

Elissa Bardhi
Miller Arts Scholars
Grant Proposal
2/12/2019

Transcending the Photo Reference

Proposal:

I have always thought, that it is so easy for a photo to lie to you. A photo can depict any shadow, shape, or color, in an unordinary way and we choose to believe it. However, it is hard for a painting to lie to you. When a shadow looks misplaced, when a color stands out, or when a shape seems slanted, it can quickly be blamed on the hand of the artist. I have learned that it is not until you paint a photo that you realize how skewed the depiction of reality actually is from what we perceive it to be. It is not until you scan every miniscule detail in a photograph and attempt to replicate it that you understand how little you are aware of your surroundings. A photo may catch light accidentally, or emphasize a certain element of the subject, but when the image is translated through an artists' hand it truly reveals the intended nature and importance of the subject in the work. The artist has the ability to bring a photograph *closer* to the truth. The question is... do you believe it?

I am applying to the Rising Fourth-Year Award in order to advance my skills in painting from photo reference. This summer, renowned artist, Alyssa Monk, is hosting a workshop concentrated on the creation of oil paintings from photo references at the New York Academy of Art. This workshop focuses on capturing the essence of a photograph in an oil painting, something Alyssa Monk is famous for. This course would give me the opportunity to use my foundational skills and take them the next level. I have never received any professional training in realism portraits, and hope that this guidance can fill in that gap I have specifically directed to this style of painting. I believe that attending an extensive workshop that is perfectly directed to this specific style of painting can teach me so much about my work.

Painting has taught me to always question my senses, always look closer. Throughout my experience as an artist, I have attempted to replicate countless photos onto broad canvases that constantly show me how little I know about what just about everything looks like. It's similar to the sensation of saying a word over and over again until it no longer sounds like a word. After painting a nose for so long I begin to question if I even know what a nose could possibly look like anymore. Monk's course aims to "instruct painters on how to use the photograph to create a painting that surpasses the look of the photograph, not simply imitates a photograph." I am guilty of using a photograph as a blueprint of my painting, and I want to do more than just replicate a photo. I want to *surpass the look of the photograph*.

Throughout my career as an artist, selecting which photograph to paint has been one of my greatest challenges. I have constantly reverted to photographing my family members with my iPhone and painting portraits of them. However, I am hoping to explore a new style of art as well—photography. For this workshop, we are encouraged to take our own photographs as the subject of our art work. A DSLR camera is recommended to take photos for optimal definition and clarity, as well as allowing for more room for individualized creativity from the perspective of the photographer. After taking a New Media digital art course at UVA, I have become exponentially more interested in the world of photography. I plan to continue experimenting with photoshop and the photography skills I have acquired in my digital media class, and incorporate more of it into my artwork. I hope to explore the world of photography and create more paintings based on my own photographs. I will use the Miller Arts Scholarship to purchase an Canon

Rebel EOS T7i. I have never had a camera of this magnitude and hope to use to influence and better all aspects of my art.

As a whole, I hope to push myself as an artist. By the first week of April in 2020—one month shy of my graduation—I hope to expose my portfolio to a more personalized motif. I plan to use the Miller Arts Scholarship to create a collection of paintings that complement one another when together, and stand equally as strong alone. I hope to find my direction, and to display it at the Awards show in April next year. After this summer I plan to continue to use the skills I’ve learned in Monk’s Workshop, as well as exploring photography, to influence the art I produce throughout my fourth year. I believe the difference between great and extraordinary lies here.

Timeline:

I first plan to purchase the Canon Rebel T7i as soon as possible. I will begin to experiment with human subjects, and then hope to bring my new camera with me as I travel to new places and explore photographing landscapes. I then plan to attend Alyssa Monk’s oil painting from photographs workshop this upcoming summer after my 3rd year. In this class I will use photos I’ve taken with my new camera to push the boundaries of my paintings. Throughout my fourth year I plan to build my portfolio and personalize my artwork using my own photographs. My main focus fourth year will be to define the direction my artwork is going in—to establish a motif and concentration amongst my paintings. Furthermore, I plan to take Painting I and II at UVA during my fourth year to expose myself to different styles of painting. Taking these courses while I build my portfolio will help me integrate classroom projects and critiques into my personal artwork. I will present a final portfolio at the Center for Undergraduate Excellence in the first week of April.

Budget:

Alyssa Monk’s Painting: Transcending the Photo Reference Workshop	\$975
Materials (based on the required course materials list)	\$500
Canon EOS Rebel T7i EF-S 18-135mm	\$1,049
Travel Expenses	\$400
Total	\$2924

Link to Monk’s Workshop:

<https://register.asapconnected.com/ClassDetail.aspx?pk=1326093>

Link to Canon Camera:

<https://shop.usa.canon.com/shop/en/catalog/eos-rebel-t7i-ef-s-18-135-is-stm-kit-digital-slr>

Participation in the Arts:

At UVA, I have taken Drawing I and II, as well as New Media I, and I am currently enrolled in Printmaking I. I plan to use those classes towards a Studio Art minor. I am also a student docent at the Fralin Museum of Art. I enjoy spending a lot of my time at the museum and I love exposing my friends and classmates to the artwork at the Fralin whenever I have the opportunity. As a student docent, I have had the opportunity to meet and learn from many diverse artists whose work is up for exhibition at the Fralin. I am especially passionate about my volunteer work at the Fralin because I feel as if it is my job to spread the word and intention of the work for the artist—it's as if I'm acting as a missionary of the artist, relaying the word of the creator to the world. Furthermore, I took the CASS 1010 Seminar in the fall and plan to continue taking Miller Arts courses throughout my fourth year. The Miller Arts program has introduced me to many great artists with which I have collaborated and shared many ideas with, and I am grateful for the experience. I'd like to thank the Miller Arts Scholars for this opportunity.

Below I have attached several of Alyssa Monk's oil paintings. I personally admire her interpretation and execution of painting from a photo reference. Not only does she prove that she has the skill to make something look life-like, but she goes beyond that to add another dimension to her paintings. Monk's artwork so blatantly lies to you and *makes* you want to believe her. She manages to incorporate both abstraction and realism into her work. I hope I can go beyond replicating a photo and learn from Monk's style of art in order to incorporate it into my future artwork.



