Norris strives to make photography his life

by Cristina Flagler

Allen Norris, 20, from Belize, a country in Central America, is a Fine Arts senior who directs his artistic talent to photography. Norris is part of a Fine Arts student group working on its thesis.

"Photography is the most important thing in my life," Norris said, "and I strive to make my photographs a part of myself."

Norris said he tries to be highly selective in his photography, almost to the point of discriminating against some of his work.

He said he likes only the best photographs which he thinks are those which never grow old and which mean something to him, and hopefully to the viewer.

Norris feels photography is a learning experience with no end. "There is a constant learning," he said, "not from a technical point of view but from an aesthetic one."

Imaginary camera

Whenever Norris looks at something, he said, he feels there is an imaginary camera in front of him. This photographic mind makes him aware of the beauty of the world that surrounds him, he said.

Norris cannot select any single photographer to be his favorite. Norris said, but he accepts many of them for what their work conveys.

"I analyze their photographic work and select what I think is best and then I apply those features into my own work," he said.

Norris' favorite type of photography is that which deals with the human factor, he said.

"I like this type of photography," Norris said, "as opposed to other types of photography such as still-life because these involve personality. I like photographing people and their living conditions because this is the human quality I am searching for in my work."

Norris' photographs can be grouped into abstracts, fashion and photo-journalism.

Abstract photography

"I like to be playful in my abstract photography, with absolutely no restrictions on subject matter or technique," he said.

I want to be open minded about it," Norris said he thinks it would be very hard for him to be successful in the abstract photographic field because he thinks people do not appreciate or accept abstraction as a form of art. He has done abstraction in color and black and white.

Norris' photo-journalistic photographs basically center around the Ketchi Indians who live on the Guatemalan-Belizean border.

Norris said this photographic series means a great deal to him because he started to feel like a successful photographer while developing the first negatives of the Ketchi series.

"The more I studied these negatives," Norris said, "the more I felt I have something to put into it. I figured out that something that had such an impact on me was something I had to expand into."

Norris is still working on this series and said he will continue on it until there is no more work to put into it, he said.

Norris began this series in the summer of 82 when he met Reverend Cayetano, who worked in a mission. Cayetano's work centers around visiting different Ketchi villages every two months baptizing, marrying and burying these Indians.

"I thought it would be a good experience for me to go along with Reverend Cayetano," Norris said.

"I walked a total of 72 miles through rain forest jungle visiting nine villages in two weeks," Norris said.

Each village is inhabited by 50 to 70 Indians who live in thatch huts and base their diet on corn and wild game, Norris said.

Norris said that these Indians did not speak English.

"I experienced life in a different dimension," Norris said. "I felt I was in a world by myself recording everything my eye could catch."

Norris said the Indians, although lacking the commodities of the technological work, were happy.

"This is the motivation for my whole series," Norris said, "and I hope to show North America that happiness does not mean wealth."