

M E N T O R S

lifelessons

**The School of Visual Arts'
Mentors Program
readies students
for the real world.**

Below: by SVA's
Barclay Hughes,
whose mentor was
Philip-Lorca diCorcia.
Opposite top: by
SVA's Juniper Pierce,
whose mentor
was Chris Callis.
Opposite, bottom: by
SVA's Mark Paris,
whose mentor was
Mary Ellen Mark.

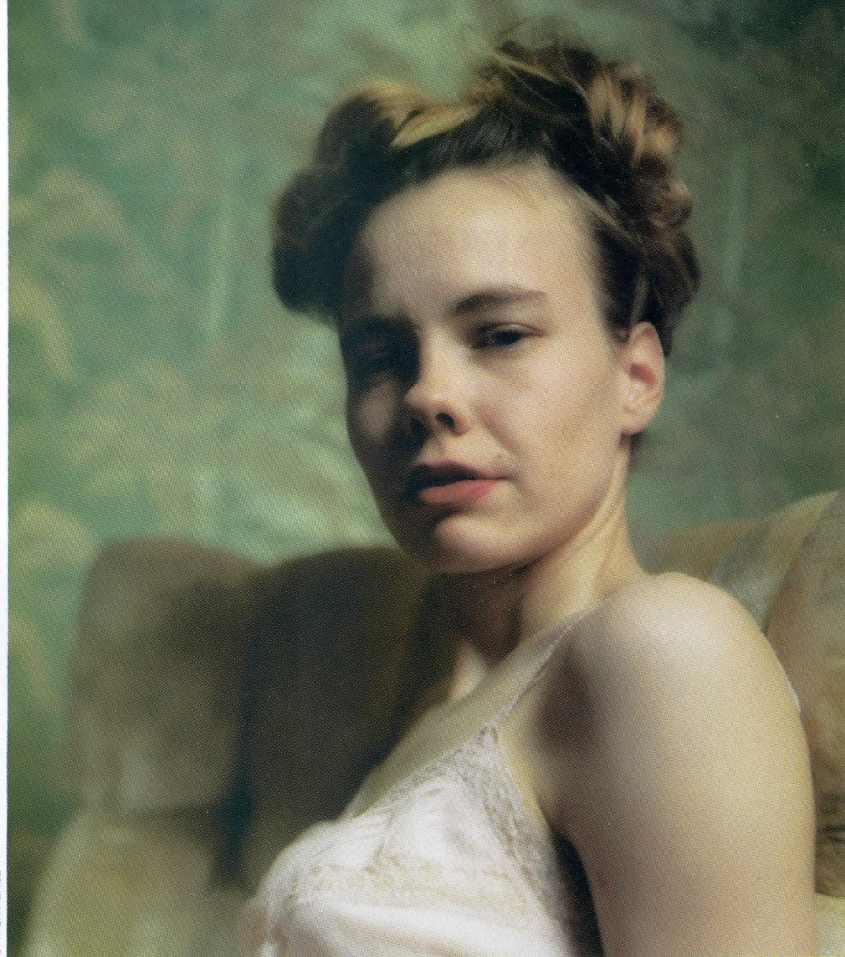


Teachers are undoubtedly the most powerful creative influences in a photography student's life. But in many of the photo programs profiled by *American Photo On Campus*, teachers are also working professionals who bring real-world experience to their academic duties—providing students with valuable career guidance and even helping them establish useful contacts with people in the industry. A special program created by New York City's School of Visual Arts is taking that important idea a step further.

SVA's Mentors Program pairs selected SVA photo students with influential photographers, photo editors, art directors, and other industry experts. Once a student is assigned a mentor late in the fall term, he or she must contact and meet with that person, who gives them a professional-style assignment that ties in with the student's own interests and plans. Then the pair meets regularly throughout the remainder of the year to review work and assess the student's progress. "The program is designed to encourage students in ways beyond what a college art education can do," explains Eve Sonneman, SVA photography chair. "Diane Arbus was my own mentor, and she really helped me focus my work."

This year's SVA mentors included photographers Gregory Crewdson, Mary Ellen Mark, and Susan Meiselas; *Life* magazine picture editor Barbara Baker Burrows and *New York* magazine photo director Jordan Schaps; collector W. M. Hunt; and critic Klaus Kertess. Assignments are as varied as the mentors themselves. Senior Barclay Hughes, whose mentor was fine-art photographer Philip-Lorca diCorcia, continued his street photography and also completed a special project on carnivals in the Midwest. "Spending time with my mentor really gave me a sense of what's out there in the photo business and art world," says Hughes. "It also made me step back from my work and see what other directions I can take it in." But the program often provides students with more than a new perspective. "Great things have come out of it for them," says former SVA photography head Alice Beck-Odette, who started the program in 1991. "We're talking real jobs."

The culmination of each year's Mentors Program is a spring show at New York's Art Directors Club. Called "Mentors: Your Choice/My Choice," the exhibition's title refers to the fact that each participant submits two pieces. One is chosen by the mentor, one by the student—as if to reassure students that their own vision is as important as any judgment that may be rendered on their work. —RUSSELL HART



JUNIPER PIERCE



MARK PARIS



BARCLAY HUGHES