Ink Stories

A Photo Essay Journey

Chester County Camera Club

March 3, 2021 – Peter Guman

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“You don't make a photograph just with a camera.
You bring to the act of photography
all the pictures you have seen, the books you have read,
the music you have heard, the people you have loved.”

- Ansel Adams

Presentation Overview

- My Background
- Photo Essay Workshop
  - Stephen Williams & Ted Goldman
- My Photo Essay – Ink Stories
  - Layout
  - Portraits
    - My experience
    - My learnings
    - A bit of technical info

Background & Photo Essay Workshop

- My background
  - Teenager – Minolta SRT101
  - Classes in college
  - Joined CCCC 2016
  - Passion for photo essays & portraits
- April 2019 Photo Essay Workshop
  - Stephen Williams & Ted Goldman
  - Why I attended
  - Infomercial for next workshop – Date TBD
    - Why should you attend?
    - Think about your project before class

Photo Essay Layout

- Black & White Portrait
  - Connected to story
- Color close up of tattoo
  - Makes it real
  - Hard to do portrait & fully capture tattoo
- Tattoo story
- Song lyrics, either:
  - Subject picks song
  - Subject suggests bands – I choose
  - I choose band & song
- Used www.canva.com for layout

Peter & Maria with Joe

He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother

PETER&MARIA WITH JOE

He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother
The road is long
With many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows where
Who knows where
But I'm strong
Strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy, he's my brother
- The Hollies

Peter, Joe and Maria are siblings.
Joe was diagnosed with cerebral palsy since birth, wheelchair bound and non-verbal.

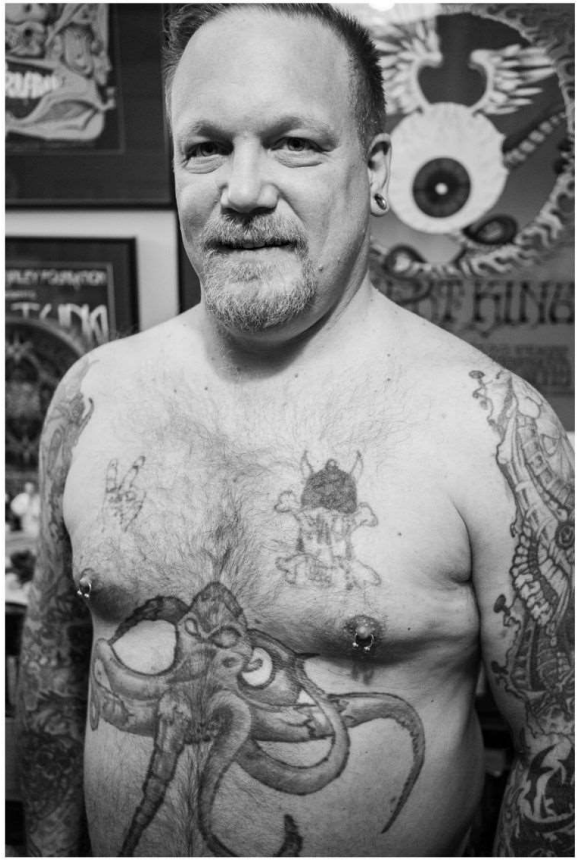
In an act of solidarity with their brother Joe and each other, Peter and Maria got tattoos with Joe's birthday and each other's birthday, in Roman numerals.

Peter also has a tattoo on his upper arm in honor of his brother, Joe - 'Do it for him'.

Adam

Down In It

A D A M



Adam's biomechanical purple octopus tattoo was done 22+ years ago, a time in Adam's life of wild partying and dealing . His extra cash was often spent on tattoos - this tattooist doing his work out of his car.

Just before beginning, Adam changed his mind on the design and suggested a purple octopus. The tattoo artist wasn't pleased.

Adam is happily married, has a son and a mortgage. He is a Social Worker.

Down In It

Kinda like a cloud I was up way up in the sky.
And I was feeling some feelings
you wouldn't believe.
Sometimes I don't believe them myself and
I decided I was never coming down.
Just then a tiny little dot caught my eye.
It was just about too small to see.
But I watched it way too long.
It was pulling down.
I was up above it. Now I'm down in it.
- Nine Inch Nails

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Learnings

- Fake it till you make it
  - Show confidence even though you're not
  - Otherwise subject won't have confidence
  - Reassure subject they are doing a great job
    - 'That turned out good, but can we try this?'
  - Know your gear – memory settings on camera
- Not really what I wanted to document
  - More intentional
  - Talk about the stories I want to potential subjects

Paul & Nate

Simple Man

PAUL & NATE

Simple Man
Boy, don't you worry, you'll find yourself
Follow your heart and nothing else
And you can do this, oh baby, if you try
All that I want for you, my son, is to be satisfied
And be a simple kind of man
Oh, be something you love and understand
- Lynyrd Skynyrd

Paul & Nate are father & son. When Paul was 15, he saw a 1953 Ford truck that he just had to buy. At 17, Paul stored it in his Grandfather's barn for 40 years until his son Nate recently turned 17. They decided to retrieve the truck and restore it in their home's garage. Both have a passion for all things mechanical and for country music.

Their planning time and road trips to source parts was as enjoyable as the actual build. The truck was totally rebuilt, mounting the truck's body on a modern hot rod frame Their tattoos echo the Ford V8 emblem on the front grill.

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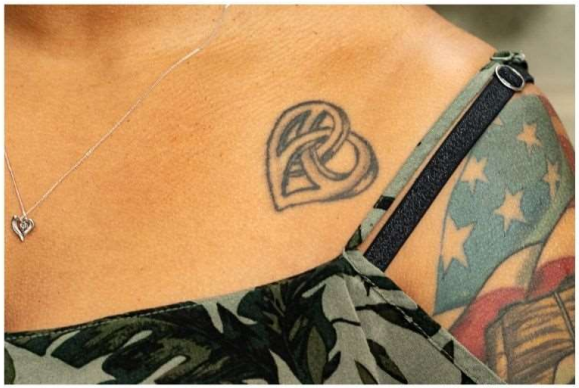
Learnings

- Spending time with subjects
  - Both you & the subject relax
  - Ask questions
  - Trying different poses
  - The process of taking the photos
    - Gets you to the final composition
  - Last shot sometimes works best

Taina, Cindy & Daniela

We Are Family

TAINA, CINDY & DANIELA



We Are Family
We are family
I got all my sisters with me
Get up everybody and sing
All of the people around us they say
Can they be that close
Just let me state for the record
We're giving love in a family dose
- Sister Sledge

Taina, Cindy and Daniela are sisters. The Celtic Trinity Knot symbolizes the power of three greater than one. The tattoo artist modified the knot to heart-shaped, capturing the love between sisters, located on their left shoulders, close to their heart.

These sisters place a high value on their relationship. "We learned a lot about our generational and shared trauma and how to heal from that. We got through some of the harder moments in our lives by being able to lean on each other...no matter how hard it is we can always find happiness and peace in our relationship." Family, friends and partners have come to admire their sisterhood and that makes their circle bigger.

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Learnings

- Posing
  - Try to build the relationship
    - Talked about their relationship beforehand
  - Subjects posed themselves, with some prompting
  - Collaborate – feels natural
  - Some posing tweaking
    - Smaller eye towards camera
    - Body turned at angle
    - Look for background distractions

Laura

Living

LAURA

Laura is a self-proclaimed nerd & geek.

She's also struggles with bouts of anxiety and depression, and an episode of postpartum.

To help Laura through these bouts, she has used various strategies, such as streaming movies/TV series, video games and reading books. Each specific strategy is marked with a tattoo making up her sleeve.

This tattoo documents the books Laura read:
Harry Potter; The Giver; Artemis Fowl; Real Player One; and *The Complete Sherlock Holmes.*

Living

Living is only one part of being
Believing is to know just what you're feeling
You weren't supposed to think you know you heard
I'm sure that you're knowing you're growing and it's you
Thinking is your own world of living
Dreaming is the one way to feeling
The only real person you need to know is you
—Alice Cooper

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Learnings

- Approaching strangers
  - Strange interaction in Wegman's
  - Developed website
  - Business cards from Staples
- Healing from the project
  - People want to talk about their tattoo & story
  - Taking some not permanent and making it permanent
  - Both the subject & me

Emma

Don’t Stop Me Now

EMMA

Don't Stop Me Now

I'm a shooting star leaping through the sky
Like a tiger defying the laws of gravity
I'm a racing car passing by like Lady Godiva
I'm gonna go, go, go, there's no stopping me
I'm burning through the sky Yeah!
—Queen

Emma got the 'Mysterious Woman' tattoo in her freshman year at college.

This tattoo marks how she wants to live her life, living to her true self and not to society's norms and expectations.

The Mysterious Woman resembles her a bit, but there's still shades of the mystery of what Emma's future will unfold.

The rose is in honor of her great grandmother, a strong single Mom who Emma's admires for her strength.

Currently, Emma works managing several bands and planning a future in a career in the business side of music.

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Learnings

- Scout your location
  - Arrived early, found an interesting spot
  - Went to where Emma takes classes
  - Didn't work, but original spot did
- Having an assistant can really help

Suzanne

Living

SUZANNE

Martyrs & Thieves

There are ghosts from my past who've owned more of my soul
Than I thought I had given away
They linger in closets and under my bed
And in pictures less proudly displayed
Hung my head in shame and refused to take blame
For the darkness I know I've let win
So turn on the light and reveal all the glory, I am not afraid
—Jennifer Knapp.

Growing up, Suzanne was very athletic and a gymnast. She struggled with being self-injurious, including cutting. In college, she strayed from being active and was challenged with alcohol & drugs. After a 1998 stint in rehab, Suzanne committed to a healthier lifestyle. Eventually having bariatric surgery and losing 125 lbs, she had skin removal surgery and sought a tattoo artist who could ink over the scars which proved challenging. Her tattoo celebrates what grounds her: cycling, water, and nature. The M&S is for her and her wife, Melanie.

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Learnings

- Conversation before shoot
  - Thinking time before shoot for me
  - Collaboration
- Bike, outside at park, & water
- Talk about their story before shoot
  - Sets the stage & mood

Final Thoughts

- Encouraging you to take the workshop
  - Storytelling good for any type of photography
  - I'm willing to help you brainstorm
- Found myself limited by natural light
  - Started using reflectors
  - Learned flash – using manual not TTL
- Take a lot of portraits
  - Taken 70+ portraits before this project
    - I Am Coatesville
    - I Am Coatesville Steel
  - Assisted a portrait photographer

Equipment

- Sony a7iii
  - Go to Lenses:
    - 35mm f2.8
    - 24-105mm f4 zoom
    - 90mm f2.8 (real sharp lens, also Macro)
  - Godox Flashes & trigger
  - Flash modifiers
    - Umbrellas – reflective & shoot-thru
    - Magmod – MagSphere / MagBounce / MagShoe
    - Glow EZ Lock 34” beauty dish

Contact

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