Rain

IN WALES, THEY talk about the weather all the time. As unpredictable as the universe, the weather in Wales and the UK can take a sunny or cloudy turn.

So imagine this: It's a Monday, and I have 45 minutes to get to my internship in Johnstown, 2 miles away. As usual, I leave early. Light rain drizzles from the sky, so I grab my pink polka-dotted *wellies* (rain boots) and my raincoat. I walk past the last campus building and out onto the main road, two minutes after leaving my dorm. I. Am. Soaked. Conflicted, I wonder if taking a cab would possibly be a better option, or walking, or cab, or walking, or cab... free and soaked vs. £3 poorer and slightly less wet...

(Because of my stubbornness and refusal to use any cabs while in Wales, if I could help it, I decide to walk. I mean, could I get any more soaked?)

Yes, yes I could.

But it's my sustainability internship, I say to myself, I have to make the journey! It would also be a chance to experience life in another person's shoes, one who wouldn't even have the option of a cab. Be it a bit of a challenge or social experiment, I had to do it! Huzzah!

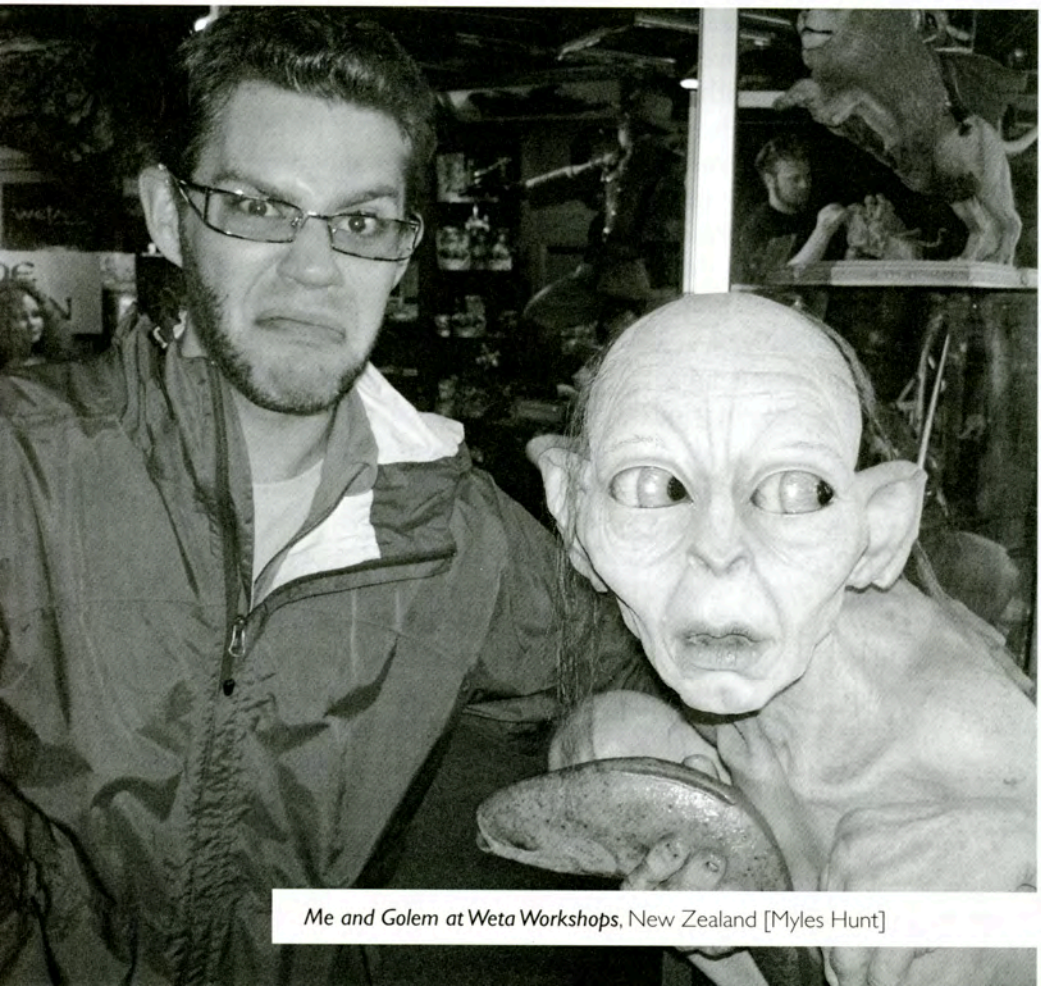
I trek through the mud, grass, and puddled pavement, as well as the rugby and football fields we're not supposed to cut through (oops) and I made it! Sweet victory! My boots are pretty much useless and soaked through to my socks, my raincoat is water repellent no more, my hair a frizzy, matted mess, and only 1/16 of my total body is not wet. Squishing in the front door of the building, eyes widened.

"Andrea!", one of the volunteers exclaims. "You look like a drowned rat!"

"Thank you?" I reply, not sure what to say. We burst out laughing.

If I learned anything from this, it's to never underestimate Welsh autumn rain showers. No umbrella or rain boots or raincoat can ever keep out the rain.

—Andrea Rocchio



Me and Golem at Weta Workshops, New Zealand [Myles Hunt]

Lessons V

The Puppets of New Zealand

JOHN REW IS a New Zealand puppeteer who builds and performs his own marionettes. At the annual "Ambury Farm Day" festival in Mangere, New Zealand, he gave a very clever and impressive performance. The theme of his show was a circus and he used a seemingly endless variety of puppets; clowns, animals and other strange creatures made people pause and laugh as they walked by on their way from the food vendors. His style emphasized direct communication with the young children in the audience, who were eager to help the characters perform specific circus activities, such as helping one of his clown puppets get onto a see-saw and operate it correctly. Using a quirky, high voice he asked the children, "Does he sit on the see-saw like this?" The children would scream directions of how to do it correctly and John would manipulate the clown to the spot they demanded.

John Rew's puppetry was very unusual. Traditional marionettes are notoriously challenging puppets, but John's marionettes were even more detailed and mechanical than usual. Instead of simple operating rods and strings, John devised hand-held mechanisms to broaden the action of the puppets he performed. Using arcs for his fingers and pulleys with the strings, John is able to make his puppets act as organic beings with gentle, flowing movements. One of his puppets was a bird that gave "birth" to a chick in an egg with the use of the same strings and rods. After the show, John let people play with the puppets and we were able to appreciate first-hand the complexity of the movements and mechanics.

Many of John's puppets are old dolls that have been converted into marionettes. He has transformed teddy bears and other antique toys into fantastic creatures. John invited me to his home and workshop in Papakura and I had a first-hand opportunity to see how he uses his marionettes to teach and entertain. He told me that he became interested in puppetry when he was a teenager. A decade later, it was a major element of his life. Working as a traveling puppeteer, he often performs at parties and schools, encouraging children to play with and develop their own creative puppets.

When I asked him if his puppets held any specific cultural relevance to the native Maori people of New Zealand, John replied that although he sometimes tells Maori myths in classrooms, his art mainly draws from the European tradition. He has tried to honor the Maori way of life by using the famous Kauri tree lumber as material for his larger marionettes. The Kauri are giant prehistoric trees that are hundreds of years old and are only found on the North Island of New Zealand. Treasured for their gum (sap) that held insects and could be formed into beautiful works of art, many were cut down in the early 1800s. With the remnants of such trees, many people have created sculptures, furniture and puppets to honor the fallen giants.

John also has a collection of puppets from around the world. He keeps his workshop well-stocked with puppets by touring New Zealand and beyond, searching antique stores and, of course, Ebay.

Later in the day, John shared his thoughts about the American Muppets. He admitted that they have done a lot to engage people with a new form of puppetry, and have also made puppetry a very popular profession. But he didn't like the fact that the Muppets' medium is television. To John, TV limits the amount of actual human connection to the audience. During live shows, John must connect with the audience for a solid hour with creative activities. In television, the viewer is only seeing short segments that are not directly focused on them but rather on the retelling of

a tale that is shot scene-by-scene. In television programs such as *The Muppet Show*, the story is told by connecting short segments that are filmed separately; the audience is not the focus, the story is.

Viewers may rarely think of such a difference. *Sesame Street*, which is filled with Muppets, attempts to create human interaction with the viewers but only through a proxy audience onscreen and quick dialogue. John's work is an example of the dedication and joy experienced by an individual who truly treasures his craft. I was grateful to have been able to visit his workshop and see his methods in action.

The next stop on my tour of New Zealand puppetry was Wellington, on the South Island. "Wellywood," as some call it, is a city of entertainment and politics, home to both New Zealand's Parliament and its entertainment community. One of the key attractions for me there was Weta Workshops, the most famous special effects studio in all of New Zealand. Weta was responsible for all of the creative aspects of *The Lord of the Rings* films directed by (recently knighted) Sir Peter Jackson. Using a blend of CGI (computer-generated imagery), animatronics and advanced puppetry, Weta has become a leader in modern film effects. Touring the mini-museum called Weta Caves, one can watch videos, touch and observe the various art around the magical place. The museum is essentially a showcase of all of the artistic works by Weta to date and incorporates a sense of exploration for visitors.

There was also time to discover how the studio uses electronic gloves and CGI puppeteering. The puppeteers not only control their character's expressions with computer technology, but they also utilize trained actors to provide organic movements. The grotesque character Gollum in *The Lord of The Rings* was created this way. It was absolute puppetry heaven!

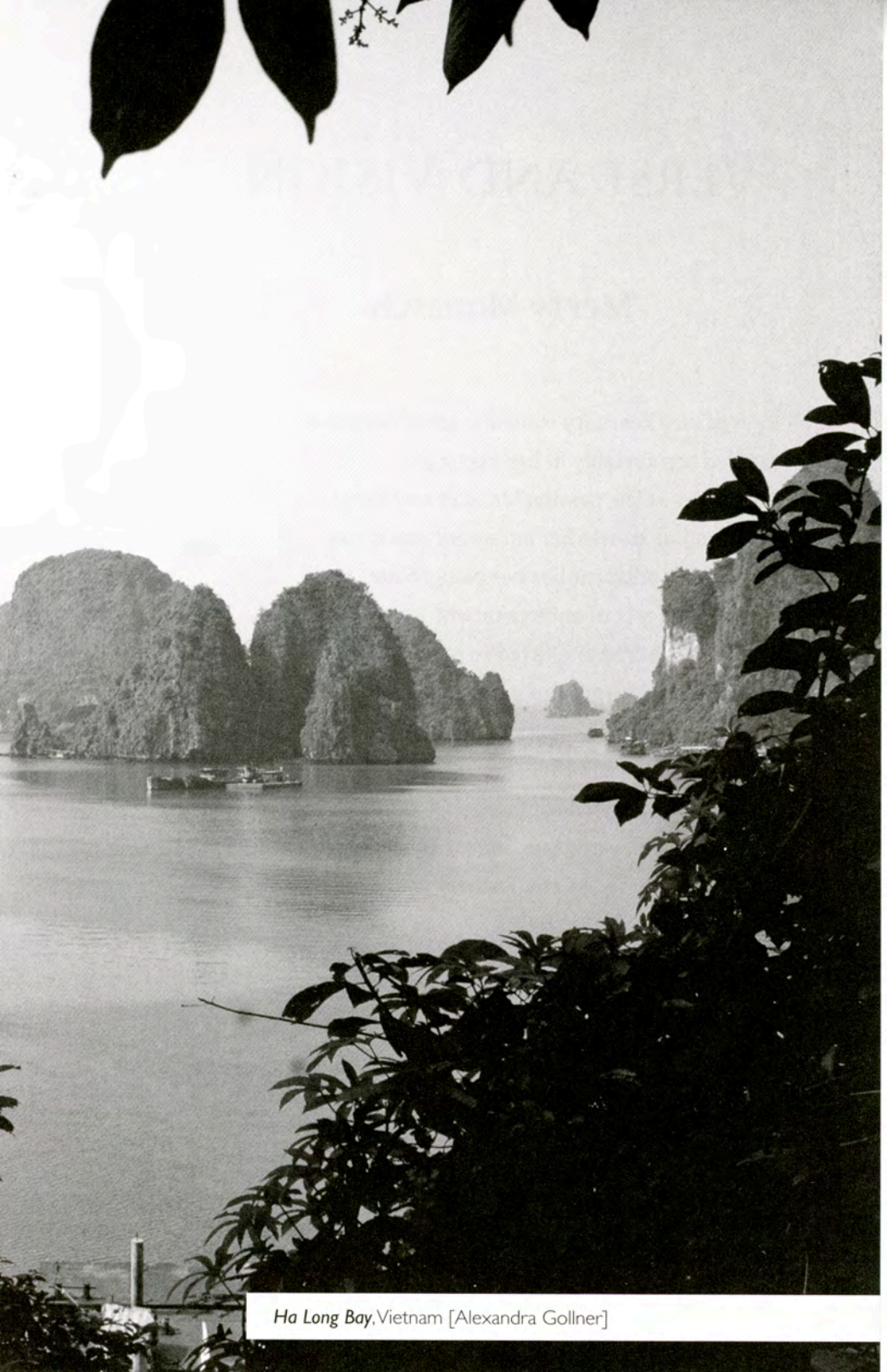
I am a puppeteer who loves bringing out the craziness and bizarre elements of comedy and fun. As an intern

with the legendary Jim Henson Company, made famous by the loveable Muppets, I wanted to explore puppetry worldwide. I became more aware of the passion of puppetry internationally with help from the staff at The Jim Henson Company who encouraged me to learn more about the art in a broader scale. As I prepared for a unique and special adventure with puppetry, I hoped to gain an intimate knowledge of the art from a different perspective. The Student International Initiatives Fund allowed for me to discover and learn about puppetry throughout the stunning country of New Zealand. I was very fortunate to have been able to travel to and explore New Zealand in search of new and interesting puppetry art forms. While studying education in New Zealand, I was able to teach primary school students about puppetry from the United States, drawing on my experience with the Jim Henson Company's Muppets.

Because of the vast distances, I could only meet with one puppeteer during my time in New Zealand. I did, however, have the chance to acquire a wealth of New Zealand puppets. I collected puppets from Crocodile Creek Toys, Fairytale Finger Puppets, The Kiwi Puppet Company and Eve Wallace Puppets. Visiting Weta Workshop was also an invaluable experience.

Leaving New Zealand was hard. I had been so honored to have lived with a wonderful New Zealand family, explore the beautiful country, and research local puppetry. I love New Zealand and am very fortunate to have been able to take part in such a life-changing adventure. I hope to return again and explore more in the future. Perhaps my work with The Jim Henson Company will lead me to partner with Weta Workshops and incorporate the art of John Rew's marionettes. As I begin a new summer with the Muppets, I hope to apply what I learned of New Zealand's puppetry in my workplace. *Aroha nui!*

—Myles Hunt



Ha Long Bay, Vietnam [Alexandra Gollner]

Verse and Vision

Merry Monarch

Rays of rare February sunshine graze her porcelain skin
Nestled comfortably in her carriage
She smiles at the passing terraces and mews
The familiar streets her ancestors would use
Beyond the adjacent lies her playground
An assorted mix of entertainment
Collected, altered and fitted to her arrangement
Steering Ms. Playground is a woman subservient
Passive in her allegiance and commitment
A false freedom smothers her
Vague sense of glorious lineage
The Indus Valley and Sub-Sahara call
Their roars tamed by the Thames
Flowing through the streets
The merry toddler coos
Her nanny cares

—Kwame Lovell

Street Artist in Ireland [Stephen Raulli]

共 国万岁


juxtaposition

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

juxtaposition

The photographer wields great power of association. By placing two subjects in a composition, the photographer can comment on or draw attention to the relationship between them. Incongruity often works well, the inclusion of two or more things that don't normally go together, or that contradict one another.

Photography is as much about what you don't show as what you do show. Sometimes juxtaposition can illustrate a truth, and sometimes it can mislead, or suggest a relationship that isn't there. Try to use juxtaposition to tease out truths, and remember that your photographs—that you will show your family and friends—may be the only representation of the place where you studied they will ever see, or perhaps the one they will remember the most vividly. What do you want to communicate to them, and what responsibility do you have as a photographer and a guest of that culture?

In *American Flags in Tiananmen Square during the Beijing Olympics* (overleaf), Conor Dodd selectively includes two iconic images to create a sense of discordance. Most likely, a photograph of many nations' flags in a row in front of the same portrait of China's communist hero Mao Tse Tung would not have such a specific "story". There's another way Conor's photograph creates an interesting juxtaposition. What are those things all over the flagpole? And what does that red, white and blue flag supposedly represent?

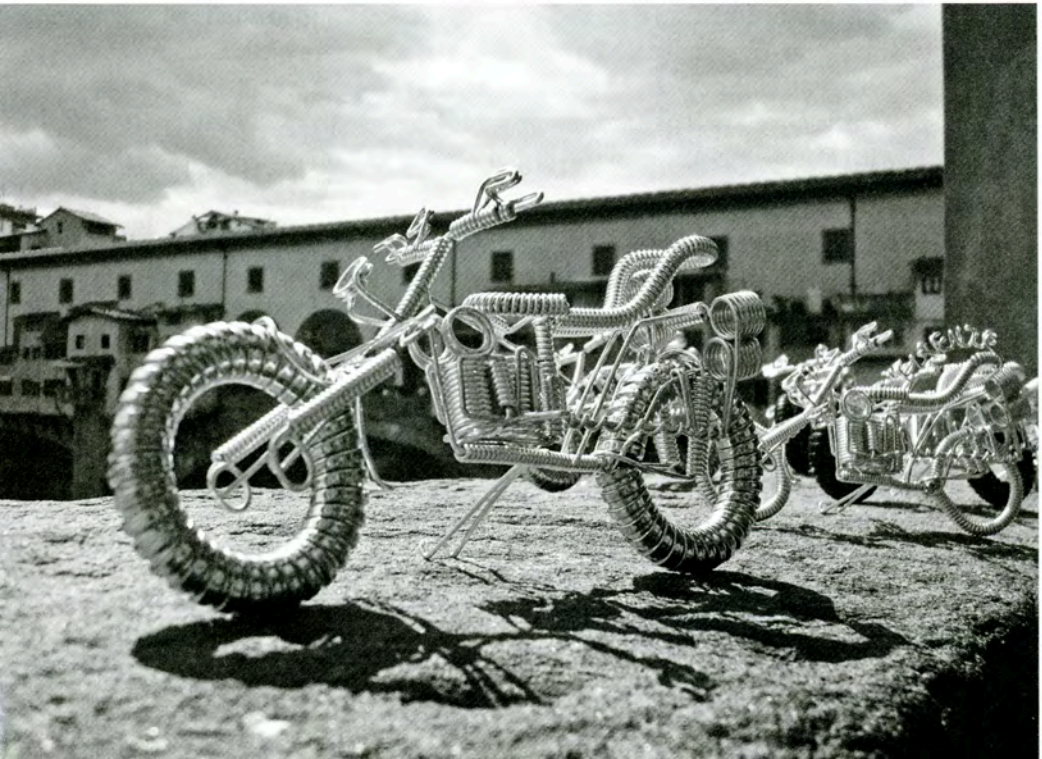
In *Police Turn a Blind Eye to Prostitution* (facing), Kayla Horibe selectively juxtaposes two pairs of people, both engaged in very different activities, to create a situational irony. Are they really turning a blind eye, or have they simply not noticed what is happening just outside the door?

Consider the images in the following spread: how does each image use juxtaposition?


Embarque
CPTM
Compre seu

Clockwise from above: ***Cao Dai Worshippers Greet Before Morning Service***, Vietnam [Sloane Sheldon], ***Rock Formations of Xlendi***, Malta [Lauren Schwarzenberg], ***Bicycles on Florence's Ponte Vecchio***, Italy [Phillip Lambert] and ***Avalanches***, France [Juliet Leeming]

juxtaposition



DISPATCH

Dear President Obama

The following letter is a composite of thoughts derived from a group of interviews that I conducted while studying abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark. During the interview I asked for advice for President Obama regarding U.S. foreign and domestic policy. This letter is based on the transcripts of my discussions with the Danes, most of whom were very excited to discuss American politics.

—Anna Hineline

Dear President Obama,

As Danes, we were watching the election in 2008 very closely and were very excited when the American people voted for you to be the next President of the United States. For the most part, we were very disappointed with how the Bush administration handled policy in Europe and around the world, especially when the advice of members of the European Union was blatantly ignored. Now that you are in office, we are looking forward to seeing you work closely with Europeans and end the era of American unilateralism.

President Obama, we would like to congratulate you for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize this fall. The fact that it was awarded to you shows that many members of the international community share our excitement about what the future has to bring.

We are very excited that you are coming to Copenhagen during the COP15 Climate Conference; Denmark has been very forward thinking in its work toward environmental sustainability and we hope to spread our ideas throughout the international community. It is important that you do not give into vested interests in the United States which are

calling for you to downplay the dangers of global warming. We would like to see progress being made and for attainable goals to be set, and in order for that to happen you must continue to push your agenda and keep pressure on those who are challenging you.

Regarding the War on Terror, we are pleased with how you have handled it thus far. By pledging to close Guantanamo Bay and distancing yourself from the previous administration's practices of torture and waterboarding, you have allowed the Europeans to gain confidence that the United States government is on a path to restoring its image in the international community. It is important that the United States continues to use both hard and soft power when engaging other countries around the world. Putting an emphasis on soft power is significant but it is also important to remember that hard power is successful in many situations that the international community deals with on a regular basis.

Economically, we would like to see the United States continue to call for free and fair trade and encourage other countries to open their borders. The United States must continue to be very aware of its economic policy and how its economic decisions may impact others; try to avoid trade wars and be sure to continue to allow the Sino-U.S. relationship to grow.

Our most significant piece of advice to you, President Obama, is to be sure that you uphold the promises that you made to your citizens and the international community. During the election you instilled hope in people around the world through your compelling rhetoric and confident messages. We hope that we are able to see you act upon your words, work hard to make the United States more respected and enhance the relationship between your country and the European Union.

Sincerely,

The Danes

JOUR•NAL

n. [1.] a book of dated entries with news and events of a personal nature [2.] a bound space for private writing that invites reflection, honesty and creative risk-taking

Every so often, a student gives us a handwritten journal, stuffed with collected items like ticket stubs and held together with a rubber band, or perhaps embellished with sketches done on the fly (or on the sly). Keeping a journal is a rare art, and yet those who practice it are left with a tactile artifact that can instantly evoke the time and place of study abroad.

Journals are wonderful tools for documenting experiences. Study abroad is packed with intense living; writing in a journal can be a refuge and a way to recharge.

Clancy Brown journaled extensively as a student abroad, first in Ecuador and Peru and then in Siberia. One of the fascinating things about reading someone else's journal is the juxtaposition of experiences, the highs and lows that strike the reader from one page to the next.

Notice: Clancy doesn't date her entries, and yet we have a fine sense of the passage of time. Also notice the way she uses her first sentences as a kind of heading, to draw the reader in. Lastly, notice how Clancy has a sense of audience, even though it's a private journal.

From my Journal

Siberia

THE NIGHT BEFORE I LEFT FOR RUSSIA...

I was walking up Washington Street. It was unseasonably cold and I heard a frantic and persistent chirping, and turned to find a robin hopping up and down like mad next to a chubby black and white housecat under the yellow light of a street lamp. I followed the cat's intent gaze and spotted a quivering baby robin huddled on the pavement. It hopped away from me, still too young to fly. Meanwhile, the cat was watching...waiting, so I picked the robin up and cradled it in my alpaca-wool mittens. The mother, still chirping, flew up to her nest in a tall oak tree, far out of reach. Unable to return the baby bird and certain he would become cat food, I named him Herbert and put him in a cardboard box, where he finally settled down after a few unsuccessful attempts to escape. Because I was leaving for Russia the next day, I left him in his box with a note for my housemate, asking her to look after him until he could fly...

Now I'm on a plane to Siberia, listening to the bings of fasten seatbelt signs and incomprehensible announcements in Russian. Herbert's been on my mind all day. I, too, feel like I have been shaken out of my nest, dropped into a frightening world of darkness, chilly air and lurking housecats. Like Herbert, I'm still testing out my wings, but I'm flying now—exploring this vast and diverse planet. I was picked up and cradled by friends and family who guided me to a strong-winged independence. I flapped through the rigors and temptations of college, through the many "interesting differences" of South America, and now I'm off

to the other side of the planet to explore the world's largest and deepest lake, the Pearl of Siberia, the great searching blue eye in the center of the Asian continent—Baikal... Come September, I will fly off into my greatest test yet, a two-year term of Peace Corps service in Mozambique. Each of my adventures prepares me for the next, opens my eyes, strengthens my wings, but is also an amazing gift on its own. Remembering to live in the moment—I am on a plane, flying over the slushy spring ice flows of the Arctic and into the heart of mother Russia, to the great Lake Baikal.

WE ARRIVE IN MOSCOW AND...

despite my jet lag and dimmed awareness, I absorbed some sense of this vast power center, the showcase city of Russia, where everything is designed to be the biggest, the most beautiful, the most expensive... even in times of hardship and famine, huge sums of money were pumped into inefficient and poorly managed construction projects. The result is a somewhat haphazard city of gilded onion domes and ornate European facades nestled amongst dreary Soviet-era construction. One of the city's proudest monuments is the Moscow metro, an underground ballroom of marble, ornamental brass grates, plaster moldings, and elegant light fixtures, overflowing with well-dressed commuters, streaming and pressing past each other in the orchestrated daily dance of city life. We clearly did not know the dance, and sloppily bumped through the crowd of stone-faced Russians in their high-heels and suits. The stick-thin and impeccably groomed Moscow women around me may well have walked right off the pages of *Vogue*. I felt like a slob—a giggling, camera-happy idiot—in other words, an obvious American tourist.

MOSCOW WAS JUST A STOPOVER...

and the next day we are back in the air, flying over a land of deep evergreen taiga, splotches of snow, and snaking rivers. Time has become fluid and sleep is a necessity that we must do without. The rising sun blinds me through the plexiglass window.

IRKUTSK...

a city on the Angara River, the only outlet of the mighty Baikal, and our home for the first week. I stayed in the tiny but cozy apartment of Lena and Sergei Svenarenka, in a clump of twenty nasty and identical Soviet-style cement block high-rises next to a murky stream and a dilapidated pipeline. It was a week of grey skies, miserable rain, and puddles in the streets.

FOR OUR FIRST GLIMPSE OF LAKE BAIKAL...

we drove south along the wide, calm Angara River from Irkutsk, past wooden *dachas* (summer cottages), with cobalt blue shutters, through stands of larch and pine and small tilled plots awaiting planting... for about half an hour, listening to our guide Natalie, a wide-mouthed Russian with tight black pigtails and a neatly pressed pencil skirt and heels, rattle on in textbook English the entire ride without taking a breath. I'm sure she was telling us something fascinating, but I was distracted by fatigue and the anticipation of finally laying eyes on the object of this journey that had dragged me halfway around the world. Then, all of a sudden, there it was.

The river opened up into a large bay, beyond which loomed strange-looking clouds on the horizon. No... not clouds... distant snow-covered peaks. We escaped the stuffy bus and ranting of our guide into a crisp breeze, cool sun-

shine and the peaceful sound of water lapping at the shore - water that was so incredibly clear that, looking straight down, it was as if there were no water at all, just air, rippling like a mirage over the rocky bottom. I started taking frantic photos, trying to capture this moment for eternity... then paused and felt the breeze in my hair.

Lake Baikal... longest, deepest, clearest, 20% of the world's freshwater... magical, invincible, alive... Floating through my mind were all the bold claims about this place—a water-filled seam in the earth's crust, spreading ever wider, sinking ever deeper.

WE REACH THE VILLAGE OF THE OLD BELIEVERS...

after bumping along dirt roads through rolling hills and patches of taiga forest. This tiny village is called *Bolshoi Kunapi* (a Buryat name meaning "big fold in the earth"). We ambled slowly down the dusty streets lined by fences and wooden homes painted in bright green and yellow, with cerulean blue shutters and intricate white trim. Above the village lies a cemetery with gravestones and crosses of the same blue as the shutters, arranged not in rows but in odd clusters, perhaps by family, which may span 6-7 generations in this place.

We stepped off the bus to the wailing song of a chorus of old women, young men and children in brilliant costumes. One of the little girls, her hair in braids, stamped out a dance on the dirt road, spinning so that her skirt and hair and ribbons lifted in a circle around her. A little boy in a loose red shirt and black pants stepped forward next and began a leaping dance, flinging out his arms and legs to the heels before tucking into a ball and flinging his limbs outwards again. The singing continued as we were ushered from our alien tour bus, through a door in the tall, wooden fence and into a green log house with blue shutters.

There, we crammed into a hot kitchen, completely

whitewashed down to the massive stone and plaster oven that took up a third of the room. A fire was blazing, heating the room to an uncomfortable warmth and cooking up small cloud-shaped pancakes that were being dropped on an iron skillet by a dough-covered woman in a headscarf. The house is an interactive museum to teach visitors about the traditional lifestyle of the Old Believers, who made their way here in the 17th century after exile from Poland and all of Western Russia.

As we ate the little clouds, with a sweet nutty sauce and tea with milk and sugar, we observed the furnishings of the room. It was the winter sleeping place, where entire families would share a single bed next to the great white oven. In the warmer months they slept elsewhere, understandably, as we were all sweating in there on that bright June day. In the corner was a shelf with placards of saints painted in gold leaf—the "red corner" found in every traditional Russian Orthodox home ("red" derived from the original Old Slavonic word for "beautiful," and having nothing to do with Communism). We were ushered into another room where young girls were displaying their handicraft skills by making hooked rugs and cross-stitching, and at the far end of the room the colorful chorus had again arranged themselves for a concert.

Their music was entrancing, unlike anything I had heard before... off-key, but deliberate...melodic in an unsettling, soul-stirring way. It was as if they had learned to sing by mimicking the accordion that accompanied them—a young man held that cacophonous note, that piercing discordance that gives the accordion its eerie sound. He covered one ear so that he could lock onto the elusive note and hold it. The melodies were repetitive and entrancing. They sang upbeat and cheerful songs with dancing, whistles and dialogue, and also mournful, wailing tunes that seemed to be full of sorrow, but instead spoke of pride and devotion to their pioneering home, their traditions, and, of course, the mighty Lake Baikal. All of the women, young and old, wore

about their necks strings of amber beads, some as large as small potatoes and of incredible value. To them, however, the necklaces are not for sale at any price. They are heirlooms brought here by their ancestors so many generations ago.

My favorite was the old grandmother and leader of the group, her head wrapped in a bright orange kerchief dangling with beaded jewels. She had a warm face with the wrinkles of a hard but happy life. As one of the women said, "Life is hard, but summer is beautiful!"

LAKE BAIKAL BECKONED...

so three of us headed down to the sandy beach in the south cove of Shaman Rock to take our first dip into its famously frigid waters. I had butterflies in my stomach as we descended the hill to the little cove. There were a few other beachgoers lying on the sand—spectators. We all stripped to our suits and giggled nervously, hopping up and down like runners before a race. Then, a hearty old Russian man yelled from the deck of a nearby boat, "*odin, dva, tri*!" ("one, two, three!"), and we ran in up to our knees and fell backwards, submerging ourselves. The water enveloped me in a heavy blanket of cold too intense for my body to register. It was as if I had sunk to the bowels of the lake, to the depth of the rift, for a split second that felt like eternity...

Then, without any conscious movement, I sprang out of the water and was, again, hopping up and down on the sand. The consensus was that it really wasn't so bad after all, that we felt invigorated, clean...WONDERFUL! So we did it again, but the second time, as if my body were punishing me for repeated abuse, I felt the sharp, painful, crushing cold of the water. My skin hurt; my bones ached; I felt like someone was pressing their knuckles into my temples. Again, I sprang out of the water and warmed my feet on the sand and my face in the sun... this time not eager to jump in again—the lake had won.

THEY SAY...

that if you cup the sacred waters of Baikal in your hands and whisper them a wish, it will come true...

that every time you swim in her frigid waters you add a year to your life...

that if you wash your face in her waves, you will someday return.

BOLSHOE GOLOUSTNOE...

is a rural lakeside village where we gather in the tidy yard of a round-faced woman named Faina. She lives there with her husband, Misha, and a son in his late twenties, Zhenya. Faina is one of the kindest women I have ever met—with the features and mannerisms of a Mongolian grandmother, and the patience of a teacher (her profession in the village school). When walking down the road, she will link arms and pull you to her side to chat, never mind that you don't speak Russian. I sat around one evening with Faina's family plus Ireida, our faithful coordinator from Irkutsk University, and the three Russians leading our volunteer effort, Sveta, Igor and Olga. Faina brought out tea and fresh milk from one of their cows then said "*davayte govorim po-ruski!*" ("Let's speak in Russian!"). Somehow, between my broken Russian, wild hand gestures and occasional translating by Ireida, I communicated my studies, my future plans, and my impressions of their village. When the Russians got talking, I tried to pick out words, then gave up and let the strange sounds of the language wash over me, joining in Faina's contagious laughter over jokes I didn't understand. We chatted and laughed until the light got low.

with the Great Baikal Trail Association (GBTA) building trails for hikers on the Sacred Mountain northwest of Bolshoe Goloustnoe. Hacking away at the rocky ridge with my pick axe and sledge hammer, I felt an increasing unease weighing on my shoulders, draining my enthusiasm. I looked out to the spreading view of the flood plain delta of the Goloustnoe River and wondered what exactly I was doing. I was building a trail, but there was already a permanent, if rugged, trail. I was building a more defined, more accessible trail for tourists, since they say increased tourism will help the local economy.

But says who? Some group of Americans who know what's best for everyone? Some Russian NGO from the city with a grand vision? Did Bolshoe Goloustnoe ask to have a trail hacked into the side of their Sacred Mountain or were they resentful of our destructive presence?

I thought of Olkhon Island and the sacred monuments home to great and powerful spirits, places where none but shamans may tread. How would our work be viewed by those whose ancestors would not farm because they felt that plowing hurt the earth? On top of these concerns, I saw us smashing rocks into pebbles, ripping out the roots and grass that hold the earth together, essentially tearing apart all of the natural stabilization of the not-so-bad existing trail. It looked like a recipe for erosion.

When I shared my concerns, I was given many assurances—that the Sacred Mountain was not registered as a protected sacred site, that the work had been approved by the town assembly, that an American-trained expert had directed the trail design... but I still felt uneasy. It's an uncomfortable position, being a foreign volunteer on a project designed and implemented by others, knowing little about its history, the motives behind its founders, how it's viewed by the local community. We just show up and do what we're told, putting our faith in the organization, hop-

Lake Baikal and Shaman Rock, Russia [John Peter Nettl]
Welcoming Committee of Bolshoe Goloustnoe, Russia [Katrina Havrish]

ing we're doing good, swallowing our doubts. Who are we helping and who are we hurting? Who wants us there and who doesn't? I'm still not really sure.

WE HAD A LESSON IN SPINNING SHEEP'S WOOL...

into yarn by Faina's grandmother, Dora, an 87-year-old woman with Mongolian features and enormous cheeks. Her swollen hands skillfully worked the wool around a long wooden spool, worn smooth from decades of use. Dora still spins all her yarn by hand and knits socks, gloves and sweaters that keep her grandson and son-in-law warm while they fish in the stinging cold and freezing spray. She explained how important it is to have warm clothes like these in Siberia, that we don't need them in America where it is so warm. Kristen explained that, actually, we have cold winters too and must also bundle up. Dora just shook her head. You wouldn't know she was 87 by the way she kept sitting and standing, lugging around the bag of wool, leaning over and showing us how to use the spool.

Kristen explained the story of how, during WWII, Dora took over the position of postmaster. She would travel down the lake to Listvyanka in a rowboat to get the mail, spend the night there, and then deliver letters and packages to two other settlements before returning to Bolshoe Goloustnoe. It was an arduous journey that took at least two days, probably more in bad weather. Dora is a hard woman with a soft heart, smiling and encouraging our attempts at spinning with many a "*kharashoa*!" ("good!"). After a few of us had tried, Dora said, "You Americans don't work, you just laugh."

WHY DON'T RUSSIANS LIKE DISCUSSING POLITICS...

I asked Ireida, our coordinator, and Nadya, my host mother. They explained that they have had such a dark political

history—both women recall the days when they feared the KGB and Russia was isolated from the outside world. Even now those most outspoken are in danger and journalists still mysteriously "disappear." On top of this fear there is custom—politics are not to be talked about, or even thought about really. Russians tend to be uninformed politically, preferring to let things play out as they will. Most Russians love Putin and see Medvedev as a feeble figurehead. Ireida openly endorses Putin—"It is not just because he is a handsome man," she said, "he is a strong man, he has strong character." Russians seem comfortable letting a strong authoritarian hand lead their country. There's not much they can do about it anyway—it's not exactly a model of participatory government and civil engagement. Nadya would not comment on Putin, but she feels that there is more freedom in a place like Bolshoe Goloustnoe, far from the watchful eyes of Moscow. She remains optimistic. "We don't have a choice," she explained, "living here we must be optimistic in order to survive."

MARINA WITH THE GOLDEN TEETH...

was our professional cook in the guest house of Nadezhda Nuzhdina. When I walk through the tiny kitchen on my morning trip to the outhouse, she greets me with a flash of a smile and a "*dobroye utra*!" ("good morning!"). The teeth suit her—an entire upper grill of gold, a glamorous glint amidst a land of cows and dowdy flower-print dresses. It's a phenomenon here in the Siberian countryside—men and women with golden smiles, flashing them as they drive home the sheep, lean on cars, smoke cigarettes, pull weeds behind a picket fence...Perhaps in their life of practicality and necessity, of scraping out an existence in this unforgiving corner of the world under the shadow of oppressive regimes and dark winters... perhaps they are expressing a need for glamour—impractical, unnecessary, flashy.

WE DROVE OUT TO THE STEPPE...

north of the village in the low light of evening—a plain of cropped grass on rocky soil, blanketed by purple and yellow wildflowers. The grass stretched out to the lake shore and skirted the feet of steep hills draped with dark stands of pine. We unloaded from the bed of Misha's pickup and Zhenya's van and stood on the grass, awaiting our surprise. It came in another van—four Buryat *babooshkas* in traditional dress of bright Chinese silk and hats with dangling beads. One of them wore a green robe that complemented her gold teeth, which she flashed every time the *babooshkas* fell into a fit of giggles. They were a cheery bunch, and welcomed us by inviting each guest to drink from a bowl of fresh milk. Then they sang in rusty wailing voices about love—love of family, of lovers, of their land and the sacred sea that formed the faint horizon behind them. They sang in Buryat and in Russian, and when they tired, we all picked up and began dancing in a circle. Faina, Zhenya and the green-robed *babooshka* led the way, animatedly demonstrating hops and stomps and singing all the while. Zhenya then brought out his guitar and joined his parents in singing us Russian folk songs. Like the *babooshkas*, their songs were about love. The words brought tears to Ireida's eyes and, when translated, to ours as well. Standing on the Siberian steppe in the sunset, singing of love while wild horses grazed around us and the horizon of Baikal glowed in the distance... it was hard not to become sentimental.

BACK IN THE STATES...

in peaceful, safe, slow-moving Geneva, I felt quite meditative all day, partly due to the persistent grey sky and drizzle, partly due to my confused internal clock. I met up for dinner with a few friends who were in town. The talk was of future jobs, what mutual friends are up to, how my latest trip went. I tried to give a brief description that might

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

color

As we have noted, photography is as much about exclusion as it is about inclusion. The same idea applies to the use of color. Some of the most powerful color images work with very limited color palettes with only a few predominant colors.

When you're watching a movie, take note of the color palette. Cinematographers (who are, after all, photographers) and art directors carefully choose an overall palette for a film and often sub-palettes for each location or even for each character. The color palette has an important non-speaking role in the film, sculpting an atmosphere and helping the audience track the story.

A still photographer can similarly use a limited color palette to great effect. Both of the photographs on the facing page use a similar limited palette of greens, blues, and highlights of red. The constrained colors emphasize a mood or feeling; the vibrant accent color might actually occupy very little area of the image, but because it is surrounded by a muted color, it "pops" out at the viewer.

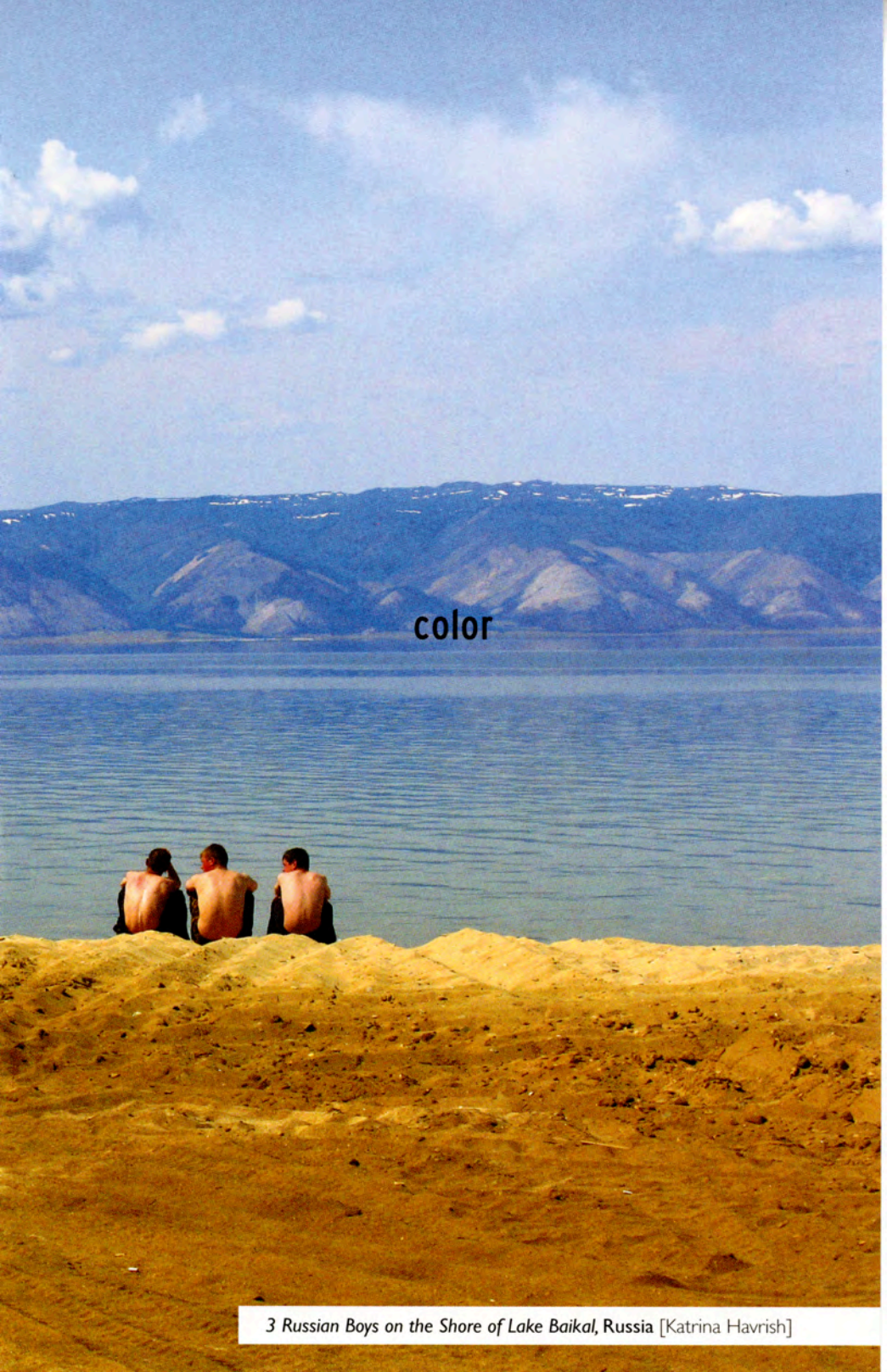
Give yourself an assignment: Spend a morning making images that are predominantly one color. The images on page 84 by Elizabeth Culp and Shannon Mahoney are excellent examples of effectively single color (monochromatic) images.

The next session, try to compose an image with just two colors. Look at Katrina Havrish's photograph (overleaf) of the three boys on the shore of Lake Baikal. It's essentially a two-color image, blue and orange, and yet it is breathtaking and unforgettable.

Color of course is a function of light; as the lighting changes, so too does the color. Shoot the same subject in different lighting conditions (times of day, weather, indoors and outdoors, etc.) and compare the images. Soon you'll become a connoisseur of light and color.

Hanoi Intricacy, Vietnam [Bui Duy Thanh Mai]
Pahuma Orchid Reserve, Ecuador [Margaret Yovanoff]


А 405 ОК 38

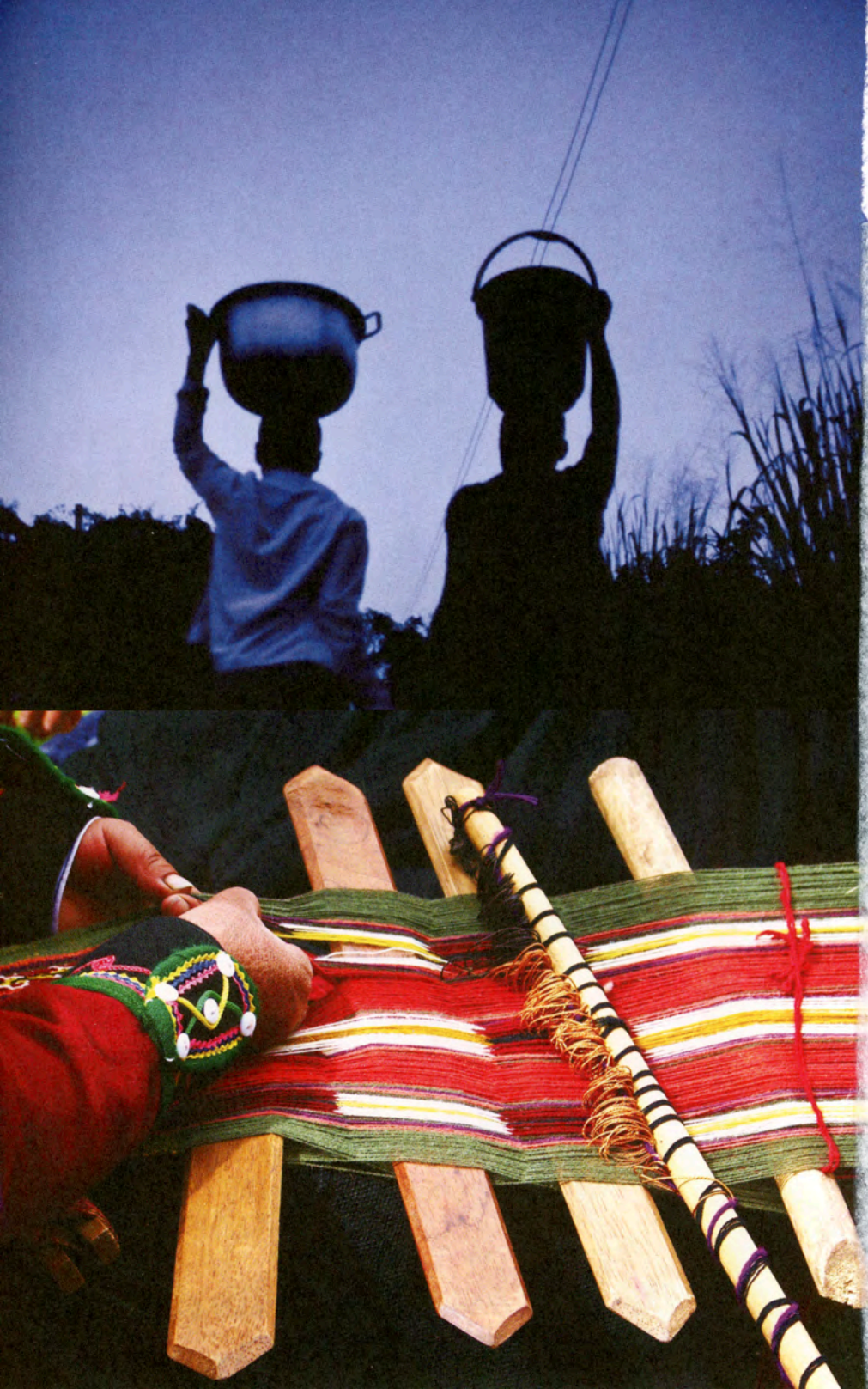


3 Russian Boys on the Shore of Lake Baikal, **Russia** [Katrina Havrish]

Grafitti on the Herculaneum in Rome, Italy [Elizabeth Culp], *Door of La Iglesia de la Compañia de Jesús in the Plaza de Armas in Cusco,* Peru [Shannon Mahoney]

Worm's Eye View, Australia [Shabana Hoosein]
Family Prepares for Approaching Rain in a Córdoba Orange Orchard, Spain [Megan Rechin]

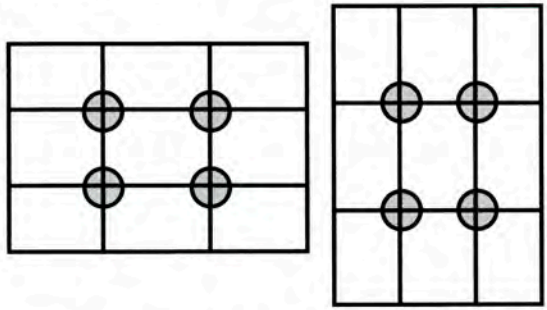
Venetian December, Italy [Sarah Bates]



RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

rule of thirds

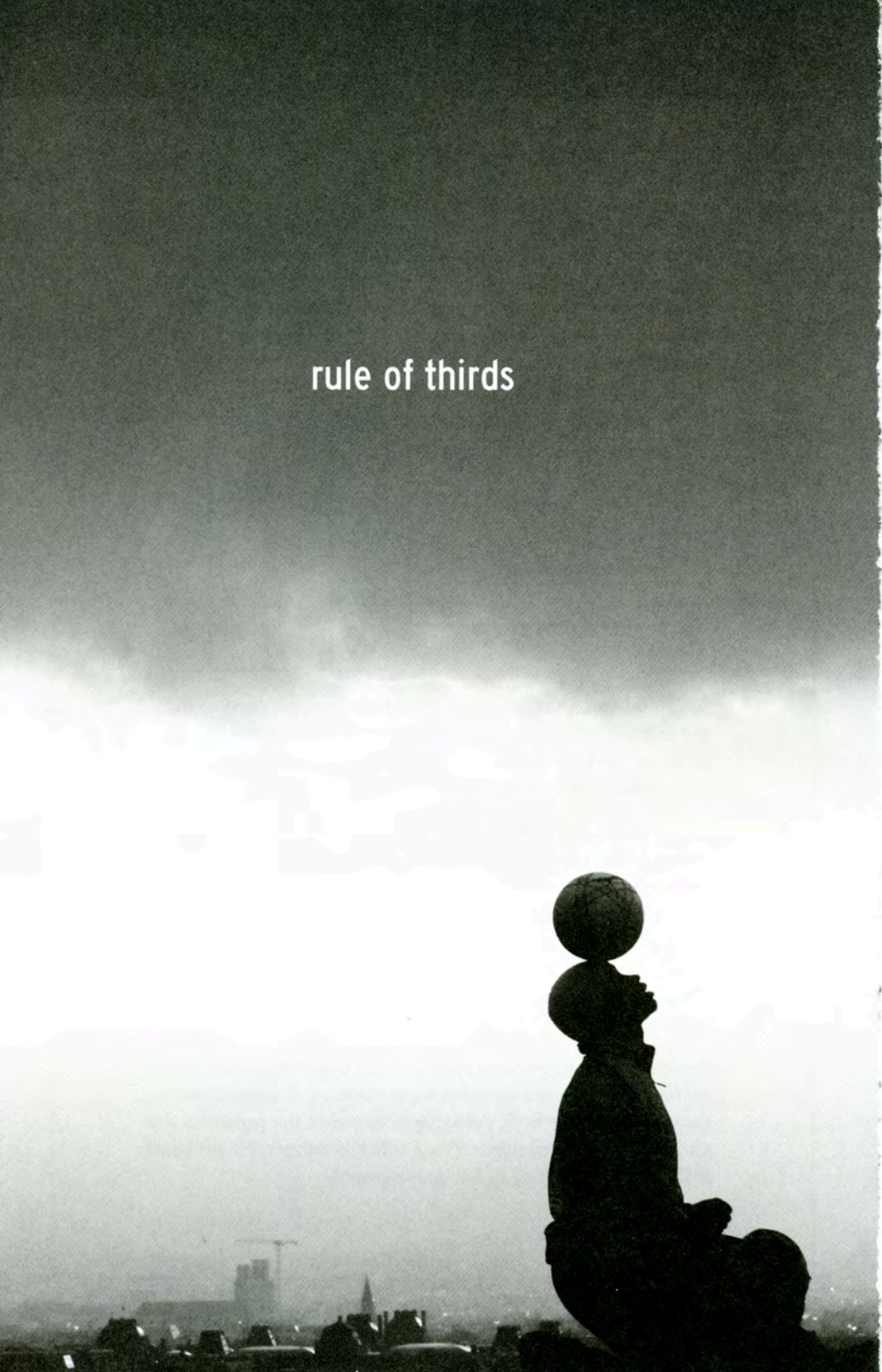
This simple rule can transform your photography overnight. According to this rule, if you divide your frame into thirds, vertically and horizontally, you should place the main subjects of your photograph where one of these sets of lines intersect. Why? It creates a pleasing assymetry. It goes back to the idea of the Golden Rectangle of the Ancient Greeks. Who's going to argue with them?



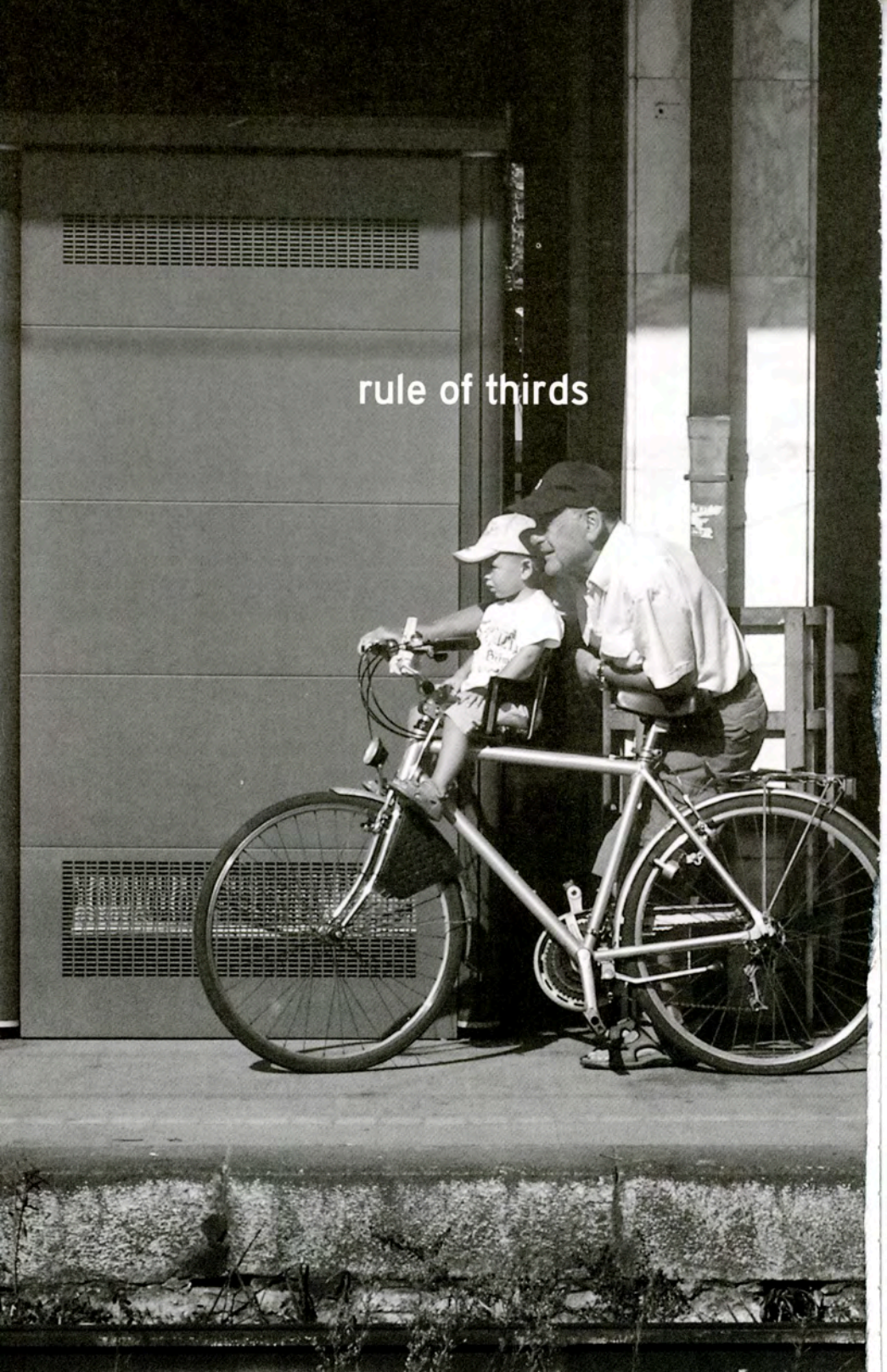
Align your main subject with one of the intersections of the thirds lines (where the circles are). Horizontal forms like horizons and vertical features (like buildings) might also fall along one of the thirds lines.

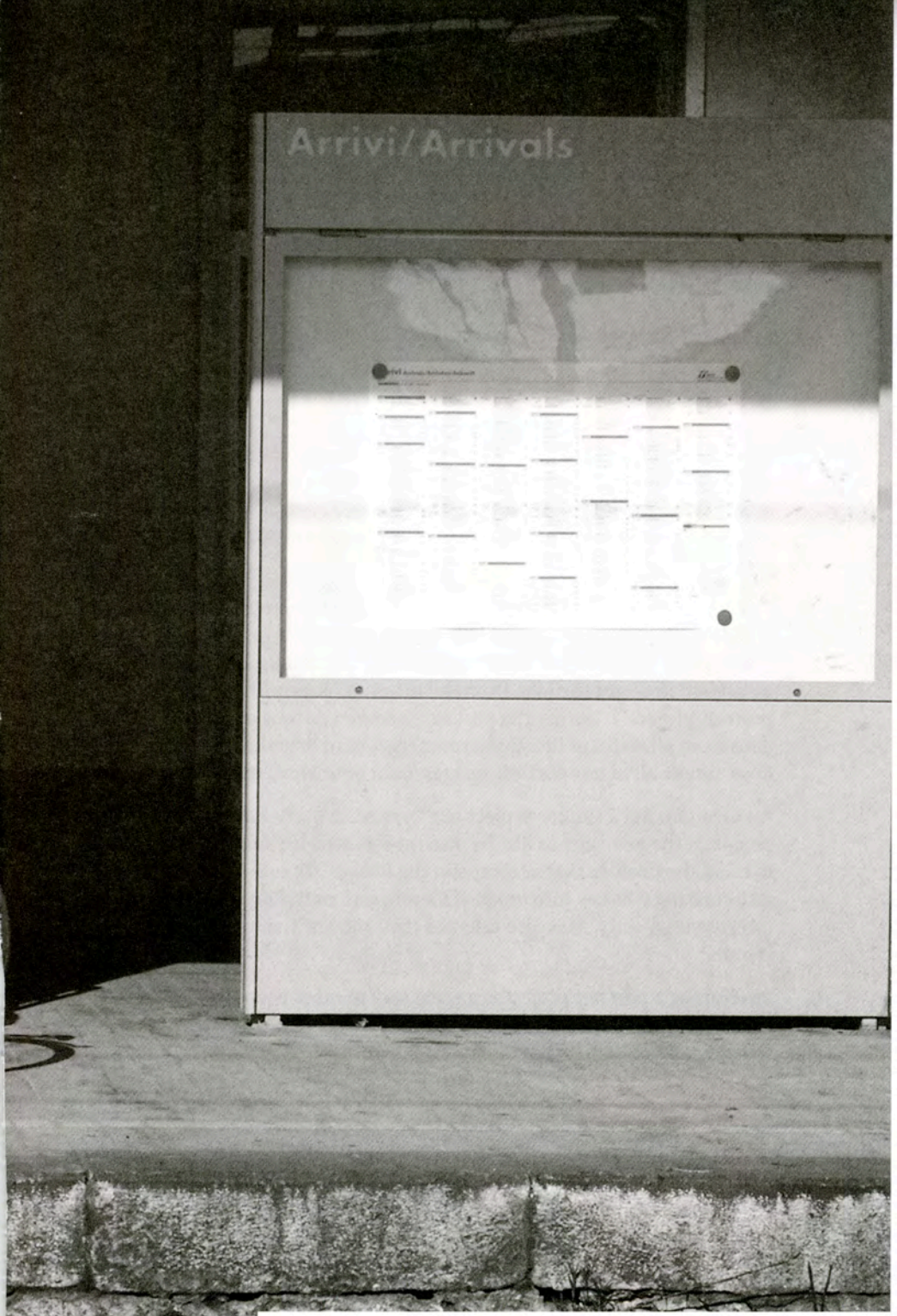
Nancy Borowick's photograph of school children carrying water back to their homes in Ghana (facing) appears to be a "centered" image but in fact it follows rule of thirds, placing the two main subjects on the verticle thirds lines. *Member of a Woman's Collective Practicing Traditional Weaving in the Sacred Valley,* Peru, by Mike Ellis, is more complex and yet still follows the same rules, with the woman's hands falling on the upper left intersection.

Elizabeth Ackley's photograph of a man balancing a soccer ball on his head with the view from the *Basilique du Sacré-Cœur* in Paris, France [overleaf], perfectly exemplifies the powerful simplicity of the rule of thirds. What other photographic principles is Elizabeth employing in her photograph?


rule of thirds

Venice Fish Market, Italy [Avery Gray]
"Greek" Salad, Mykonos, Greece [Kathleen Henke]


rule of thirds



Waiting for the Train in Pietrasanta, Italy [Emily Gasperetti]

POR·TRAIT

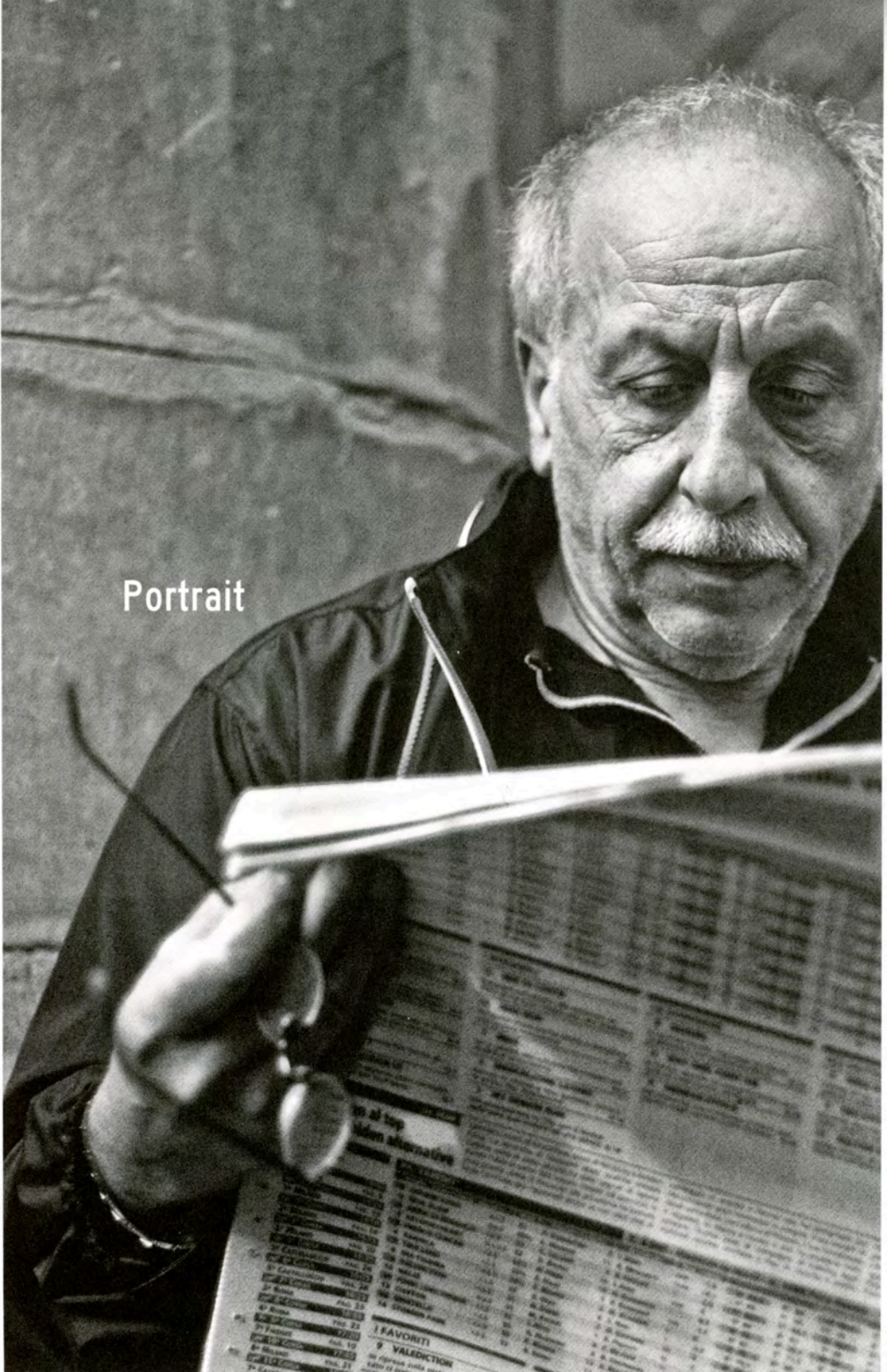
n. [1.] painting, drawing or photo of a person, often showing only the head and shoulders [2.] a representation or impression of someone in words or images

To make a good portrait, the artist has to communicate and connect with the subject. Who is this person? What is their character? What should the portrait try to capture? Portraiture is difficult to do well, but it's a powerful way to get to know one's surroundings.

Two years ago, a student named Rose did a portrait project in Australia. Rose would position herself at a bus station or other public place and offer lollipops to passersby who would stand for a portrait. Rose got the idea from the internet (google "lollipop portrait project"). During the project, Rose met dozens of Australians from all walks of life. Unfortunately, a hard drive crash cost Rose almost all of her portrait images. Back your work up!

Alex Handin did a similar project in Florence, Italy. To bring the people in the portraits to life, he also interviewed his subjects to build the profiles that accompany the images. The result is a fascinating window into modern Florence as an Italian—and international—city. Alex also selected the fonts for the following layout.

Developing a portrait project is a great way to meet people, and it's also a great way to make yourself more comfortable asking strangers if you can "make" a photo of them.


Portrait
FAVORITI
VALEDICTION

Portraits in Italy

As we follow our daily routines, we often glance briefly at the people we pass on the street and wonder about their lives. Sometimes we overhear a snippet of a conversation or perhaps we see a person reading a certain book or newspaper. From this information we can find ourselves piecing together a fictional story about these people, imagining what their lives are like.

This project seeks to provide a juxtaposition of simple portraits along with specific characteristics about each subject's life. By looking at the pictures, we can create a first impression of each person, just as we make assumptions about the strangers we pass every day on the street. After reading the text describing each person, however, we get a second, hopefully deeper, understanding of these people as individual characters.

What follows is a collection of eleven portraits of Italian natives and foreigners alike, ranging from a retired taxi driver to a professional portrait model, that I found living in Italy during a ten-week stay between March and June 2010.

—Alex Handin

Carla 67

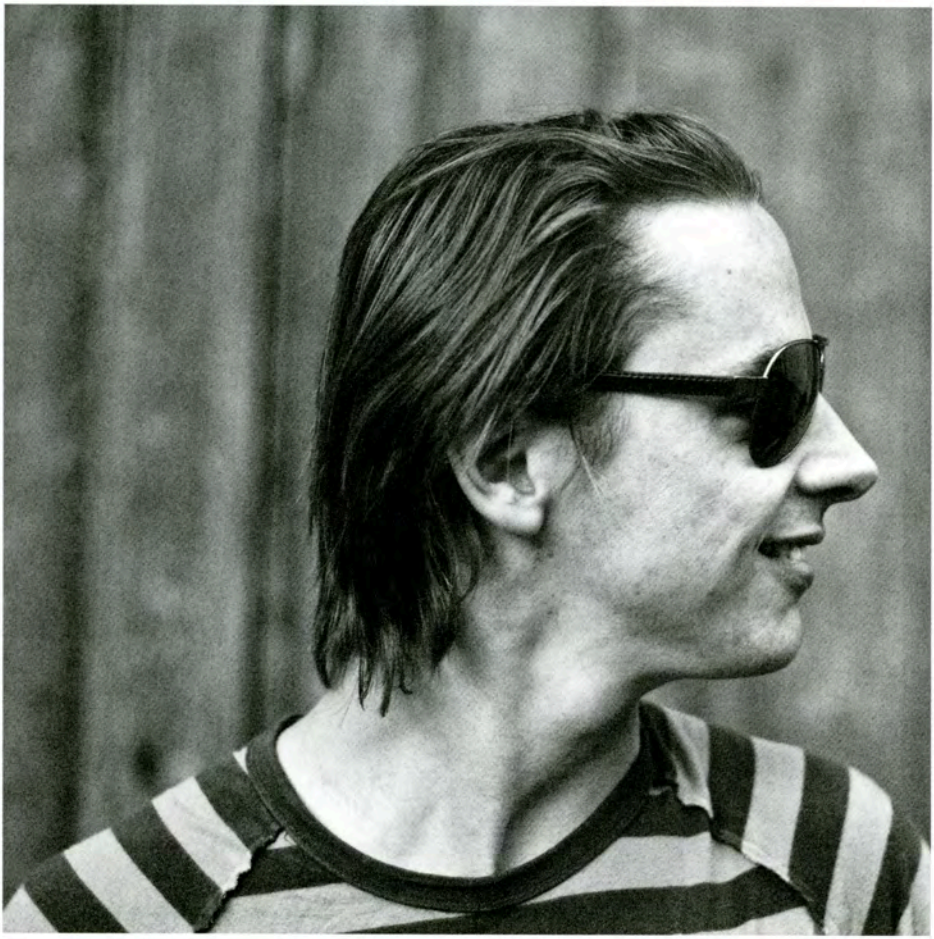
BIRTHPLACE **ANGHIARI, AREZZO,** OCCUPATION **FORMER HAIRDRESSER,** FAVORITE PLACE **SURROUNDED BY FLOWERS,** FAVORITE FOOD **CROSTINI,** FAVORITE BOOK **IL PICCOLO PRINCIPE,** MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT **HER DAUGHTERS**

Maurizio 78

BIRTHPLACE **FLORENCE,** OCCUPATION **FORMER TAXI DRIVER,** FAVORITE FOOD **PASTA WITH GARLIC, OLIVE OIL AND PECORINO,** FAVORITE BOOK **THE DA VINCI CODE,** INTERESTING FACT **LIVED IN PERU**

Renato 29

BIRTHPLACE **FLORENCE**, OCCUPATION **REAL ESTATE AGENT**, FAVORITE PLACE **CORSICA**, FAVORITE FOOD **MEATBALLS**, FAVORITE MUSIC **HEAVY METAL**, IMPORTANT LIFE EVENT **GOING TO LIVE WITH HIS FIANCÉE**



Antoni 28

BIRTHPLACE **WARSAW, POLAND,** OCCUPATION **GRAPHIC DESIGNER,** FAVORITE PLACE **THE SEA,** FAVORITE FOOD **BEEF STEAK,** FAVORITE BOOK **MASTER AND MARGARITA BY BULKOV,** INTERESTING FACT **TRADITIONAL PERSON INTERESTED IN HISTORY AND FAMILY ROOTS**

Nicholas 20

BIRTHPLACE **BATH, ENGLAND**, OCCUPATION **DRAWING STUDENT**, FAVORITE PLACE **THE WOODS IN SCOTLAND WITH LIGHT FILTERING THROUGH THE TREES**, FAVORITE FOOD **SANDWICH OR ANYTHING BIG**, FAVORITE BOOKS **GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND LORD OF THE RINGS**, FAVORITE ARTIST **CARAVAGGIO**, SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT **STUDYING IN FLORENCE**

Francesca 33

BIRTHPLACE **MILAN**, OCCUPATION **TEACHER**, FAVORITE PLACE **FOREST**, FAVORITE DISH **SPAGHETTI AL POMODORO**, FAVORITE BOOK **LA STORIA BY ELSA MORANTE**, FAVORITE PLACE IN FLORENCE **BOBOLI GARDENS**, INTERESTING ACCOMPLISHMENT **TWO MONTHS IN TUNISIA**

Rose 20

BIRTHPLACE **LONDON**, OCCUPATION **PORTRAIT MODEL AND STUDENT**, FAVORITE PLACE **HAMPSTEAD**, FAVORITE FOOD **FISH AND CHIPS**, FAVORITE BOOK **BRAVE NEW WORLD**, SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT **DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL AND GOING BACK TO DO IT BETTER**

Veselina 20

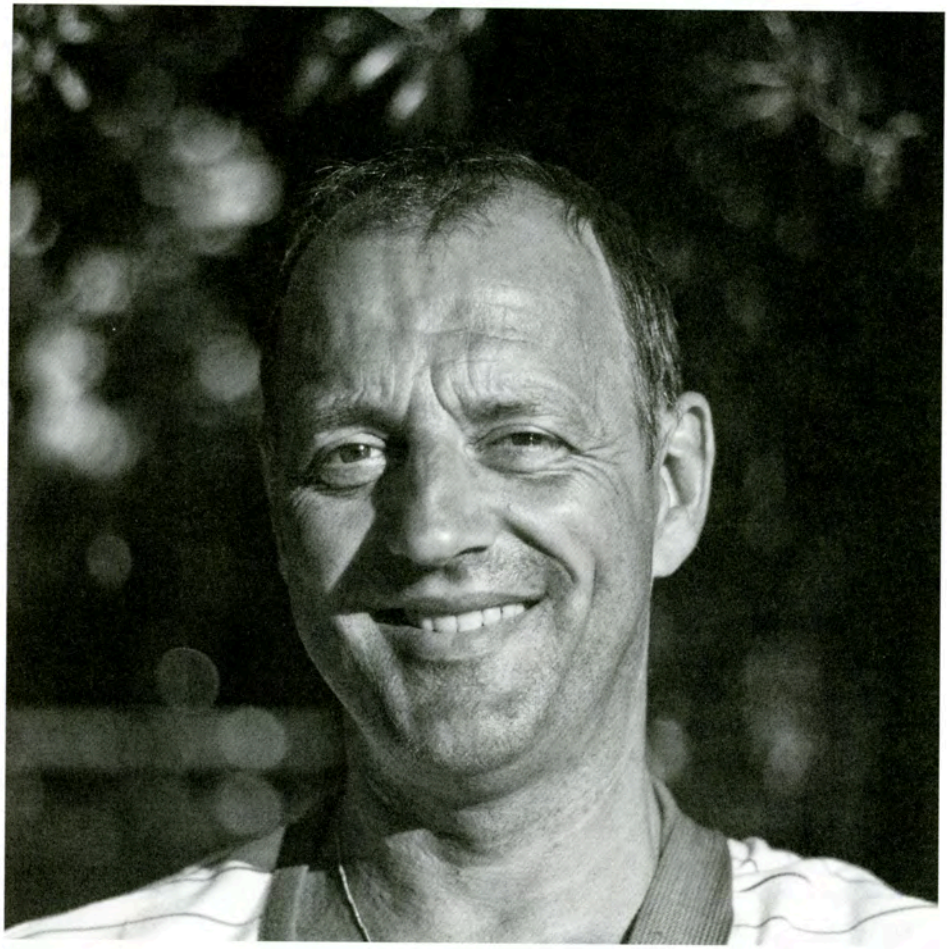
BIRTHPLACE **BULGARIA**, OCCUPATION **INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENT**, FAVORITE PLACE **CHIAROSCURO CAFÉ** AND **PARK NEAR SAN MINIATO**, FAVORITE FOOD **LOCAL FISH AND VEGETABLES**, FAVORITE BOOK **ANYTHING BY UMBERTO ECO**, INTERESTING FACT **ENJOYS BEING BEHIND THE SCENES OF A MOVIE, THEATER OR OPERA, AFTER ALL OF THE COMPONENTS HAVE COME TOGETHER AND THE SHOW IS ABOUT TO START**

Velco 27

BIRTHPLACE MACEDONIA, OCCUPATION GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND PHOTOGRAPHER, FAVORITE PLACE HIS BEDROOM WHERE HE DREAMS AND HAS PRIVATE THOUGHTS, FAVORITE DISH FLORENTINE STEAK, FAVORITE BOOK BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL BY NIETZSCHE, INTERESTING FACT LIKES BEING EVERYWHERE

Eugino 18

BIRTHPLACE **FLORENCE**, OCCUPATION **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT**, FAVORITE PLACE **ANDALUSIA, SPAIN**, FAVORITE FOOD **SPAGHETTI CARBONARA**, FAVORITE BOOK **I PILASTRI DELLA TERRA BY KEN FOLLET**, INTERESTING FACT **LIKES TO GO TO THE BEACH WITH FRIENDS**



Mat
50

BIRTHPLACE **MAASTRICHT, NETHERLANDS,** OCCUPATION **MANAGER,**
FAVORITE FOOD **REGIONAL FOOD,** FAVORITE BOOK **DA VINCI CODE BY DAN BROWN,** SIGNIFICANT LIFE EVENT **MEETING HIS CHILDREN**

Ruggaro 22

BIRTHPLACE **SICILY**, OCCUPATION **CULTURAL HERITAGE ANTHROPOLOGY STUDENT**, FAVORITE FOOD **FISH**, FAVORITE BOOK **Q BY LUTHER BLISSAT**, FAVORITE PLACE **PANTALICA**


Capturing Time

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

capturing time

Although a photograph records an instant in time (the decisive moment) the "instant" is not a standard measure of time. Some moments are longer than others. The duration the camera makes an exposure, called shutter speed (after how fast the camera's shutter opens and closes), is one of the parameters the photographer can manipulate to achieve different effects.

If you record the same decisive moment with two different shutter speeds, one long enough to blur some or all of the action, and one quick enough to freeze all action in absolute sharpness, you will have two very different photographs.

Modern digital cameras often have a mode on them called "shutter priority," often represented by an "S" on the mode dial or menu. This allows you to choose a shutter speed, and the camera will adjust the other parameters accordingly, so you end up with a well-exposed shot. 1/30 of the second is a relatively slow shutter speed. Anything moving faster than a crawl will likely be at least a little blurry. 1/250 of a second is relatively fast, and many fast moving objects, like water droplets gushing from a well, will be sharp as if frozen in time.

Nancy's two photographs from the Triumph International School in Ghana (facing) illustrate different time effects based on manipulating shutter speed. In the top one, most of the action is frozen except the arm of the boy at the far right, drawing a circle. It's a nice counterpoint to the clarity of interaction of the two students to the left. In the second photograph, a slow shutter speed blurs a hug, giving the viewer a powerful sense of the emotions of the moment.

The effect can be mixed, showing the movement of faster objects against stationary ones, like the rush of commuters past a stationary student checking the time in Molly Head's photograph (preceding) *Contemplating São Paulo Rush Hour*, Brazil.

CON•NEC•TION

n. [1.] a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else [2.] the action of linking one thing with another

Connections represent our highest aspiration for study abroad. We want our students to build relationships across borders, and we hope that those relationships will continue beyond study abroad to become an enriching part of our students' lives after graduation.

We also hope that the action of linking one thing with another will create real, positive change. When students (past and present) submit stories about how they've built relationships across languages, cultures, histories and borders, we put them in this section.

Both Connections in *Aleph 9* are about Ghana, a country in West Africa. One from a current student, one from an alum; both illustrate the power of connecting to a place and a people, and how that connection can become the energy source for change: there, here, in them, in us.

Notice: Nancy Borowick's worldview was built on connections she made all over the world; the lessons she learned in Barbados helped Nancy succeed in Ghana.

Notice: The service-learning program created by Michael Clark was made possible by his own long hours spent as a volunteer. The ability to help effectively is directly proportional to the time spent first building relationships and understanding.

ALUMNI VOICES

CONNECTIONS I

Water

SINCE GRADUATING IN 2007 my life has been a whirlwind of new and unexpected experiences. As an Organizing Theme major, combining elements from the Anthropology, Visual Arts and Modern Languages departments, I was determined to find a way to combine these three interests of mine into a career. That fall I moved to New York City for an internship at a magazine and quickly realized that I was happiest behind the camera, not behind a desk. Within two months my bags were packed, all of my immunizations were taken care of and my plane ticket was confirmed- I was moving to Ghana.

I spent two months volunteering at a primary school in a small village outside of the city of Kumasi, six hours from Accra, the capital. I arrived at the school, armed with donated cameras, film, pencils, notebooks, and markers and was ready to dive head first into teaching photography. Turns out they wanted more than just a photography teacher, so I ended up teaching everything from math to physical education. I had a similar experience when I was studying abroad in Barbados in the winter of 2006. I worked with first graders, teaching them all different subjects and as a special project I was able to teach a photography class. This was a little easier to do in Barbados than in Ghana because the children spoke English and could better understand me (and me them).

While I was teaching in Ghana I lived with the family in charge of the school. This included Peter and Gladys Oduro (my host parents), Priscilla and Deborah (their biological children), and Kofi, Hannah, Marilyn, Abigail, and Patricias (their five "adopted" children). Rosemond, the first grade

teacher, and Mamma, the cook (both Peter's nieces), also stayed with us. Although the home was crowded, it functioned like a well-oiled machine and every chore was finished by the 9am morning bell for school.

One of the chores that really struck a chord with me was collecting water. In preparation for the long lines at the nearby well the children would get up around 5am, sweep the home (and the grounds), grab their jerry can or bucket and rush to the well which was about ¾ of a mile away. They would make this trek, pump water and then return again two more times to collect enough water for the home and the school. Students would then arrive and pay for bags of this water. It was truly heartbreaking to see these children perform this task every day and night. It reminded me of how fortunate we are in the U.S. to be able to turn on the faucet and have clean, abundant water immediately.

I decided that the first thing I would do when I got back to New York was to research wells and start fundraising.

The first event was a small gathering at a local bar, co-owned by Union class of 2006 alum Nadia Koch. She graciously donated her space and drinks for the cause and the fundraising began. To make our cause more organized and formal, we decided that we needed a group name; the "Ghana On Tap" project was born. With the help of my friends and family (and many Union alums) we were able to put on a fundraising exhibition at Envoy Gallery. On that night alone we raised over $3000, halfway to our goal.

It was amazing how people wanted to donate their time, their money, and their skills to help our cause.

A year after my first trip to Ghana I was back on a plane heading to Accra. This time I was there working at a film festival for two weeks. Once finished with the festival, though, I was back at my village, Mowire, and with the students of the Triumph International School again. Just being back there with these children reinforced my feelings about why I commit so much of myself every day to this cause. They have so little yet they gave me so much and I felt like it was my duty

to give something back to them in return.

A quick side note—if you are ever thinking about constructing a well in a foreign country where you don't know the business or the language...reconsider your strategy. I learned this lesson the hard way. Through friends I was able to meet with a Ghanaian contractor who happened to be from the region and spoke the local language. He gathered the drilling team and the engineers and before we knew it, they broke ground! Unfortunately, we celebrated too early. We soon learned that the location we chose to drill was not properly selected. Although they drilled down over 180 feet, they were not hitting water. There is a proper procedure one must follow and we did not do this. Everyone was shocked. After long talks and negotiations we worked out a plan to have an engineer join us and do another survey of the land before the drillers would return. One major lesson that I learned in Ghana is that you cannot try to make something happen at a "New York" pace. Life moves at a different speed in Ghana and if you want to get something done you need to sit down, eat some mango, talk details and enjoy the sunshine. So we waited another week before the drillers returned.

I experienced a sense of déjà vu. They drilled for seven hours straight. I sat there watching every second of it, waiting for "the moment" when they would hit water and it would come shooting out into the air victoriously. That moment never came. They hit rock at 210 feet into the ground, and gave up. I can't really explain how this experience felt, to watch something you care so much about crumble right in front of your eyes. I didn't know if this well would ever be finished.

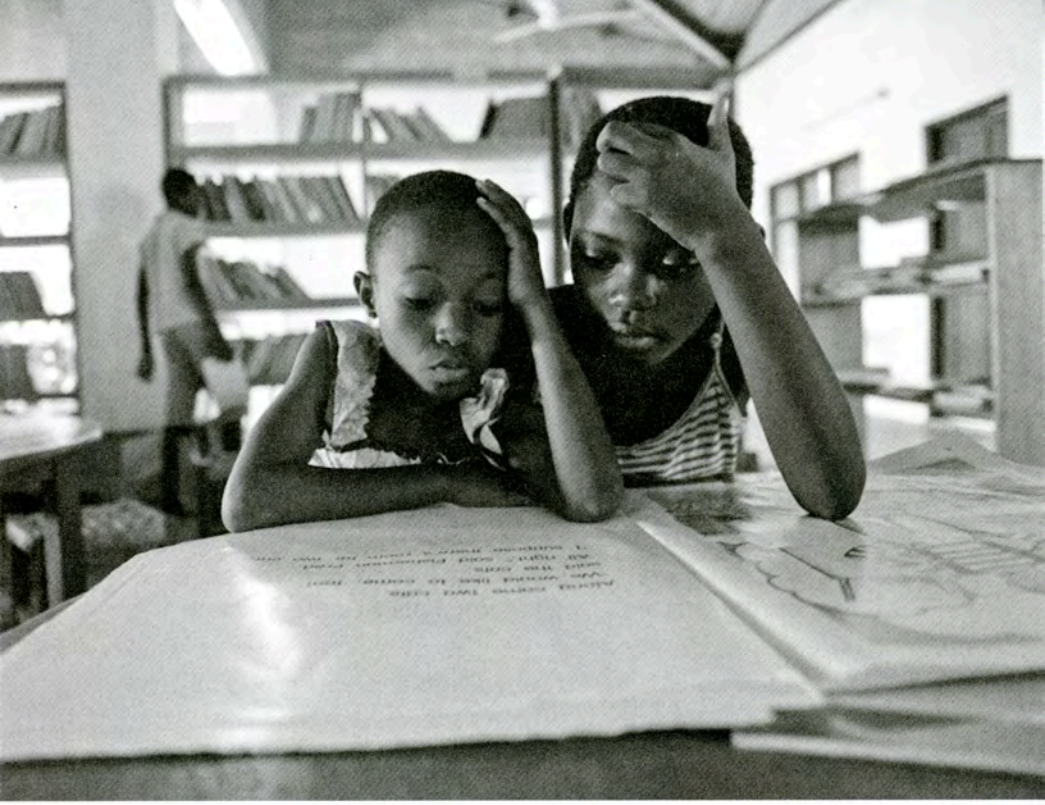
A day later I was back on a plane to New York City. Turns out, I wasn't going to get home as quickly as I had hoped because my plane had to make an emergency landing on the island of Sal in Cape Verde. We were stranded there, Gilligan's Island-style, with no communication to the outside world. I now see this as a blessing in disguise because

many of the other passengers were American engineers traveling between the U.S. and Ghana, working on water, oil and gold projects. In the 24 hours that we were stuck there I learned about why things went wrong with the well, how to finish the project properly and what my next steps should be. With all of this in mind, the instant my plane touched down in New York I was getting my team together and within 4 months we were able to throw one more event, bringing in over $4000 in donations.

After that event, everything seemed to fall into place. I was in contact with the school and the drilling team and within three months the project was finally completed. The well was finished! I couldn't believe it. A volunteer at the school during the completion of the well informed me of this and recorded a video of the running water, which can be seen at www.ghanaontap.com.

I like to think that my experiences at Union, particularly those I had while abroad in Argentina and Barbados, heavily influenced who I am today and what I am capable of accomplishing. The mini-term in Argentina taught me about the importance of keeping up to date on the current events and political situations in a country. In a place like Argentina, where protests form by the hour, you need to be adaptable and aware. As a photographer and journalist, this experience informed my development as a documentarian and prepared me for my two-month stay in a developing country like Ghana. My experience living in Barbados was something I will always hold close to my heart. I learned what it meant to be a total outsider and what it felt like to then become part of a small and close-knit community and family. To those who know me, my decision to move to Ghana to teach children photography was not surprising; it was expected. I shaped my trip to Ghana based on the experiences I had in Barbados and I could not have been more well-prepared because of it.

—Nancy Borowick



Library of the Rural Communities and Empowerment Center and *The Well Flows at Triumph International School*, Ghana [Nancy Borowick]

Connections II

Life Is All About Gaining Perspectives

WHEN YOU ASK a child, or even many adults for that matter, to describe Africa, a majority of the replies will include romanticized exaggerations about all the types of animals and tribes they believe dwell on this far off and mysterious continent. I, too, used to believe in the notion, or myth, of wild Africa, but that all changed for me once I actually went there.

In the summer of 2008, I traveled with a service group to Accra, Ghana to aid a needy primary school located in the capital region. As soon as we landed, I realized that all of my prior understandings and perceptions of Africa were far from reality. There were no elephants, just lots of cars, dirt, traffic, and pollution. We stayed in a small volunteer house, which on occasion would run out of water and electricity, but was certainly nicer than the mud hut I had envisioned us sleeping in. During those first couple of hours in Ghana, all of my foolish and childish beliefs about Africa had been completely dissolved. As hard as it was, I had to come to terms with the fact that there was no "Lion King" in Ghana, and that it was up to me to develop a new and more accurate perspective about Africa.

That summer I spent a majority of my time assisting teachers and working with students at the local primary school. Every day I spent many hours in the school correcting grammar mistakes in the handouts and tests given out by the teachers, as well as playing countless games of soccer. I was fortunate to build some really wonderful relationships with the faculty and students at the school. The students would teach me about Ghana, and in return, I did my best to answer any questions they had about me, America, airplanes, and Jackie Chan movies. However, the

most comical topic I had to address was a belief circulating throughout the school grounds that I was in fact Spider-man, something that a lot of the children still believe today. During my time with the children, I was able to get a feel for what life for them was really like and the types of hardships they faced on a daily basis. I was inspired by their strength, perseverance, and willingness to overcome any and all obstacles that hindered them from going to school. I had come to Ghana to teach, but at the school I had become the student and the children were my teachers. Every day they taught me new life lessons, and what it really meant to live and enjoy life.

That first visit to Ghana undoubtedly changed my life. When I returned to Union College that fall, I started the "Building Up Ghana Program", which focuses on expanding on educational facilities in Ghana. The first project was to raise the funds and book donations needed to build a library at the primary school where I had been that past summer. I wanted to give the children an opportunity to pursue their intellectual curiosities and to expand their horizons, and a library seemed like the perfect solution. At Union, we raised the monetary funds needed to build the library and we shipped over 3000 books to Accra. Then, in the summer of 2009, I went back to Ghana with two other students to build the library and catalog all of the books. The project was a wonderful success, and now each one of those students has the chance to widen their perspectives on academic subjects they never had the opportunity to read or learn about.

My experiences in Ghana and my time with the children have helped me develop a more accurate understanding of Africa, and through the Building Up Ghana program I hope to provide the children with the tools they need to increase their knowledge and understanding of the greater world. This summer I will be continuing my efforts in Ghana with the help of ten other Union students who will be assisting me in building a music and art center, as well as classrooms at two other primary schools in Ghana.

—Michael Clarke

TASTE

n. [1.] sensation of flavor perceived in the mouth upon contact with a substance [2.] a brief experience of something, conveying its basic character

Among animals, humans are somewhat odd; our primary sense is sight. Most other animals rely on the other senses to convey important information to the brain. Human dependence on vision probably came about out of necessity, and we've done all right by it. However, a lot can be gained by trying to cultivate our use of the other senses. The blind often develop sharper senses of hearing, smell and touch; you can do the same simply with a little discipline and practice.

Writing is an excellent way to cultivate all the senses. Although we rely day-to-day on sight, our memory works differently. Researchers have found that smell is closely linked to memory, moreso than any other sense. Yet we remain visual creatures. How often do we record what our noses or tastebuds or even our ears are telling us? We use a camera to record images but no such device exists for smell or taste. We're left with words.

Megan Rechin undertook an ambitious project in Spain to research the sherry industry, combining her interest in chemistry and cuisine. It soon expanded beyond the confines of the small town of Jerez and came to encompass her entire study abroad experience and multiple countries. She tells a remarkable story of someone who traveled and explored by intellect and taste.

Philip Lambert wanted to document what would turn out to be a memorable wine tasting in Florence. We bet that, rereading his detailed and carefully observed description, Philip can actually recall the tastes from that night. The reader almost can, too.

Street Vendor in Kunming, China [Bernd Kroell]

Tasting I

The Chemistry of Culture

I.

JEREZ IS SMALL. The stones that cobble its streets are small. They line the small *paseo* (walkway) which lies between small blue and white porcelain tiled restaurants where small old men sit hunched over small bars and eat small pieces of bread topped with small pieces of Mediterranean fish and cream cheese and talk small talk. They are busy with small things like small socks that come out of the laundry and are hung to dry on the lines strung between the one- and two-bedroom apartments that are scattered throughout town. Or the small breakfasts of *tostada* (toast) and *café* (coffee) they have every day. But what is most important to the people of Jerez de la Frontera is something so small it can fit in the palm of the hand of the *niño* (child) who picked it—a Palomino grape, the essence of sherry.

The dry, crusted landscape of central Spain did not give me much hope. Looking out of the window of the bullet train, all that I saw was tree after tree aching for water and a stretching sky with no sign of any precipitation. With the desire to find lush grape vines drooping with grapes, I was beginning to think that south might have not been the right direction to take. But there I was, on a chemical mission. Let me explain.

Grapes are grown all over the world for countless purposes. They are used to scent shampoo, squished for grape juice, aged for wine and pitted for oil. And each culture has its own use for grapes, which makes them even more interesting. Take, for example, my hometown, Silver Creek, NY.

In the fall Concord grape vines snake across the town on plots of land as far as the eye can see. We celebrate the harvest with a festival and a very competitive grape pie contest. Our grapes are grown for juice; the thick kind that sweetly sits on your tongue and stains your front teeth purple. But there I was, on an abroad trip across the Atlantic. The grapes in Spain were grown not only for a different reason, but also in a completely different way, and because of the unique chemical makeup of these grapes, a distinct culture had emerged in the small town of Jerez de la Frontera. I was off to immerse myself in it and, as a chemistry nerd, figure out what made this culture so different from mine on a molecular level.

I chose that weekend to travel to Jerez because it was the *Fiesta de Vindimia*, or Celebration of the First Harvest. After checking into my hostel, a hard task because in small Spanish towns my small Spanish vocabulary doesn't get me very far, I stood on the balcony of my room and saw the celebration coming to life. All throughout the maze of streets, flags were hung and huge oak barrels labeled with the local *bodegas* (wineries) stood in pyramids. It was that night that I discovered just how small this small town was.

After changing into some festive garb, I headed out onto the streets to experience this new culture first-hand but instead found myself being the one experienced. Everyone had heard, probably from the stationmaster, that I had arrived that day on the train. Everywhere I went they stopped me and, after giving me *dos besos* (two kisses) on both cheeks, asked what I was doing there, could I come to their home to meet their children or how long was I planning to stay so they could take me to lunch at the little café down the street. Though quite surprising at first, the small town talk gradually sunk in and I felt quite at home, even moreso because the entire town smelled of grapes. But unlike my home, where the odor of juice is in the air,

the waves of smell that float around Jerez are of sherry, the wine I set out to study.

Sherry is a fortified wine that is only made in one place in the world, Jerez de la Frontera. It is strong, containing double the amount of alcohol of normal wine, and has a peculiar taste that all Spanish people love and outsiders have an interesting time coping with, including me.

Upon learning that I had never tried sherry, the people of the town decided that the next day I should go on a tasting extravaganza as well as visit the fields where their prized Palomino grapes are grown. And so I did. From dawn till dawn, as is the Spanish way, I went from *bodega* to *bodega* sipping every manzanilla, amontillado and crème Jerez possible. Though the taste was not very pleasing to my palette, I could see that these people poured their lives into producing sherry as happily as they poured it into my glass. And, when I went out to the fields, I was able to pick the green Palomino grapes alongside workers who spent an incredible amount of time scrutinizing every grape that went into their sack, checking its sweetness, its acidity, its color, its texture and its taste.

At night, after a long day of grape-picking in the white-hot sun, I talked with Victoria, the owner of the hostel I stayed at, about what I learned. And, though she wasn't that interested in the chemistry of sugar content and amino acid degradation, she told me that what I observed was true. She had spent her whole life in Jerez, working to make sure that grapes were grown. Grown so that they could be milled and pressed into liquid, to age in American oak barrels and be consumed with a pastry after *cena* (dinner). The grapes in Jerez are a way of life for the people, a culture unknowingly shaped by chemistry. And, after my short stay in Jerez, I began to think bigger than the small town and hypothesize where else chemistry might have also shaped the culture. So, Madrid became my next project.

II.

I am a meat and potatoes girl. It makes sense because my mother is full-blooded Irish and my dad is both Polish and German. So being in Madrid, a city smack dab in the middle of a Mediterranean country, where fish, almonds and olives are the most plentiful foods, it was easy for me to find many new foods to try. And to cook. But first I had to find a teacher.

Wandering around Madrid was something that I did a lot while I was abroad. But as soon as I gave myself the mission of learning how to cook Spanish cuisine from a Spanish chef, my level of wandering went to the next level.

The streets of Madrid are littered with cafés, tiny restaurants and street vendors. Or, in other words, lots of schools in which to enroll. The one I chose ended up being relatively close to where I lived, in the newer, more modern part of the city near the Plaza de Picasso. Most of the reason I chose the restaurant was because every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, as I passed the mirrored windows, the smells that drifted towards me were not only mouthwatering, but inspirational.

The woman I found to be my teacher was named Maria. When she cooked she wore heels higher than I had ever worn in my life. Her apron was stained with the innards of prawns, a main ingredient in her best, and Spain's most famous, dish: *paella*.

Paella is a large production with lots of ingredients. But Maria taught me that it didn't really matter what went in the pot as long as you followed these main rules. 1) Don't use store-bought broth for your rice 2) Never stir the rice after it is in the pan 3) Smash the heads of the prawns to get out all the good juices because that is where the flavor is and 4) Use a wooden spoon that is at least 10-years old and well-seasoned. These sound like simple criteria, and to

a woman who has been making paella for the last 40 years of her life, they were. But to me, well, let's just say my first *paella* went to the dog.

Gradually, after about six attempts, my rice started to get the proper texture and I could smash prawn heads like an expert. I found more teachers, owners of other restaurants around Madrid, who taught me to make *cocido* (a hearty beef stew with chick peas), *tortilla* (a potato omelet) and *gazpacho* (cold tomato soup). And not only did I eat some good meals with some good people, I got connected to the culture in a whole new way. Just like in Jerez, the people in the capital city were proud of their food because it represented their Spanish heritage.

It was after my *Madrileño* cooking experience that I came to what may seem like a common sense revelation, but a revelation nonetheless: everyone has to eat, but it is how and what and why we eat that can create our culture. So, as I planned a weekend getaway to Ireland, I thought I would test my hypothesis as I explored a new culture through its cuisine.

III.

If someone wanted to know what the opposite of Spain is, I could give them a simple answer: Ireland. Spain is an achingly dry interior with a salty exterior. Ireland is green and wet and rocky, through and through. The Irish wear tweed, while the Spanish prefer light, colorful cotton. People in Ireland hope for sun and in Spain they wish for rain. But their passion for food, well that is something that runs in the veins of both the Irish and the Spanish (and as I later found, the Italians.)

I flew into Dublin in the middle of the night. It was cold and rainy, as expected, and my Spanish apparel didn't quite hold up, but my upstate New York blood was equal to the task. Earlier that week I had contacted a man named Marco on the couchsurfing website to arrange a place to stay. He

lived near the center of the city and had a couch to spare, the foundation for a good trip. We met on the wet bridge over the canal that flows through the city center and to my surprise I found that Marco was not Irish. So, after a weekend full of scones, sweet Irish cream butter, corned beef, and above all else, heaping piles of spuds, I went, on Marco's invitation, to learn how to make pasta from his mother at their house in Florence, Italy.

I have never seen fingers move as fast as I did when I watched Marco's mother, Valentina, make tortellini. Stuffed with fresh cheese and homegrown herbs, the little tortellini were plump and ready to pop. And pop they did, right into my mouth. Valentina and I made pasta for six hours. And, after I got past my bout of arthritis from all the pasta primping, that night we picked tomatoes from their garden to make a marinara sauce. When it was all ready, we sautéed the pasta with mushrooms and ate it (alongside crusty bread) beneath an arbor overgrown with grape vines in misty candlelight. I knew then that even though I didn't speak Italian, I could always communicate with Valentina through food.

Fin

We all eat. In small towns and big cities, in castles or cabins, on mountains or in the desert. But there is more to it than that. We don't just eat what is available to us. We take what is there and use it to make it an extension of ourselves. We can define ourselves through food because it is part of our culture. Whether we make *paella*, sherry, pasta, a hanger of sausage or grape pie, we make it because it is part of who we are. My study abroad experience not only taught me new recipes to cook, but also that behind every culture is a type of culinary chemistry that brings people together. You are what you eat, no matter what it is.

—Megan Rechin

Olive Oil Tasting in Mendoza, Argentina [Meghan Brooks]

Tasting II

Wine and Cheese in Florence

THE EVENT

The wine and food pairing event was a presentation of a variety of wines, cheeses, and several other dishes native to Italy. The presentation and tasting was hosted by a talented duo of expert Italian sommeliers.

THE SETTING

A weighty wooden door sitting on a pair of enormous rusted iron hinges was the first brush stroke on the canvas of the evening. Through this main entrance lay a short, chilly, stone and tile hallway. The feeling of foreboding was immediately dispelled by the warming graces and atmosphere of what was behind yet another heavy wooden door. Opened from the other side, we were ushered into a large studio apartment with trendy hardwood floors and vaulted ceilings accented by protruding stone capitals. A series of animal print and leather-cushioned seating gave us a place to rest for a moment while the other attendees arrived in groups of three and four. A cursory glance around the room revealed several other animal motifs, including horns of some sort, bestial-carved wooden chairs, and a sea-themed centerpiece on the coffee table. The mix of modern and indie/folk rock, the slideshow of student/professional photographs on a computer monitor, and the Italian/English "Famous Homes in Florence" poster over the television screen each contributed their own tasteful element to this already carefully-designed space.

Finally, the guests had all arrived and the hosts began the presentation. Crowding around a small wooden table, the hosts introduced themselves and the first "course." The first wine was a Prosecco, an Italian dry, light and crisp sparkling white wine made from a variety of white grape of the same name, grown mainly in the Veneto region of Italy. With the Prosecco, the hosts suggested a variety of accompaniments, including peanuts, strawberries, caprice, and a very tasty sheep cheese known as Pecorino (from the region of Tuscany.)

Following the first wine, we were offered a sample of a well-known Italian favorite: Chianti Classico DOC. With the Chianti, one must first search for the *gallo nero* (black rooster) on the label. If the *gallo nero* is present, the wine within the bottle is authentic and approved by the *Consorzio Chianti Classico*, a foundation whose function is to promote and maintain the quality of wines from the region. The floral, cherry, and light nutty notes of this wine were paired with a very sharp and very delicious Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and a sample of artichoke (a favorite vegetable of Italy) and bruschetta-topped crostini.

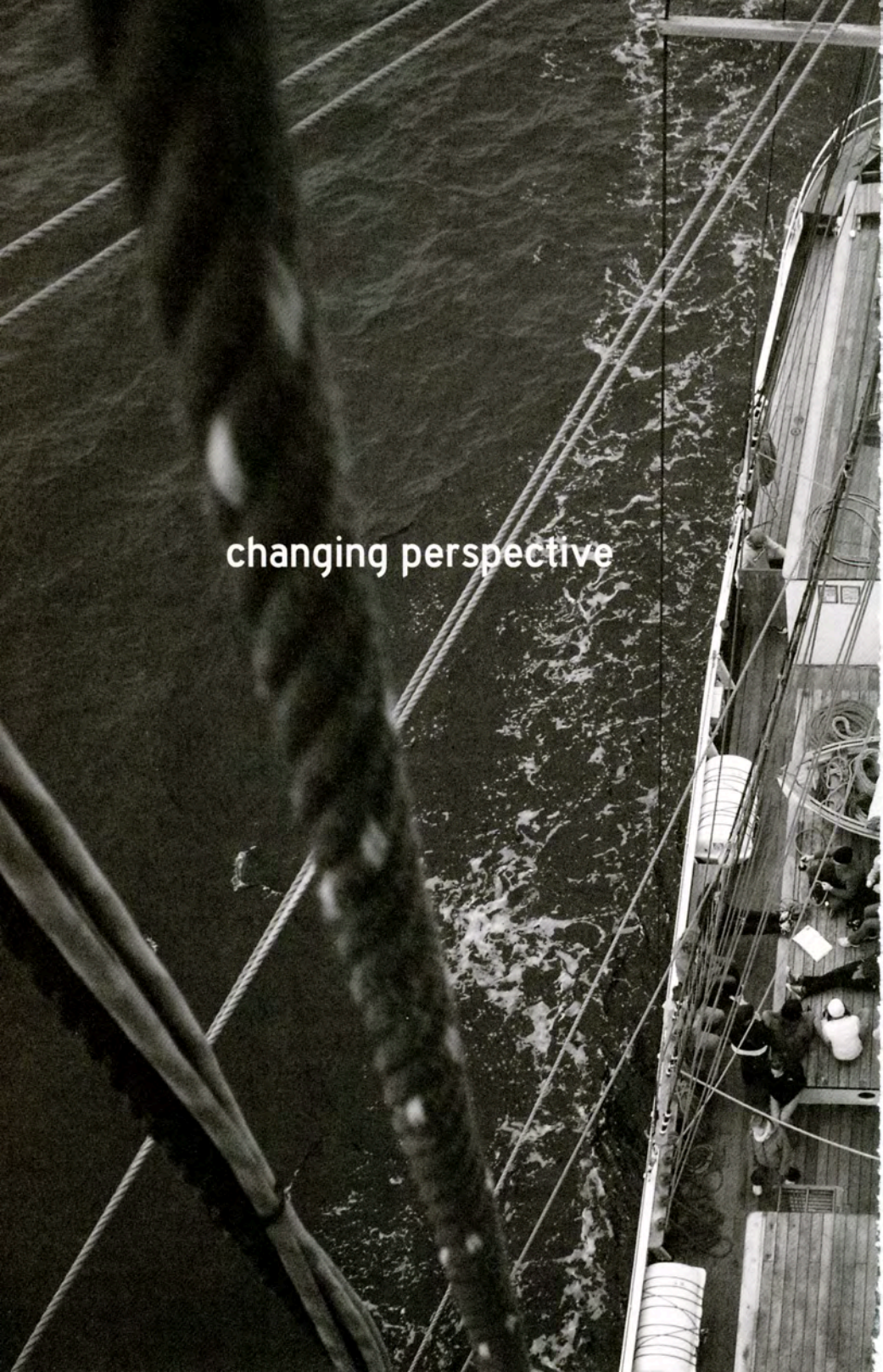
The third wine was a Rosso di Montalcino [Renieri]. Rosso di Montalcino is made from Sangiovese grapes grown in the same delineated region as the more elegant and well-known Brunello di Montalcino. The Rosso is typically lighter and fresher than the Brunello, but heralding some of the same full-bodied, silky, meat and nut characteristics while especially emphasizing the long finish. As the guest list was a handful of college students, a less expensive version of the same vintage, normally consumed as a "table wine" and served soon after its bottling, was poured into our plastic glasses. With these two wines, our hosts had prepared a plate of porchetta-topped crostini, a very salty and fatty (yet extremely delicious) sliced pork, and a sampling of a very soft and smooth cows milk cheese called Toma del Margaro.

Finally, with a flair of the well-known Italian hospitality, as if to say "Please, don't leave us without drinking all of our wine!", we were offered a sample of a significantly stronger dessert wine known as Vin Santo. The flavor of the wine was strongly reminiscent of oranges, but the hostess insisted that we dip the biscotti into the wine. Traditionally, as I believe I understood, the biscotti was much too firm to consume without a soak in the sweet and hard-hitting Vin Santo.

THE END

Our tasting over and the wine gone, our hosts offered us a visit to their "dungeon," or the basement of the apartment. While appearing recently cleaned out and tiled, the old stone walls and low curved ceilings seemed to close in upon you. I would not be surprised if a forensic analysis of the floors and walls revealed the presence of dried blood from a long-dead Roman prisoner. Nevertheless, the existence of this "dungeon" served to reinforce my previous notions that every building in this city has its own venerable history. A final thanks to our hosts for their gracious hospitality and we were on the way back to our lives as American college students invading (and tarnishing?) the Florentine way of life.

—Philip Lambert


changing perspective

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

changing perspective

Few things can make a photograph better, and a photographer more capable, than learning to see from different perspectives. Try making a picture from a crouched-down-low position. Try to get above your subject and look down. Turn the camera a little bit to skew the perspective. The most important thing is to experiment with different angles. Most photographs are made from approximately 5 1/2 feet from the ground, and are rigidly aligned with the horizon. Mix it up.

Seeing differently, and seeing difference, are both also goals of study abroad. Like getting closer, changing perspective can apply to your photography but also your own point of view. How do the new perspectives you gain from living in another culture affect the choices you make as a photographer? Does it change your definition of what's beautiful, or worth documenting?

Ben Ahearn (overleaf) climbed the mast of a tall ship to get this hair-raising perspective on a sailing trip he took in Denmark. Sarah O'Connor's photograph (facing) of a worker pausing thoughtfully on the metalwork of the Eiffel Tower is a great example of changing one's perspective on a commonly-photographed subject by thinking and seeing differently. Her photograph captures a very different interaction between a person and the iconic structure than the usual snapshot of a person standing in front of the tower. And Blair Gordon's photograph (facing) from the Vatican Museum takes a similar top-down perspective on a famous staircase that first leads the viewer to think they are looking at a nautilus shell.

Look through the other sections of photos in this issue: where do you see a changed perspective?

changing perspective

FIC·TION

n. [1.] literature in the form of prose, usually about imaginary events and people [2.] invention or fabrication as opposed to fact

We live in a memoir-obsessed time, with first-person, "true" and revealing accounts all over the best-seller list each week. Every once in a while, one of these authors gets in trouble for lying, fabricating or embellishing their own stories.

We don't fact-check stories for *The Aleph*; we don't have the staff for it. Yet most of the pieces we get ring true. For fiction, this "ring" of truth is even more critical, as it depends entirely on artifice that nonetheless resonates with the reader. Sometimes fiction can allow a writer a greater freedom to express themselves—and explore ideas—than memoir. Where they get into trouble is when they start to forget the difference themselves, or misrepresent it to others.

Fiction is a great traveling companion. Steady, reliable, not subject to batteries, books open up another narrative arc in our lives, and the resonance between what we're reading about, and what we're experiencing when we're not reading, is one of the pleasures of travel.

Andrea Rocchio's experience abroad was driven by the fictional characters and world she started creating as a young girl. As she visited the places she had written about, inspired by maps and other second-hand sources, she started to feel the fictional world impinge upon the real world. Or vice versa.

(Non)Fiction

Write Me Solent

I am 14. I am in Creative Writing Club. It's after school on a Monday or Tuesday. It's the second week we have our personal "CWC" journals and I sit there and think. I think of something old to me, something new to me... a love story, a body of water in between...an island. A movie, *Deeply*, still fresh in my eyes. The names come shallow...Trent, from my movie star crush Trent Ford, and Juliet for the reference it held. It's 1895 and Trent is about to leave for France. Juliet, a childhood friend, gives him a parting gift, her locket laced around her neck. "Keep it," she whispers, gently squeezing Trent's large hands, "so you will always remember me." He promises to return as he is dragged off to France by the rippling waves of the Solent and Channel.

A simple plot, a simple time, a simple start...but there is a problem...there is no real identity. It is a love story, a very boring and average love story, but this is what happens when a 14 year old girl wants to have a narrative take place in England, on an island.

As the months go on, the story grows on me. I write more every day, every time I have a free moment. But it's missing something...a real location. Not long after the story's genesis I pull out a maroon and gold book, a *New World Encyclopedia* (volume E), flipping haphazardly to "England." I gaze at the map in a haze looking for an island somewhere near France and England and—ah ha! I've found it. Sitting at the edge of England's southern coast is a small island: The Isle of Wight. I become intrigued...the book has no pictures, only bland descriptions that give no life, no context, no sensation of this Isle.

The internet beckons me to search the cavernous halls of websites containing some reference to the "Isle of Wight." I find pictures, some history, and background on the time period appears before me: late 1800s, the end of the Victorian. It's not enough. I see old photographs, but it's not clear how the meaning of the Isle will come through, what it signifies, what secrets it holds. Right away, I write an outline; I know what should happen, I know the people, it just comes into my mind and out through my fingers through pencil, pen, or electronic strokes.

One day whilst thinking of the story, I realized something it was missing...intent. I had no real purpose, no message, and so I made one, I created one to fit with my story to make it have more meaning in my life and potentially others so it wouldn't become "just another book" in the future. I decide to make it partially a statement of stereotypes of women and men in the Victorian era, about treating the natives of invaded countries fairly, about love gained and love lost, and how to move on when love doesn't return.

Years later, I start the trilogy, *The Isle of Wight*, and decided to write as much of it as I can over the summer. With my 40 pages of consistent story I have more claim to my initial thoughts than years prior. People would ask, and for the first time I could explain more of my characters and not have my secondary ones become smoke. But then, it dies a bit. I start several other books and short stories and poems and plays and I jump here and there, leaving the ones I had lost some interest in for a time when creativity would strike.

I touch it up, here and there. I talk through complicated scenes with my parents, but it's not complete. Only after all of this, I realize how important it is to go to the Isle. When I study abroad in Wales in Fall 2009, I finally get that chance.

I travel there by train and ferry to make my way across

the misting Solent. We land and as I step foot from the wriggling boat I notice the boardwalk. This is the same boardwalk I've seen in pictures from the late 1800s. All my research starts to make sense. I remember the old, cracking postcards and pictures as they stretched across the computer screen. The rolling hills of Ryde, the port town, lead me into a land of disbelief.

At first, I am disappointed. When someone has been writing about a place they have never visited, and then they actually get to see it up close—the valleys, the shops, the people—there is always an element of disappointment and dissatisfaction. At night, in the historic Yelf's Hotel in Ryde, I close my eyes and wonder what is ahead.

The next day, I take the bus to Ventnor, a small seaside town. Sandy shores invite a beach visit though the water is frigid. The quaint town in the fall is not as spectacular as the spring or summer, but I still breathe in the majestic quality sewn in the spine of the hills. Soon after arriving, I find myself perusing authentic shops and the island's well-known botanic gardens. I traipse up and down the rocky footpaths looking out at the Channel from a cliff's edge soaking in the rich history and presence.

A couple days later, I am in Chale, the town I randomly picked out of all the towns on the Isle at the start of my writing journey, a town that I had previously known through scratchy photos.

It is perfect.

I'll say this about Chale initially... the bus stop is misleading. The signs say "Chale" but once one gets past the lack of a town center, it has the capability of having that "middle of nowhere" charm...blessed with a bus stop. I step off and as the bus flies away, I think, is there anyone here? A few moments later, a woman sits at the bus bench, sheltered from the warm, autumn sun, minding her own business and fussing through her purse. She wears tennis shoes, thinning and peeling at the sides and soles, and a plain set of clothes. Her freckled face against her raven hair, and sunken ceru-

lean eyes weave a story in my eyes before she says a word.

She says not to use her words directly; there is a quality of ignominy behind them. I see the hesitation to tell her stories to a stranger, especially from America (and the wrong New York). I am amazed at how she opens up knowing I was writing about her town and a person eerily similar to her. This is when it hits me how close this story is to me, how near to reality it is becoming. Her words were so puzzle-perfect... as if my own character in her was saying, write for me, I am real, I am here sitting in front of you.

The next day, the famous Needles pass by my eyes, across the Isle from Chale, where the first radio signal was sent out to sea. I watch the jagged rocks rise up from the depths of a near ancient past.

Newport is in the center of the island, and catching a bus is not tricky, but finding the right one is. I meet a woman there at a geological society meeting in the Newport Parish Church. I tell her about my story, how one of my characters is a budding paleontologist, and she insists I go to the Dinosaur Museum in Sandown and speak to Steve Hutt, the head paleontologist

Leaving in the bus, I pass by Yarmouth, then Freshwater where the bus stops to let on sweaty teenagers to get a ride home from private school. I am reminded that those days were not long ago.

The next day I see Shanklin and Seaview as I make my way toward the Dinosaur Museum in Sandown to meet Steve Hutt. After a while, he makes time to talk. Forty-five minutes and countless species of fossils later, I am in dinosaur heaven. Hutt explains that, around the time my novel is set, evolution is gradually becoming an accepted scientific theory. Thanks to the discovery of dinosaur bones on the Isle, scientists were able to make a more accurate estimate of the age of the earth than that provided previously using the Bible.

Leaving the Isle is a bit difficult, but in the end, it is the next step. I have inspiration again... something I lost years ago. The story is fluidly coming to my pen in waves once more. Most importantly, I have faces for my characters. Probably one of the biggest factors for something being in the head and part of a waking dream is that faces and places and spaces are unbound and fuzzy around the edges. I met many of my characters on the Isle of Wight and I met some off the Isle, too. I even found myself wholeheartedly in one of my characters. Each voice of theirs, real or from my imagination, gives me the support I need to finish what I started when I was 14. I am writing for the voices that are too hidden to speak, the ones that can't find an outlet, the voice of a story that is whispered to me as I sleep.

—Andrea Rocchio


get closer

Bon Me Thuot, Vietnam [Alexandra Gollner]

RECIPE FOR A PHOTO

get closer

Robert Capa was one of the pioneering war photojournalists of the last century. His maxim was "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough." Capa didn't mean use a powerful zoom lens to observe unseen from a safe distance (he didn't have one); he meant getting physically as close as possible to your subject. Most amateur photographs are simply taken from too far away.

This rule can be interpreted in different ways. The first is literal and spatial, as described above. The second interpretation is social; it suggests that familiarity, even intimacy, with the subject can lead to a more successful photograph.

Regardless of interpretation, if you are photographing people, this rule inevitably means you'll have to interact with your subject(s).

Capa lived by his own rule, and he died by it, early in the American phase of the Vietnam War, when he stepped on a land mine seconds after taking his final photograph.

Luckily students going abroad aren't going as soldiers to a war, so getting closer carries less risk. Getting closer is actually what we want you to do while abroad; that it will also make you a better photographer is a nice bonus. As *National Geographic* photographer Matt Moyer explains, "The camera is a backstage pass to life." Live what you photograph and photograph what you live. You travelled several thousand miles to your destination...can you cross the last few feet?

The trio of photographs from Vietnam presented in this section, including Sloane Sheldon's photograph *Street Vendor in Hoi An, Vietnam* (facing), illustrates the advantages of getting closer, and interacting, with the subject of the photograph. Don't hide behind your camera; rather use it as a key to open communications with the world around you.


get closer

View Down a Hanoi Alleyway, Vietnam [Lilla Safford]

CROS·SING

n. [1.] a place where two roads cross [2.] moving across or over something [3.] a place at which one can cross borders

In *The Aleph*, a Crossing is a story about study abroad that reflects on the writer's culture and identity, and how the experience of living in another place can shift the sense of both of these things.

Jacob Malcolm's experience with the Hadza represents a multiple crossing for the author. Not only was Jacob experiencing a very different culture, he was also starting to reflect on his own cultural background, as well as the elevated place "tourism" resides in that culture, in a critical light. The reader is left wondering how Jacob's path in life has been affected by his encounter with the Hadza, for we get the impression that it has been forever altered.

Ashmita Roka traveled to France to live and study with a sense of identity that was already complex...and her experience enriched the multiplicity of cultures she could identify with. But rather than cause confusion, Ashmita found the new perspectives helped solidify her sense of herself in the world.

Notice: Jacob's Crossing is a seamless tapestry of academic insight and personal observation and reflection.

Notice: Ashmita's Crossing isn't about clichés that come to mind when we hear the word "France". Rather, it's about the people she met that touched her life.

Crossing I

The Hadza

I'm crouched in the catcher's position in an acacia thicket, peering through what seems to be an impenetrable wall of brush. I shift my weight and put my hand on the ground for balance, craning my neck to find a gap in the bush and a view of the target, a tiny antelope called a dik dik. Flies buzz in my face and I desperately fight the urge to swat them, knowing I must remain still and silent. To my right are my two guides, Madroba and Moshi, who are tracing the path of the dik dik in the air and motioning silently to each other. To my left are my three other student companions, red-faced and sweaty, as bewildered as I am as to how anyone could possibly see through this tangled thicket. In one silent, fluid motion, Moshi lifts his bow, draws, aims... and lowers his bow again. We sigh in unison as he smiles broadly at us and gestures us to exit through the gap in the brush.

On the move again, I try to mimic my guides' stealthy sandaled footfalls with my clunky hiking boots, but they crackle on dry grass and twigs, and slip out on loose, gravelly rock. We scramble up a rocky outcropping to a vantage point, and look down on a clearing full of grazing Thompson's gazelle. Using broken Kiswahili and hand gestures we attempt to ask our guides if they plan on shooting one of them. They chuckle slightly and Madroba pulls a small block of wood and a long, slender stick from his quiver, but it is not an arrow. Moshi reaches into his dirty cotton satchel and produces rolling papers and an old film canister. He opens it and carefully pours out a line of tobacco. As he rolls the joint, Madroba cuts a notch in the wooden block, inserts the end of the long, thin stick, and spins it

rapidly between his palms until whispy plumes of smoke rise from the block. With the tiny ember Moshi lights the joint. We wait as they pass it between each other, staring out at the scrubby rangeland, punctuated by rocky outcrops and broad, impressive baobab trees. Moshi takes a hard drag and starts hacking, which alerts the gazelle, and they gracefully bound off into the bush. They finish and motion for us to start climbing down. The hunt is on again.

This hunt was part of a week spent with the Hadza people of the Lake Eyasi Basin, northwestern Tanzania. The Hadza are the last remaining big game, low altitude hunter/foragers in the world, and the last functioning hunter/gatherer society left in Africa. Today, between 1,000 and 1,500 Hadza occupy the Eyasi Basin and adjacent Yaeda Valley, practicing a lifestyle that is remarkably similar to that which they practiced 10,000 years ago. Because they still hunt for wild game, sleep in impermanent huts made of sticks, speak a language that includes clicks, and forage for tubers, fruits, and honey, the Hadza have been labeled by both the Tanzanian government and tourist outfitters as "living fossils." The proximity of the Eyasi Basin to Olduvai Gorge, the "Cradle of Mankind" where some of the earliest hominid remains were discovered, only increases the mystique of the Hadza as direct descendents of the earliest humans in both genes and lifestyle. Over the past 10,000 years, the Hadza have withstood the advent of agriculture, metalwork, guns, disease, warlike neighbors, colonialists, missionaries, anthropologists, and "development schemes," and their lifestyle has survived relatively unscathed. While they have exhibited remarkable cultural resilience, the Hadza are neither "ancient" nor are they "fossils." They are a fluid society that, at least until the past half-century, has successfully adapted to living sustainably in their environment.

Like other hunter/gatherer peoples, the Hadza livelihood is characterized by a nomadic lifestyle, egalitarian ideals, extensive local knowledge, varied diet, and a logical, sustainable subsistence economy. The traditional Hadza

food economy is perfectly suited for and sustainable within the severe, semi-arid environment in which they live. This became apparent during a foraging excursion with a group of Hadza women. It was the end of the dry season, and I saw nothing that remotely resembled food as we walked along dusty foot trails through the thorny brush. Overhead we heard birdsong of various types, but one woman began mimicking a single call, and surprisingly, the bird answered back. She veered off the path, following the bird's call. They continued their rapport as we stumbled through the brush behind the woman, who stopped suddenly under a mature yellow acacia tree. Bees swarmed a dark, gaping hole in its trunk. Without hesitation, the woman stuck her arm elbow-deep into the hole, and the hive exploded with activity. We gasped as bees swarmed her face and neck, stinging her multiple times. She barely flinched as she pulled her bee-covered arm from the hole, producing a handful of honey and beeswax. Another woman brought a jar, and she began scooping oozing handfuls from the hive into it, completely unfazed by the sleeve of bees that had formed on her forearm.

I learned later that the bird the woman had been calling is known as the "greater honey-guide". For millennia, following the call of this beeswax- eating bird has helped the Hadza to locate beehives. In addition to at least three types of honey, the traditional Hadza diet consists of multiple types of tubers, several wild fruits and vegetables, and game meat. By foraging for foods that are native to the area and moving frequently to prevent exhausting food sources in a single place, the Hadza ensure that they have a dependable food supply in the harsh semi-arid conditions of the Eyasi Basin. Typically, men hunt and collect honey while women gather fruits, vegetables, and tubers. The Hadza are highly egalitarian, and in camp the food collected in the bush is shared equally amongst the community. With this system, the Hadza enjoy a diet that is relatively high in calories and protein while laboring for an average of less than five hours per day.

Vondelpark in Amsterdam, The Netherlands [Lucia Berliner]

In contrast, their pastoral neighbors such as the Datooga rely on a much less varied diet, based on staple crops such as maize and cattle products. During times of drought, the Hadza report that neighboring agropastoralists sometimes seek them out for advice on how to hunt and forage. While the Tanzanian government and people often scorn the Hadza for being "backward," they have never accepted food aid out of necessity during times of drought. Their extensive local knowledge allows them to collect food in abundance with little environmental impact. In fact, the Hadza may live the most ecologically sustainable lifestyle of any people on the planet. Few others have lived in the same place for many millennia without relying on technology to compensate for their despoilment of the land.

During a hunt I stood on a rocky ledge with two Hadza men, looking over the expansive yellow-green Yaeda Valley. Below was a Datooga herder, standing stoically in the blaring sun, occasionally redirecting an errant cow with the quick blow of a stick. Behind him was the crooked rectangle of his maize field, consisting of a few short, dry stalks protruding from the dusty soil. It looked forlorn to me, and I imagined the harsh daily existence of this man, toiling in the fields and herding his cattle all day, returning to his hut in the evening to eat a little maize gruel before sleeping restlessly for fear of his stock's safety. In contrast, I looked at the Hadza hunters next to me, leaning on their long bows and staring serenely at their diminishing territory. They were mobile, they could shoot a gazelle at 300 yards away and stand fearlessly on the end of a high baobab branch, they ate a rich and varied diet, they slept under the stars, they relaxed, smoked, and made arrows in the shade every afternoon. Given the alternatives, what incentive did they have to "develop" and emulate their neighbors?

I know the image I'm creating here, and it is precisely one that I want to avoid. The Hadza are not noble savages. They are simply practical, resourceful, and opportunistic. Historically they have avoided confrontation, choosing to flee conflict with warlike groups such as the Maasai by

retreating farther into the bush, which has no doubt contributed to their longevity. The Hadza do not traditionally craft or wear ornate clothing and accessories. Today, typical dress for a Hadza man is tattered western style shorts and a t-shirt. My guide Madroba was touted as a great hunter; he was a tiny, wiry man wearing a faded AC/DC tank top. They are quick to learn and adapt new subsistence practices, such as eating the fruit of the invasive prickly pear cactus or fishing when the Yaeda Valley floods with El Niño rains. Several times over the past century, missionaries have built churches in the Yaeda Valley and attempted to convert the Hadza to Christianity. Some Hadza choose to attend church, and take the opportunity to tear pages from the Bible for use as rolling papers.

Despite their resourcefulness, today the Hadza face an onslaught of forces that may spell the undoing of their livelihood. In order to continue the hunting and gathering activities that form the backbone of Hadza society, they must be guaranteed a large land base. For the past century, the proximity of the Eyasi Basin to protected areas such as the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Serengeti National Park has allowed wildlife migration through Hadza lands, ensuring that large game existed for hunting. But more recently, Tanzania's rapid population growth has intensified competition for land. Hadza lands are increasingly being infiltrated and surrounded by farmers and herders, cutting off vital wildlife corridors to the Eyasi Basin. Farming and herding not only disrupt wildlife migration routes, but they degrade the habitats of herbivóres that are important parts of the Hadza diet. Traveling around the Yaeda Valley on foot, the effects of overgrazing from Datooga cattle herds was apparent. Through a translator, Madroba revealed to me that he remembered a time when he could always make a kill during a short hunt. Now, he said, scarcity of game can make hunts last for several days.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to overcome if the Hadza are to secure an adequate land base is the discriminatory

attitude of Tanzania's government and people towards hunter/gatherers. The government sees the Hadza as an impediment to development, to the extent that their regional representative to the National Assembly once called them "archaic, primitive and disgusting to the nation." The perception that hunting and gathering is unacceptable, while farming, fishing, or livestock keeping are inherently honorable is widespread, even when those who practice these types of livelihood require government subsidies and humanitarian assistance.

The government's dismissive attitude towards the Hadza came to a head in 2007, when they signed an agreement with the Royal Family of the United Arab Emirates, making over 2,500 square miles of the Yaeda Valley a hunting safari playground for the Royal Family. The U.A.E princes chose Yaeda after a helicopter tour of Northern Tanzania, in which they erroneously concluded that the valley was uninhabited. The likely demise of Hadza culture was narrowly avoided when the Tanzanian government rescinded the deal at the last minute, under international pressure from several NGO's that claim to represent Hadza interests.

For the Hadza to effectively represent themselves in the future, they must have educated advocates from their own community. Many Hadza are accepting education as a necessity for their children to have a place in Tanzanian society and voice in the policies impacting Hadza culture. Yet formal education is a double-edged sword: the upshot may be better representation, but time spent at school is time away from family and from the land, where local knowledge is acquired and traditional culture transmitted. Sitting on a smooth orange rock one evening, in the surreal pink glow of an equatorial sunset, I asked an elder if he thinks formal education diminishes Hadza culture. He said no, he thinks Hadza children will always come back. He cited the example of a Hadza ranger in Serengeti National Park, and mentioned with pride that he still uses his bow and arrows on patrol, and comes home several times a year.

I wanted badly to believe he was right. But in what society, anywhere, do children always come back?

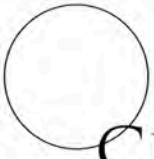
Probably the most sobering realization of my week with the Hadza, besides the excess material baggage that I carry, was that I, the student/tourist, was doing my own small part to diminish Hadza culture. It is easy to blame the government, development, education, or the Emirate's Royal Family for the Hadza's tenuous position. It is hard to envision how the Hadza benefit from a group of American students rolling into the Yaeda Valley in the enormous trucks of a safari outfitter, where they are led through a week long series of discussions and "cultural activities."At the end of the week the Hadza are compensated for their services with processed food, tobacco, and money. I'll probably never forget the exhilaration of climbing a forty-foot baobab tree, or watching a Hadza hunter, master of his craft, draw back and put an arrow through the chest of a gazelle at 50 yards. But at what cost? Our tour operators provided the food for us and for the Hadza who accompanied us that week, so that gazelle died primarily for our entertainment. Ironically, we came to learn from hunters and gatherers, and in return gave them maize flour and money, items that diminish the need for them to hunt and gather.

One afternoon that week I went off by myself into the bush, climbing the hill behind camp so I could look out over the valley. The ground was rough and rocky, and the plants looked prickly, foreign. I'd been surrounded by people for the last few days, and the new quiet was almost unsettling. My fears began to manifest, and I became alert. Under every rock could be a black mamba, behind every tree a leopard or buffalo. My pace quickened, and I soon neared the crest, which was topped by a colossal boulder, steep on every side. Wedging myself between the rock and a tree I shimmied up, pulling myself to the platform on top in a burst of nervous energy. I was greeted by a stunning view of the valley, a vast yellow-brown barren area stretching

to green hills far on the other side. This was the heart of the Hadza homeland, and I could not see a single sign of human settlement. The harsh beauty of the valley helped me realize why I felt scared: I was too far removed from the environment to ever survive in a place like this.

I felt humbled that the Hadza had lived there for so long, saddened that their survival was so much in jeopardy, and worse yet that my very presence among them was hastening their demise. When they go, we will not be shedding vestiges of another age, but rather we will lose the unassuming teachers of an essential ecological lesson.

—Jacob Malcomb



Crossing II

In-Between Existence in France

IT IS 11:30 PM IN FRANCE. MARION, MARSELLE AND I just got back from our dinner at a small pizzeria in Corsica. I also got a surprise today. Marion bought me a book, *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad in English and in French. Earlier, I went looking for an English bookstore but could not find one, so during her lunch break, she went around Bastia, Corsica and surprise, surprise, she was able to find one. She believes that nothing is impossible when you give your best effort, and in the six months I have spent with her she has transmitted that philosophy to me. Living in the fast-paced American culture, I had forgotten how to live in the present. In France, I realize that Americans do not know how to live in the present, they always think of tomorrow and they do everything with a sense of urgency. Americans are always in a rush and barely take a moment to relax or even enjoy their food.

I came to France without knowing the language or much about the culture. My first night at my host family's house I wanted to crawl under the dinner table. I could only name four or five different kinds of cheeses and in front of me there were more than ten different types. I felt out of place. What did I sign up for? Then I said to myself, I came here to learn about French culture and I won't let the cheeses scare me. I am going to put in the effort to know my French family and learn how they live their lives differently than I do.

My host mother, Marion Gery, is a psychologist and my host father, Jean Paul Ponthot, is a digital artist. Spending an hour every day at the dinner table gave me a chance to get to know my family a lot better. In America people

Jean Paul Ponthot, Ashmita Roka, and Marion Gery

hardly eat dinner together, whereas in France it's a central feature of their lives. The family dinners reinforce family ties and keep each member abreast about each others' lives.

My host family had already opened their house to me but as time went on they opened their hearts to me as well. I felt at home far away from home. In fact, I felt more comfortable here. I was invited to family vacations, family dinners and two weddings, one of which was my host brother's. It was a beautiful wedding in the countryside and I met dozens of French people. Contrary to the belief that French people are arrogant, I found out that the French are friendly when they let you into their lives, and for that to happen you must be willing to learn and make an effort to assimilate.

I was thirteen years old when I moved to America from Nepal. I quickly adopted the American culture to fit in but it created a huge gap between my parents and me. I never felt at home in the American culture because I was not born here. At the same time, I did not feel at home in the Nepalese culture. The different value systems in the two cultures

led to an 'in-between' existence. I felt like an outsider to both cultures. At home I could not talk to my parents about my American way of life and at school I could not talk about my home. I was living two different lives in two different cultures.

Coincidentally, my host mother happened to be a psychologist and her area of study was immigrant kids and the struggles they face in a new culture. I got a chance to open myself up to her. She gave me very useful advice, which no doubt is going to change my life. I realized that I am different and I need to be true to myself and embrace my differences.

American culture values individuality while Nepalese culture values community. My study abroad experience has taught me that you cannot have one without the other. I need to maintain my individuality but at the same time I must recognize my responsibility to my community. I would like to thank Marion Gery and Jean Paul Ponthot for helping me grow as a person and treating me like their daughter.

Not only did I learn about a new culture, I learned a great deal about the American and Nepalese cultures, too. This experience has helped me become more comfortable in my own skin. I do not fully belong to the American culture or the Nepalese culture; I am outsider to both cultures, and as an outsider I have a unique perspective. I am able to notice aspects of both cultures that escape the attention of my American friends as well as my Nepalese family. I do not have to conform to one particular identity. Both these cultures have taught me valuable life lessons. My Nepalese background has taught me to care about people and my time in America has taught me how to be independent. And these qualities are going to help me succeed and become a valuable member of any community I choose to live in.

—Ashmita Roka

Reflections of Resistance I

Kreuzberg SO 36

I BEGAN MY TERM ABROAD IN GERMANY UNSURE of what to expect from a country whose dark past casts an ominous shadow even on present times. What I soon discovered by living in Berlin, Germany were remnants of a more recent history present alongside the scars of the Second World War. As I wandered the modernized streets of the nation's capital, evidence of the Cold War and memories of a divided nation resonated throughout the former East and West. Each day, I passed the "Kottbusser Tor" metro stop, while the history of Berlin's innermost residential district occupied my thoughts. I only later realized that the story of its past interested me to such an acute degree because the overall theme was oddly familiar.

My historical interest, "Kreuzberg SO 36," is a city section centrally located in the heart of Berlin. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, SO 36 bordered the nearly impenetrable barrier and was seen as an undesirable section of the city for this reason. In order to encourage further economic and industrial development, West Berlin (along with the rest of West Germany) looked to Turkey to commission women as *Gastarbeiterinnen* or "Guest workers" for its factories. These women were given the unique opportunity to work for a limited amount of time in West Berlin and only later were allowed to bring their families from Turkey to Germany. Many of these labor immigrants settled in Kreuzberg and began to transform their city section into the diverse multicultural center it is today.

But the years following reunification demonstrated that Germany's history of discrimination had not ended with

the conclusion of the twentieth century. Kreuzberg became unfairly stereotyped as an area of drug use and crime, and many Germans did not accept the city's "new inhabitants". The former guest workers and their families were not given the privileges of German citizens. Children of Turkish descent born and raised in Germany automatically took on the rights of a Turkish resident. Only recently have the new generations born in Germany been given the option to obtain German citizenship. But some nonetheless decide to become Turkish citizens, as they have never felt accepted in Germany and instead identify more with their traditional upbringing. For this reason, questions associated with cultural and national identity have become very important amongst the Turkish-German youth population.

As I learned Kreuzberg's history and spoke to the descendants of Turkish immigrants, I soon realized that I recognized some of the stories I was being told. But the accounts did not sound so familiar because I had studied Germany's recent past in a textbook or researched it in-depth before coming to Berlin. Instead, I knew the discrimination and injustice these immigrants experienced because similar circumstances have plagued the US throughout its history, from slavery and segregation to immigration quotas and racism. The plight of the Turkish immigrant is comparable to the difficulties faced by those who came to Ellis Island in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that of individuals who seek refuge in the United States today. These groups of immigrants are considered outsiders and are often discriminated against or looked down upon due to their differing accents and traditional practices. And just as Germany has resisted offering bilingual education for young Turkish-Germans, the United States has often done the same in largely Spanish-speaking communities.

I will forever remember how difficult it was for me to live in a country whose language I did not natively speak. I cannot imagine how it must be for new immigrants and

subsequent generations to adjust to these vast differences in culture and language. For this reason, it was difficult to hear a native Berliner speaking unfavorably about her Turkish neighbors while being so unaware of their hardship. Likewise, it is just as devastating to listen to a fellow American complain about the "evils" of immigration.

Overall, my experiences in Berlin left a lasting impression on my views of Germany and my perception of the United States. Previously, I had known that Germany was a place of past injustice and horrific intolerance, but I now begin to understand that America exhibits similar tendencies. I hope that some day Germany will be able to overcome its insecurities and sense of prejudice so that it may become a fully united nation. But I now strongly believe that the United States must do the same in order to truly represent freedom and equality for all.

—Erica Fugger

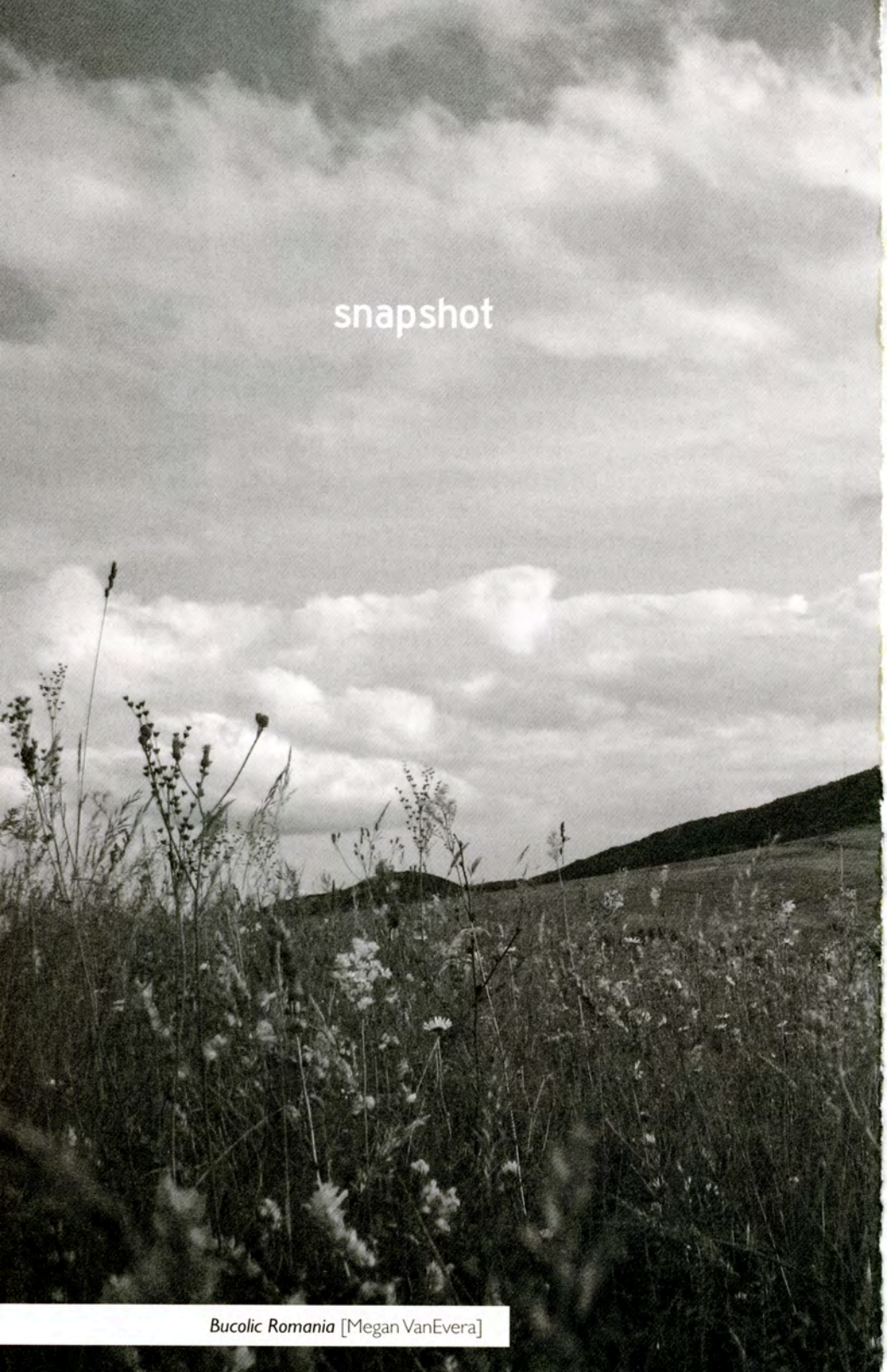
The DMZ between North and South Korea [Ethan Guralnick]

SnapShot

This picture (overleaf) captures my favorite experience during my study abroad experience in Central Europe. The photo on the following pages was taken in a small village called Cubles, which includes the home of Professor Temple's mother-in-law. We arrived in Cubles after a long and tiring day on a small bus. The seating was cramped, the roads were bumpy, and people were starting to get a bit restless. A lot of the students on the bus missed the scenery on the way because they were sleeping, but once we stepped off of the bus in Cubles, our breath was taken away. What struck me first was the silence. After being amongst the hustle and bustle of Budapest and Cluj-Napoca, the calming environment of Cubles washed over me like a refreshing splash of water.

After eating dinner with Professor Temple's family and exploring their home, a few of us decided to take a walk further down the road. We ended up at the base of a rather steep hill. I am always excited by the idea of what might be on the other side of hills, and being in such a place as this, I was thrilled. So I charged ahead and led our small group up the hill. When we finally made it to the top, sweating and panting, this photo depicts exactly what we saw first: a scenery so vast, captivating, and moving that we all just stood in silence for ten minutes as some of us snapped photos, picked flowers, or just took it all in. In the distance, we saw shepherds leading a flock of sheep across a field and could faintly hear their voices even though they were a considerable distance away. We also saw two horses grazing nearby. I think it is the fact that the beauty of this place is simple, yet so magnificent, is what impacts me the most. It is an increasingly rare example of humans coexisting with and appreciating nature. The people in the small village of Cubles are living richer lives, I feel, than a lot of people back in the US.

—Leslie Carrese



Bucolic Romania [Megan VanEvera]

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Stories in the *The Aleph* are set in Gentium, designed by Victor Gaultney (2002) and adopted by SIL International, an NGO working to document thousands of dying ethnic languages, many of which are written in modified Latin scripts. Most digital fonts do not include these extended alphabets and therefore millions of people are shut out of the publishing community. Gentium is an attempt to meet this challenge. The name is Latin for *belonging to the nations.*

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