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2013 Senior Independent Projects

Isabelle Allen: There is no doubt that food is pervasive in modern culture and media. Food appears in magazines, on billboards, and in a veritable cornucopia of blogs and TV shows. What we put in our mouths every day has long been a topic of fascination to humanity. Our current extreme devotion to our diets is a product of years spent bridging the gap between raw material and intricate cuisine. As so much of what we put into our bodies extends beyond mere sustenance, my senior project aims to understand the reasons behind this and to explore some of the facets of the human relationship with food.

Over the past decade, human relationship with food has been further shaped by bloggers and social media users. While one might be tired of seeing another plate of sushi on Instagram, many contemporary food blogs and magazines provide wonderful lenses into modern food culture and behavior. *Kinfolk* magazine, self-described as a “guide to small gatherings,” presents an incredible blend of photography, personal stories of memories and traditions, and advice for putting together events based around food. My senior project is my own addition to the 21st century’s food world. I begin with the physiology and psychology of eating, and then delve into individual relationships with food.

Addie Barron: My senior project started with the simple and broad idea of *flight*. “Too many things don’t fly,” I thought to myself. “It’s time to change that.” So I set off through a multitude of phases, processes, and perspective changes until I finally settled on the building of a miniature aerostat (alternatively: airship, dirigible, balloon, zeppelin, or blimp). This process involved many steps, some of which were tedious, while others of which simply involved ordering materials from online hobby shops. I also found myself wrapped up in areas of mathematics that were fully unfamiliar to me. All in all, this maneuvering of complicated and unexpected obstacles was what characterized my project.

Similarly, I was forced to navigate a rocky schedule filled with jutting deadlines and the constant threat of total failure. It was a wonderful opportunity to work on planning skills and to hone my foresight, and although the project's experimental nature meant I was often behind schedule, I did finish before the deadline and had a beautiful, shiny blimp for show at Spring Exhibition.

The balloon's envelope was made from Mylar emergency blankets (yes, the kind you bring on cold camping trips), and the keel was fashioned from extra-thin balsa wood. Filled with helium, the craft generated enough lift to carry the balloon and my entire exhibition board. Success!

Jesse Cohen: My senior project was to make, completely by hand, an archtop guitar. I based my design in part off of Bob Benedetto's seminal *Making an Archtop Guitar* and, in part, designed the instrument myself. Working closely with luthiers and craftsmen both inside and outside the Academy community, I learned an enormous amount about woodworking in general as well as the design and craft of a fine instrument. Along with the guitar, I also created a book and DVD slideshow documenting my work throughout the year.

Patrick Dowd: During my senior project, I explored the importance of educational and expressive outlets for individuals who are incarcerated. I facilitated seventeen creative writing workshops at the Franklin County Jail and House of Correction, and ten male inmates participated over the course of that time. My greatest goal was to create an environment in which each man felt comfortable sharing his experiences, his thoughts, and his original ideas, and I tried to steer the group in a direction that would be fun and identifiable.

When the workshops wrapped up in mid-March, my next project was to compile samples of the writers' work into a written collection that displays the achievements that each man came away with. I sparingly (and ineffectively) edited the book to best represent how each writer read their work aloud, but I was certainly more than happy to let the unfiltered work speak for itself.

Waverley Engelman: For my senior project I set out to create a piece of theatre that tackled an important women's issue, that was based in character and truth, that taught me some new skills, and above all, that could empower women. After settling on birth as the topic of my play, I decided to interview three women and turn the interview transcripts into monologues. The three women I chose, a home birth midwife, a new mother who had a difficult birth, and a New York City obstetrician, have made informed decisions about their births and their careers in birth. In addition to the play, I created a video compilation of the monologues. In the end, I challenged myself to

create a theatre piece with social significance that pushed me out of my comfort zone. I think that it was the culmination of my Academy education.

Yan Fang: My project was to discover the relationship between Tibet and China. I started out with this topic because I have always been curious and unsettled by different opinions from different people on this matter. In the next months, I researched the historical relationship between China and Tibet that makes China claim Tibet as an inalienable part of China, whereas Tibet says the opposite. I interviewed local people who are knowledgeable about the situation in Tibet. Moreover, I looked at the current relationship between the two regions, and the impacts China has had on Tibet, as well as what may happen in the future. My goal is to learn as much as I can about the Tibet issue, and to do my best presenting them in the book.

Tenzin Gyalpo (PG): For my senior project, I started up the Cultural Exchange Council. The mission of the Council was to welcome international students into the Academy community and attract Academy students to help international students adjust. Throughout the school year, we announced several events highlighting the cultures of the international students.

The Council is now running and will be a continued resource for international students in the future. I enjoyed helping create this experience. It was a very beneficial experience for me to assist the international students with adjustments (reaching out, academic tutoring), giving me a chance to be a helping resource to them. It was also exciting to be a part of the Council, with meetings and event planning. I hope to return and hear continuing appraisal for the Council's aid to international students.

Benjamin Miller: My senior project explored the skills and techniques of audiobook production. The year-long study enabled me to become the arbiter of my education (under the gentle and watchful supervision of the entire Academy community). The senior project is a challenge: prove that you are independently capable of producing exceptional work. "Art of the Audiobook" was not only the culmination of my high school education, but was also an opportunity to advance my life dream of becoming an audio engineer.

Tristan Peltenburg: My senior project was originally going to be a kickboxing program for students at The Academy. I was pretty excited because I used to kickbox back in The Netherlands. After a few estimates it dawned upon me that this was going to be a huge task, and almost impossible because I needed to raise nearly \$800 for equipment etc. After some brainstorming it occurred to me that it would make way more sense if I redesigned the Academy's website, so I did just that. Ever since I was

little I have been designing websites and working on other IT stuff, so this was right up my alley.

Emma Picardi: This past year my Picardy Shepherd, Cooper, and I explored the work of a shepherd and sheepdog. Over the past eight months, Cooper and I have:

- Spent time at Claire DiLeo's farm in Plainfield, MA, learning about sheep raising.
- Visited an ASCA herding trial in Westfield, MA.
- Attended a herding clinic in Greenfield, MA, with David Sykes, a master sheepdog trainer from the U.K.
- Had three obedience lessons with April Mascolino, a neighbor well-versed in Schutzhund dog training.
- Had twenty-four herding lessons with Denise Leonard, a well-known sheepdog trainer and owner of Tanstaafl Farm in Greenfield, MA.
- Spent one to two hours a week working on new skills and commands away from the sheep.

Throughout this time, Cooper and I have grown closer than I ever could have imagined. Whether out in the pasture or inside the kitchen, we have been working together for eight months now like never before. Despite various setbacks including Cooper's sometimes frustrating, adolescent mischief and my own slowness to grasp the highly complex business of sheep herding, we have made remarkable progress.

As my instructor, Denise, and I have experimented with different exercises for Cooper in the hopes of better utilizing his innate abilities, I have learned about and tried a range of different sheep herding "styles" in various settings with various numbers and types of sheep. In the end, this project has been an in-depth overview of stock dog work, focusing on several different approaches to herding, and has further inspired me to continue working with animals in the future.

Arcadia Rom-Frank: I used my senior project as an opportunity to explore my interest in film. My initial intention was to create a short horror movie, which later evolved into more of a satire than a thriller. An important aspect of the project for me, was to complete all steps of the process – writing, directing, producing, editing - on my own, which I did with the exception of the help of my actors. The movie I made – *Lunch* - now lives on YouTube and is available to anyone interested in viewing it.