

## 1. Copy of your original proposal

Ann Mitchell  
Art & Photography Department  
Sabbatical Leave Proposal  
Dates: Fall 2012 - Spring 2013  
Re-submitted: October 31, 2011

### 1. Briefly state the purpose of your sabbatical leave.

My sabbatical project speaks to the heart of my current coursework: to ensure that our students are gaining photographic skills that will be relevant in today's marketplace and to create interesting and significant work as a photographic artist who integrates antiquarian practices with digital technologies.

This project will address the following areas:

- **Art-Making:** Visual art students need to be trained by faculty who are fully committed artists engaged in the outside world. This is especially true in photography, a field which has experienced enormous changes in the past 5-10 years. I will be using my sabbatical to deepen my artistic practice by finishing a current body of work and starting a new complex photographic series.
- **Digital Instruction:** With the industry shift to digital technologies, our program must now incorporate advanced digital skills throughout our curriculum. Over the past 4 years we've created a strong basic digital foundation in our photography classes, but we need to do much more to have our students gain effective vocational skills in today's digital environment. I will be updating a digital Workbook (that I wrote) which is currently in use for beginning students and will be creating a second Digital Workbook Level 2 for our advanced students.

2. Give all pertinent details of your proposed plan. This should include all activities, projects, research, itinerary, study, employment, expected outcomes, relationships with current coursework etc connected with your proposed leave.

#### **A. Finish a current body of artwork and start a new photographic series.**

- **Rationale:**

A significant part of my being an effective teacher is my continuing development as a practicing visual artist. This activity informs almost every discussion I have with students. Currently, I'm a fine artist, but my past experience also included a significant career as a commercial photographer and having practical experience in both areas gives me a full set of tools to counsel our students and guide the photography program.

It takes time to be an artist, time spent both in the field capturing new work and in the lab/studio editing and refining the statements you want to make. As a working artist I have faced

many of the same issues my students will encounter. Because I have found my own solutions to both conceptual and technical problems, I can guide them through the process of finding their own solutions. Right now the photography program students are creating very interesting work because their faculty are fully committed photographic artists, engaged in the outside world. This project will support the full range of my current assignment.

- Finishing a current body of work:

I've been working on a very complex series of photographs that seek to redefine the iconic views of the Southland through inspiration from a broad range of sources. Drawing from memory, cinema and literature, I'm exploring how our urban landscapes have been shaped by the fantasy of Hollywood, the noir novels of the 40's and 50's and the waves of immigration that reshape and revision our cities through a constantly changing architectural palette of visual styles. Think of it as "The West" seen through a cinematic montage sequence, moving beyond documentation into interpretation and fantasy.

My process starts with the search for locations to photograph - often drawing on my experiences as a child growing up in Los Angeles and riding the bus with my mother (who didn't drive). The bus windows created a frame through which passed the L.A. neighborhoods from the beach to downtown's Grand Central Market. The real icons of our experience aren't the tourist attractions, they're the corner market, the liquor store, the house at the corner...these are the visuals that end up defining our experience of living in an urban environment. So, I search for those icons that stand out, that "speak" to me and photograph them with vintage large format cameras (old press cameras) enjoying the occasional optical flaws that are embedded into the imagery. At each location, I capture 3-4 images on a single sheet of film to create a montaged original.

Once captured, the film is then digitized and the actual process of creating the image starts. The original sheet of film is usually a confusing mix of lines and shapes that is slowly refined by digitally "sculpting" parts of the image forward, while subduing other areas - to reveal the emerging composition. At this point the image starts to become a hybrid of photography and drawing and a strong influence on my practice are the architectural renderings of the 1920's which featured dark visions of looming monumental silhouettes that helped shape a vision of America as a spectacular, moody Gotham. Each image can take weeks to evolve and I often work on multiple images at a time, searching for a balance between clarity and complexity. The images are finished with a sepia toning which references nostalgia, memory and even sadness - we understand what is lost at the time it is revealed.

Throughout the process I proof the images and usually my studio will have at least 3-4 large prints on the wall as I live with each version. Photographers work in series and it's important to also understand how each new image will enhance the value of the pre-existing images - you want to find a balance between variation and cohesiveness, so that they feel a part of the group, but are not simply repeating solutions already achieved. An additional factor built into this project is that the film I'm using is no longer produced. While I've saved several boxes,

it's important to finish the project before the film is too outdated to function. Due to the complexity of the process, it's essential to have large uninterrupted blocks of time to develop the images and that's difficult to find during the school year. The continuous start and stop reality of teaching makes it hard to stay connected to each image. I will be creating a minimum of 12 new images for this series.

- Creating imagery for a new body of work:

To fully utilize the sabbatical timeframe, I have planned an ambitious project that incorporates my current body of work with my past commercial experience as a studio photographer. Starting from the "noir" element in my imagery, I will be creating a series of staged location shots which explore the experience of contemporary urban living - featuring character figures to create a narrative of life in a fictionalized urban existence.

While the entire series will feature 10-15 pieces, I will be finishing 7 of them during the sabbatical timeframe. Each image will fit into an existing narrative and will involve the following steps: location scouting, casting for character models, costuming and multiple location shots which will be composited into single frames. I have been thinking about this series for several years, but have not been able to start it due to time constraints. In my career as a commercial photographer I specialized in studio lighting and often created ads which utilized most of the above steps, so I have the necessary skills to complete this type of a project. It would be a significant jump for me artistically since I have never truly melded my past and current photographic practices. An additional artistic leap would be the incorporation of advanced digital compositing and retouching techniques into my image-making practice.

## **B. Update the Digital Workbook Level 1 and create a Digital Workbook Level 2:**

### Rationale:

Over the past 4 years we've integrated digital technology into all of our coursework. While I have worked hard to stay current, the truth is that technology is changing at such a rapid pace that a deeper course of study is necessary to bring additional advanced skills into the classroom. My plan is to utilize multiple areas of research which will also increase my understanding of the resources available to our students. Instruction will include personal exploration, online instruction and workshop-style coursework from vendors such as Lynda.com and Samy's Camera.

Courses which would benefit include: Photo 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 40, 41 & 43, Art 41, 45, 47, 48, 49, 80 & 81. My current course load is concentrated in Digital Photography, Studio Lighting and Advanced Photographic Processes and these courses have a heightened need for these types of skills. This will also meet our Department Goal #4 Improve and Increase Classroom and Student Access, Quality, Safety and Effectiveness and #5 Modernize the Art & Photography Programs. This project will support the full range of my current assignment.

I will be creating the following resources:

- **Digital Workbook Level 1** is an 85 page textbook which is used by students in the digital photography class. The book evolved because I found that most outside published digital textbooks were designed for students who already understood the programs and they didn't address the specific needs of our students. I designed the book to give beginning students, and returning professionals, a strong foundation in Digital Asset Management (organizing, storage, annotation, retrieval and maintenance of a digital storage archive) and digital editing, retouching and compositing of digitized imagery. The textbook covers Adobe Lightroom, Camera Raw, Adobe Bridge and Adobe Photoshop and I will be creating an updated version for our Fall 2013 classes. The book is designed to serve both as their in-class notebook and as a reference guide after they've finished the course. The format involves 24 skill-building exercises which are then incorporated into 4 conceptual assignments.

- To update Level 1 and create Level 2 workbooks I will be concentrating on training and personal research in the following areas:

- Advanced archiving through Image Asset Management, keywording, metadata and cataloging. This would also include advanced instruction in Adobe Lightroom, one of our primary instructional programs.
- Advanced digital image editing, compositing and retouching. This would be focused on Adobe Photoshop which is also one of our primary instructional software programs.

- The following is the Table of Contents from the *Digital Workbook Level 1* currently in use:

### **Table of Contents**

<b>Approvals</b>	.....	2
<b>Introduction</b>	.....	3
<b>Troubleshooting your computer</b>	.....	4
<b>Chapter 1: Working with an Apple</b>	.....	5
On/Off, Working in MacOS environment, Hardware, Software, Menu, Keyboard and 3 Tests.		
<b>Chapter 2: Input &amp; File Preparation</b>	.....	22
Digital Cameras, file management, Adobe Lightroom, Camera Raw 6 & Bridge, Scanning: types, factors, resolution, software, basic steps.		
<b>Chapter 3: Photoshop Environment</b>	.....	38
Digital vs. Analog, Terms, Photoshop Basics: New Files, Color Space, Windows, Palettes, Brushes, Memory, Calibration, Saving, File Formats, New File Exercises.		

<b>Chapter 4: Digital Photo Skills</b>	54
Layers, Adjustment Layers, Color & Contrast Control, Curves, Levels, Cloning, Healing & Patch Tool, Puppet Warp, Dodge/Burn, Filters, History Palette, Digital Toning.	
<b>Chapter 5: Selections and Color</b>	72
Selections: tools, methods, menu commands. Quick Masking, Digital Coloring and Desaturation Techniques, PSD Color Terms, Color Palettes/Blending Modes & Toolbar, Painting Tools, Type tools	
<b>Chapter 6: Output</b>	84
Printing: Print with Preview, Page Set-up, Additional Assignments	
<b>Index</b>	87

• **Digital Workbook Level 2:** this would be used by students in all our advanced imaging classes and would cover the advanced techniques in digital retouching, editing and compositing that I will be learning for my new body of work. It will follow a different format from the *Level 1* book to allow for a more “episodic” usage - that way sections could be used independently by our faculty and students based on need. The workbook would use the same method of 4-6 exercises in each area (total of 16-20) that concentrate on skill-building followed by 4-8 conceptual and commercial assignments. This book would be used extensively in all of our advanced photography courses and could be used in our digital and fine art courses as well.

**Digital Workbook Level 2 proposal for subject areas:**

- **Restoration:** this will include the digitization of vintage and other analog materials, repair and restoration.
- **Commercial Retouching:** this will address advertising and product shooting. It includes an understanding how surfaces and textures vary (metal vs. plastic etc.) and how they should be reconstructed.
- **Commercial Compositing:** this will also focus on the needs of advertising and commercial photography. It includes a more complex assemblage of imagery and creation of larger “surrealistic” environments.
- **Retouching and Compositing for Portraiture:** stronger emphasis on the needs of portrait photographers which includes skin surfaces and figure refining. It would also include compositing in group photography.

3. Provide a timeline indicating how the activities in your plan will be completed within the time frame of the proposed leave.

Summer / Fall 2012:

- Start research/instruction on digital editing and compositing.
- Continuing work on my Southland icons series:
  - Location scouting and original capture
  - Start editing/sculpting process
- New Series:
  - Location scouting / Character model casting
  - Storyline plotting / Rough layout of character scenes
  - Start initial shooting.

Spring / Summer 2013:

- Continue with my research/instruction in digital media.
- New Series:
  - Continue with shooting
  - Editing and compositing of new images
  - Printing
- Printing and final editing of Southland icons series.
- Update *Digital Workbook Level 1* to incorporate new software features.
- Create the *Digital Workbook Level 2*

4. Describe how the proposed leave will contribute to your professional development, including how it relates to your current assignment.

This Sabbatical project speaks to the heart of my current assignment: the changing technologies involved in Photography, how to make Photography relevant in today's market and how to work as a digital artist. By making new work as an artist and by increasing the level of sophistication in my digital skills I become a more relevant teacher and working professional. My value as a teacher is that I am an artist who teaches and as I grow as an artist I have more skills and experience to draw from as a faculty member. My proposed new series will stretch me as an artist, while also giving me very necessary new digital skills as an instructor.

The project relates to my assignment very directly in that it involves complex image-making that combines the full range of photographic media (traditional through digital). It will make me a better teacher to experience a wide range of approaches to teaching technical information - which can often be dull and tedious.

5. Describe how the proposed leave will benefit the college and students.

As a visual artist, working to train other visual artists, the development of new bodies of work will further my ability to help my students make their own work. Artistic development is an individual process that can't be learned from a book - rather it's the one-on-one experience that comes from

working with someone who's been there. It's important for LBCC students to see that their faculty are teaching from personal experience and are actively engaged in the outside world.

When I started teaching digital photography eight years ago, photography was starting to make the switch to digital technologies. Our students weren't proficient on computers or with editing software. That situation has changed radically, now almost all of the students have basic computer skills and there is a growing set of students, with mid-level digital editing skills as well, that are not challenged by the existing coursework. Over the year I will be able to create the advanced Workbook Level 2 for these students. The book will incorporate digital retouching and compositing through the use of advanced imaging techniques and those skills are needed in all our advanced classes. My new skills would also help with our program plan of developing new digital courses and a digital certificate. Having those new skills will increase our students' abilities to get jobs as digital artists.

6. List and describe the specific, tangible products you will bring to the college within 90 days after your return to your assignment.

Upon my return to the college I will:

- Create a DVD portfolio of my artwork projects and make a link to my website portfolio available on my faculty page. The DVD will include: at least 12 new images from the Southland Icons series plus at least 7 new images from the new body of work (as yet untitled).
- Update the *Digital Workbook Level 1* and have it available for students at the bookstore.
- Create the *Digital Workbook Level 2* and have it available for students at the bookstore.

7. Describe how you will share the outcomes of your proposed leave with other interested parties upon your return.

The information would be available to interested parties through a variety of methods:

- The sabbatical report would be available to all interested parties either by pdf or hardcopy.
- The DVD portfolios would be available both through the Art Office and through the Library (assuming that their current policies are still in place).
- Both the *Digital Workbook Level 1* and the *Digital Workbook Level 2* will be available to students and faculty at the bookstore.
- All information will be available to any faculty that requests it and I will (of course) present to the Board if that is still part of this process.

8. If applicable, disclose any additional sources of employment earnings during the proposed leave. None

Ann Mitchell  
Signature of Applicant

11/1/11  
Date Originally Submitted