



AUB spreads passion for photography to underprivileged

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More than 20 photography enthusiasts recently converged on AUB for a special workshop meant to promote artistic expression, especially among the less privileged.

Organized by the Department of Photography and the Office of Information and Public Relations, in collaboration with the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), the four-day outreach photography workshop was led by San-Francisco-based photographer Adrienne Koteen who is also an arts consultant. The workshop provided access to basic photographic education and visual storytelling for participants from low-income or marginalized communities. The photographs created during the workshop will be exhibited during the current semester at AUB.

"The hope is that through the workshop, participants will have access to a new tool and method of communication, and develop a deeper and more critical understanding of the visual language and its potential across media and platforms," said Koteen.

"We hope that people will disseminate what they learnt to others and entice people into a culture of photography as a means of expression," said Marwan Sabban, who heads the Photography Department.

The workshop centered on fundamental concepts of digital photography with a focus on visual storytelling and documentary practice. These concepts and skills are taught through a combination of formal lessons, focusing on composition, narrative, editing, and sequencing, shooting exercises, and group critique.

For their first assignment, Koteen told students at the start of the workshop: "Go out for 10-15 minutes and take a shot of something you like and something you dislike."

The point of this assignment was to encourage students to convey their emotions through their photos. In other words, a picture of something they find ugly should be able to evoke a similar reaction in the viewer, Koteen later told students.

Koteen explained that since the world we live in is a "visually saturated landscape, it is increasingly important to critically analyze and take advantage of the communicative power of images."

Coming from all corners of the country, the diverse group of students included young men and women from Sidon, Tyre, Tripoli, Chouf, as well as Palestinian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon.

"I found the students to be respectful, attentive and engaged," said Koteen. "The group was quite varied in terms of their background and personal reasons for taking the workshop."

The students seemed to have enjoyed their experience too. All those interviewed were enthusiastic about what they learned at the workshop.

"The experience was enriching and fun," said Zaher Sobhi Ismail, who came from South Lebanon to participate in the workshop. "I leaned to polish my lighting and composition techniques."

Koteen "greatly enjoyed teaching at AUB and was especially impressed by the dedication, energy and expertise of the people with whom I worked."

"I was additionally bowled over by the beauty of the campus and sincerely touched by the warmth and welcome I felt from everyone I interacted with," she said.

Koteen was especially drawn to Beirut because she had been "entranced by the zeitgeist of contemporary art from the area as well as the fact that I think it is incredibly important, now more than ever, to encourage communication between the USA and the Middle East."