

2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Young Photographer's Alliance Award

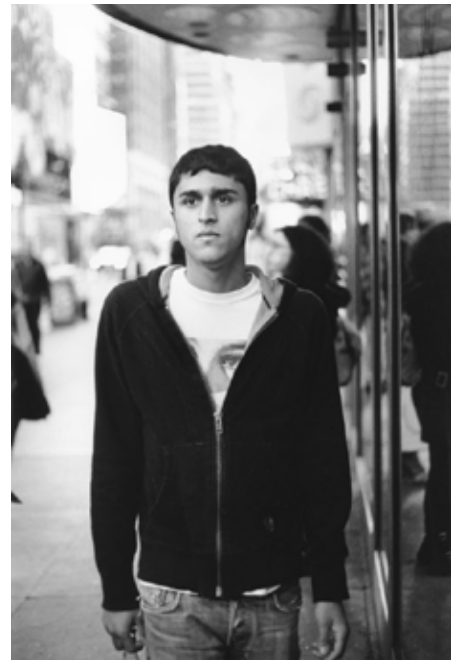


KHRYSTYNA CHEKHLATA

Photography
Freshman
Pratt Institute

It was a melancholy November night in my hometown, Kyiv, Ukraine. I stood behind the door of my room looking through a crack, hearing my mother call his name in desperation. I watched him walk quickly through the corridor and out the door, finalizing his exit with a loud door slam, making the paint crush from the ceiling. We lived by the train station and the furniture shook every time a train went by, but this time it felt like an earthquake.

His gray silhouette disappearing into the painful clarity of cracked paint and faded wallpaper that enveloped my front door—this image has become imprinted in my memory forever. A light bulb above his head was flashing frantically as if it were alive and its pulse was about to give—that was exactly how I felt watching my father walk out. The thermometer mark was crawling below zero and I remembered that I still did not have a winter coat.



Worldstudio
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the professional association for design

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Photography



The difficulty of my childhood and the overwhelming experience of immigration to the United States has strongly affected my choice of career and way of life. Throughout elementary, middle and high school, I had been involved in a strong academic curriculum along with several community programs and art disciplines. I discovered a lot when I volunteered to teach music to young children from difficult backgrounds (<http://www.guitarsnotguns.org/Virginia.html>). I saw how much pain and anxiety my students were going through and how much music helped them bear and overcome that pain. I had learned about the power of art and the change it can generate.

After practicing several different genres of art I chose one discipline in which I am most flexible and interested. Photography has taught me that the still image serves as a document of a moment that can never exist again in its original form. I became absolutely overwhelmed with the power a single photograph can have over human emotion and awareness.



The focus in my work has drifted through different subject matter. Recently, I found myself taking a great interest and initiative in the exploration of social anxiety and identity crises that my generation is going through. Another topic of mine that awaits deeper exploration is the way young adults exploit sexuality in their quest for identity. I have been working on a series of portraits that have inspired me and allowed me to see through the psychological barriers my subjects are forced to put up in their daily lives.

My focus is inspired by my personal experiences and observations. I've gone through a fair amount of abuse along with significant financial difficulty and social anxiety of which I am now fully aware. I've learned how much awareness of such things improves peoples communication skills and self-image. I feel truly blessed with the opportunity to generate social awareness with my art.



I am currently in the middle of my second semester at Pratt Institute and soon pursuing my second year in the photography program. I have learned an incredible amount of techniques and skills in the foundation program, which gave me great inspiration for my personal projects. I have also learned about the financial difficulties of going to college. My family is under enormous pressure of financing my and my sisters education. I am ever so grateful for the opportunity that the Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships program has given young artists like me.