

Maeve Bradley
Fourth Year Art Award Proposal

Exchanging Photographs and Ideas

This year I started living at the International Residential College (IRC) and appreciate being surrounded by international students who constantly make me question aspects of my daily life and practices that I take to be “normal.” The presence of an international perspective has greatly helped shape my understanding of America, especially in conjunction with my study of American Studies.

For the Fourth-Year Art Award, I am proposing a photographic portrait series that would explore cultural identity and exchange. As a double major in Studio Art and American Studies, I’ve enjoyed making connections between the two, using research and field-study to inform my photography and vice versa. With this project, I would like to examine theories of American Studies, specifically of Imagined Communities and nationhood, within student populations. Benedict Anderson’s 1983 essay, *Imagined Communities*, reflects on the development and spread of nationalism, beginning by defining an “imagined community” as a group that fosters comradery and common ideals, but is *imagined* because it’s too big for everyone in it to know each other.

Beginning with the IRC as my starting point, I’ll explore the concept of Imagined Communities in relation to international students. Generally, how displacement from one’s home country affects cultural identity. Additionally, the concept of “Americanization” in terms of adopting practices, and even American names, and how that can create separate identities. I’ll also examine the dichotomy between the fetishization of America and hatred of it as an inferior culture compared to others. There’s a lot of room to expand upon these ideas of nationality, identity, culture, and citizenship within student populations.

Once I start photographing, I think I’ll have a better sense of where this project will go visually and how to accurately express these themes by talking with and photographing students. The practice of formal portraiture facilitates a one-on-one interaction between the artist and sitter that can stimulate conversation and familiarity. I will be using a Hasselblad 500CM medium format camera with a waist level viewfinder that allows me to talk to my subject and compose a shot without the camera directly in front of my face. This enables a direct interaction that allows the sitter to feel more comfortable without such a dominant presence of the camera. With this camera, I’ll be using 6x6 square medium format color film. I’m interested in combining a series of formal head and shoulders portraits with detail shots of objects in spaces describing a person’s individuality. I want the process to be collaborative, so each subject will take part in editing and receive a final print. I would also like to include a bit of text with the photographs in a final show to contextualize them. I’ll be starting the project this semester while I’m still living at the IRC and have access to a large population of international students, but I’m interested to see how I can build off of it and expand it to other student populations.

An arts award would allow me much more freedom in this project since analog film, film processing, and pigment ink printing are very expensive. I don’t want financial constraints to

inhibit me from reaching the full potential of this project. By the end of Spring 2018, I will have started the project at the IRC already and funding would help me push it further towards a cohesive body of work that I could assemble into a show for the Annual Arts Awards presentations and potentially become my thesis work as well. Both Alice Bailey of the Photography Department and Grace Hale of the American Studies Department have agreed to advise me through this process and provide feedback as the project evolves.

Project Timeline

Spring 2018: begin series of portraits of international students at the IRC

Fall 2018: work towards cohesive body of work, final photographing, scanning, printing, framing

Spring 2019: final editing, printing, and preparing for exhibition at Annual Awards Outcome event

Budget

Film: 120 rolls of 120mm film (~20 people/6 rolls per person)	840
Processing: color film processing at Pro Camera (6.50/roll)	780
Paper: contact sheets, proofs, and final prints (various sizes)	450
Ink: two semesters in photo lab, printing	100
Framing: mat board and frames for final prints to show	800

Total: \$2,970

Participation in the Arts

I've been in Miller Arts Scholars for the past year and took the CASS 1010 seminar class in the Fall. Apart from this current semester, I've taken at least one studio art class every semester and several art history classes. Last summer I participated in the summer study abroad in Italy for contemporary art history and pinhole photography, which inspired a lot of work both for the class and on my own during the program. During the Spring 2018 semester, I'll be assisting with cinematography and lighting on a film project by fellow arts scholar, Mimi Robinson.