

1-1-2004

# photoraphic memory

Anna Cousins

Liisa Silander

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/bss>

---

## Recommended Citation

Cousins, Anna and Silander, Liisa, "photoraphic memory" (2004). *Broad Street Studio*. 29.  
<https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/bss/29>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Youth Program at Digital Commons @ RIC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Broad Street Studio by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RIC. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@ric.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@ric.edu).

# photographic memory

When **Scott Lapham '90 PH** and **Pamela Murray '96 PH** established a **Community Darkroom** in 1995, the idea was to create a photo processing facility for anyone in Providence who wanted to use it. Based at **AS220**, the thriving nonprofit arts organization on Empire Street, the darkroom soon served scores of amateur and professional photographers but very few young people. In an attempt to reach out to this group, Lapham and others at **AS220** inaugurated **Photographic Memory** in 2001 as a free photography program for at-risk teenagers. They hoped especially to attract adolescents in the foster care system or coming out of the Rhode Island Training School.

The backbone of **Photographic Memory** is an ongoing schedule of classes in the after-school hours when kids are often without supervision. Offered at **Broad Street Studio (BSS)**, a youth-focused **AS220** satellite in South Providence, the classes welcome new students on a rolling basis and foster the natural mentor-pupil relationships that can grow between old and new participants. As they work on building portfolios, students learn the finer points of composition, lighting, darkroom techniques — all the nuances of the medium for aspiring art students and professional photographers. Real-world business experience is also offered through a small commercial offshoot (one of a handful operated from **BSS**), a mobile portrait studio that travels to local public events. While the students earn money from their professional work, Lapham believes the intangible results that emerge “almost as a byproduct” represent the real payoff: as they master the technical aspects of photography, students grow in “patience, attention and focus,” and as they begin to exercise their creativity their “self-awareness and self-confidence can really blossom,” he says.

As a high school student in Providence, **Chandelle Wilson '07** benefited from the mentoring she received through **AS220's Photographic Memory** program — so much so that she prepared a portfolio full of photos like those shown here and got into **RISD** herself.

The open-ended structure of **Photographic Memory** attracts different types of students, from short-term dabblers to those who get deeply involved. One two-year veteran is **Chandelle Wilson '07**, a local student who started attending classes at **BSS** because her high school lacked an art program. As “a photographer at heart,” Lapham says, she learned quickly and took “full advantage of the instruction and facilities offered”; when it came time to apply to college, the quality of her portfolio earned her a spot in **RISD's** class of 2007. Though Lapham confesses he misses working with her at **BSS**, he's thrilled with **Wilson's** success so far and looks forward to watching her develop as an artist.

Lapham recently learned that **AS220** will soon establish another link with **RISD**, thanks to funding from the college's Student Alliance to rebuild its **Community Darkroom** and bring it up to code. This will make the community resource available to **RISD** students year round — at a 75 percent discount. Lapham sees this initiative as evidence of a growing relationship between **RISD** and **AS220** — one that holds promise for future joint ventures that blur the line between city and school. With so many fertile minds involved, he says, “the opportunities are endless.”

