

Inspiring, educating,
and empowering the
next generation
of photographers

PARTICIPANTS

72 college photography students

36 professional photographer mentors

LOCATIONS

Canada

Ottawa
Toronto

India

Mumbai

Scotland

Glasgow

United States

Anchorage
Columbus
Dallas
Kansas City
Los Angeles
Minneapolis
Nashville
New Orleans
New York City
Orlando
Portland OR
Seattle

United Kingdom

Bristol
London



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Major Founding Sponsor



ESCAPE

Young Photographers Alliance 2013 Mentoring Program

"I believe one has to escape oneself to discover oneself."

— Rabih Alameddine, *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*

Project Brief to the Students

How does one capture the essence of the word Escape? By its very nature it cannot be grasped or tamed, confined or controlled. Escape is the flower that grows from the crack in the concrete. It is the choice between having a drink or taking a walk. Escape is freedom from reality, but it is also reality unrestrained. Escape is a paradox. Escape is inevitable.

Young Photographers Alliance invites the next generation of photographers to explore the theme Escape, and produce a series of images. Each photographer will be asked to write a 300 word photo essay around three of their most powerful images.

The theme can be explored from any vantage point; portraiture, photojournalism, landscape or architectural photography. Each participant is encouraged to find his or her own unique perspective and interpretation, to push the boundaries of how photography can shed light on a subject in new and innovative ways.

"It is in fact a part of the function of education to help us escape, not from our own time... for we are bound by that, but from the intellectual and emotional limitations of our time." –TS Elliot

About the Mentoring Program

Escape is the 2013 theme for the annual Young Photographers Alliance mentoring program, which provides encouragement and assistance to young photographers entering the photography field. This project will allow students to communicate, document and inspire through the power of photography. Talented college students and recent graduates will partner with leading photographers

and industry professionals who participate as mentors to collaborate on a photo essay around a compelling social theme.

The program gives emerging photographers the ability to work with successful professional's to fine tune their craft, create images for their portfolios, develop business skills and explore markets for their work. At the same time they experience the power of photography to build community awareness and support around an important social issue.



About YPA

YPA is an educational foundation dedicated to rallying the resources of the creative community and general public in support of young talent. Our mission is to inspire and empower the next generation of image-makers by offering the real-world knowledge, insight, experience and contacts they need to build sustainable careers as photography professionals.

YPA is unique in its focus on community and the fostering of direct, meaningful connections between emerging and established photographers. Our vision is to create powerful synergies between the two groups, recognizing that collaboration benefits both and ultimately energizes and advances the profession as a whole. Great talent isn't just born. It's developed.

Escape is an initiative of the Young Photographers Alliance with support from ASMP Foundation

ESCAPE

Young Photographers Alliance 2013 Mentoring Program



Left To Right; Anchorage team meeting, Glasgow team, Kansas City team, LA team, London team, Minneapolis team, Nashville team, Toronto team.



Xenia Vlieger
University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage team
Mentors – Jeff Schultz & Clark Mishler

Dreams are often viewed as the escape we experience from reality--but what happens when elements of real life carry over to our dream state? Fear and anxiety from our waking lives manifest in nightmares. Sometimes it is easy to identify what these anxieties are, but often the true fears we are unable to escape from are hidden under layers of symbolism. I approached the theme of 'escape' by recreating several of my own nightmares that reflect my real life anxiety in literal and metaphorical ways. I chose to do self-portraits to create intimacy with the viewer. I feel that self-portraits are the most vulnerable forms of art and that when viewing self-portraits, a viewer automatically attempts to draw parallels with the subject. I used photo-layering techniques to not only create a dream-like setting, but to give each image a sense of motion and time.

I selected my final images based on how well they reflected my real life fears in the dream setting. Often in my dreams and nightmares, I find myself running away from conflict, whether it is from physical harm or just an embarrassment. I think this is because I tend to avoid conflict in real life. When I was in high school, I had a reoccurring dream that my teeth were falling out. At the time, I was very concerned with presenting a specific image of myself and I think that my teeth falling out in my dreams represented the lack of control I really felt. My final image is based on the nightmare that all family members of the military have--that they lose their loved one.

In viewing my images, I hope the audience is provoked into reflecting upon their own lives and nightmares--perhaps even discovering what things they are incapable of escaping themselves.



"Dreams are often viewed as the escape we experience from reality—but what happens when elements of real life carry over to our dream state?"



Anna Piotrowska
Bath Spa University
Bristol team

Mentors – Alex Acin & Daniel Bosworth

Life has its own paths. They all have their start and finish points. Whether they are painful or full of joy, they are all just as important. One period of our life gives beginning to the next one. Dark days give us strength and motivation to change our path and to look for brighter future.

I have never seen the difference between my past, my present and my future.

I was living with the ghosts of my past, retaining relics of my family and my childhood. I kept them safely in an old suitcase beneath my bed. I needed them to feel that I belonged somewhere. No matter how much pain was hidden in my memories it was easier to live with the pain than with the awareness I was alone, I haven't had anywhere to go back to and nowhere to head to.

I let this pain, fear and guilt dictate who I was and more importantly who I couldn't be. I lived the life of a scared, lonely, little girl who felt she didn't have right to have a better life. That girl kept smiling and kept lying to cover her pain.

There was never a good time for me to deal with those feelings and fears; I was never strong enough to 'escape'. I became trapped in my past.

Years later I opened the suitcase again. I cried.

I thought I could never escape from it. Then I found my son playing with my old teddy and I realised that life isn't not about escaping from my past nor living in it. It is about finding my place in the world, where I will feel secure and strong enough to deal with it and to leave it behind; I knew it was time for it.

"...riding in a rickshaw is my favorite. It is slower but I get to see more of the life on the street."



Kate Petty
Southern Methodist University
Dallas team

Mentors – Claire McCormack & Stuart Cohen



Putting aside any literal connotations of the theme, I focused on the less concrete definition of escape. In the early stages of imagining escape, my mind wandered through warm, ethereal scenes, far from work and traffic and technology. Sunlight flickering through the leaves of a tree, a subtle breeze floating through the air, quiet, peace.

"For me home is a state of mind, it's a gut feeling; it's somewhere to feel safe, somewhere to feel comfortable and most of all some where to be yourself."

My daily escapes are writing, reading, and sipping a hot cup of coffee or tea. These rituals become far more meaningful when enjoyed outdoors, in nature. I used this project to capture a combination of these favorites and, in doing so, illustrate my kind of escape.



Claire Maxwell
Glasgow School of Art
Glasgow team
Mentor – Claire Stewart

“Gaming is an escape from reality into entirely new worlds...”

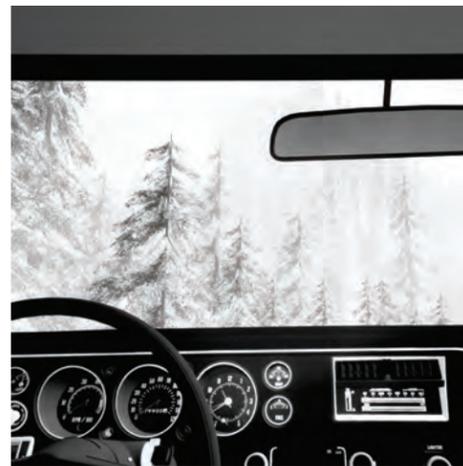
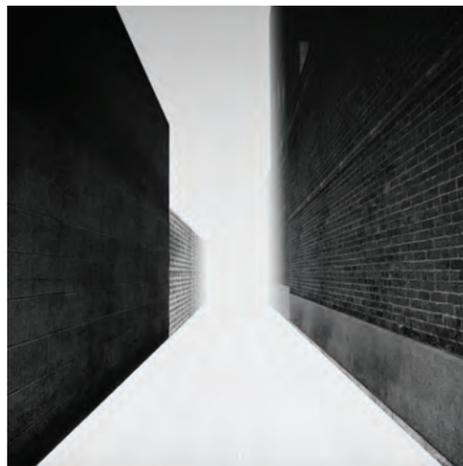
To Other Worlds

Gaming is an escape from reality into entirely new worlds - in some cases realistic multiplayer 3D worlds where people can choose their own character, explore vast areas, and complete objectives together.

As a PC gamer and documentary photographer I often find myself compelled to stop and compose interesting screenshots of events and places in-game that I want to remember. The emergent term for this is simply “in-game photography” and the idea is that these 3D virtual game worlds are becoming places for photographic opportunities.

I decided to explore this relatively unknown concept with my camera. Treating the word ‘escape’ as a getaway from the real world, I visited virtual places and documented my time there - from the environment in the games to the players - by photographing the computer screen. My main series comes from a ‘sandbox’ multiplayer game called Garry’s Mod where players are given the tools to create the world themselves and choose how they play. The game is non-linear and I had complete control over composition - it was like exploring a new city or travelling through the countryside, only virtual.

This project aims to shed light on a new subject and propose the validity of photography in a virtual space, where places will become bigger, more realistic and more immersive over time.

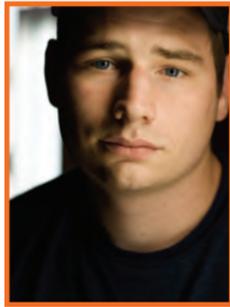


Sunny Chauhan
Shari Academy
(Photography Institute Mumbai-India)
India team
Mentor – Avinash Jain

Escape can mean different things to different people but it needs a common outcome - Freedom. We as living beings try to escape any situation to achieve Freedom. In my series of photographs, I have captured an ongoing problem in Mumbai, India. Children between ages 3 to 17 are made to work - child labor and child prostitution. Street dwellers sell their kids to factories, drug cartels, brothels for a fixed fee or a monthly income. These kids go through tremendous traumas (physical and mental torture). These kids try their best to escape from the place where they are kept as slaves. Unfortunately some kids even commit suicide to escape to achieve the final freedom.



“Escape can mean different things to different people but it needs a common outcome - Freedom. We as living beings try to escape any situation to achieve Freedom.”



Taz Hall
University of Central Missouri
Kansas City team

Mentors – Jonathan Chester & Mark Berndt
 YPA Escape (Getaway)

Escape is a word that is all too familiar to young people. One can escape emotionally and mentally, true, but in the most immediately evident connotation of the word, escaping is getting away. In those first formidable years of mischief and wonder, young people often have a hard time adhering to authority. When adults get in the way of a good time, young people often choose to get away by any means necessary.

This set of images shows young people escaping unfavorable situations while also attempting to avoid the wrath of authority. They portray rebellious acts that many young people are familiar with such as sneaking out at night, getting caught in the act, and evading the police. The theme of the images may not be immediately evident to all audiences because the content is intended specifically for teens and young adults. Being a photography show of the Young Photographers Alliance, it only seemed right that the intended audience be young as well.

The intended outcome of the set of images is for teens as well as all young men and women to identify with the work and maybe have a few laughs at the recognition of the situations. Ideally they will be able to relate to the situations and remember a time when they were in the same position as the models.



“One can escape emotionally and mentally, true, but in the most immediately evident connotation of the word, escaping is getting away.”



Kristi Knupp
Santa Monica Community College
Los Angeles team

Mentors – Andrew Durham & David Zentz



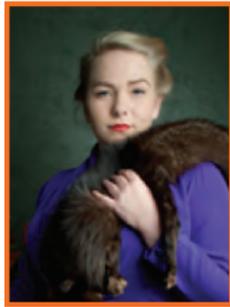
Escape can be interpreted in many different ways, depending on whom you ask. For me, this mentorship has been an escape from the mundane everyday work that I used to do. It's filled me with a sense of purpose and excitement. Because of this, I wanted to capture everyday people escaping their various day-to-day work environments by doing an activity that they love. The lawyer that makes time to sing in a choir, the office worker who can't wait to hit the ballet studio, the game designer who craves surfing on the beach, the list goes on.

The reason I chose this approach is not only because it hits very close to home but also because I feel like people from all walks of life can relate. The target audience is everyone. Because of this, I made the decision early on to keep each photo as true to what the individual in the photos does for work in conjunction with what they do to escape. I've used found props in each environment I've shot in and adapted to each situation as it came at me. I've learned a great deal about everyone I've worked with and am thankful for their participation.

I'd like everyone viewing my work to walk away asking themselves "What is MY Escape?" Some people may already have a very clear idea of what it is and for others it could very well be the first time they've stopped to think about it. Having the courage to pursue what you love for a career or as an escape from what pays the bills keeps that childlike excitement alive in all of us.

In the words of Rumi - Respond to every call that excites your spirit.

“Having the courage to pursue what you love for a career or as an escape from what pays the bills keeps that childlike excitement alive in all of us.”



Tania Gibson
University of Cumbria
London team

Mentors – Dan Black & Jasmine Teer

“The Danish nation has since the 1930s had a stigma saying, You are not to think you are better than, from The Law of Jante.”

The Law of Jante

The Danish nation has since the 1930s had a stigma saying, You are not to think you are better than, from The Law of Jante. Us referring to rest of the nation. The saying is so embedded in the nation that if one succeeds then everyone succeeds, even if the successor has broken away from the social pattern.

Having lived in the United Kingdom for three years I felt as if I had escaped the old saying and the stigma attached to it. On my return, I was instantly reminded of how I had felt previously. These images are a photographic representation of a nation, stripping people of their individuality, class and social inheritances presented within a modern architectural environment.

The people in the images are representing the Danish nation and The Law of Jante but they also represent the social pattern breakers.



Dave Bassey
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Minneapolis team

Mentors – Karl Herber & Lance Vicknair

I am a mechanical engineering student with the love of photography, and this is my escape. Escape; is the moment we break free from confinement. In my vision, I see these confinements to occur in different forms for different people of different backgrounds. I approached this theme from a lifestyle portrait point of view. In today's collegiate world, a performer has a life away from his craft. It is by revealing the moment of escape through portraiture that his passion can be felt and observed. The audience, upon viewing the images from this project should be able to feel, understand and communicate this passion that the subject shows through a juxtaposition of ambiguities, energy and emotion, by looking into the lives of dancers, actors and athletes; subjects with diverse personalities and backgrounds. Mostly aiming to capture a moment where they seem to break free from barriers that might hold them back or hinder their growth. With these portraits, I intend to tell a story about the barriers that the subject faces and well as victory over these obstacles.

The main idea for this shoot is to capture different subjects who are torn between various crafts and show that in this era, college is not just a place of learning but of growth through escape.

Through these photos, I will try to show the moment of escape that the subject is immersed in. The emotions expressed on the faces of the subjects and their candid poses caught express an escape from the outside world.



“Escape; is the moment we break free from confinement.”



Alicia Piper NSCC
Nashville team

Mentors – Chris Hollo & Mark Mosrie

Suicide the Ultimate Escape

Most of the time when people think of escape it is because they want to escape a bad situation. But to what extent will people be willing to go to escape, some just watch mindless television, read a book, go for a walk, others turn to a darker side. Seeking a further sense of escape they begin to abuse drugs and alcohol or even commit suicide. I normally have the pleasure of photographing happy events, but with this project I wanted to challenge myself to shoot something completely different yet something meaningful.

In 2011 the US had a total of 38,364 deaths by suicide and these rates are not decreasing. Suicide has always been such a taboo subject and I want my photographs to spark the talk about suicide. The subjects in my images could be your husband, sister, mother, daughter, son, or your best friend. No one is immune from thoughts of suicide and all it takes is friendship, love, and support to help someone in need. It takes someone like me or someone who views my images to become more aware, pay attention to the warning signs. Instead of being someone who wonders if there was something they could have done after losing a loved one to suicide we could instead be the one who helped that love one. For persons ages 15-24 years old suicide is the third leading cause of death.

However 80% of those who seek professional help are successfully treated. Maybe awareness campaigns using images like these will help to open up the conversations, and show that having suicidal thoughts is not something to be ashamed of that instead of closing off to everyone there are other options.



"...to what extent will people be willing to go to escape, some just watch mindless television, read a book, go for a walk, others turn to a darker side."



Anna Chana Demidova
Hunter College/European Humanities University
New York team 2

Mentors – Michelle Kawka & Pauline St. Denis

"If you were to escape your ordinary life, what would you take with you?"

'Happiness is not having the most, but needing the least.' Dr. Abraham Twerski

If you were to escape your ordinary life, what would you take with you? My idea was to photograph people with their most valuable belongings. I asked them to imagine they were going to a deserted island and could only bring a grocery bag full of things they would take with them.

This idea of leaving for an uninhabited place represents, to me, among other things, an escape from the contemporary pressures of consumerism and commercialism. My generation is constantly being brainwashed with the idea that buying new things and happiness are related. Seduced by online shopping, unlimited credit lines and free shipping we end up having more things but not necessarily more happiness. Every time we buy a new thing we rarely think about the people in the third world countries who made it and the conditions they are working under. Did you know there are private garages in this country unusable for parking because of all the stuff they are jammed with? Others have to work so hard for so little money to provide us with things we do not remember owning - why?

I want these photographs to make viewers think about which belongings really matter to them. My hopes are that the next time they see a sale sign they can resist the urge to buy what they do not need. Those brief moments of happiness resulting from getting new things can never compare to the minutes of happiness associated with our relationships, experiences and work that we put meaning into. The latter have no price tags yet prove to be truly irreplaceable and adding the most value to our lives.





Mei Ratz
Pacific Northwest College of Art
Portland Oregon team

Mentors – Leah Nash & Christopher Onstott & Tom Hassler

“When the winds blow cold and the dark swirls in, where do we go? How do we choose our safe havens? Where do we find peace and safety?”

Dissection of Escape.

When the winds blow cold and the dark swirls in, where do we go? How do we choose our safe havens? Where do we find peace and safety? These are the questions that I chose to tackle in my exploration of the theme “Escape”. I wanted to know how alike our escapes are or how different. I wanted to see the inner workings of the human fear and comfort. The dissection. This is that dissection.

I first decided to shoot using double exposures of a figure and their escape. I wanted to use the figure as a frame, and their escape as the fill. I wanted the inner workings of the being to look dreamy and for the viewer to wonder. I wanted the escape to seem as just a dream or a thought because that is where they start isn't it?

I found that some people wear their escape like a badge of valor and some people are quiet and guarded. I found that some people travel to their escapes and remember it in their minds' eye. I found some people can escape by just thinking about their escape, I would watch them drift away. I found that other people needed to hold their escape in their hand. Escaping is something we all do. Escaping is also something that seems to follow us through our age as something that shifts from “safety” and “comfort” to “hope” and “home”.

Maybe we are more alike in our fear and hope than we would like to admit or believe. Through my project I think I have found that connection.



Joshua Reber
Everett Community College
Seattle team

Mentors – Ari Sharipo & Brian Morris



Ever since I was a kid, I have had many relationships in my life, between friends, families and significant others. I have faced problems head on, over time I realized that escaping an unhealthy relationship is sometimes best for both parties. When I was a kid my parent's divorced, and I didn't understand why that happened, but I now realized that it is sometimes best for people to pull away from and give each other time to mend wounds.

The goal with my photo essay was to portray the process and feeling of going through that period of time, where the decision to leave is so critical, and making the choice is essential in moving on with your life. Many people don't know the feeling, and I hope that when people see this essay, they see the images and can get a glimpse of what it can be like. For the people who have gone through this, I hope that they can relate to the images with what they have been through, and the relief they got from escaping that relationship.

“The goal with my photo essay was to portray the process and feeling of going through that period of time, where the decision to leave is so critical, and making the choice is essential in moving on with your life.”