

THE AWAKENING OF THE ORDINARY

A COMMUNITY PHOTOWORKS EXHIBITION

FEATURING PHOTOGRAPHS BY MS. USUI'S EIGHTH-
GRADE STUDENTS AT MARK TWAIN MIDDLE SCHOOL



THIS BOOK WAS MADE POSSIBLE
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AND

This photographs in this book were taken by the students of
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The typefaces used are (Adobe Caslon Pro and **BLANCH**)

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FOREWORD

Community Photoworks is a collaboration between the J. Paul Getty Museum's Education Department, the nonprofit writing and tutoring center, 826LA, and a Title I secondary school in the Los Angeles Unified School District. We invite students to discover contemporary photography and the depths of their artistic and creative potential—but the students don't embark on this journey alone.

This year, eighth grade students in Jill Usui Datwyler's class at Mark Twain Middle School took on the project. The students' work began with an introduction to photography and formal analysis as well as a session on conducting audio interviews led by the Getty Museum's media writer. Next, we introduced our visiting artist, Abelardo Morell (affectionately called "Abe" by the students), who made a classroom visit at the middle school and discussed his tween years in Cuba, his career in photography as well as the techniques he uses. Following the presentation, pairs of students interviewed the photographer with questions they prepared prior to his visit and engaged in a lively dialogue. The next day, Mr. Morell led a tour of his current exhibition at the Getty and then transformed an entire room into a camera obscura (an optical device that projects an image) by covering the windows in black plastic and using a pinhole of light and lens to project the image of the surrounding landscape for the students.

Students were then provided with digital cameras and tasked with creating original photographs, tailored to the theme of their coming exhibition—making the ordinary extraordinary. They took a few practice photographs at the Getty Center and later composed photos at home and school, carefully crafting a dozen works of art to create something that thoughtfully exemplified the theme. Staff and volunteers from 826LA worked with students to over several sessions to select a single photo for the exhibition and author multiple drafts of their artist statements, until each one eloquently stated the intention and power behind their work.

The final result is *The Awakening of the Ordinary*, an exhibition highlighting the magic trapped inside a droplet of water, or how a tiny plant can appear to be a towering tree if captured at just the right angle. These young artists teach us to see the world with new eyes.

View the student gallery online at: <http://bit.ly/MarkTwainStudentGallery2013>.

Birte Klug
826LA

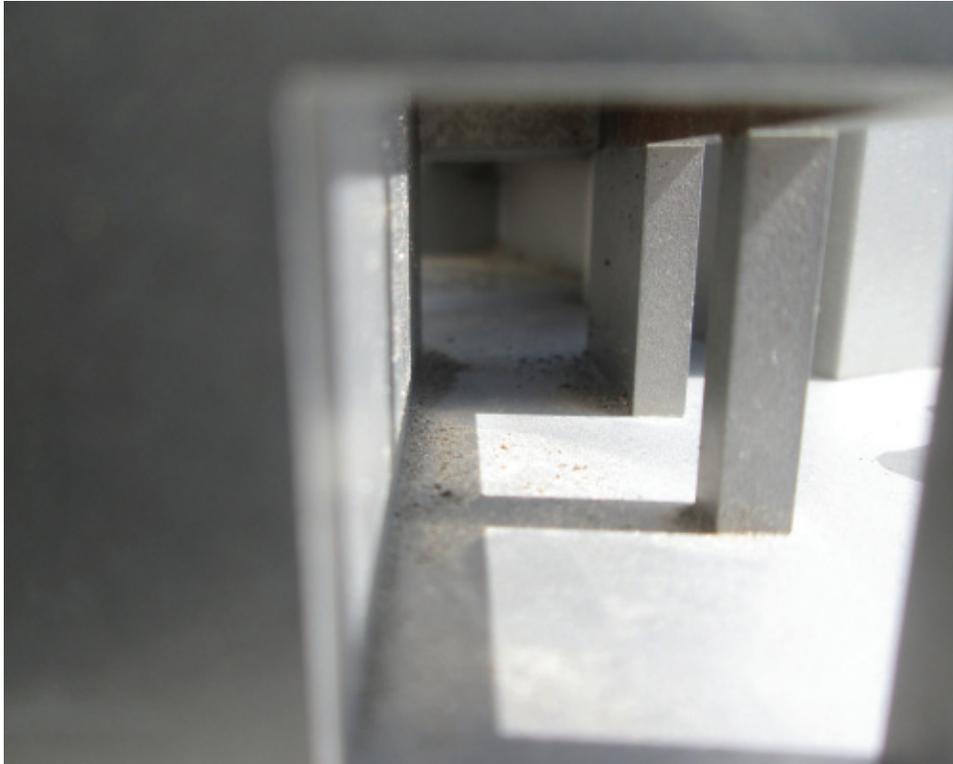
Sandy Rodriguez
J. Paul Getty Museum

A SMALL BUILDING / CHRISTIAN LOPEZ

At first I was just looking around for a picture of a large building because I feel like bigger is better but then I thought why not take a picture of a model of a building. It's still a building. So I went looking for the model of the Getty. Once I found it, I asked myself, where am I going to take the picture? So I looked from all directions till I found the right place.

What inspired me to take that picture was how big it could look in the photo while in reality it is miniscule. Also I like tricking people so if they look at my picture, they would think that this model is a normal sized building. I also like small or miniscule objects. The main reason I took it is that I was happy.

The elements of are that are found in my photo are forms, texture, and balance. Form because there are rectangles and corners, which make cubes. For texture, you can tell it is metal because it looks smooth. Finally, balance, because everything is where it is supposed to be.



CARVED LINES / EMELY ESCAMILLA



I chose this image because the lines on the wooden table look like a tree trunk rising up into the sky. This symbolizes freedom. The black lines on the table were the first things that caught my eye. When I took this picture I was sitting in class, when I turned around and saw these dark lines that caught my attention. It was about 2:00 p.m. While looking at the lines, I was thinking how the carved black lines on the wood looked very artistic. The feelings I tried capturing were the feelings of a student, when inside the classroom, bored and confused. I was able to capture this picture while asking a question to my partner. When I look at this picture I think about how kids at school are sometimes bored and depressed. I would like the viewers to say, "Wow, that looks awesome," and, "What is that anyway?" I expected this image to look exactly how I took it, dull with some detail. The most important elements in this picture are the lines and the color. I used the balance for my picture because the bright blue on the textbook really jumps out against the dullness of the wood. Angles and lines contribute to my photo. Also the shadows below balance contrast to the sharpness of the wood.

MY CRUISER BOARD (A.K.A. PENNY BOARD) / AYLEEN ALLYON



I chose this picture because I love skating. It's something I love doing. It's been a part of my life for a long time. I like the feeling of the air against my hair when I go fast on my board, even though I get tired after a long time of skating, I get back on my board and skate on. But after a while I just set my board on the ground so I can get a drink and saw that the sun was setting down. I took this photo at a party while outside skating with my brother. I thought it was the perfect moment to take the picture because the sun was setting down slowly and it just looked perfect. I felt like it was going to be a great photo. I was just sitting on the curb and set down my board and I took out my camera and took a photo of it. I would like the viewer to think of the photo as a unique kind of photo. The emotion I have when I look at this photo is happy.

THE CONFUSING LOOK /

VENUS ALVARADO

I never thought stairs would be eye catching. I was actually walking around the Getty Museum looking at plants and the different architecture, when I decided to take a picture under the stairs. The stairway being spiral caught my eye. I was moving the camera, trying to find the perfect angle for the perfect picture. A while passed and I decided to turn the camera facing upwards, and that was the perfect shot...

What caught my eye was that you can look at this photo for a while and not have a clue of what it is. I would like the viewers to be confused, to be honest. If people are confused, they will be more interested. Viewers will hopefully try and look at this at different angles and see the many parts there are.



RAINBOW JACKS / JESSICA GARCIA

Out of nowhere, I found these jacks on my bed. I started to play around with them when a flashback appeared in my head. I used to play with jacks when I was a young child. I remember how I used to play with them with my mother every day. I placed them together and caught something very awesome but also weird at the same time. A backbone! Then it hit me, what if I take a picture of this toy game?

This picture really inspires me. I really wanted to take a picture of something that reflected me or something else. I guess I did get that picture of my jacks reflecting me. By the way, I was also playing around with the camera. Who can't have a little fun while taking a picture? Taking random pictures around my bed, that's where I got the idea of taking the picture of the jacks with the kind of background I gave it. I was planning to blur out the background and have an awesome texture of the jacks and the bed cover. I wanted the picture to pop out with the wonderful colors, and give that feeling of seeing a toy through the eyes of a teenager. I want the viewer to see the imagination I used to make this picture, and feel the way the picture can inspire memories. The rich and bright colors touch the point of your eye with imagination.



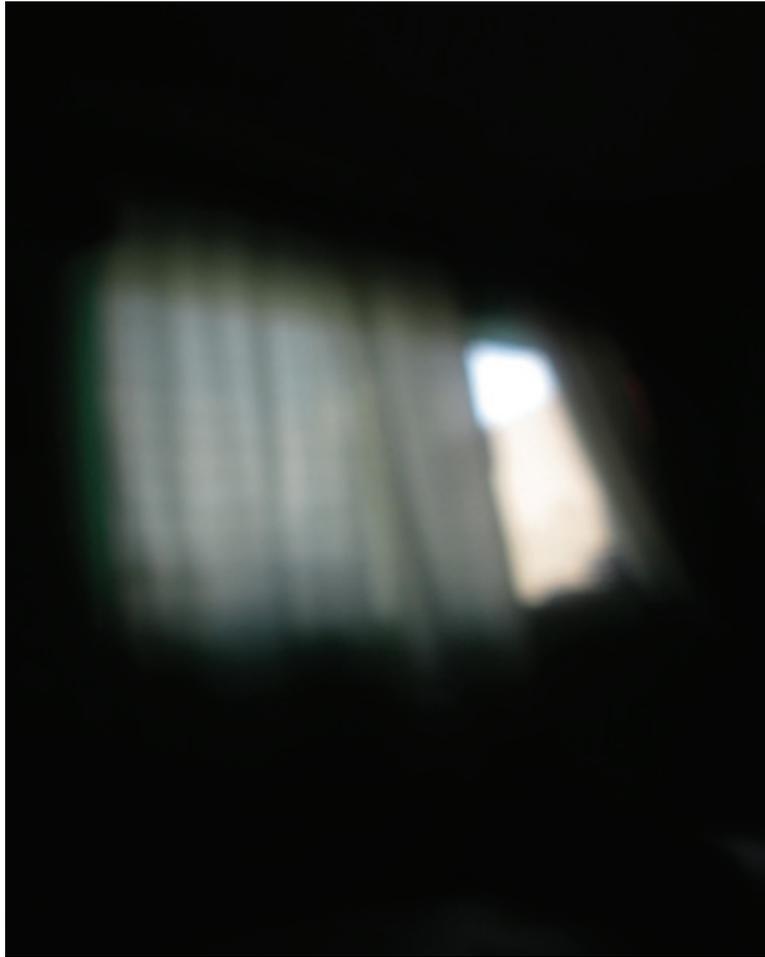
MY MESS / DEIONTE MADDOX

On one ordinary day, I walked into my messy room frustrated because I had a lot of schoolwork to do and not a lot of time to do it. I was getting to the point to where I would just give up and call it a day. Right then and there, a light came through my bedroom. I took this as a sign, which meant that everything will get messy before it gets clean, or that every conflict will have a solution. That day, the light helped me rethink a tough task. It goes down as the greatest MESS ever.

In this picture, there are a couple of technical forces at work. One humongous force at work is the light. The light is what makes this picture stand out. There is so much light that it blasts out all details in the picture away. Another element is the black and white. It helps bring the emotion into the photo.



BRIGHTER DAYZ / EDWIN LOPEZ



When I see this image it makes me think of Brighter Dayz and Darker Dayz. It makes me think of Brighter Dayz and Darker Dayz because the room is dark and the outside is bright.

When I took this picture I was expecting I was going to get a regular picture like the others. I randomly took the camera and I turned it on.

I took this in my room after school. I was bored. I turned my camera on and I was distracted and what caught my eye was that the inside of the room came out dark and the window and beyond came out normal with light. I took a whole mess of pictures. I chose this one because it came out abnormal.

TRAPPED / JULIANA SUZUKAWA

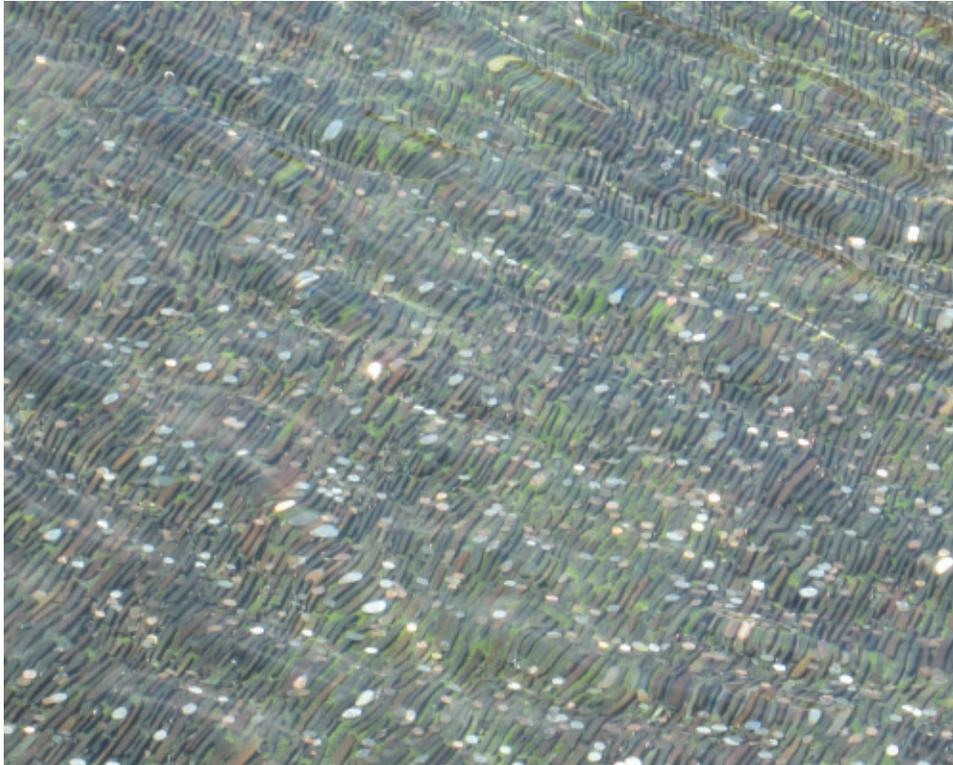


Isolation, sadness, depression. These are three main words that I think of when I took, and looked, at my photo. When my friend passed by the cold shadow of a metal pillar, he gave me a truly marvelous idea. I swiftly went over to my friend and gently tapped his small, covered shoulder and asked him with a faint smile, “Hey, can you pose for me for just a sec, please?” He then gave me his approval and gave me the exact pose I was looking for. I then took a couple of pictures and told him that he could get up. After, I gave him all my thanks and appreciation for doing this favor for me.

In my photo, there are only a few elements of art. One element is texture. I can see texture on the warm lit ground, my friend’s cold, small body, the hard metal bars, the trees with giant leaves, and the form of the shadows in the photo. Another is emphasis. The emphasis is my friend because he is the first thing you see in my photo. Lastly, there is repetition. There is a lot of repetition in my photo. The shadow of the cold metal bars, the shadow of the giant leaves still on the branches of their mother, and the shadow of someone standing on the side.

The emotions that I had been feeling on this bright sunny day were sadness and depression, and I think that is exactly what I gave my friend in this way. My reasons for feeling so sad and upset were caused by personal family problems. I think whoever is looking and observing my photo will first see my friend crouched up, looking as if he is in search for warmth, or any other source of heat. They will notice a shadow person to the right, who looks as if he or she is watching him and seize him if he tries to escape. When all this comes together it all creates one word, the word that is used for a princess stuck in a castle guarded by a dragon, the word that is used for a man stuck in a labyrinth with a murderous minotaur chasing him: trapped.

MOUNTAIN VIEW / BRENDA RAMIREZ



When I was at the Getty Villa for a school project we were looking at Abelardo Morell's photography and we were out looking for things like Abe's photography. My eye caught the different color and perspective about what was in the fountain. The fountain was in the garden. The maze was inside the fountain and the coins were shining from the sunlight. The day started out cloudy but then the sun came out and that's why it caught my eye. In the fountain it looked shiny and you could see them in the water, in the picture it looks different because the coins don't really show that they are coins. You can see the pattern from the ground because of the water. I realized it looks like one of Abe's photos, Map of North America: it's about a map and water is on top. That is how I felt my photograph was like.

I imagined it looking different from how I took the picture, like the water showing more. What surprised me is that more color and pattern came out in the photography. The photograph has pattern in the shiny things and rhythm of the lights and texture because everything has texture. I used it for texture and pattern and point of view. I named it "Mountain View" because if you get the picture from far it looks like a mountain and houses were there, even though it's really coins inside the water fountain.

THE MANY KEYS / ALFRON MATTHEWS

When I take photos, I usually take the picture and see how it turns out; this was one of those pictures. I was using my computer and thought about the keyboard. I'm that kid who asks all those questions and wants to know how everything works.

I chose this picture because it looks interesting. At first glance, I couldn't quite tell what it was. What caught my eye was the shadow with the light of the flash. It looks confusing; I could barely recognize it.



125 PENNIES / AMILCAR MARTINEZ

On Friday 11/2013 at around 6 p.m., I was on the sidewalk with my sister. I was having a “sort-of” bad day. My sister showed me this ordinary dollar that was just made out of paper, and then she folded it in such an awesome shape that I wanted to take a picture of it. She saw me taking the picture and she asked me, “Why are you taking pictures?” And I answered, “Because I need to take an ordinary picture.” And she said, “Here, take a picture of this dollar before I unfold it.” I said, “Okay.” I was surprised when I saw my photo. The theme “ordinary to extraordinary” and Abe’s quote, “paper means everything” connected to my photo.

I think this means that paper is really important because we use it for so many things, for example money. This is also important because it is just paper; it’s not a big thing, but actually it has many uses.



FALL FISH / VIVIANA HARO

When I took this picture I thought, Wow, those shadows of the tree branches are very sparse and the leaves on the water look like fish swimming in a pond. The idea I was trying to capture was that the branches no longer have leaves on them—the leaves fell onto the stream and magically turned into the fish. Another idea I was trying to capture is that the season is changing into fall. The leaves are falling so the trees' shadows are transforming and changing into smaller shadows. The image also shows a lot of texture with the rocks on the stream and the stream and the sunlight. When the leaves fall into the water they transform with life and life and look like fishes. The mood these shadows are trying to create is kind of like dark and gloomy shadows. However, when I see this photo it makes me feel cheerful and happy because I love the fall season. The image was taken at the Getty Museum around midday.



REFLECTION / JOCELYN GUTIERREZ



I was walking around the school grounds after school with my friend, when we decided to go to the restroom. Then, I decided to play around with the effects on my camera. After that I got thirsty and took a drink of water. I noticed how clear the water was. I thought it was very pretty. I saw my reflection in the water as I was drinking it. As I was drinking it, I thought that the reflection I saw of myself could be captured on a photograph. So then I took a picture of it and used the effects that I had been playing around with before. The effect blurred the background and cleared the focus of the foreground while stretching out of the image, making it look like the two faucets were much further apart from each other than they actually were.

After I took the picture I looked at it. I was able to notice that my reflection was in the faucet also. I chose this picture because the faucets at my school aren't usually as clean as they were that day. I was inspired by this picture because I never tried to look at the water that I'm drinking while I am. This day the water seemed extra special to me just like I thought the picture would mean to me too.

STRANGE TREE / GABY GARCIA



This tree is different from the rest of the trees. I like how deformed it is, how the wind made it when it was growing. This tree shape looks like a snake going up to the sky. I took this picture in school, outside the classroom. I took this picture because of how different it was and how tall it was. The tree looked like it was about to fall when I took the picture.

The strange tree had a few leaves left; it looked lonely. It looks insecure and unsafe of how deformed they made it. I made it black and white because seeing that tree, I pictured it black and white and I liked how it looked. It needed to be with more of its kind so it wouldn't feel insecure anymore. It needed to be safe and secure with others. The bark shows different designs on it so it could show how it looks. I like the light shining off the tree and the dark texture on the tree.

THE DARKENED ILLUSION /

CORIANNA JOHNSON

I really like the fact that everything is dark and moody and the railing is like a ray of sunshine. It's the first thing that catches my eye. I think you would see this photo in many ways. For example, it could be a sad raining day, transforming into a bright sunny day. I captured various pictures in many effects and decided to use this one. It's called the Toy Camera Effect. It darkens the sides to give the photo a distinctive feeling, a feeling that is comfortable.



THE DOOR TO LIFE / JAYLEN ERHAHON

This particular door represents many things, like opening and closings in life. People see doors every day, like at school, home, and business. I took this picture during school hours, 6th door to my classroom, the more I decided that is no ordinary door. To me, it looks like opportunities in life, like the saying “One door shuts, another one opens.” This picture caught my eye because of the cool patterns such as the ongoing rectangles. My feelings when I photographed this door were strong and exciting, because you don’t always know what this door leads to in life.



HOW TALL IS IT? / RICKI TODD

My picture is some sort of vegetable plant tree. I chose this image because it takes a boring plant and from my angle makes it look like a tall tree. I shot this picture as I walked through my school garden at about 2:45.

As I took my picture, I became cheerful. I thought about how small people consider themselves tall. They do this because on the outside, you can be the shortest person ever, but on the inside you can be as enormous as you want. I want this picture to inspire others in that no matter how small anything you can make it as big as you want, like if you have a petite dream.

In my photograph I want people to see all the details. When someone sees my picture, I want them to think of how tall it is. I want them to show others and say, "Is this a tree or plant?" and ask each other, "how did she make this shot happen?" They should point out things, like the lines and different shapes.

How Tall Is It? shows many different types of principles of design and elements of art. My picture demonstrates rhythm in the leaves and lines.

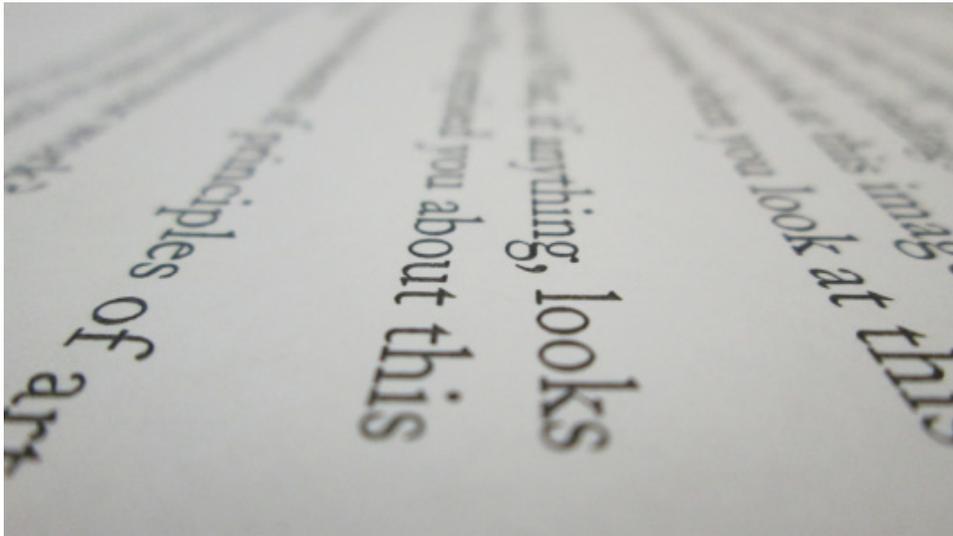
I hope that after viewing my photograph, you will always think tall.



THE INFINITE AMOUNT OF WORDS / ALEJANDRO CRUZ

During Period 6, at 2 p.m., I searched for an infinite image to photograph. What to shoot? I picked up a text and saw what appeared to be an infinite number of words floating around me. I got intrigued because it looked awesome. I chose the part of the text from a textbook. I was really interested in the picture.

I love this picture because it looks imaginative. The book was fine and well angled. It looked like the world out of focus, out of tiredness. The picture I took was interesting because it was good and made a magnificent impression on my mind. My picture is a good and superb picture.



THE FINAL ELEMENT / EDWIN CASTRO

It was just one of those days, walking on grass at the peak of the morning sun. The grass, an ordinary part of nature, was not noticed yet until I stopped at will, dropped to the floor, like a crazy man's dream. Everyone around me was wondering what was going on, while I saw shadows, light, shapes, and wonder all against the morning sun that lied on the cold, beautiful sky. This world made by God and nature, and raised by life was found and captured by me. I felt myself being part of nature and inspired by life.

Every drop of water tells a story, but all you need to do is pay attention. This small piece of nature is at its peak and at its finest. This piece of grass transforms from the ordinary to extraordinary because it's seen through a different perspective. I feel like I was one of the lucky few to notice what nature has to give in an ordinary place.

I hope that anyone who sees my photograph and reads my statement would love this picture as much as I do.



YIN YANG LEAVES / JOSE MENDOZA

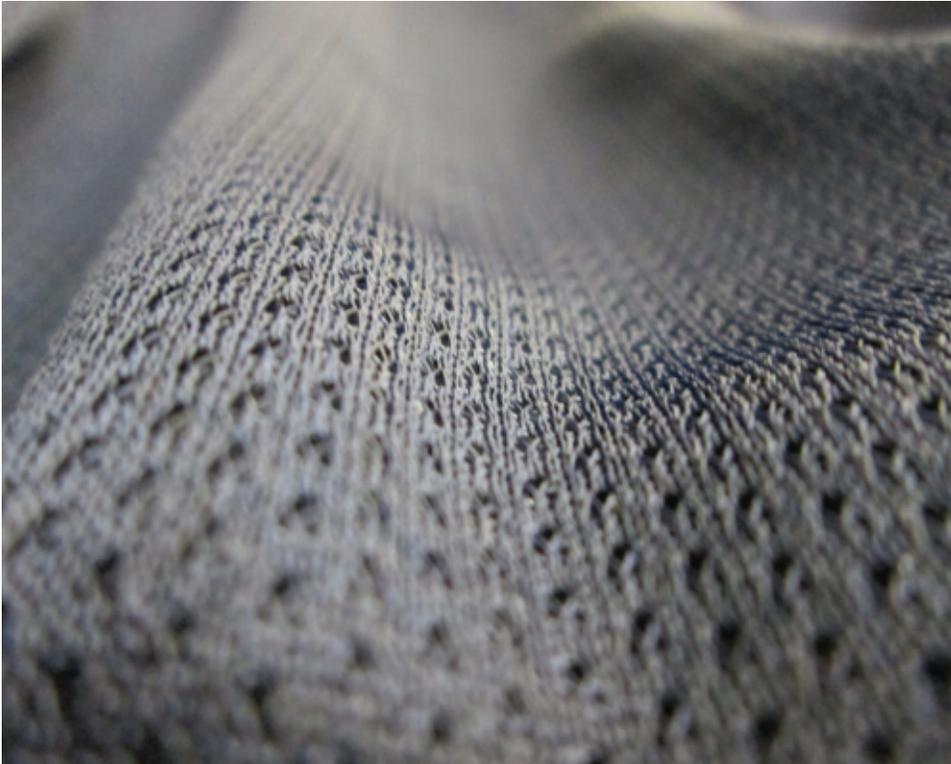
I put my camera down in a random spot, in the school field. I sat down and looked at the back of the camera. When I started taking this picture I had noticed the two leaves like they were Ying and Yang. I thought of the dark leaf and bright leaf. It looks like the leaves are dying and grass is growing.

This picture is extraordinary because you never focus so much on two leaves. Also it's amazing the way the focus is on the leaves and blurry all around the grass. I also found it interesting how one leaf is younger than the other. In my opinion this picture shows so much color it makes your day. If you notice this also gives you a soothing feeling like it's calming you down.



DURING 6TH PERIOD /

SEAN WATANABE



I was really bored during my 6th period and I started to stare at my gym shorts. I started to notice the texture of the shorts. It had patterned circles with string inside which looked pretty rough in the photo, but actually the material is soft. It was really weird, meaning the texture looked different from everything else. I guess when I am bored, my eyes become blurry and unfocused and I would see things in different ways. I am not sure how viewers would respond but I would hope they say that the photo looks cool. To tell the truth, what I did was put the camera on my shorts and the outside of the picture became out of focus. I focused on the middle of the picture clear and that's about it. Then I snapped the photo. I was really hopeful that the picture of my gym shorts would look extraordinary, even though they are ordinary. This reminds me, I need to bring my gym shorts home!

ABOUT 826LA

AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING

From Monday to Thursday, students rush to 826LA after school for free individual tutoring in all subjects. Once homework is completed, students read books from 826LA's library and write stories based on a monthly theme. Students submit their writing for inclusion in chapbooks, which 826LA publishes throughout the year. To celebrate students' hard work, 826LA unveils these chapbooks at book release parties, where students read their work to thunderous applause from their tutors, families, and peers.

IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT

Because not all students can come to us, 826LA brings specially trained volunteer tutors into under-resourced public schools. There volunteers provide one-on-one assistance with writing projects. 826LA works with teachers to craft all projects, which are designed to engage students while targeting curricular issues. This year, 826LA will provide year-round programming at Manual Arts High School in South L.A. through a grant from AmeriCorps VISTA!

WORKSHOPS

826LA's workshops bring students together with artists, writers, and professionals for creative collaboration. Whether the subject is journalism or preparing for the zombie apocalypse, our workshops foster creativity while strengthening writing skills.

FIELD TRIPS

Weekday mornings, public school teachers bring their students to 826LA for a morning of collaboration, creativity, and writing. Whether the topic is Storytelling & Bookmaking, Choose Your Own Adventure, or something entirely different, these three-hour field trips are always in high demand. Every student leaves with an individualized publication of the finished story under his or her arm, complete with illustrations and an author photo! 100% of teachers report that their students take a new excitement for writing back to the classroom thanks to 826LA's field trips.

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