

Intergenerational Digital Photography Workshop Curriculum



**generations
united**

Because we're stronger together

About this Curriculum

With funding from The Brookdale Foundation, Generations United worked with professional photographer, Annie Levy to pilot the intergenerational photography workshop during the summer of 2007 with two organizations in New York – the Carter Burden Center for the Aging and DOROT. This curriculum is based on the lessons learned from the two pilot projects.

About Generations United

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organization and individuals. Since 1986, GU has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation. For more information, visit www.gu.org.

About Annie Levy

Annie Levy is a photographer and creative director who documents, and brings to life, the experience and stories of ordinary people through the art of portraiture in its variety of forms – image/text, exhibit/installation, presentation/performance. With a special focus on the lives of older and young people, she is committed to creating works for both innovative and traditional venues that inspire, educate and influence public opinion and perception. Examples of Ms. Levy's work have been featured at the United Nations and The Frick Collection for their "Art of Observation" program. With an additional interest in enlivening non-traditional settings with exhibits, her projects of this nature include a permanent installation at Roosevelt Hospital, a 100- portrait project for the Hebrew Home for the Aged, an installation for the 30th anniversary of Covenant House as well as public art projects, "When I Grow Up" & "If I Could Go Anywhere", developed with the young people of the Manhattan Plaza community. Ms. Levy holds a BFA from NYU Film School and an MSW from Hunter College.

About Our Partners

The Carter Burden Center for the Aging, Inc. promotes the well-being of elderly residents of the Upper East Side of Manhattan through a broad array of direct social services and volunteer programs oriented to individual, family and community needs. They are dedicated to supporting the efforts of older people to remain in their own homes living independently, safely and with dignity.

DOROT is a Hebrew word meaning "generations." DOROT's mission is to enhance the lives of Jewish and other elderly in the Greater New York City Metropolitan area through a dynamic partnership of volunteers, professionals, and elders; to foster mutually beneficial interaction between the generations; and to provide education, guidance and leadership in developing volunteer-based programs for the elderly nationally and internationally.

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Introduction

This curriculum grew out of a project that was piloted in New York City with a grant from The Brookdale Foundation. The workshop was conducted in two different types of settings. One was a senior center where students from a middle school visited weekly to participate, the other, an agency dedicated to fostering relationships between generations. The settings and participants were very different. This helped us to evaluate and determine that the principles and concepts described here will in fact work in a host of different settings.

In both settings the workshop was designed around **the two key concepts** of the simple creation and discussion of images. This served as the point around which the generations could freely interact and learn about each other. One of the participants called the camera “a great equalizer”, further stating that everyone could express their unique vision and interact around the images created without the experience feeling “contrived”.

Program Goals

Young and old people walk the same streets together, but routinely on opposite sides. The workshop in this curriculum is designed as a venue for younger and older participants:

1. To work together in exploring life themes from different generational perspectives,
2. To have a venue in which to discuss their perspectives on different subjects through the images they create,
3. To produce an “end product” exhibit that can be shown to a variety of audiences to communicate about their life experiences and, by definition, their experience of working together, and,
4. To learn a new skill, a new form of expression and a new language – a “visual” language.

The Workshop Leader

The role of the leader is to facilitate group discussion and, in some cases, depending on the group, to assist them in either creating or selecting assignments from a variety of choices. Assignments are presented here, however, the leader should feel free to make changes based on the needs of the group.

The leader will either instruct or coordinate the instruction in basic technical aspects of the workshop, i.e., using the camera and using the computer for viewing and printing the digital images.

If cameras are being purchased for the group, it is recommended that an easy to use digital camera be selected to the end of allowing those without a great deal of “technical” know-how to participate. The leader should stress that the camera is the *tool* to bring the photographer’s vision to life and therefore the most important thing that all participants bring is their “eye”. Quotes from well-known photographers are included in each section to reinforce this idea. The workshop should be described as a vehicle to develop and tell a story vs. a technical workshop.

Project Overview

The workshop should consist of (6) sessions. Each session will be approximately 1-1/2 hours in length including “lab” time for printing. However, two hours should be allotted for Session Number One as this will include the camera distribution and tutorial.

Getting Started

Preparation

1. A group of (10) participants should be recruited – five older participants/five younger participants. Based on the experience in the pilot program, this is a reasonable size in terms of allowing each group member to post and discuss their work as well as have comments and questions from the group about the images.

2. A letter should go out to participants in advance of the first class welcoming them and requesting that they bring “A Favorite Image” to the first meeting. The letter should explain that the image can either be one from their own collection (either something they have or someone else has taken) or one from an outside media source (magazine, newspaper, printed from the internet). Explain that at the first class they will be asked to introduce themselves, post their picture and simply tell the group why they selected that image. This will set the stage for getting to know each other through the use of pictures.



3. Throughout the workshop participants should be asked to bring in images from existing media that they believe relate to the specific assignments and/or the workshop in general.

Workshop Requirements

1. It is recommended that the host organization have a dedicated space in which the workshop can take place with wall space that can be utilized during the course of the workshop for posting of the participant’s images. The ability for participants to leave their images up from week to week and see the “story” develop is a valuable part of the process.

2. A computer (for the camera’s digital software) and printer will be needed. If possible the computer and printer should be available for participants either during the week or a “lab” time be established at some point prior to the workshop for printing of the images that they will select for posting. Each week participants will be asked to select (3) images that they wish to show the group. The selection process will be the means by which they will start to think more specifically about what they want to “say” with their images.

Session One: Introduction



“There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer.”

Ansel Adams

Ansel Adams was a visionary figure in nature photography and wilderness preservation. He is seen as an environmental folk hero and a symbol of the American West, especially of Yosemite National Park. Adams' dedication to wilderness preservation, his commitment to the Sierra Club, and of course, his signature black-and-white photographs inspire an appreciation for natural beauty and a strong conservation ethic.

Preparation:

For Session One the leader should have the cameras available for distribution and a corkboard or wall space with pushpins and/or tape available so that participants can “post” the favorite image they have been instructed to bring to the first class.

1. Welcome to the workshop.

The leader should distribute a class schedule and give the group the overview and weekly structure. Participants may be taking pictures of each other or other people during the course of the workshop. If the images will be used for an exhibit/display or in other materials, photo releases should be distributed and discussed (sample attached).

2. Introductions.

Each member of the group (including the leader) should introduce themselves to the group, indicate which image they selected and say a few words about why they chose that particular image as well as why they have decided to be in the class. Use the Ansel Adams quote above as

the discussion develops, i.e., in what ways might there two people in the photo you selected (photographer and viewer)?

3. Distribution of the camera.

Tutorial in camera use.

4. The first assignment: “Everyday Life”

Participants are asked to photograph something that they feel represents “Everyday Life”. The leader should discuss various options such as things ranging from “breakfast” to a hobby one might engage in. Each participant should consider this during the week and create images that capture this theme. They should be advised that for the second class they will be asked to select (3) of their favorite images for posting and discussion.

Session Two: Everyday Life



"The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera"

Dorothea Lange

In 1933, Dorothea Lange, a young, successful portrait photographer, picked up her camera and left her studio located on Union Street in San Francisco. Compelled by the visible human anguish of the Great Depression, she traveled through the streets to a food distribution area --- a bread line --- that had been recently set up by *White Angel*, a wealthy woman living in San Francisco. That day Dorothea Lange took several photographs. But the most telling was the one of an "unshaven, hunched-up little man, leaning on a railing with a tin can between his arms, his hands clenched, the line of his mouth bitter, his back turned to those others waiting for a handout." Lange tacked the developed image of this man on the wall of her studio, naming it "White Angel Bread Line." Next to that image, she put a quotation from the English philosopher, Francis Bacon:

*The contemplation of things as they are
without error or confusion
without substitution or imposture
is in itself a nobler thing
than a whole harvest of invention.*

Both remained on that wall for the years to come.

1. Participants should have selected (3) images from their assignment and posted these on the viewing board/wall for the class.

2. Time should be allotted to discuss camera use and if there are any questions. If there are questions these should be addressed at the outset and if participants can answer these for each other, this should be encouraged, i.e., has anyone else encountered this situation and if so, how have they solved it?

3. Each participant should then present their work. Questions to be considered include:

a. Did they have an idea of how they wanted to depict everyday when they received the assignment?

b. Did their images differ from their original concept and if so, in what way?

c. Reflecting on the Dorothea Lange quote above, in what ways has the camera been helpful in allowing them to “see” without a camera?

4. Assignment for Session 3: Favorite Things

Discussion of how the group might want to approach this: Will this include people and places?

Will they “pair up” for this assignment to produce a compare and contrast grouping?

Session Three: Favorite Things



“My portraits are more about me than they are about the people I photograph”

Richard Avedon

Richard Avedon (May 15, 1923 – October 1, 2004) was an American photographer. Avedon was able to take his early success in fashion photography and expand it into the realm of fine art.

1. Participants should again select (3) images from the assignment to post for the class to view. If participants “paired up” they should hang their images side by side.
2. Each participant should discuss their images from the point of view of why they selected these as their “favorite things”. The quote from Richard Avedon should be considered as a jumping off point for the discussion.
3. Participants should also look at each others’ images from the perspective of beginning to compare and contrast how different people “see”.
4. Assignment for Session Four: Participants are given a choice between “Beauty”, “Celebration” or if the leader thinks appropriate, an assignment of their choice, which similar to these two are open to the photographers’ interpretation.

Session Four: Beauty or Celebration

Though we travel the world over to find beauty, we must carry it with us or we find it not . . . The difference between landscape and landscape is small, but there is a great difference in beholders.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

1. Participants should again select (3) images from the assignment to post for the class.
2. The leader should point out that this week's quote is from a poet rather than a photographer as the subject of "beholding" is a constant in photography. The class should discuss their images of "Beauty" or "Celebration" from the point of view of how they chose to "see" the subject.
3. Time should be allotted by the leader to introduce the final assignment for Session Five: As this is an intergenerational project, we would like to spend some in the next week considering how the subjects of "age" and "youth" are depicted. The leader should have collected sample images from media that in different ways show "age" and "youth" – these should be both positive and negative to show participants as "food for thought". Participants should be encouraged to use their imaginations in thinking about the assignment, i.e., they can think about this literally, i.e., an aged branch or tree or figuratively, something that speaks to them about what youth or age means.

As a note, if appropriate for the group the leader can turn this into a two-week assignment with "age" and "youth" being separate assignments.

Session Five: Age and Youth



“Keep it simple”

Alfred Eisenstaedt

1. Participants will be asked to select (3) images depicting “age” and (3) images depicting “youth” to post side by side.
2. In discussing their images participants will be asked to discuss their thoughts on the assignment and how they approached it. In addition, they will be asked if they found any surprises in the course of doing the assignment, i.e., did the assignment cause them to think about the subject in a different way, were they aware of any stereotypes that they or society might hold about the subjects?
3. Participants should be asked to consider how images in general and their images in particular might be used to influence society in a negative way or a positive way.

Discussion of the final assignment:

SESSION SIX: THE PHOTO EXHIBIT

Based on the responses to item three, participants will be asked to consider what they want their exhibit to “say” and how they can use the images they have created to communicate a larger point.

Participants will be asked to think about this during the week and come together for their lab period to discuss how they will design their exhibit.

SESSION SIX: THE PHOTO EXHIBIT

“Exhibitions are really a form of art --in the lowercase-- which requires both those who make them and those who experience them to use their imaginations.”

Leslie Bedford, Consultant on Exhibitions

Director, Leadership in Museum Education Program at Bank Street College

Although somewhat “spontaneous” in nature, participants will have had a chance during the week to discuss how they might put their exhibit together and will have worked with the leader during the lab time to create “headings” for their exhibit or other text boxes if they see fit that they will use as part of their final exhibit.

For the final exhibit the leader is encouraged to invite other staff members and participants should be encouraged to invite friends and/or family members to see the exhibit and hear their final comments.