Brian and Amy Meissner Creativity Award in the Visual Arts
Scholarship Application
Carly Garay
March 15, 2011
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Project description:  

Over the past three years that I have been studying photography at UAA, a unified style or theme has begun to emerge in my work. It has taken on a storybook quality. The images have become surreal departures from daily reality. They are dreamy and ethereal. The imagery invites the viewer into a realm of fantasy and imagination. 

For my final thesis project required to complete my BFA degree, I will continue to push the boundaries of fantasy and reality. I want to create a body of work that speaks to the power and beauty of an active imagination. The project will consist of a body of 26 portrait style photographs of various creative people and performing artists in Alaska, with an emphasis on circus arts. I will use these portraits to create an ABC picture book, with each letter representing a various creative profession (ie: A is for Acrobat, B is for Bellydancer, C is for Clown, D is for Dare Devil, etc.)  

Circus imagery holds a great deal of allure for me, as it does for many people. The elaborate costuming, the cast of characters, and the invigorating feeling of wonder that surrounds this mesmerizing art. I look to all these things for inspiration. I have selected subjects to photograph based on their character, personality, and interests as artists. I have now completed nearly all of the 26 base photographic images. This consisted of organizing shoots with professional lighting equipment and coordinating costumes and props for each picture. The photographs are shot digitally and then undergo various digital techniques to make the images look like hand painted film photographs from older times. The next step in my process is to take each of these images and couple them with a short lyrical poem relating to the letter which they correspond with. (ie: B is for the Bells on the hips of the gypsy ladies, bringing joy by dancing with their bellies)  

Over the last few summers, I have been involved in a music and arts festival in Trapper Creek, Alaska. The festival highlights musicians, poets, fire dancers, aerialists, and creative people of all kinds. In trapper creek, and through my own community of artists and musicians in Anchorage, I discovered an amazing undercurrent of highly talented and creative artists. As George Bernard Shaw said, “Life is not about finding yourself, life is about inventing yourself”. The concept for this project developed out of a love and appreciation for the creative people that I am surrounded by. In this modern world seemingly dominated by strip malls of monotony, and boring 9-5 jobs, a majority of adults find themselves losing the hopes, dreams, and imagination that they had as children. I want this body of work to recognize the individuals that have broken free from societal norms and have chosen to use their experiences, their imaginations, and their creativity to make this world a more interesting place. It seems especially important that
we remind the youth that they can be and do anything that they can imagine, and to remind everyone that a little imagination can go a long way.

As an artist, I want to stoke the fires of imagination and embrace the idea that this life is a gift and we need to do with it what makes us happy. This project will be a tribute to certain Alaska artists in my own community that embody this message. The focus is on circus arts, as it activates the imagination, delights my inner child, and encourages both children and adults to pursue a more creative life. I will develop this body of work by taking 26 very deliberate photographs that correspond to each letter of the alphabet and then use these images to make an ABC picture book. I will print and bind the images into a handmade book form as well as mount each image individually into shadow boxes for the project showcase. The show is scheduled to open the third week in April at the UAA Student Union Gallery. I would also like to have the books available through an online site such as hulu or blurb so that copies are available to order on request.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your support for the arts.

Sincerely,

Carly D. Garay