

2011/12 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Young Photographer's Alliance Award



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Photography

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At an early age, I realized where I was living and growing up was a ludicrous attempt at a utopian society. My family seemed normal for the most part. We went to church, lived in a modest house, and even spent time gardening together with smiles on our faces. But something seemed wrong. Somehow I realized the life I was living was an artifice. I began to strive to escape from the confined, conservative thinking of the families surrounding me. Around that time, my perfect, gardening family came to an abrupt halt when my father filed for divorce. This opened my eyes to the lie I was submerged in. I saw countless smiles surrounding me. No matter what was going on in one's life, they woke up, put a smile on, and when asked "How are you", responded with "I'm great! How are you?" This is what led me to art. I wanted to create something real. I wanted people to gaze at my art and feel a sense of uneasiness. They go about their lives with naiveté; terrified to face anything that might make them question the worldview they have been spoon-fed by the elders and the authorities of their community. I believe art should be viewed subjectively. When one enters a gallery, they should leave all reservations and hesitations at the door in order to get the most out of a piece. My work is meant to suggest varying concepts. I don't want to



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contribute to the spoon-feeding of my community. I want them to wake up to the world around them, embrace human diversity, and relinquish the brainwashed worldview they possess.

I believe that art is the medium for all change. Politicians can strive to change the world but unanimous change rarely occurs. Artists have become the only effective vessels of change. I have been surrounded by extreme conservatives my entire life. As much as they would like to believe they are flawless, they are far from immaculate. One major change I strive to bring about is the acceptance of homosexuality. In my community, homosexuality is a joke. People throw around the word "faggot" relentlessly. I even hear the administration at my school degrade and make homosexuality seem like the boogeyman: a foolish invention that should not be given merit or respect. Because I have close friends and family members that are homosexual, the dehumanizing insults strike a highly sensitive chord within me.

It is immeasurably important for me to challenge the personal and moral beliefs of those who view my artwork. For the few seconds or minutes I have the attention of the viewer, it is my opportunity to bring about change. It should not be about displaying a pretty picture that causes solely tender feelings of security and comfort. It needs to unhinge their soundness and challenge their world views.

