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# Leaving

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**David Andrew Holloman**
**College Scholars Senior Thesis Defense**

***Leaving***

***~Leaving~***

For my College Scholars Senior Thesis, I have completed a photography project that is focused on works that have been inspired by music. Some pieces embody the entire theme of the song, while others focus on certain lines from a particular song. This paper will discuss each piece and discuss the relevance of the photograph to the song.

2001

***"Anyway"***
**Song by Dynamite Hack**
**Media: 35mm Slide Projection Accompanying Music**

The idea to do a slide show accompanying music first came to me about 6 months ago while having a conversation with my brother. I was making the assertion that although images from videos have become almost as familiar as the songs in which the supposedly symbolize, those images are usually not addressed very effectively as single images. To put it another way the emphasis in music videos seems to be on the whole as opposed to each individual part. As an exercise in avoiding this sort of representation, I decided to try to make a worthwhile body of photographs that represented a song. The idea is that instead of having a bunch of decent images tell the story, the entire process and outcome would be enhanced if every image was considered good enough to stand on its own. This proved to be quite a daunting task and although I do feel that the work includes some very strong images I'm not convinced that every image is as strong as I could make it.

The work follows the story of the song fairly closely. Each image was preconceived, sketched, and then created during the shoots for each slide. The images were designed in such a manner as to flow as rhythmically as possible along with the song. I have chosen to show the images two at a time in order to allow sufficient time for the viewer to consider each image.

**~Magic~**
***"From the Back of Your Big Brown Eyes, I Knew You'd Be Gone As Soon As You Could"***
***"Saw You Last Night, You Danced By the Light of the Moon"***
**Song "Magic" by Ben Folds Five**
**16x20 and Mural Print from 4x5 Negatives**

Both of the photographs in this work are pictures that were inspired by lines from the song "Magic" by the band Ben Folds Five.

*"From the Back of Your Big Brown Eyes, I Knew You'd Be Gone As Soon As You Could"*

This piece was extremely easy to conceive of, and much harder to create. I felt that the line was so powerful that every photograph I created was weak and lacked insight at best. On my third session shooting this particular image with the same model, I finally found what I had been looking for. Only at that point had I pushed the model to the point of being fed up enough with the situation that with very little coaching I was able to get the shot that I was looking for. In the end the shot seems a bit empty to me, and I am not sure if it succeeds in conveying the idea that I envisioned. However, when titled with the line from the song I do feel that this is a strong representation of the idea. The line stands largely on its own in the song, and only the gaze of the eyes subject informs the author of the mood. In this respect, I feel that the piece successfully conveys the idea of the line much in the same way that the line itself is presented in its original format, the song.

*"Saw You Last Night, You Danced By the Light of the Moon"*

The idea for this print was to try to describe the situation as delicately and beautifully as the idea is described in the song. The image was formed using a synchronized flash from directly behind the subject to form a silhouette-like image. The

song is about a person changing by leaving behind her old constraints and opening up to new possibilities. For this reason, I felt that an image that showed a very solid form would detract from the idea of the change in the subject by providing an overly structured representation of the figure. This is why in the picture you can only see an outline of the subject. The idea is that hopefully what this image lacks in blatant description, it more than makes up for through the possibilities for the image. Basically, with the image I am trying to walk the fine line between not saying too much and saying nothing at all.

***"I Can't Remember Why I Lied To Make You Mine"***
**Song by Big Daddy Dave and the Skinny Pimps**
**16x20 Print from 4x5 Negative**

This song is by a band that I was formerly a member of (before the other members went to Duke and George Washington for respective graduate schools) and was written by F. Beau Howard. The song tells the story of a drawn-out break up that culminates in the final line of the song, which is the quote and title for this piece. This image is designed to try to describe to things. The first thing that the print is meant to portray is the way in which the two people address each other. The demeanor and expressions of the subjects is meant to explain their situation. The second aspect of the photograph that I tried to emphasize was the distance between the people, both physically and emotionally. Lighting and effects designed to manipulate the background are used to try to emphasize these aspects of the photograph. The distortion of the background between the two people in the photograph is meant to symbolize the confusion that decidedly lengthens the distance between the two people in the relationship.

**~Evaporated~**

***"I Poured My Heart Out, I Poured My Heart Out, It Evaporated, See?"***

**Song "Evaporated" by Ben Folds Five**

**Three 16x20 Prints from 4x5 Negative**

This series of photographs was created to represent futility described in the situation that above quote is describing. The song is about getting older and leaving behind certain aspects of life. A major theme in the song is that of failure. The type of failure described is that which comes from working on something as hard as one possibly can and having that effort amount to nothing in results. It is this futility, of an act that someone puts all of their effort into only to realize failure that the photographs attempt to describe.

This set of three photographs borrows the ideas of the quote above and applies them to a situation that is not discussed in the song. The situation is that of a girl leaving and a guy pleading with her to stay. What I wanted to describe in these pictures is that same futility described in the quote applied to a relationship. I wanted to portray an image of someone doing everything they could and working as hard as they could, with no positive result for their labor. The first two pictures symbolize the guy doing everything he can to make the girl stay, and are described by the quote "I poured my heart out". The girl leaving symbolizes the part of the quote "It Evaporated, See?" because I wanted that to symbolize a complete loss. It is evaporated, gone forever. The fact that result is not that which the guy had hoped for is unimportant in the context of this work.

This group of photos and the quote hopefully leave the viewer with an understanding that complete failure is a possibility, but that the effort is what matters. To ignore the possibility of failure is foolish. Basically the idea is that complete failure

is totally possible and that needs to be understood and addressed, however, not trying is guaranteed failure. In the end the guy is better having tried then just outright failing without trying.

***"Bitter"***
**Song by Nine Days**
**Collection of 35mm Photographs in Contact Format**

The story line is based on the song "Bitterness" by the band Nine Days. I originally came up with the idea to do a piece of work that consisted of many smaller photographs combining to communicate on central theme about a year ago. The song, which tells the story of turbulent relationship and subsequent bitterness felt by the author, was a natural match for the idea. Writing the story line was a bit more complicated, and took about two weeks to plan out. The idea is to overexpose some shots, in order to make them darker in the final print effectively forming the background, and to underexpose other shots leaving those shots lighter in the final print. The story line begins in the top left corner of the print and works its way down each column and from left to right across the page. The print is presented as a narration of the relationship as told by the author of the song. The viewer is able to observe not only the interpretation of the situation by the narrator, which is indicated by the word "Bitter" highlighted in the whiter shots, but to observe the circumstances which lead the narrator to this interpretation, which can be done by following the storyline. Another aspect of the underexposing of some frames and overexposing others is that the underexposed frames (lighter in the final print) represent images that the narrator finds to be positive, while the overexposed frames (darker in the final print) represent images the narrator finds to be more unnerving. This is a useful tool not only in showing the different emotions of the narrator and in forming the word "Bitter" for the overall idea of the piece, but also to show the shift in the narrators thinking through the time elapsed in the piece. For example, in some of the first "positive" (lightly shaded in print) sections, the narrator is looking at a picture of the

couple and thinking about their relationship. However, in the very end of the piece this positive attitude toward the relationship is starkly contrasted when a "positive" section includes the narrator burning an old picture of the couple. This usage of the "positive" and "negative" sections in the piece not only allows myself as the story teller to clue the viewer in to the emotions of the characters, but to show a progression in the psyche of the characters.

***"And I Don't Believe in God and So I Can't Be Saved, All Alone In This Mess That I Have Made"***
**Song "Mess" By Ben Folds Five**
**Mural Print Three 4x5 Negatives and One 35mm Negative**

This print was created to try to portray the hopelessness and fear involved in the quote itself. I don't want to get into a long-winded discussion about my own spirituality, but the photograph is definitely autobiographical on many levels. My hope in creating the print was to create in image that I felt was as intense as I consider the subject matter to be. The particular images and techniques used in producing the photograph were designed explicitly to try to make the picture as intense as possible.

The final print was created from two exposures of the same photographic paper. The image created by the first exposure is that of the church located in the upper left corner of the photograph. The second exposure of the photographic paper is that of three sandwiched negatives forming the three figures that make up the body of the print. The manner in which the image is printed is also meant to enhance the idea communicated in the print. For example, aspects of the print such as the chemical stains above the image of the person and the floating image of the church are meant to add a feel of confusion to the print. The ominously lit images of religious figures are meant to enhance the emotion of fear felt by the subject. I felt that it was important to try to portray the scene with such strong images because the statement that the photograph is portraying is so strong.

***"Goodnight, Goodnight,... Let the Moonlight Take the Lid Off of Your Dreams"***
**Song Lullaby by Ben Folds Five**
**Prints from 4x5 Negatives**

These photographs were created in hopes of describing the idea of the entire song from which the quote was taken. The song is a lullaby and description of a subsequent dream. The idea for the prints was simple. Sleep is one of the most basic and easy states in which to describe a person. What I hoped to capture in these prints was both the beauty and fragility of state of sleep. The 4x5 view camera is the perfect instrument for recording these aspects of the situation because the format allows the photographer not only the freedom of absolute control over the focal length and plain, but also allows the photographer to record the very fragile aspects of the situation. I chose to print these photographs in the smaller format because I wanted to keep these prints as true to the situation as possible. By conveying the image almost exactly as it was observed I am able to keep the print as simple and direct as I want it without getting sidetracked on irrelevant aspects that might be created by altering the image.

***"There it goes again, I've Got A Little Habit,***
***I Should Stay Away From Her"***
**Song "Habit" By Letters To Cleo**
**Mural Print from 4x5 Negative**

This picture is much less profound and introspective than most of the other pieces and should be read accordingly. What this work is describing is the contrasting yet complementary aspects of desire. In this photograph the innocent look on the girls face is meant to symbolize the innocence and simplicity of the situation. This idea goes along with the part of the quote "There it goes again, I've got a little habit" which sets up the situation to seem not only innocent but relatively harmless. Then the second half of the quote "I should stay away from her" clues the audience in to the fact that this habit is not quite so innocent. Obviously there is a past between the whatever, or whoever, the author is describing. The rest of the photograph describes this part of the quote; the girl's nakedness is in stark contrast to the innocence of her expression. This set of circumstances is the paradox that I set out to describe in this picture. The innocent look on the girls face is what the viewer is immediately drawn to, leading the viewer to think that the situation is safe and innocent, just as the first half of the quote does. Then, however, as the viewer's eye begins to wander they begin to understand the full complexity of the situation and how it relates to the quote.