

VCUarts Photography + Film Department

⇒ Alumni Spotlights ⇐

Mel Kobran, 2013 Photography + Film BFA

Currently, I work as a Local 600 2nd Assistant Camera. I've worked notable jobs such as, Dear White People, All American, The Eric Andre Show, and Bad Trip.



The skills I developed from Photo + Film critiques have stuck with me the most. I learned to take **constructive criticism** and properly articulate my thoughts to a crew which are pretty essential skills for such a group oriented job.

Diego Valdez, 2013 Photography + Film BFA

My current job is the owner of the Diego Valdez Photography studio.



The **work ethic** I developed from the Photo + Film Department has stuck with me the most, especially now that I'm trying to get my own company off the ground.



I often collaborate with my old classmates and friends. It's also great having these connections in other cities. Sometimes there isn't a budget for me to travel to client shoots, I know I can always recommend an old classmate who's based in that city.

Kevin Wright, 2018 Photography + Film BFA

I am currently working with LVTRRAW, an independent record label and multi-media company expanding & developing raw talent and artistry.



I was already embedded in my career before school and the department understood that and gave me **freedom** to make moves and maintain my school work. My junior and senior year I was able to travel to 15 countries and bring that element of my work to the classroom.

It was hard to adjust coming from my background but once the students and professors heard my perspective about art and took interest it began to impact my work. The Photography + Film department taught me to **always be myself**.

Monica Escamilla, 2017 Photography + Film BFA

I am currently a full-time freelance photographer and studio assistant. I produce work for commercial and editorial clients in the Richmond and DC area. My specialty is high end portraiture.



During my time in the program, I interned for Richmond Magazine and I now freelance for them regularly. I also explored many aspects of art and design and frequently took classes outside my major. This has set me apart from other photographer's and allowed me to expand my professional skillset.

I regularly use techniques that I learned in the VCUarts Craft and Sculpture Departments to make props and design sets for my photo shoots. Taking classes outside my major also opened up more opportunities to work with other artists outside my field. Professionally, I have collaborated with VCUarts grads from different majors on paid commercial work as well as personal artwork

The VCUarts Photo + Film program also does a great job of keeping alumni in the loop of local artist events and exhibitions. Having **an artist community** available after school has been very important to my personal growth and career. I frequently receive job and artist opportunities from the department and have taken advantage of a number of opportunities to expand my network and meet new clients.

Emily Rund, 2017 Photography + Film BFA, Kinetic Imaging BFA

Emily Rund lives at Tippet Rise year round where she documents performances. The center hosts exhibitions by musicians, visual artists, poets and others in Montana's mountainous, rural environment.



The Photo + Film faculty were honest and cared about your work and **personal growth**; they provided many details of the film world that still stick in mind while working today.

While still in Richmond, I worked freelance at the Children's Museum of Richmond as the videographer and animator. I received this work after interning as a photographer for them during a semester. I also worked at VCU recreational sports in the marketing department where I supplied photographs and video content for their website and social media. Both of these positions prepared me for working on set and how to work in an environment where I must take on multiple roles. They were also beneficial in helping me understand team strategy.



Olivia Valdez, 2016 Photography + Film BFA, Media Studies Minor

My current role is Content Associate- Social Media. I do a lot of digital design, take photos on the Hill and beyond, get to flex some motion graphics skills and more.



The department of Photography + Film helped me develop my ability to think on my feet and problem solve in the moment. This is very crucial in my day-to-day work, especially when I'm creating to respond to a breaking news or legislative moment. Another skill I learned is understanding the **power of collaboration**. In more times than not, creative work is strongest when made in a partnership. Finally, learning to take constructive criticism. It's not always fun but very necessary!

My friends and colleagues from VCUarts have helped me in so many ways. They've been my gut checks for big decisions, my references for jobs and my collaborators for projects that bring us passion. And I've even married to one!

Jessica Taylor, 2018 Photography + Film BFA

Currently I am a Programs + Volunteer Coordinator at Oakwood Arts, a non-profit organization in Richmond's East End supporting creative opportunity for all.



What has stuck with me most from my time at VCU Photo + Film are the soft skills I built while serving as Co-President for the senior class. These skills have helped me thrive in ways beyond being just a photographer.



The VA Sea Grant Internship, which I found out about through VCU Photo + Film, brought me to where I am now. This internship allowed me to work, paid, for a whole summer on 2 documentary projects. This opportunity pushed me to further develop as a photographer by giving me first-hand experience as a photojournalist. Through this internship I also learned that I did not want to ever do "brand-journalism" ever again – **and that's ok!**

Alec Gary, 2017 Photography + Film BFA

I currently work at The Branching as an editor and camera operator.



The connections I made at vcu have been very important to my work. A lot of my early freelance work wouldn't have been possible without my classmates' help. Having experienced friends to rely on has been crucial to my career after graduating. My professors and advisor's recommendations have helped connect me with people in the industry as well.

What stuck with me most from my time in VCU Photo Film are definitely my classmates and my failures. My failures are what **helped develop my voice** the most throughout my time in the program.

Alex Coyle, 2017 Photography + Film BFA, Mass Communication BS

I'm a 600 (the camera union) camera assistant. I've worked on projects for Warner Bros., HBO, Netflix, Showtime, Smithsonian Channel and various local commercials.



The Photography + Film Department helped develop my eye for detail and an understanding of nuance. Even though I don't have a "creative" position on set, being able to be in tune with my environment helps me stay a step ahead. Crit days helped me become a **thoughtful observer**.

My position right now is pretty technical but I make time to be on set and watch all the puzzle pieces fit together. The other day the camera operator asked me how I'd shoot the scene we were doing. We broke down the script and did a take away.

Sarah Parker Beasley, 2016 Photo + Film BFA

I work for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Foundation as a Donor Relations Associate.

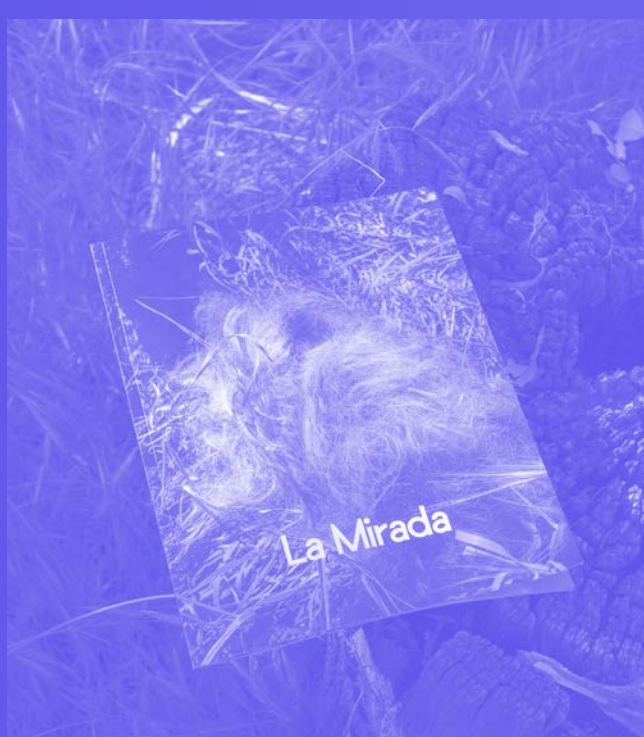


I still maintain relationships with fellow students that I graduated from VCUarts with. I meet fellow alums constantly! VCU is the source of such a **strong network** in Richmond, especially within the arts.

One significant take away from my time at VCUarts was the importance of getting involved out in the Richmond community. My professors and peers helped me to understand how necessary it was to make **connections beyond the classroom**. As a result, I was able to secure several internship opportunities (Candela Gallery, 1708 Gallery, Independent Curator Internship, VMFA, The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design) that allowed me to create long lasting relationships and learn skills that are directly applicable to my job today.

Emmett Methven, 2014 Photography + Film BFA

I recently started working as an assistant to a pop-up art/event studio that hosts gallery shows as well as brand activations, murals and live art battles both locally and worldwide at venues like Miami Art Basel.



During undergrad I assisted the artist William Lamson in New York City, an opportunity that came to me via my Concepts professor, Justin James Reed. Seeing how an artist utilizes a highly interdisciplinary approach incorporating sculpture, performance, sound and video in an everyday context was **liberating** to me. Since leaving undergrad, I've started incorporating sound and moving image into my personal practice.

I am the office manager at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond in charge of accounting, HR, and IT for the entire organization.



When I was in undergrad I interned at Richmond Magazine, worked for The Commonwealth Times all four years growing from a contributor photographer to the Director of Multimedia and did freelance for Richmond Times Dispatch. I also worked at the Anderson Gallery and it closed my senior year. This led me to finding an internship elsewhere in town, and I **found my home** at the Visual Arts Center.

I cherish my relationships from my time at VCU Arts more than anything. As we were planning our senior thesis exhibition, the whole experience really showed me exactly what I liked about being in art school. From finding a place to rent to curating the walls to organizing anything between 24 stressed about-to-be-graduated college students, I found a home in the community aspect of it.