BREAKING BARRIERS

BEYOND THE OBJECT

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BREAKING BARRIERS 2024

INTRODUCTION

The USF Contemporary Art Museum is honored to present *Breaking Barriers: Beyond the Object*. The works are a result of two *Breaking Barriers* photography workshops, *Dressing the Table – A Brief Look into Still Life Photography* and *Bringing Objects to Life – Examining Our Fascination With the Object*, that were conducted in the summer of 2024 and led by artist and US Army veteran Christian Cortés, with assistance by artist Kristen Roles.

The USFCAM team organizes the catalogue and a special gallery viewing of the photographs created by the workshop participants. Program Coordinator Amy Allison worked with the veterans to edit and organize their written texts. New Media Curator Don Fuller and Digital Media Specialist Kenzie Ferrell created the catalogue and managed the promotion of the program. Exhibitions Designer Gary Schmitt, Chief Preparator Eric Jonas, and Preparators Alejandro Gómez and Madison Andrews framed and installed the work. Thank you to Deputy Director Randall West, Exhibitions Manager Shannon Annis, and Events Coordinator Tammy Thomas, and a special acknowledgment to Leslie Elsasser and Noel Smith for their curatorial input.

Thank you to our partner, the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital. Our supporters make this program possible, including the USF Office of Veterans Success, the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners, the Dr. Allen W. and Janet G. Root CAM Endowment, and the USFCAM ACE Fund (Art for Community Engagement).

The *Breaking Barriers* program enables veterans to create their own photographic images, connect with other veterans, and learn a visual language they can use when words are hard to find. I offer my sincere congratulations to the 32 veterans whose photographs are featured in *Beyond the Object*.

MARGARET MILLER
Director and Professor
USF Institute for Research in Art
Contemporary Art Museum/Graphicstudio



ABOUT

Our fascination with objects begins in the earliest stages of life. Through touch, sight, and movement, we explore the physical world around us, learning about boundaries, both our own and those of the spaces we inhabit. It's through these interactions with objects that we first encounter sensations like pain, desire, envy, and joy. What we have and what we long for shape much of our early development. Even as we grow older, nostalgia often clings to certain objects, colors, or scents, connecting us to memories and emotions long past. In this workshop, we developed our own visual language by delving into the symbolic power of objects. We studied the evolution of still life photography from its historical roots to the interpretations of contemporary artists and drew inspiration from both. Participants were encouraged to explore a variety of tools to enrich their visual narratives and to question the utilitarian assumptions we often place on everyday items.

Armed with our trusty phone cameras, we ventured into a classic genre of photography, still life, that continues to offer fresh possibilities. While we've previously explored the advantages of smartphone photography, this time we approached our devices as traditional cameras. The participants meticulously manipulated their environment and with great care selected everything shown in the frame. It is a great pleasure to share the incredible work the *Breaking Barriers* participants produced this year.

CHRISTIAN CORTÉS
Artist and *Breaking Barriers* Instructor

Christian Cortés, *Where I Vanish,* 2024

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BEGINNING WORKSHOP

CHRIS ALGARIN

★ US MARINE CORPS

The Yin and Yang of Poverty

The photograph captures a moment frozen in time, a blend of hardship and resilience. It reminds me of the pots on the floor catching the leaks from a roof that never held up, of the early loss of a mother to drugs and a father to alcohol and abuse.

But amidst the struggle, there was my grandmother, fighting to raise me and my brother through sheer strength and love. I see us, young and innocent, sitting on the worn-out floor of our modest home, spooning cereal with water from our favorite bowl—our small, makeshift breakfast in a world that couldn't provide for much more.

We were creative, though. Butter, mayonnaise, and a sprinkle of sugar transformed the piece of bread into our very own version of french toast, a treat built from necessity but tasted like joy. The laughter and the fun we had, finding ways to escape the weight of our circumstances, are immortalized in this photo. It takes me back to those days—simple, yet profound. I remember the mix of textures, the taste of cereal with water, and the way my brother and I exchanged glances at the first bite.

It wasn't much, but to us, it was everything. The image isn't just a reminder of struggle, it's a reminder of how we made moments of happiness in spite of it all.

It makes me wonder, what does the image stir in your memories? Smells, tastes, the feeling of time passed? For me, it's the echoes of laughter, the comfort of family, and the strength to carry on, no matter the odds.

Chris Algarin, *The Yin and Yang of Poverty*, 2024



DAVID BRYANT

★ US ARMY

The Journey We Take in Life

David Bryant, *The Journey We Take in Life*, 2024



LUIS E. CARRASCO JR.

★ US MARINE CORPS

Soy Yo! - It's Me!

A car can be just a car to some,
but for me, it's a living, breathing
symbol of my essence.

It's a portrait of my culture, my
beliefs, and my approach to life.

The care I give my car, the cleanliness, the
welcoming vibe—it all mirrors who I am.

My car is more than an object; it's a
reflection of my pride and joy. When
others see it, they don't need to see
me. It speaks for itself. Soy yo!

Luis E. Carrasco Jr., *Soy Yo! - It's Me!*, 2024


PUERTO RICO
PUERTO RI

GWENDOLYN CHRISTIAN

★ SPOUSE OF US MARINE CORPS VETERAN

Sweet Surrender: A Soldier's Fall

A lone toy soldier, representing countless individuals fighting unseen battles, struggles against a flood of candy corn—a symbol of modern America.

This sugary sea stands as a metaphor for superficiality, indulgence, and the overwhelming forces that pull us under while society looks the other way. Alone and nearly consumed, the soldier fights on, embodying the resilience and grit of those left to navigate the challenges of a world that seems indifferent.

Perfect for those seeking art that confronts the complexities of our times, this piece is a powerful reminder of both personal struggle and societal apathy, wrapped in a colorful yet unsettling portrayal of today's reality.

Gwendolyn Christian, *Sweet Surrender: A Soldier's Fall*, 2024



DIANA COLON

★ US AIR FORCE

Living While Dying: A Self Reflection

The bouquet of flowers my husband brought home for me was wilting and dying. I made this smaller bouquet with the flowers that stood out to me as beautiful, even in the decaying process. I relate to these flowers. The elements and science behind aging and the stressors of the environment can be felt in my life, the same as I see in the flowers. From beauty, love, contemplation, and passion, to strife, stress, and sadness, our relationship has had its ups and downs. A living and a dying. A dying yet living. Sometimes wanting to die, also wanting to live, but to live in love and peace.

The backdrop of pink is my wedding dress that I wore to our "Give Love" wedding. The falling petals could be tears and energy that have fallen and continue to fall. The lines in the dress draw the eyes back up to the top of the photo as a sense of hopefulness that we can keep rising to the love and peace we once had and long for again, the forgiveness for another day to keep living, while dying.

Diana Colon, *Living While Dying: A Self Reflection*, 2024



EILEEN DAVIS

★ US ARMY

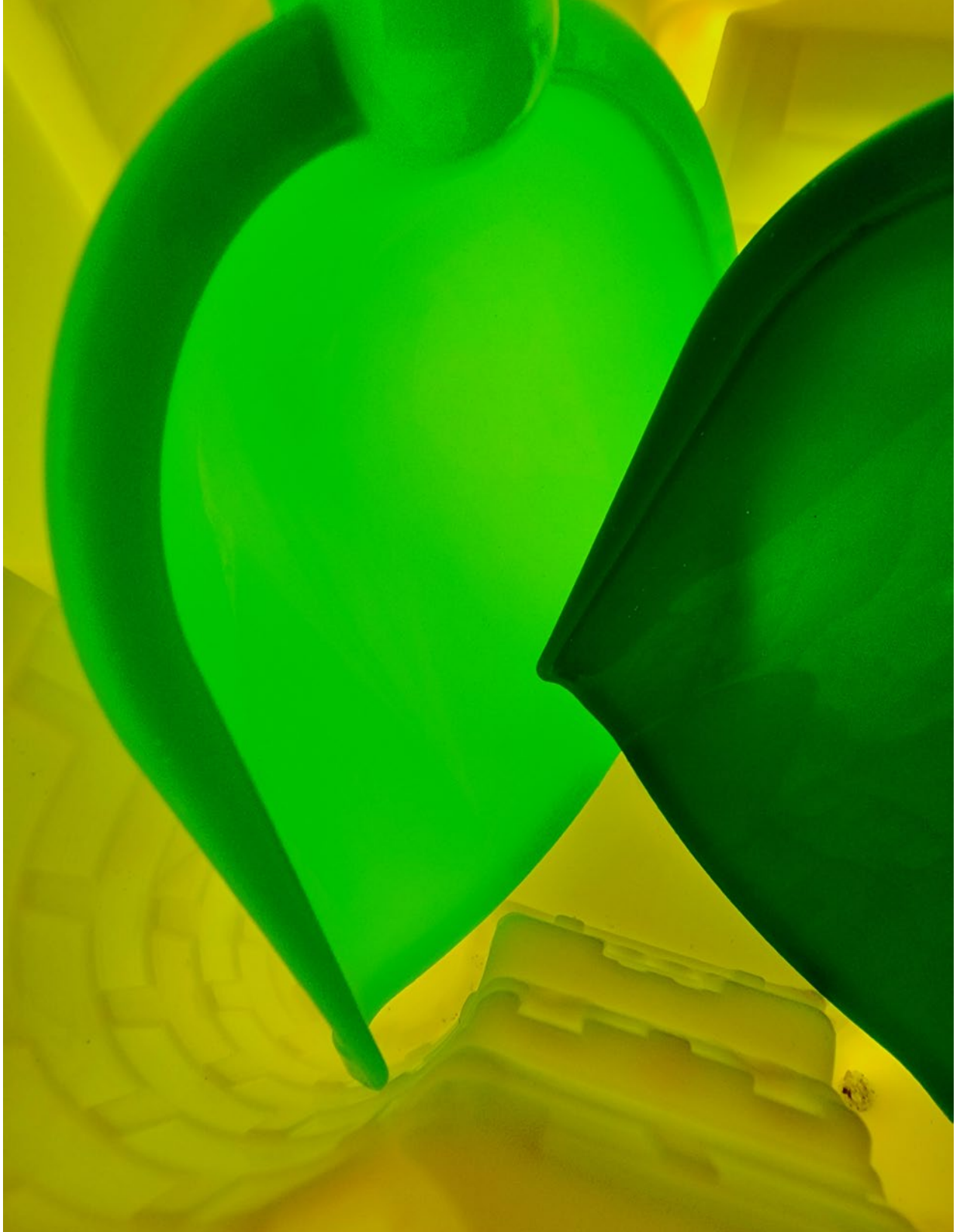
Shovels of Fun

I took this photograph of a yellow bucket and two green shovels, not just for a photography assignment, but for what the objects mean to me. They represent sheer unadulterated fun, like a day at the beach with so much adventure to be had. They mean feeling like a kid again and playing with my grandchildren.

At my age, the beach is not just a beautiful landscape but a playground full of endless joy and laughter. When I look at the photograph, I can imagine playing with my grandchildren with the shovels and bucket. I can see their little hands gripping the shovels and digging in the sand to create castles, moats, and sandhills. The bucket is perfect for carrying unique seashells from our treasure hunts.

This photograph doesn't just demonstrate depth and light, but that there is still a child within me who loves to play and have fun with my grandchildren.

Eileen Davis, *Shovels of Fun*, 2024



LARRIE DAVIS

★ US ARMY

Daily Cup of Beauty

My photograph explores the idea that there is beauty in things we don't see yet surround us every day. Sometimes it's as simple as looking into the bottom of your empty coffee cup. It's encouraging to know that we have the ability to awaken our senses to see a treasure trove of beauty in our daily life.

My senses awakened while taking a class to learn how to use the camera on my phone. Wow! My whole perspective of how I see the world has changed. I am now aware that if you stop and focus you can see beauty while simply living life. I am energized and motivated to rise and explore. I look for new things to see and enjoy and I'm taking the time to enjoy each and every moment.

My inspiration for this photo happened out of nowhere. One morning, after finishing a routine cup of coffee, I saw beauty in the bottom of my cup. I grabbed my phone, took the picture and was amazed at how much I enjoyed the outcome. The warm colors of gold, yellow, and brown made me feel comfortable. It was like someone put a warm blanket around my shoulders. The shadows on the white background pulled me in. I stared trying to understand the shapes I saw. For a moment, it took me back to a time when I hadn't a care in the world.

I hope the photo inspires you to take another look and see something beautiful that you may have missed.

Larrie Davis, *Daily Cup of Beauty*, 2024



BERNADETTE DUNN

★ US AIR FORCE

Joyful Harvest: The Fruit of Our Labor

As I gaze upon the photograph, I am reminded of a time when not having enough was a harsh reality in my life. The image serves as a powerful reminder of the source of my blessings and the journey towards abundance that I have experienced. In the past, my thoughts of scarcity led me to be overly pedantic about having enough food, but now, surrounded by plenty, I am filled with gratitude for the nourishment that sustains me.

Through practicing mindful eating, I have become more in tune with my body's cues for satisfaction, leading to a deeper appreciation of the food that fuels me. The richness of colors and the play of shadows in the photograph draw me in, reflecting the beauty of the abundance that surrounds me. I take pride in growing some of my own food, a reminder of the hard work and dedication that goes into cultivating sustenance.

Bernadette Dunn, *Joyful Harvest: The Fruit of Our Labor*, 2024



PAUL HALL

★ US ARMY MEDIC

This is My Habitue, This is My Phun

Like "Cult Of Thorn", *Los Enmascarados* came masquerading as though they were invited to my rave. From out of nowhere, they came on this particularly clear day. Denying the fact that they wear a mask. Masks that lasted through the pandemic. Masks that have robbed everybody of "all walks" of everything they've ever wanted and known. However, *Los Enmascarados* exists. And they're not even wearing masks. So, what is it that they want? Apparently, they haven't been here too long in this "Garden of Happiness." Which is what we've taken for granted for so many years. I was brought here to this garden; my name is Paul Hall. And I was blind to the fact that they wear normal apparel during whatever parallel plane they feel comfortable in. This made them believe that they were sane as they stepped away from their weather machines and jumped into their cyber trucks. We all knew *The Lion and the Cheating. Ain't Misbelieving*!

Everyone has this umbilicus of Phun.

Don't Forget To Check The Oil...

Paul Hall, *This is My Habitue, This is My Phun*, 2024



FREDDY JIMENEZ

★ US ARMY

Untitled

Freddy Jimenez, *Untitled*, 2024



TANYA O'BRIEN

★ US NAVY

Off Duty

This photograph is of my service dog Charley. Because of Charley, I can now go out in public and attend events which I was not able to do for many years. She has given me a new outlook on life that I savor. While she does work hard, she also rests hard. Charley loves to nap, both on the couch and outside in the sun. This picture reminds me of how hard it must be to be my service dog.

I am a 100% disabled Navy veteran. I have struggled with my PTSD diagnosis and the symptoms I experienced. As a kid, I always took pictures, either in my mind or with a camera. I loved trying to capture moments as memories. One of the programs I participated in during my recovery was Breaking Barriers. This class taught me how to set up, compose, and edit photos I take with my iPhone. These have been great tools to help me get back into a hobby I love.

Tanya O'Brien, *Off Duty*, 2024



JESSE PRICE

★ US MARINE CORPS

Relationships: The Reason for Life

This picture of animate objects is a non-threatening reflection of the basic necessities—plants, sunlight, air—that are vital for human life and living.

The animate and inanimate objects presented together in the picture reflect a harmony that isn't common in the human experience. Human life is all about relationships. The healthier the relationship, the healthier the life and living experience.

When I look at this picture, my first thought is of God, the creator and source of all life. I think of my relationship with God. Then I think of the most important relationship in my life—my wife.

I love music and the picture puts me in the frame of a song: "This Is the Air I Breathe."

This is the air I breathe
This is the air I breathe
Your holy presence
Living in me
This is my daily bread
This is my daily bread
Your very word
Spoken to me
And I... I'm desperate for you
And I... I'm lost without you
This is the air I breathe
Your holy presence
Living in me

Jesse Price, *Relationships: The Reason for Life*, 2024



RJ SMITH

★ US AIR FORCE

Rising From the Sands of Time

Leaving the military was a storm I hadn't prepared for—a sudden unraveling of the path I thought was mine. In my second year of service, I committed to a future in uniform, envisioning a career that would carry me to retirement. But fate had other plans. Four years later, a medical discharge thrust me into the unknown, forcing me to redefine myself while carrying the weight of a family to support. The chaos of that transition was a battle of its own—one of uncertainty, loss, and the search for purpose.

This photograph stands as a testament to that struggle—not just mine, but one shared by countless veterans who step out of service and into the daunting vastness of civilian life. It captures the quiet resilience required to rise, to rediscover oneself, and to move forward without ever forgetting the past. There is an unspoken understanding among us—a bond forged in sacrifice and endurance. We see it in each other's eyes, in the grip of a handshake, in the weight of memory.

This is our journey.

RJ Smith, *Rising From the Sands of Time*, 2024


BILT

MELISA VELEZ

★ US ARMY

Shattered Silence: The Duality of Strength

The broken glass tells the story—each shard a piece of me, sharp and raw. The skull staring back from the reflection is a reminder of battles fought in silence, of what's hidden behind the uniform. The soldier standing in the light, proud and disciplined, is who I was, who I showed the world. But the figure in the shadows, holding the shattered mirror, is who I truly am—carrying the weight of trauma and the strength it takes to hold the pieces together. This is more than just an image; it's the truth of survival, the power of facing the darkness and still standing.

Melisa Velez, *Shattered Silence: The Duality of Strength*, 2024



ADVANCED WORKSHOP

CRIMI ARRIETA

★ FAMILY MEMBER OF US ARMY VETERAN

Reflection

My intention was to capture the interplay between a physical object and its reflection, highlighting how light interacts with surfaces and creates both a visible presence and an abstract version of reality. This interplay creates a duality, two versions of the same object.

I invite the viewer to witness the visible and abstract worlds of this object, two versions of reality at once. Reflect on its duality, the relationship between reality and perception, the known and the unknown, the here and there, the now and then, up and down, left and right, light and shadow...

Crimi Arrieta, *Reflection*, 2024

MANFREDO BOBADILLA

★ US ARMY

Mooshu's Prey

Here, you see a mouse toy that has been worn out from running. It is filled with catnip, a substance known to energize cats. In the background, you see my cat Mooshu Bear. Mooshu is slowly creeping up to the mouse toy, using his sensitive nose to lure him to the smell of his next target. The mouse is hoping that by standing still, he will not catch the attention of Mooshu, for he knows that Mooshu will toss him around the apartment once he is captured.

This is one of the many scenes that occurs in my household as I engage in playtime with my cats. It is my opportunity to escape reality and become their prey. However, it takes more than just throwing a toy around my apartment to activate their hunter instinct. I must imagine myself in a different environment, trying to escape from becoming their next victim, which adds thrill to the game.

The scene ends with adrenaline pumping as Mooshu shifts from regular housecat to a lion in the jungle. His eyes widen as he analyzes my every move, looking for a chance to sneak attack. I know that I have his full attention and joy when I see his butt wiggle as the feline engine revs up for the moment to kill.

Manfredo Bobadilla, ***Mooshu's Prey*****, 2024**



ALVARO CALVILLO

★ US ARMY

The Looking Glass

I often dream of forces attempting to muffle my words. Whatever forces they are, they are never successful. I often wondered where that strength came from. It wasn't until time stood still and my reality turned surreal, at the very moment I heard the sound of gunfire—both coming at me and leaving my weapon—that I realized where the strength came from.

It was the stitching, the threading, the composition, the density, the elasticity, the tensile strength, the optical properties, the defects, the fractured toughness, and the sheer strength of the material of being, that had to originate from a higher source than anything I could muster, create, or imagine on my own. I had always believed this but did not fully comprehend it until I had the opportunity to peer through "The Looking Glass" and realize that the force that sustained me was the power of the one True Living God.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Alvaro Calvillo, *The Looking Glass*, 2024


SPECIAL FORCES
AIRBORNE

PATRICIA COLBERT

★ US ARMY

New Normalcy Accepted

Time hasn't stood still!

It has been almost 24 years since my injury. In that time, I have had many medical obstacles to overcome, my children have grown, and grandchildren have arrived. My mobility and daily tasks continue to be completed.

My mom's rule was to never leave dirty dishes in the sink at night. Through the years, I have remained committed to that rule of my childhood and accepted the challenge to make a new normalcy work for me. This acceptance represents independence on my own terms. So, washing dishes is not simply a mundane chore, but a quiet, hard-earned choice. Washing dishes is one of many choices that I make each day to garner my personal independence and success. I choose resilience for the mundane tasks and the challenges that come with my new normal.

My day-to-day choices are tough, but my new normalcy is accepted with grit, grace, and a smile.

Patricia Colbert, ***New Normalcy Accepted***, 2024



AGUSTIN COLLAZO JR.

★ US MARINE CORPS / US NAVY

The First Step

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

This famous quote by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu is part of the inspiration for my photo *The First Step*. The idea behind *The First Step* is to share the beginning of two very important journeys in my life, my military career and my journey as a photographer.

In this image, you will see the first camera I purchased many years ago, and beside it is a photograph of me standing with my Marine Corps recruiter that was taken after my oath of enlistment. Coincidentally, that photograph was taken with the same camera. At the time I had no idea how life-changing and important the military would become, nor did I imagine the influence photography would have in my life.

The first steps in my journey began over 35 years ago. Although my military journey has ended, the other continues. I do not know the direction my next steps will take me, but I will look forward to sharing some photos along the way.

I'm a photographer, I'm an artist, and I'm a proud US military veteran.

Agustin Collazo Jr., *The First Step*, 2024


HOW TO MAKE
GOOD PICTURES
WITH YOUR
POLAROID
Speedliner
LAND CAMERA
MODEL 95A

DR. CHARLEY FERRER

★ US ARMY

Images Within

At times, life resembles a runaway train—out of our control and rushing by—as our subconscious struggles to hold onto a fleeting moment, as if from a dream we suddenly woke from.

We're constantly flittering from one moment to another, barely catching a glimpse of ourselves in the mirror.

And yet, when we have a fraction of time to look around us, what do we see?

Do we see it all or do we merely capture a glimpse of the whole?

Is our reflection what we imagined?

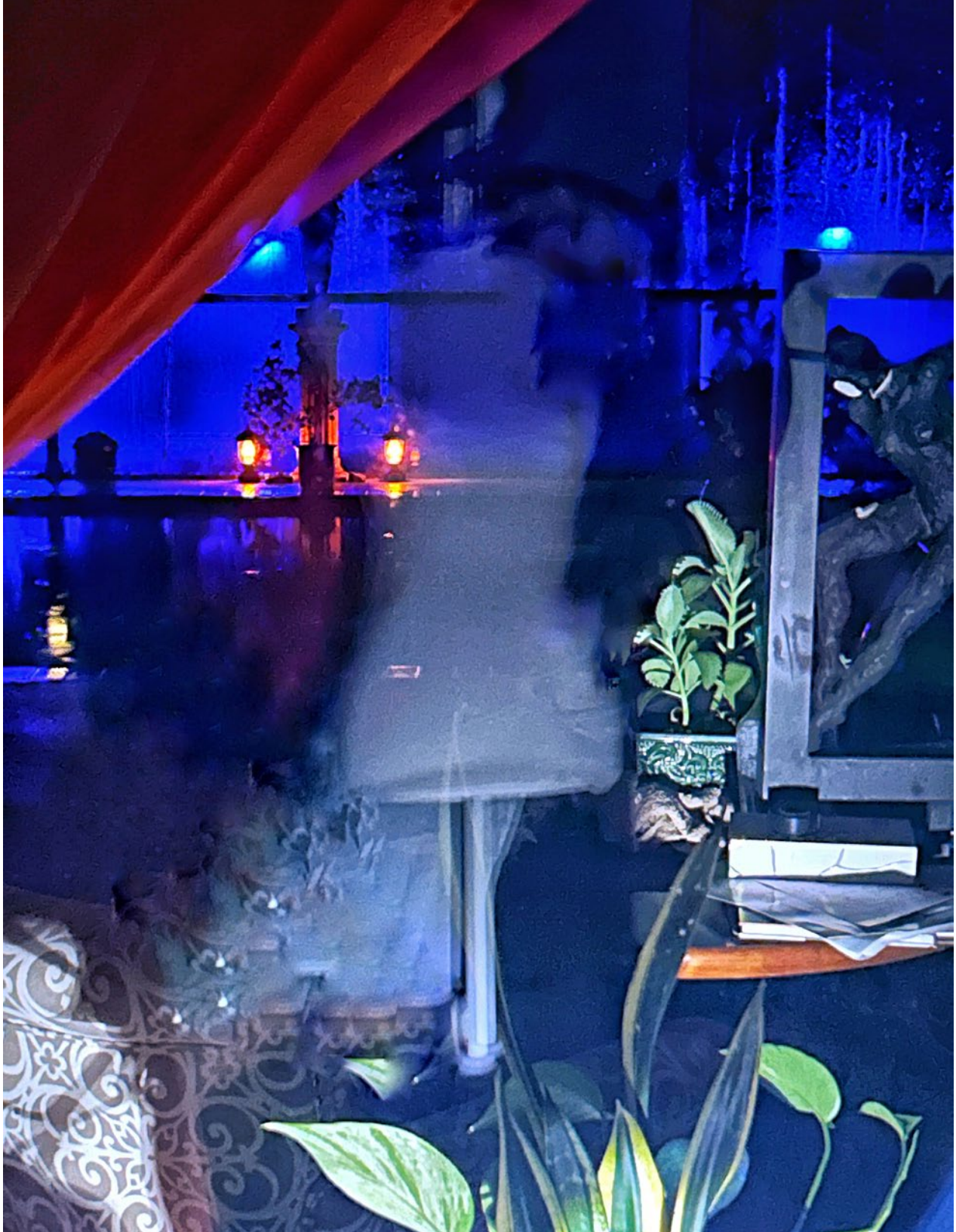
Are we?

When you look at this photograph, can you focus on the whole or is your eye drawn to merely one section, giving you just a small glimpse of it all?

Does that glimpse arouse your curiosity?

Imagine for a moment the treasures you could discover hidden within this photograph's depths, if only you allowed yourself the freedom and luxury to stand still for a moment to search.

Dr. Charley Ferrer, *Images Within*, 2024



EVAN FOUNTAIN

★ US AIR FORCE

Empty Space

This picture was one of a series looking at the empty spaces where my dog Luna used to be.

She was a mutt, and not the dog I went to pick up that day. When I got to the rescue, I found that the other puppy I was going to pick up had already been adopted. Luna and her siblings were still available though. All the other puppies nibbled on my fingers, but Luna licked my fingers. She stayed that gentle throughout her twelve years.

She was a good dog.

Evan Fountain, *Empty Space*, 2024



DEREK HOPKINS

★ US AIR FORCE

U.F.O.

While I was there, Kandahar Air Base was the most active single airstrip in the world. Jets and transport, helicopters and drones, and business was good. One of my duties was to bring munitions from the bomb dump to the flightline.

It was a bit of a rush moving thousands of pounds of explosives in an active warzone. A surprise mortar or rocket attack could send me home in spectacular fashion.

I would have to wait on the flightline, sometimes for hours on end, with little more to do than contemplate. You can see far into the distance where the dust and sky blend in a dome around you. A purple and tan haze fills the space with dirt and identifying lights blink in and out. The dust gives birth to two Blackhawks that descend like UFOs on this alien planet. I exit my vehicle and begin to work.

Derek Hopkins, ***U.F.O.***, 2024


Roland

VALERIE LARSON

★ US AIR FORCE

Missing You

My name is Valerie Larson, and
I am an Air Force veteran.

I come from a very large Air Force family. We are used to moving away from family and friends frequently. Moving hits so much harder when it's your grandbabies that are leaving. My son got his orders to move back to Colorado Springs.

After saying our final goodbyes as they PCS'd (permanent change of station), I walked into my office and saw the chair where my grandbabies and I read books.

Looking at the picture makes me sad. But it also brings back good memories of funny storytelling and acting out the books as my babies did. It's hard to fit in this small chair with them, they are growing too fast as grandbabies tend to do. But we will be right back in that chair the next time they visit, reading and laughing, as if they never left.

Valerie Larson, *Missing You*, 2024



JOHN LEDUC

★ US ARMY

A Mother's Gift

If you look closely at the picture, you'll find me surrounded by delicate Origami, wrapped in a dreamlike haze.

As a child, my mother would enchant me with the art of Origami. To my young eyes, it was pure magic—the way her hands transformed a plain, unassuming sheet of paper into something intricate and graceful. It felt like a spell, her sleight-of-hand conjuring beauty out of nothingness, imbued with an almost mystical charm.

As I grew older, I came to understand the quiet brilliance of my mother's gift. Origami was not just an art; it was a lesson. It taught me patience, sharpened my focus, and made my small, clumsy fingers nimble. At the same time, it was her way of keeping me entertained, a gentle nudge toward calm creativity that gave her moments of peace. All of this was wrapped in the promise of a goal: *Senbazuru**.

I never did reach that goal—1000 folded cranes—but those rainy indoor days became a haven, filled with purpose and serenity instead of chaos.

**Senbazuru*—a Japanese tradition of folding 1000 Origami cranes. Legend has it that completing this task within a year grants the folder a single wish, along with blessings of happiness and eternal good fortune.

John Leduc, *A Mother's Gift*, 2024



KEVIN LIPTON

★ US ARMY MEDIC

I Used to Be Indestructible

I used to walk with a fearless grin,
Steel for skin, there was no way to get in.
But the wind blew hard, and
the years came fast,
Now I'm glass, just glass.
The cracks let the sunlight through,
What I lost; I never knew.
Fragile now, but I can feel,
And that's how I know it's real.

Kevin Lipton, *I Used to Be Indestructible*, 2024



MIKKO MAKI

★ US MARINE CORPS

From Beginning to End and Always

As told to Bethany Maki:

It's been said "There's no such thing as a former Marine." Yet there is an end to active duty. Mine came after 15 years of service.

The 17-year-old who picked up his dog tags at Parris Island was running from what was and exploring what might be. An angry, rebellious escapist getting on the toughest and most honorable path he knew of.

The 20-year-old corporal who had finished a West Pac deployment and was living the regimented life of security forces duty at NAS Alameda. The Loma Prieta Earthquake on October 17, 1989, disrupted that life and forged a new leader who realized he thrived when there was no script to follow.

The 26-year-old instructor at Camp Lejeune's School of Infantry, training new Non Combat Arms Marines the skills they'd only use if all hell broke loose. No longer one of these young men, no longer angry and rebellious. A leader still exploring what might be.

The 32-year-old staff sergeant at the Training and Education Division at Quantico, working a desk job managing school seats and interservice coordination. Ready to retire and for what might still be.

Forty years since I stepped on those yellow footprints, and I've learned you can't escape what made you nor should you. The path that should be is one that brings into your life that which helps you understand, heal, and thrive. For me that is the Corps, time and strength for self-reflection and evolution, my soulmate, my photography and capturing the story.

Mikko Maki, ***From Beginning to End and Always,*** 2024

San Francisco Chronicle
HUNDREDS DEAD
IN HUGE QUAKE
FMF
1A
THE WALKING DEAD

DOLORES MATTEO

★ US ARMY

The Little Brown Suitcase

The choice of deciding how to describe a journey of self with only a photo takes some planning. My choice of using the suitcase and its contents represent my life's travels.

Before I truly appreciated the gift of traveling through the world, my parents gave me a wonderful childhood experience. My military career also provided me with other journeys.

The suitcase was my mother's, used when escaping the horrors of World War II from Czechoslovakia to Austria in the 1940s. The color red of the background is the love of family, the blood that connects us and drives us to search through our days for the passion of our pursuits. The many postcards represent the countries I have lived as a child, traveled as an adult, stationed in the military, and enjoyed with my children.

Traveling instilled the passion to discover new places in them—and hopefully my grandchildren—giving them an open mind to diversity and cultures.

Dolores Matteo, *The Little Brown Suitcase*, 2024


TORREMOLINOS
Costa del Sol
Wiefelburger Bier
I have dreamt of Love
SUNSHINE
tenderness
Wonderful
United States of America

ALICIA MORALES

★ US ARMY

24 ½

I'm forever proud of the time I served in the Army. I remembered I still have my Army Green and the official photo of when I was promoted to Master Sergeant.

This photo expresses great memories of that time.

Alicia Morales, *24 ½*, 2024


MORALES

CHRIS SMITH

★ SPOUSE OF US ARMY VETERAN

The Last Highlight

Each part of our life will play out in
ways that we may or may not control.

When one stage of life ends, there will
be images, flashes, and memories that
will endure like shadows in our minds.

Our past becomes a compilation of
the journey we were once on, and
the moment when it changed.

Fragments of a former life will
remain. Silhouettes and shadows
become identical and highlight an
experience of what life used to be.

The empty space that was
created can be filled with new
experiences and opportunities.
This is the chance to start a new game
with a new perspective but with more
knowledge on how to play, win, and
be more successful than before.

Chris Smith, *The Last Highlight*, 2024


No.
Name
Date
Dr.
Remarks

ROGER ST. JULIAN

★ US ARMY

Shattered Memories

Have you ever forgotten someone's name? How about your own? In 2016, I was put into a coma after a motorcycle accident, and when I woke up, I didn't know myself. My world was shattered. Only pieces of myself remained, scattered and unfamiliar.

My reflection was no longer someone I recognized, and what I saw felt distorted and misshapen. I came to learn that the areas of my brain that were damaged caused retrograde amnesia and emotional dysregulation.

The understanding that the different lobes of my brain performed different and distinct functions felt vaguely reminiscent of the esoteric practice of phrenology, a Victorian era pseudoscience of reading a person's personality by analyzing the shape and terrain of the skull. The model of a phrenology head featured here is a self-representation, indicating the feeling that I had lost control over these disparate domains of self-identity, that my perception of self could be so easily relegated to which areas of my brain remained undamaged. The unmoving statue also represents the experience of my face becoming the unfeeling facade of a person, as another consequence of traumatic brain injury is a pervasive numbness to life, a seemingly unending flat affect that is captured in this frozen stone face.

The license plate featured here in the foreground, the same from the bike that I crashed, serves as a yearbook time stamp, recording the year of the accident (a needed service, as I often forget when it happened).

Roger St. Julian, *Shattered Memories*, 2024


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FORCE
JOY

RAEANNE SWANSON

★ US AIR FORCE

I Am the Veteran

The photograph *I Am the Veteran* was inspired by the profound sense of pride I have in being a United States Air Force Veteran. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to serve my country and work every day to ensure airmen had the resources they needed to complete the mission and that their families were provided with services to enable them to thrive. It was also my distinct honor, during my time on active duty, to help veterans secure medical and mental health services by researching squadron records and providing evidence that was used to corroborate thousands of VA claims—from as far back as Vietnam and as recent as Desert Storm.

The specific items in this photograph highlight that I am a Woman Veteran, that I wore combat boots and completed the mission while also embracing my feminine essence each and every day.

The composition is significant because I am frequently mistaken as a spouse and asked, "Is your husband with you?" My response is always, "I am the Veteran." It amazes me that even today I am asked that question at airline gates, restaurants, and businesses that offer special services or discounts for active duty and veterans. I am grateful for their recognition of the service and sacrifices that our military members make but am frustrated that men and women alike continue to ask me this question, even when I have presented my military or veteran ID card.

I hope to convey through my photograph that women are an integral part of our active-duty force and veteran community and should, without hesitation, be recognized as such.

RaeAnne Swanson, ***I Am the Veteran***, 2024



VIANA TAVARES-FISCHER

★ US ARMY

Boxing Into the Light

The boxing gloves represent the determination within me after experiencing multiple losses, especially my mother who was my confidant, inspiration, and motivator, and instilled in me to always be my best. The gloves reflect the fight to recover, to allow myself to feel life and beauty and to live again.

Boxing is a release and motivates me to surrender deep dark emotions and sadness and uncover the feelings of love that are sometimes suppressed when one experiences loss. Through the sweat and tears, I can view life as a never-ending story full of hope.

Boxing restored my life. I'm able to pursue my aspirations of sharing my artistic talents with the world through creative writing, photography, and poetry. The boxing gloves also restored a pathway to living in the light. The fight and my determination are encouragement to never give up and to live a life of happiness and in remembrance of shared love.

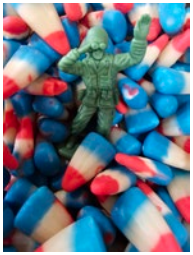
Viana Tavares-Fischer, ***Boxing Into the Light***, 2024



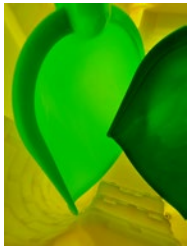

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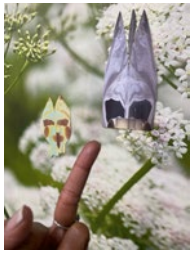

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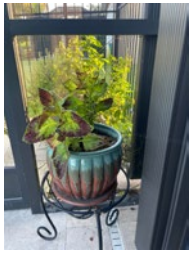

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BEGINNING WORKSHOP

1. CHRIS ALGARIN
The Yin and Yang of Poverty

2. DAVID BRYANT
The Journey We Take in Life

3. LUIS E. CARRASCO JR.
Soy Yo! - It's Me!

4. GWENDOLYN CHRISTIAN
Sweet Surrender: A Soldier's Fall

5. DIANA COLON
Living While Dying: A Self Reflection

6. EILEEN DAVIS
Shovels of Fun

7. LARRIE DAVIS
Daily Cup of Beauty

8. BERNADETTE DUNN
Joyful Harvest: The Fruit of Our Labor

9. PAUL HALL
This is My Habitue, This is My Phun

10. FREDDY JIMENEZ
Untitled

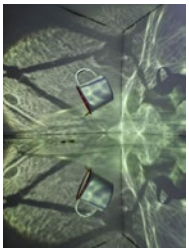
11. TANYA O'BRIEN
Off Duty

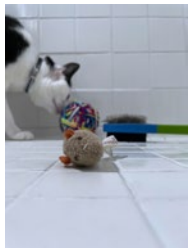
12. JESSE PRICE
Relationships: The Reason for Life

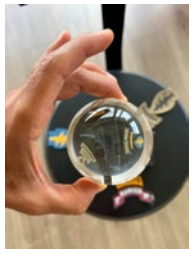
13. RJ SMITH
Rising From the Sands of Time

14. MELISA VELEZ
Shattered Silence: The Duality of Strength

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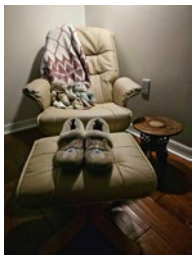

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ADVANCED WORKSHOP

15. CRIMI ARRIETA
Reflection

16. MANFREDO BOBADILLA
Mooshu's Prey

17. ALVARO CALVILLO
The Looking Glass

18. PATRICIA COLBERT
New Normalcy Accepted

19. AGUSTIN COLLAZO JR.
The First Step

20. DR. CHARLEY FERRER
Images Within

21. EVAN FOUNTAIN
Empty Space

22. DEREK HOPKINS
U.F.O

23. VALERIE LARSON
Missing You

24. JOHN LEDUC
A Mother's Gift

25. KEVIN LIPTON
I Used to Be Indestructible

26. MIKKO MAKI
From Beginning to End and Always

27. DOLORES MATTEO
The Little Brown Suitcase

28. ALICIA MORALES
24 1/2

29. CHRIS SMITH
The Last Highlight

30. ROGER ST. JULIAN
Shattered Memories

31. RAEANNE SWANSON
I Am the Veteran

32. VIANA TAVARES-FISCHER
Boxing Into the Light

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