

Julie Kellman Wins National Honor

18-year-old Transforms the Landscape into Basic Forms

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When Julie Kellman looks out the window of her father's Cessna skimming above urban freeways or rural byways, she fixes on pattern and texture over transport and utility. Like Matisse, the photographer Kellman transforms the material world into geometry.

'My photos are not so much different in subject, but different in quality of line,' says Kellman, who this year kept advancing higher and higher in the youngARTS competition, recognized by a panel of professional photographers. youngARTS is the core program of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA).

Selected in January, along with 140 high school seniors from a pool of 6,000, who originally registered for the contest, Kellman spent a week in Miami, where she was able to work with professional photographers and add to her portfolio.

Two months after returning home, the Pacific Palisades resident learned that she had been chosen a Silver Award winner, which carried a \$5,000 prize and an exhibition at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York City

Her talent was further recognized when she was named a Presidential Scholar and spent a week in Washington, D.C. in June.

Twenty students from across the nation are chosen annually to receive this designation, from the fields of cinematic arts, dance, music, photography, theater, visual arts, voice and writing. During those five days in the Capitol, Kellman participated in seminars, visited government officials and elected representatives and attended cultural events'all of it culminating in a White House-sponsored event at which she was awarded the Presidential Medallion by Vice President Joe Biden.

Kellman, 18, was encouraged to enter the youngArts contest by her Marlborough photography teacher, Judith Tanzman. 'She has confidence in students,' Kellman says. 'From the point you get your grounding,



Rich Schmitt / Staff Photographer

Palisades resident Julie Kellman is one of 20 Presidential Scholars for 2009.

she says, 'Apply to contests.' The school also provided support by paying the contest fees, covering one piece for underclassmen and a whole portfolio for seniors.

Kellman presented a suite of aerial shots, taken with her Nikon D40X (which she bought with the money she made working two summers at Bentons Sports Shop on Swarthmore).

Her initial inspiration to focus on the landscape as seen from the air was a result of flying across the country in her father's Cessna, stopping along the way to visit colleges.

'Dad was really great taking back up in the air to photograph both urban and rural landscapes up and down the California coast. Kellman's work reveals not only the encroaching built landscape, but also emphasizes the graphic qualities. Roads become ellipses, fields seem like perfect rhomboids and neighborhoods match up in chevron shapes.

For the first round of the NAFA contest, Kellman sent digital images, but as the field narrowed, judges wanted to see printed work, not exceeding 18 x 24 inches. Kellman's portfolio makes an impressive statement at 13 x 19 inches.

The oldest of three girls, Kellman traces her fascination with cameras to the simple, spontaneous disposable. 'I used to sit on the bus to Marlborough staring out the window and watching the day to day activity, finding pattern in the mundane.'

She deepened her interest with classes at Marlborough, UCLA's Design Media Arts Summer Institute and one particularly challenging six-week program at Cal State L.A. summer school for the arts. 'The course was taught by graduates of the program. My teacher, Mr. Ayers, had us work on self-portraits and then a small series.'

She built her NAFA portfolio in the Marlborough AP photo class her last at the school, which dictated 10 pieces in breadth a non-associated subject, and 10 in her concentration, which entailed creating an idea and slowly evolving it over time.

Unlike many photographers, Kellman began with digital imaging, visual design and Web-based work, and then got into darkroom and traditional photography. Glad for the traditional approach at Marlborough, Kellman appreciates still photography and has her favorites.

'I like the way Richard Avedon set up pictures and portraits,' she says. On the other hand, she likes the spontaneity in Henri Cartier-Bresson's work. 'He started the idea of 'in-the-moment photography.'

In an oblique way, Kellman believes that her parents' work has influenced her. 'Dad [Phil Kellman] works with perception as a professor of cognitive psychology at UCLA. He wrote a book on infant perception 'Cradle of Knowledge,' (The MIT Press). My mom [Pam Hilpert] is a doctor who specializes in women's health and radiology. It dawned on me how images are in my family's life.'

Kellman looks upon this year of her various honors with openness, and perhaps a bit of incredulity, beginning with her first notification.

'Two days before Thanksgiving I got a phone call informing me that I had been selected for the youngArts week in Miami,' she recalls. 'I thought it was a telephone solicitation.'

A major component of the whole experience in Miami, New York and Washington, D. C. was the friendships that bloomed among the other contestants she met along the way. In Miami, we photographers got a different experience from the other artists, who spent the week working in art studios,' she says. 'Because you can't stay in one place for long, we got to go on incredible shooting outings.' They went through Little Havana, enjoyed caf' con leche and got a good idea of the local scene. In a sharp contract, they also walked around the tourist mecca South Beach, where they learned a little bit more about the development of the Miami gold coast.

'The time there with our teachers, who also were judging our work, was great for us because we came

together as a group and got to know each other's work,' Kellman says of the five photography winners.

'Rodney was the only guy, and he was already in college at the Pratt Institute. He does more with messages. HIV/AIDS drives a lot of his work. Annie was from Mississippi. She had taken a lot of photos of abandoned buildings and has also followed a circus. Jill was from Yuma, Arizona and wasn't driven to things other than photography. She wasn't a scholar, had a 1.3 grade point average, but it showed me that there are a lot of different mindsets about academics. Rachel was from New York and focused on city life.

Annie, Jill, Rachel and Julie were chosen as Silver Award winners and went on to New York.

Kellman stays in contact with her NAFA friends through a strong Facebook group. She has also been recommended to be an advisor to the 2010 winners next year, which is something she'd like to do.

Looking towards her freshman year at Washington University in St. Louis, she displays all the enthusiasm and appetite for many interests, including philosophy and computer science. With that in mind, she enrolled in the college of art and sciences, over fine arts, but no doubt will be recording it all.

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