

VIEW from the Hill



St. Patrick's Day Parade, New York City, by Doug DuBois, 2001.

Caught in a Moment

When art photography professor Doug DuBois explores the nature of portraiture, he is enticed by encounters with subjects that can last years, or a matter of seconds. He's spent an enormous amount of time shooting intimate pictures of his family, documenting their relationships and interactions with each other. He's also captured the working-class stories of his grandmother, who lived in a dying coal town in western Pennsylvania.

At the other end of the spectrum, DuBois engages in the complex confrontations of a street photographer. "I think about how to encounter large groups of people in certain anonymous ways and situations," says DuBois, whose work has been exhibited at New York's Museum of Modern Art as well as prestigious galleries and museums in Santa Fe, San Francisco, London, and Tokyo. In a portraiture series featuring people in transit, he photographed Tokyo subway commuters "beautifully framed by the closed doors," he says, and Italians in Florence showing off their fashions while aboard motor scooters. He also blitzed the clogged traffic of Bangkok, Thailand, to snap photos of helmeted motorcyclists waiting at intersections. "It's a quick negotiation," he says. "You move and they move and you do this little dance together and you make the image before the light changes. The street vendors applauded me when I made it back to the sidewalk."

Closer to home, DuBois took portraits of prize-winners bearing their stuffed animals at the New York State Fair. "I told them I was doing a project on winners," he says. "The people posed very seriously with their prizes, and I wouldn't let them smile." Nor were smiles allowed among the nearly 300 teenage marching band members that he and assistant Lori Braunstein '00 corralled for portraits at the 2001 New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade. "It's chaotic as hell, their friends make fun of them, and I ask them to stand at attention and look at me," he says. "I could see all the adolescent anxiety there. Some, though, look very confident, while a bunch of them appear slightly terrified."

DuBois, who shoots freelance assignments for such publications as the *New York Times Magazine*, *Details*, and *Blackbook*, calls photography the ubiquitous medium of today and notes that it's constantly changing with technological advances. This, he says, can make it tricky to teach, but he still sees the hard work that goes into capturing a good image and discipline in the darkroom as paramount skills. "The central anxiety of photography is knowing when to stop photographing," he says. "Even in the darkroom—when you make a print, when is it *the* print? I can tweak a print forever."

—Jay Cox