

Featured Photographer: Regina Mamou



Regina Mamou. *Accidental Document #1*, (2010)

"Memory is a complicated thing, a relative of truth, but not its twin."

– *Barbara Kingsolver*

The vagaries of memory, with its tricks, omissions, distortions and embellishments, permeates Regina Mamou's photography.

Consider the titles of some of the projects illustrated on her website, www.reginamamou.com: "Between an Object and a Memory," "Trying to Remember," "I Try to Erase You but You're Still Here."

Memory is an inherent quality of photography, Mamou points out. "So much of taking a photo is about remembering a particular time and space. I'm interested in how people remember a space, how it is memorialized, how we talk about and understand a particular space," she explains.

Her project, "I Try to Erase You but You're Still Here," for example, is the artist's response, "to the idea of nostalgia based on location—as an origin of pain and yearning for the past," says her artist's statement.

This focus may sound abstract or esoteric, she says, but, "it allows me to be fluid in my process and not get pinned down in one particular genre or theme."

Born in the Detroit area to an Iraqi father and American mother, Mamou received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 2005, and a Master of Fine Arts in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2007. She is currently an adjunct lecturer in the Art Institute of Chicago's department of Museum Education and a study leader on international travel programs for members of the museum.

The 15-month Fulbright Fellowship she received in 2009 enabled her to, "explore navigational methods and memory in Amman, Jordan," while learning Arabic at the same time. Her recent project, "Mapping Collected Memory," is based on that experience. The completed work, which includes a series of large-format Luminage prints made by AutumnColor, was added to the Midwest Photographers Project, a rotating collection of portfolios in the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago in January 2012.

Amman, like much of the world, until recently had no formal system of street addresses and house numbers. Residents move around the city by remembering landmarks. They might know to turn left at a particular store or right at a park or garden, for example.

"I wanted to learn what landmarks and points of interest people used to navigate," Mamou says. "I talked to residents and asked friends to give me informal walking tours. Then I would go back and document the landmarks people had pointed out as important turning points, as well as making portraits of my guides."

This meant hauling and setting up a large-format camera. ("I was a total spectacle," she says.) Mamou photographs almost exclusively with a Calumet 4x5 monorail view camera. She likes the slow pace imposed by the format, taking 20 to 30 minutes to compose a shot. And she likes the "quality of movement" she can get with large format. "Even with a tilt-shift lens on a DSLR I can't get the same effect," she adds.

She shoots video and sometimes makes visual notes to herself with a Canon 5D Mark II. But when using it, "I want to shoot digital slowly, like I am shooting 4x5," she says.

Her entire process is slow, thoughtful, deliberate. "I usually scout out a place first, I'll spend many months just looking and taking a place in before ever making an exposure." During her 15-month stay in Jordan, she shot only some 300 frames, she recalls.

Mamou was first introduced to Mark Doyle and AutumnColor on a field trip during Henry Horenstein's color photography class at RISD. A couple of years later, when she needed her first exhibition prints, she turned to AutumnColor.

Mark is very responsive to email and, "constantly in contact during the process of making prints," she says. She's worked with AutumnColor for more than eight years.

"It comes down to trust, and sustaining a relationship with people who you trust, who are careful and who will do what is needed in a rush," she adds.

Although her process is slow and deliberate, the unexpected remains an intriguing element of traditional photographic methods.

"Shooting 4x5, I know what I am going to get on film," Mamou says. "You have a sense of how it is going to turn out, but there is always something you can't control, and that's what I really like about photography."

AutumnColor to Host Encore Night Photo Workshop

On Saturday, June 16, AutumnColor will again host the workshop, "Photographing the Landscape at Night."

The one-day workshop will be presented by Mark Bowie and the Adirondack Photography Institute in partnership with AutumnColor. Mark has specialized in night photography for many years and is the author of several books, including, "The Light at Midnight: Photographing the Landscape at Night."

The workshop will consist of an afternoon session of instruction, followed by a group dinner and the opportunity to practice night photography in the field. Mark will share many of the lessons he's learned in his years photographing at night, ranging from basic camera settings to combining multiple exposures and working with layer masks in post-production.

"We had a full house for the workshop last year," says Mark Doyle. "We went to a local park right in the middle of Worcester to photograph, which you would not think is an ideal location to shoot at night, but we got some terrific images. But this year, we plan to go further afield to open up even more possibilities." **For complete information and to register for the workshop**, please visit The Adirondack Photography Institute at www.adkpi.org.

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Thanks for your interest.

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