

THE QUARTERLY

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Paul Dunlap**

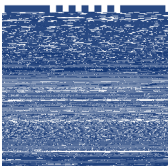
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Student Spotlight: Sophia Monsibais

A Conversation with Professor Paul Dunlap

BY DANIELA FRANCO

What is your school background and what inspired you to choose photography?

"I attended what was then North Georgia College in Dahlonega. The name changed to North Georgia

College & State University before I graduated. Initially, I was a drawing and painting student, but I always wanted to take a photography class. Back then, film was all there was—digital photography had not really been around. The school offered a 35mm black and white film photography course in the summer and I signed up for it. Well, I am not very good with math and trying to understand the exposure equivalencies and the balance between aperture and shutter blew my mind.

The course was a condensed 5-week course, so before I knew it, it was all over. I wasn't too thrilled with my results and that was unacceptable to me, so I signed up for the next course the following semester. When it all clicked...so to speak. I loved the medium and never looked back. After graduation, I visited the photography department at the University of Georgia and loved it. I applied for their MFA graduate program, and they selected two students. I was one of them!"

What influenced you to become a professor?

"I was a non-traditional student at North Georgia College in my late 20s, and I was often helping my classmates in the darkroom and in my other classes. One of my professors, Tommye Scanlin, mentioned to me that I should consider teaching. I had never even thought about it, and I think I initially laughed when she said this. She then told me that

I was already teaching them—whether I knew it or not. I started thinking more about it and becoming more aware of how much I was helping my other classmates, so I applied to graduate school. Ten days after I graduated from the University of Georgia, I started teaching as an adjunct instructor at my alma mater, and I am now wrapping up my 15th year teaching in the Department of Visual Arts."

What makes teaching worth it?

"It is always rewarding to see students' confidence and technical abilities grow beyond their own expectations as they become wonderful artists. It is also great to hear back from them years down the road and see what successes they have achieved and their gratefulness for the faculty who taught them, equipping them with the tools needed to succeed."

How does it feel to be working with the university you graduated from?

"As sappy as it sounds, I feel like my life was transformed during my undergraduate experience in Dahlonega. I suppose I feel I have a debt that must be paid forward (not back) to others at this university. I knew I always wanted to come back and teach here. Since then, many wonderful things have opened up for me. I am very, very proud of steering us to successful accreditation with the National Association of Schools of Art & Design (NASAD), and I am not sure anything could top that. Earning that accreditation took a long time and a lot of late nights. It has completely changed everything about the Department of Visual Arts: garnering us a lot more faculty, better facilities and equipment, and improvements in our programming."

Meet the Staff

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