

Alex Emmons

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Artist Statement

I am influenced by my family's migratory patterns and immigration history. My mother was born in Panama and my father in Michigan. Neither lived long enough in either location to know it. This holds true for the many places they lived afterwards. I grew up as a transplant in rural Middleburgh, New York during my parents' 16-year home renovation project. I never put down roots there, choosing instead to live abroad and in various cities. The stories resulting from my family's and my experiences with moving have influenced my working process. Largely, the intersection of displacement and domestic space is the conceptual range that drives the direction of my creative research. My current projects embody a diverse visual terrain that reflect an intellectual curiosity and a myriad of emotions encompassed by ideas related to domesticity and being "away from home".

I am a lens-based artist primarily, which describes my exploration of photo-media for the variety of outcomes toward my conceptual goals. By incorporating different cameras to capture images with a wide range of focus, I create a visual dialogue while photographing that is inspired by memories, intuition, and current events. My projects describe my reflections as well as my "gut" responses through the selections I make in my pictures. I apply a formal vision to my projects that consistently defines each working portfolio. Post structurally, I present identifiable subjects to my audience and then rely on their curiosity to investigate further to relate to their own perspectives and knowledge.

I am including two projects from my current portfolio for this application. **Fieldtrips Home** embodies my experiences with displacement from moving and my honest approach toward the myriad of emotions encompassed by domestic space. I photographed friends' and acquaintances' houses with a large format camera. The type of camera involves a methodical approach for photographing and informed my working process. I manipulated the focal plane and angle of view for the camera to provide a myopic perspective. During my excursions, I was drawn to the organization of their rooms, the emphasis of certain objects, and the interactions with their pets, which allowed me to understand the resident's view for a moment. Within these domestic spaces I created my own visual dialogue. My project describes my nascent memories by the selections I make in the pictures. Constructed from 2003 - 2008, this series began prior to the "tilt-shift movement" and definitely points to my interests in how other artists contemporary artists like JoAnn Verburg, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Catherine Opie were surveying the domestic space and its inhabitants. Ultimately, I hope these images will transport my viewers to their own ideas of "home". For the exhibition, the photographs are large-scale digital prints at 31" x 40" on fine art rag paper in a minimal black frame without glass, creating a window-like view into the picture. Also, the gallery has living room furniture installed to create a more familiar atmosphere.

House & Garden is a series of cameraless cyanotypes on paper and fabric, initially inspired by the early plant specimen photographs of Anna Atkins. This project is an Arizona-based series, where I recorded plant shadows from gardens as well as objects from yards and garages. This 'blue-print' process creates a blue and white image that engages a viewer by relating to blue color subjects like a cyan cloudless sky. The present-day objects illustrated by my House & Garden project describe my recordings of yard tools, garden plants, eggs, seedpods, as well as mystery items from 'the garage'. As the cyanotype print shifts from a negative to a positive image from the white outline of a form; the shape of shadows, I believe, then transport my viewer from the everyday to a dream-like mnemonic, mind space. From the early influence of our first published photographer, Anna Atkins, to more contemporary artists like John Dugdale, I believe these antiquated processes can open up our viewers' visual experience to explore our subject matter differently. Likewise, this different gaze and resurgence of old processes offers a new opportunity for the photographic object that does not have to be traditional. Much like Penelope Umbrico has accomplished with her harvesting "suns" from flickr to reflect on the visual culture of a photographer anywhere. Thus the viewer can relate to the work readily. For the gallery installation, I hung work so the viewer can look at my prints on paper and fabric and become engaged as if they are looking at their own sheets hung on a clothesline containing shadows of recognizable objects.