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# Ryan Duffy

## The Sheldon - St. Louis, MO; Fall 2012



### **What were some of your main tasks as Gallery Intern at The Sheldon?**

I cleaned frames, researched for upcoming exhibits, handled and transported artwork, set up information panels by the artwork, cataloged artwork, and watched over the patrons in the gallery. The best part of working at The Sheldon was working with all the great artwork and being able to really get to know them.

### **Tell us about your most rewarding experience working with the organization.**

The most rewarding experience while working at The Sheldon was setting up the Arnold Newman exhibit. Newman was one of the greatest portrait photographers of all time, and it was a joy to handle all his original darkroom prints. Through installing the information panels, I was able to learn about the many famous people he photographed and that enhanced my appreciation of the work. By the end, we were all proud of the exhibit and the work we did to make it happen.

## What was your biggest challenge in your internship experience?

The biggest challenge was wearing multiple hats to maintain the gallery; having to learn to do several different jobs everyday was a bit to get used to.

## In five or fewer words, how would you describe the work environment?

Ever-changing center for art.

“Locked” Ryan Duffy  
Vintage Diana, NEW Portra 400



## What is your advice to students searching for an internship?

Do a lot of research on multiple places (check the websites, see if you like their work) and don't wait until the last minute to start sending out cover letters. Once there, get to know the people you are working with and show passion and persistence. Go beyond what is merely required and take the extra effort to do the best possible work. Make an impression.



"Second to Last Page" Ryan Duffy  
Hasselblad, digital back

## Now, tell us about your solo exhibit. How did this come about?

The photos featured in the solo exhibit are part of a large, ongoing project that started in Susan Stang's Color Eye class. I first exhibited the work in another solo exhibit in the May Gallery small wall [at Webster] in October. I told [my internship supervisor] Olivia Gonzales about it. I showed her the large (16x20) prints and she then told me she wanted to show them in a small solo exhibit. She selected six images and I matted and framed them for the show. I gave her my artist statement and she began setting up press releases and planning the presentation of the exhibit. I have since been able to do a lot of professional networking.

## Have you always been interested in photography? Tell us about this. And tell us how you decide what you'll photograph.

No actually; no one in my family was into photography either. My interest in photography started in my senior year of high school when I took a one semester Photo 1 course to fill some credits. The class was taught with analog black-and-white film and traditional darkroom printing. I was not very good in that class but it got me interested in photography. After that class I started doing photography on my own with a cheap digital camera and started reading up on how to use cameras and take better pictures. This hobby grew and grew and made me want to study photography in college.

I mainly photograph anything that really catches my eye, whether it be because of the light, form, texture, or

color. I believe that you can take a beautiful photograph anywhere and from just about anything, so I explore my surrounding area and look for something to photograph. I look for subjects that are not cliché (NEVER taking photos of the arch), and have something about them that could mean more than just what the subject is. I could take a photo of just an old trashcan, but because of the way I photographed it, it can invoke several different emotions and bring to mind several different ideas and themes. I like to photograph things that have some ambiguity to them, things that can be photographed and be appreciated by people who know nothing about the subject, things that have a long tonal range, and complex color relationships.

For the photo project at The Sheldon, I looked for subjects that are “relics and symbols of Midwest, that tell of its past, its drama, and its secrets” and that have complex color relationships that give them a sort of beauty.



"Business Journal" Ryan Duffy  
Vintage Diane, NEW Portra 4

I find my subjects from intensive exploration of my surrounding environment. I often find my subjects while out on walks, and I purposely go to places I've never been before, just to see what is there. I suppose I have an ability for bringing out personality from inanimate objects, in a way; taking portraits of things that are not people. I attribute this ability to the fact that my subjects are often things I find interesting in one way or another, and I try to photograph them to make people see them the way I saw them. The toy cameras I use help with this, as they'll have blur, vignettes, and unusual renditions of color, all leading to photographs that are dramatic and emotional, and can make things ordinary things seem alien and abstract. I try to make photographs that say and mean things more than just the subject.

### **Why did you choose Webster, and what will you do after graduation?**

I originally chose Webster for its Audio Production program, as I originally was a double major in Audio Production and Business Administration. I soon realized that I'd much rather be a photographer than an audio engineer, and changed to a major in Photography by the second semester of my freshman year. I am a double major in Photography and Business Management. I'm still working out exactly what I want to do after graduation, as I have enough versatility to pursue a number of career opportunities. I may start freelancing as a digital retoucher for local studios as I am quite proficient with Photoshop and enjoy using it. Eventually I may pursue getting a master's in Photography, so I might eventually teach Photography.

I plan on using my personal contacts to help me locate job opportunities, and this summer I plan to learn as much as possible on how to use the programs Photoshop, Lightroom, InDesign, Final Cut Pro, Logic, and Dreamweaver so I can be very versatile in a number of jobs.

### **What else would you like to share with us?**

Just a few random thoughts:

Your career doesn't start when you graduate, it starts as soon as you pick your major, so you should be making the best work you can right now, use all the resources available to you, and start networking and get your work out.

The only one who is going to make you successful is yourself, and you should be **ACTIVELY** working on shaping your career and bettering yourself as a photographer.

Serve” Ryan Duffy  
Holga 120N, Tri-x 400, sepia toned



Ambition, resourcefulness, and the ability to adapt are three traits that I highly respect in people, and that I feel are often underrated.

If you're a Photography major, you shouldn't like photography, you should LOVE it; you should love every part of it and learn and do as much as you possibly can. I often check out about 10 photography books a month from the library to not only better understand photography, but because I just find it all so fascinating and enjoyable. If you only shoot when there's an assignment due, and are not actively learning how to better yourself as a photographer, then you might not have the passion to survive in this industry.

Do not try to just be like everyone else; work to make yourself stand apart from the rest. The only way to be good at something is through passion and practice.

See more of Ryan's work [here](#).

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