

Lotem Sella

FILM 4200

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Get Wet Report

For the *Get Wet* assignment, I approached it like an experiment in that I had no idea what picture I would take but through different combinations of liquids I would discover which one was the most aesthetically pleasing. Before taking the picture I knew I wanted to play with colors in order to create an expressionist like quality. So naturally food dye was the first choice for color liquid manipulation, but what to mix it with was the next issue. I decided on using soap, hoping that the bubbles would magnify the colors, while keeping them in place. Also the bubbles seemed like an interesting aesthetic choice because I could shine one light on them and see hundreds in return. The assignment was to take a picture of some type of fluid phenomenon and by using this guideline I was able to create a portrait of soap and color dyes.

The final result was a mixture of different colored soap patterns swirling together in the middle. The reason the dyes stayed in place long enough for me to take several pictures is because the soap didn't move. Confined to a small surface area within a cooking pot, the soap bubbles stayed in a common pattern with the only change coming from time. The longer the bubbles stayed in the water, the smaller they became probably because pressure was leaking out of the bubbles. To create these bubbles I simply poured some dish soap in an empty pot and then ran tap water over it until there was a thick layer of bubbles resting on top of the water. After creating the soap layer, I poured food-coloring dyes in small drops. The drops spread on impact, stretching in a circular direction. After spreading to a greater circumference, the color dots eventually remained at the same size. At this point,

realizing that I could get relatively controlled results, I began to experiment in color combinations as well as composition.

When I figured out which fluid phenomenon I wanted to manipulate, I set up my pot of soap and dye in my living room in order to photograph the different combinations. There was little light shining from the north window, so the majority of my light had to come from a 75-watt tungsten desk lamp. By using the inverse square law, I figured I could move the light closer or farther to light different areas of the pot. I finally settled on leaving the light source about a foot away from the photographic subject due to the exposure I could attain and because the size of the light reflected in each bubble was the size I wanted. Other than that no other light source was used to create the composition.

To create my final image I loaded a Pentax K-1000 with a roll of Kodak 200 ISO color negative film. The roll contained 36 exposures so I knew I had to get the picture correct with limited variations. Since the only light source was the 75-watt desk lamp I had to stop down to a 2.8 f-stop. I also like to use a fast shutter speed in order to decrease camera shake, so I set the camera to expose at 1/500th of a second. For the lens I used my wide 50mm prime so that I could get as close as possible to the subject. Then in order to gain further magnification I used a +4-magnifying mount on the front of the 50mm. Although the magnifier reduces light by 10%, I could not open my iris any more and so I was forced to accept a 1/5 of a stop under-exposure. When I finally pressed the shutter, the camera was about 6-8" away from the subject allowing me to keep focus on one side of the pot, while losing focus on the other side. Shooting at an f-stop of 2.8 helped decrease the depth of field and when I positioned my camera at about a 45 degree angle from the subject I was able to create a sense of three dimensionality within the photo. These are the specifications for my final image; the other images I exposed were shot at different angles and distances however. When I finally received the

negatives from the lab, I scanned them at the darkroom, which yielded a 4332 x 2870 pixel image saved as a TIFF. Then as a digital copy, I placed the original photograph in a photo editing application called pixelmator. With the program I only adjusted contrast by changing the color curves. I pushed the darkest areas to the point that they resembled true black. Then I did the same with the whites. After that I fixed the curve to resemble a logarithmic curve instead of a linear one in order to attain smooth drop-offs from darks and whites. The final image when cropped yielded a 4038 x 2675 pixel image.

When I was finally done with the assignment, my photograph pleasantly surprised me. The colors complement each other with warm and cool tones. The final image eliminated many of the blues found in the original compositions, which complemented the orange and yellow very well. But I think that the use of deep blacks and greens were a cool enough combination that contrasted well with the warmer colors. Other than color theory, I liked the way the colors seemed to swirl towards one another. In the end because of the focus, position of colors, and the reflection of the light bulb in each bubble, I felt like I was looking at a strange impressionist face staring right back at me. Maybe I am just seeing things, but every time that I look at my picture again I see a surreal face looking at me. I'm not exactly sure what fluid dynamics is specifically being manipulated, but I like the stillness presented in the floating bubbles. I really didn't know what I would get out of this project before snapping the shutter, so I suppose that the result was a pleasant surprise. In the future I would like to work with dyes more but maybe in a solution that allows them to move more and reflect a more flowing quality. So that you can tell where the subject would be floating a second after the shutter has been pressed. For the assignments down the road, I would like to try to create an image that is even more up for interpretation than this one. Have a composition

that is so strange that anyone can see something different inside of it. Overall this experiment was quite simple to execute and it was exciting to see the result turn out.



