

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

HIDDEN

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Art

Visual Arts

By

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ABSTRACT

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Most people are busy with work and life, and don't have time to notice small details. American photographer Diane Arbus (1923-1971) said, "I really believe there are things nobody would see if I didn't photograph them." Her words resonate, as I use my camera to create hidden relationships among ordinary details in order to give them new life.

Unlike Diane Arbus who explored socially "hidden" populations, I am drawn to common, inanimate objects. In the series "Hidden," common subjects become the focal point in my photographs. These include curtains, spider webs, and shadows, and they absorb and radiate their own particular light. I use the camera's frame to create unexpected formal relationships in an attempt to transform these common subjects into aesthetic objects worthy of contemplation.

Photography has the capacity to convey feelings; it uses a special visual language to

communicate these feelings for which I have no words. The camera has become my “third eye,” helping me to discover and explore overlooked details and find inspiration in the little things.

Color is an important element in my photographs, and its subtle presence becomes as unassuming as the subjects I photograph; faded walls and light leaks have nuanced and engaging gradations of color. I prefer the details of color photography to the more abstracting and graphic qualities of black and white photographs. My color photographs give ordinary subjects a strong presence.

Although I am drawn to beautiful colors and lighting, I seek out “ugly” subjects in order to create interesting compositions. *Engram* (Figure 1) reveals the hidden within Nature. The lichen is unremarkable, but it provides an interesting, organic contrast to the white, mottled walls and broken concrete. In *WWW* (Figure 2), a spider web tangled among plant life becomes beautiful. I look beyond the surface of this undesirable object and use the camera’s frame to enhance the hidden relationships among color, light, and shadow and reveal the beauty within this subject.

My photographs emphasize the peculiarity of each color and engage the viewer with perspective and texture.

Different camera angles and close proximities expand the possibilities of the two-dimensional frame and emphasize the unlikely tactile quality of highlights and shadows. *Gone with the Wind* (Figure 3) uses close proximity and shallow depth of field to exaggerate the camera’s angle, the curtain’s texture, and the sunlight’s directional

quality.

Using a camera helps me to explore my experience of the external world and reveal my internal life. I seek to photograph ordinary, yet hidden details in order to show their presence and value.

My approach to photography has been influenced by American photographer Uta Barth. Her work makes me pause to think about my intentions and what is important in my photographs.

Looking at Barth's photographs, I understand more deeply the relationship of color, optics, and abstraction. Her images transform simple things into engaging subjects. Some of the photographs in *Hidden* incorporate her approach to abstraction and composition. However, I concentrate more on design and the relationship of the objects in the frame rather than on the objects themselves.

Light in the Corner (Figure 4) embodies this concern with the camera's frame, creating visual relationships among elements in the photograph. The wooden bench and colorful carpeting begin a unique "conversation" with the directional light, this intersection helping to unify the composition. In addition, the shadows formed by this conversation become as tangible as the bench and carpeting. I animate the so-called ordinary elements in my photographs and endow them with formal and emotional meaning.

The American photographer William Eggleston is considered to be "The Father of Color Photography." His photographic style uses a snapshot aesthetic and saturated color

to emphasize a “democratic” approach to making pictures. Through his lens, mundane things become objects of beauty, and I admire his process because his pictures are not only bold expressions of color, but also they incorporate real world content that is accessible to many Americans. Similarly, I use the camera to consider the world around me and find beauty in the ordinary. This approach is evident in *Ramble 1 and 2* (Figures 5 and 6). Both photographs use available light and textures to create engaging visual relationships.

Making photographs is not solely about technique and aesthetics; it is a vehicle to communicate ideas and express a variety of emotions. My photographs transform inanimate objects and infuse them with new life. As a result, the camera becomes an empathetic bridge between me and the subjects I photograph.

HIDDEN

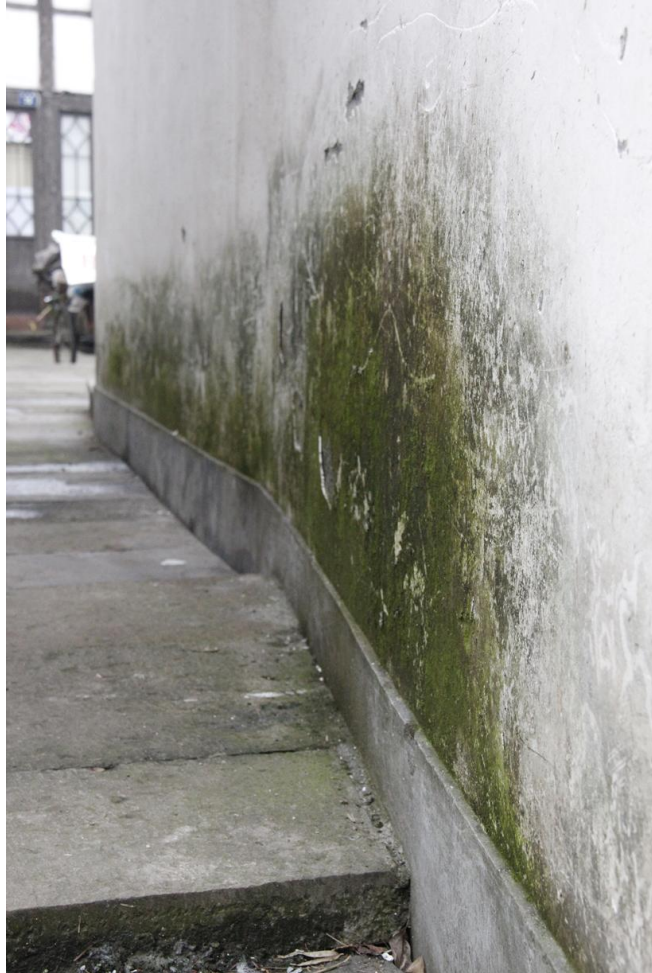


Figure 1. *Engram*
Archival Pigment Print
11.52 x 17.28 inches, 2013



Figure 2. WWW
Archival Pigment Print
17.28 x11.52 inches, 2012

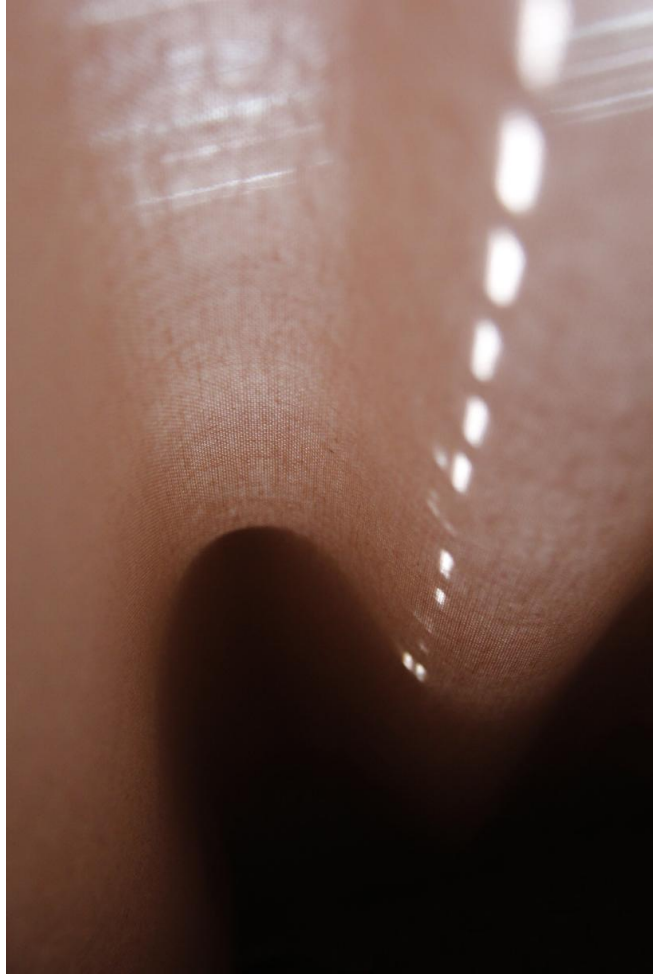


Figure 3. *Gone with the Wind*
Archival Pigment Print
11.52 x 17.28 inches, 2012

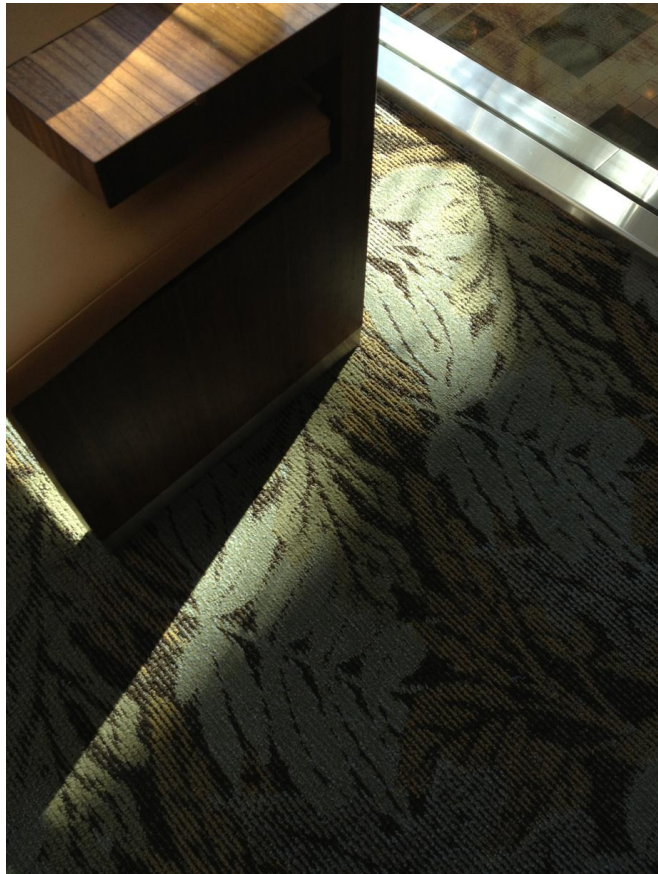


Figure 4. *Light in the Corner*
Archival Pigment Print
8.16 x 10.88 inches, 2012



Figure 5. *Ramble #1*
Archival Pigment Print
11.52 x 17.28 inches, 2013

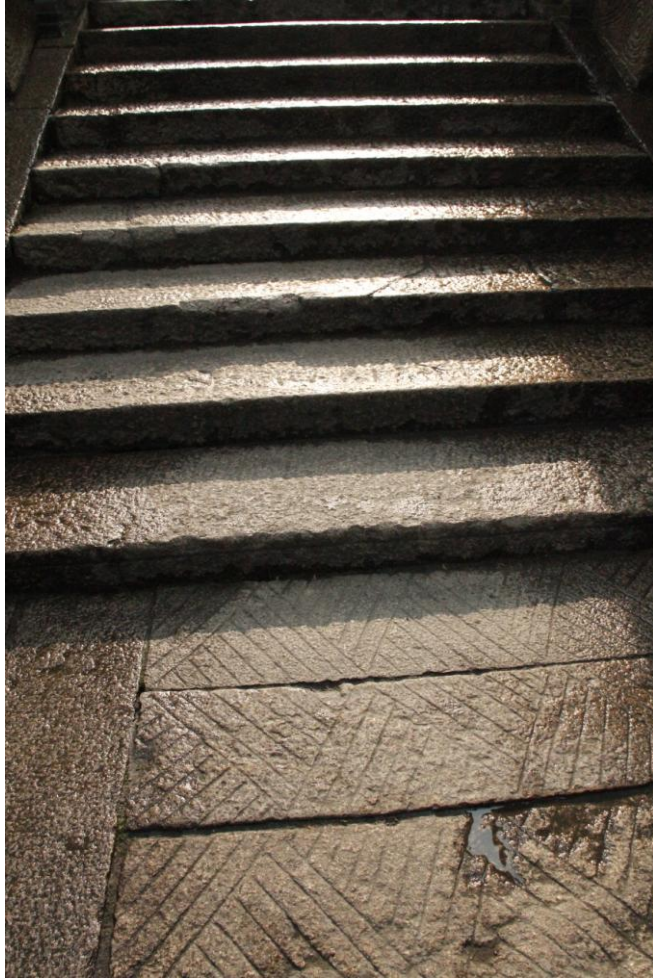


Figure 6. *Ramble #2*
Archival Pigment Print
11.52 x 17.28 inches, 2013