**Honors Experiential Learning Project Proposal Form**

Complete this proposal and upload it in the UHP Database (<https://webapps.uc.edu/uchonorsstudent>) for review. Create a project (“Add a new record”) in the “Tracking Project” tab and then upload your proposal document as an attachment. After making changes, click the “E-Mail Advisor” button to notify us of your submission.

*While the quality of the proposal is most important, strong proposals are typically 3-4 pages in length (single-spaced).*

**Basic Information**  
Full Name: Anh Le Bao Tran

UC Email: [tranar@mail.uc.edu](mailto:tranar@mail.uc.edu)

College: Design, Architecture, Art and

Major: Architecture

Title of Project: *Aloha, Bliss –* Hawaii through the Lens

Thematic Area (choose only one): Creative Arts

Expected Project Start Date: Jan 7th, 2013

Expected Project End Date: May 7th, 2013

**Project Information**

1. Provide a detailed abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

*“Happiness is like a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you” – Nathaniel Hawthorne*

During my first Co-op in the Spring 2013 in Maui, Hawaii, I will have my very first official photography/art project, *Aloha, Bliss,* the idea of which is to recreate the life of Hawaii in my interpretation in different artistic media such as photography and watercolor. *Aloha, Bliss* will be a series of photographs and paintings about little things that can somehow define the environment in Hawaii: people, the beaches, palm trees, colors and the sea. *Aloha, Bliss* might go beyond those topics to explore more in detail what makes Maui Island distinguished from other paradises of Hawaii.

I am a second year architecture major in DAAP. With Photography and Art being my passions, I want to pursue further these two aspects, which can influence greatly my studies of architecture in college. Through this project, I wish to push my existed limit in creativity to strive for something more different from what I have been doing. This project will be a reflection of my experience in Hawaii, as well as a reflection of my artistic journey. If successful, the work will play a vital role in my future portfolio. Personally, this will also be my personal development, which will help me learn more about myself in many different ways. More importantly, I now have the opportunity to do the things I love, one of which is photography, at such an amazing place. My mentor, artist Tom Sewell, will be the main inspiration for my work. As eccentric an artist he is, he has wonderful work and thus inspires young people like me, who is still trying to figure out what I want to do with my future career and life.

Most of my time in Maui, I will be assisting Tom with his studio work, where I will have the chance to learn about media like film photography and movies. The theme of my project does not restrict the photos to be about specific things, and thus I will bring my camera all the times with me to take snapshots of every day’s things and events. It is the spontaneous aspect of the project that will make it special. I will not plan to have a photoshoot, but instead, I will let my surroundings decide when, where and how I will take my photographs. This is also the idea I want to convey to the audience: Happiness, or bliss, does not come when you look for it; instead, it will come to you naturally when you least expect, just like what Nathaniel Hawthorne says.

On average, every day, I will spend roughly 2 hours taking photographs, then 2 hours editing photos in Photoshop and Photoshop Lightroom, the two professional photo editing software. This will be the time for me to learn and master these two softwares. During the weekend, I will spend more time on these two main steps: about 3 hours photographing and 4 hours putting everything together in software. Sometimes, it will take much longer to edit photographs because I will need to go through the process of filtering and deciding which photographs I should use for the final project. Along the way, I will draw out sketches and ideas of what I want to do with other media. Therefore, roughly 1 hour per week will be spent on other aspects of this project. The hours will increase once I finalize what I want to do with them. I will also keep a blog to update my experience in Hawaii on Tumblr: <http://hawaianh.tumblr.com>. My photos will be on a separate website, potentially <http://www.wix.com>.

**Clearly and thoroughly address how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work:**

1. Connection to Learning Outcomes within the Honors Thematic Area (identified above)

This experience will address three learning outcomes:

* Acquires or further develops competencies within a particular creative domain.
* Possess a well-developed awareness of theories and methods in the field.
* Connects, synthesizes, and transforms ideas.

With merely any background in professional photography, this experience will give me the opportunity to properly learn and improve my photography skills, thus helping me achieve the first objective in the field of photography. I have self-taught photography. Now that I have Tom as my mentor, I will improve my ability in photography, both Digital and Film. Looking at Tom’s own photography work inspires me to create photographs with better quality and meaning. My final objective is to be able to hold any camera and photograph in any situation, whenever and wherever. In order to do this, I will learn directly from Tom as well as read books from his reference library. Time will be the answer to whether my skills will be improved. In the end, I will ask for Tom’s opinions on the quality of my photographs. Tom being a professional photographer for years will be the ruler for me to measure where I am in photography and what extra steps I need to take in order to excel in it.

For the second objective, I plan to apply theories I have learned before through self-learning process and experiments to the real situation with my camera. I am using a Nikon D-90, and have been trying to improve my knowledge of the camera with the help of Internet forums, books and experiments. This experience will allow me to utilize the knowledge to produce not just a mere photo but also a work of art. I am learning how to edit photos with appropriate software, so that the photos could be enhanced professionally. I will be using different sources on the Internet as well as books in the archive to help me in that process. Along the way, I will be able to use different computer program for my photography, and potentially understand well how to use both Digital and Film cameras. Along the way, the degree to which I am comfortable with using my camera and how fluent I am with the computer software will indicate how much I have gained confidence in working with camera and photo editing. The quality of the photographs will also be reflected upon the final products.

The last outcome will be done throughout the project. I will go through the pictures I take to select which ones will convey my theme and focus better. Brainstorming is necessary, and thus I will talk to my mentor about my project to gain ideas and advice from him. I will also look at photography books to learn about photographers’ approach to their topics and themes, from which I will form my own and develop it. In the end when the project is done, I will look at where I was at the beginning to compare with the final idea. There should ideally be a great development from where I started. My goal is to use my photographs, my art to show people a story, a visual story. Each picture will leave an impression on the audience and they will connect all the pictures together in order to draw out a conclusion for the meaning of my project.

1. Connection to Goals and Academic Theories

As stated in the abstract, this experience will help me tremendously with my future academic, professional and personal goals. As an architecture student, my goal is to have a better understanding of architecture and the art in general. I have come to realize that I want to be balanced between architecture and art, and that my future architecture work will also be a work of art itself. With this experience, I will have the opportunity to explore and study my surroundings, and thus improve my perception of all aspects that I encounter. This experience will give me a boost in my creativity, which is essential in the design process in architecture. Professionally, all will contribute to my career as an architect, or, if not, an artist, a photographer, or a designer etc. Any of these professions needs a good balance, and this is why I am looking at not just architecture in particular but also sculpture and photography. To me, the smallest idea could lead to a great one, a vital one that will decide my style of design in the future. Likewise, my personal goals are no other than to become more competent in photography. I want to have a better understanding of this world of photography, where pictures speak more than words. I want to be fluent in this language, be it Digital or Film camera. Photography has long been my passion, one that I have yet to have a chance to pursue thoroughly. Now that I have the opportunity and the resources, I will make sure I utilize them all to gain the best results. Also, through this experience, I want to test my ability in this art, and to find out if it will affect my decision to become just an architect in the future.

I’ve taken *Intro to Photojournalism* in Fall 2011 with Professor Jon Hughes, who taught me the basics of photojournalism as well as the art of telling stories in photographs. Professor Hughes, an award-winning photojournalist and documentary photographer, has been an inspiration and it was him who encouraged me to pursue further in photography. With knowledge I’ve learnt from him about photography in the class, I will be able to apply theories to practice and bring out the narrative in my pictures. The book I am going to use to aid me in this photography project will be *Aperture* by Main Ray, one of the world’s most famous photographers. Ray’s photographs are more often than not enigmatic and unusual, yet able to draw the attention of the audience. I want to learn from his photographs to try something new and different from what I have been doing. Other than that, I plan to use the forum <http://digital-photography-school.com/> for any question about DSLR camera and techniques.

1. Initiative, Independence, and Creativity

I myself have planned everything for this project. A photography project has been a goal I’ve set for myself for a long time, one that I have yet to accomplish. Now that I have the opportunity to be in Hawaii, I want to use this rare chance to carry on what I have planned. I have done a lot of researches, studied photographs and photographers, read photography forums as well as experimented with my camera, a Nikon D90. This is special, because I have not taken a proper photography course. Self-teaching is what makes my experience worthwhile. After this, I know I will have many mistakes and failures, but it’s them that will boost my skills and confidence in this field of art.

For the most part, this project will entirely depend on my schedule and determination. I have my camera with me 24/7 so I have control of the equipment whenever I need it. My work will not interfere with this project and vice versa. Instead, I would want my work to incorporate with this project, because creating creativity is the reason why I am here in Maui, Hawaii.

1. Reflection

As mentioned, I do keep a blog that records my thoughts and experience in Hawaii: <http://hawaianh.tumblr.com>. This blog will be where I keep updates of my life on this island, be it about my day at work or about someone inspiring that I met. This blog will be my sincere thoughts, because coming here, I want to learn so many things and share with people the things I learn every day. I realize that people do catch up with me through my writings and that I have done a good job sharing my experience with people so far. In one of my past experience writing blogs, it made me truly happy when one of my friends told me that my blog inspired her to follow her dreams and do the things that she loves.

Besides the blog, my photos will be my best reflection of my artistic journey in this wonderful land. *Aloha, Bliss* will be featured in my website, which is in the progress of putting everything together and thus soon to be public. I will use <http://www.wix.com> as the host of my website, where I will present my artwork, photography and other media. I have always wanted to have my own website where I can showcase my work, and with this opportunity, I will have the chance to develop my personal website.

1. Dissemination

Through the blog and the website, my work will be publicly shown to the audience of all ages and backgrounds, as long as they share the common interest, which is art. Specifically, I would like to present my experience with my Architecture fellow students, DAAP students, my Professional Fraternity brothers and, of course, Honors students. As an Honors ambassador, I wish to show first-year Honors students and prospective students about the opportunities they could have in Honors program. If successful, this experience will be a tremendous achievement in my college life and I want to share this with my fellow students. I have been in Hawaii for about a week, but I have been learning much more than I have asked for. I have also planned to write in the Honors Matters, a forum written by UC Honors students about their experiences, about this experience. It would be great to show fellow Honors students about the possibilities Honors program offers so that they could do the things they love. I would love to answer any question about this project if that is to make more students more creative with their Honors proposals.

1. Project Advisor (list the person’s name, title, and contact information)

Tom Sewell

Tom Sewell Studio, [www.tomsewell.com](http://www.tomsewell.com)

Artist/Photographer/Designer/Filmmaker/Sculptor/Environmental Visionary

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1. Budget

Travels:

* Air tickets Cincinnati – Haiku: 1,098.59 USD (attached ticket)
* Air tickets Haiku – Honolulu (tentative), 3 days (April 28-30, 2013): 150.00 USD
* Transportation within the island of Maui: roughly 100.00 USD
* Food: roughly 250.00 USD
* Camera equipment: Film rolls (Kodak Gold Ultramax Film): 65.00 USD

Total: 1,663.59 USD