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## **SP.747 Final Project**

When I first began thinking about a subject for my final project, I decided that I wanted to do something that displayed my life at MIT. As a senior, I wanted my project to be something with which I could remember the things that were most important to me here. My first idea was to photograph my best friends at MIT wearing the expressions that I thought made them unique. Although I could picture those expressions in my head, they never seemed to surface when I had my camera with me. All I could capture were cheesy smiles. Soon, I realized that the presence of a camera changed the dynamics between my friends and I so much so that my vision of portraits would not be possible. So, I went back to the drawing board: what were the most valuable memories that I made at MIT, and how could I capture them in photographs?

After a little thought, I realized that most of my memories fit into two main categories: friends and running. As a varsity cross country and track athlete, running has played a huge part in my life at MIT. Since my portrait idea did not seem to be working out, I decided that I would try my hand at capturing four years of track memories in several photographs. For three weeks, I brought my camera to track meets and shot until my memory card was full. I had 900 pictures of running, jumping, and throwing, but none of them seemed quite right. Because the pictures were of my teammates competing, I associated very specific memories with each photograph. I needed a way to capture my running experience in a more general way.

Finally, I realized that my pictures needed to be more generic. When I thought of competing, what did I think of? The race of adrenaline that accompanied the gun, the smell of gunpowder when it went off, the sound of my coach's voice as he screamed splits to me, the vision of my teammates lined up along the final straight-away cheering their hearts out, the feeling of crossing the finish line, the emotion that accompanied either winning or losing. Those were the things that I would miss as I transitioned from being a varsity track athlete to a recreational runner, and those were precisely the things that I wanted to capture.

By the time I realized what I needed to shoot, there was only one meet left in my season and my career. I shot only twenty pictures at that meet. Because most of the pictures were void of people, I was able to enter the pictures and feel as if I were racing at that moment. I picked four of the pictures that evoked the most vivid senses. After looking at the pictures for a while, I realized that there was an obvious progression to the pictures. I had shots of a set of blocks, the start of an 800, my teammates cheering, and the finish line. I realized that I needed a shot of a gun and a shot of a trophy to make the set complete, so I staged those two shots.

At this point, I had all of my pictures, but I was not satisfied with the project. I couldn't imagine just putting my pictures up without any context. They needed presentation. When I thought about preserving memories (the goal of my project), I thought about museums. And then it clicked—earlier in the semester, the class had gone to the Museum of Fine Arts, and I had been impressed by the museum's presentation of the art. The presentation seemed to be a form of art in itself, perfectly selected for each individual piece. I decided

that I would present my photographs as if they were exhibits in a museum, with a placard that gave each picture context.

First, I painted six canvases to serve as the backdrop for the pictures. This seemed like the best way to represent the presentation-as-art concept. Then, I printed each picture in black and white and in color, on matte and glossy paper to determine which printing method was most effective. After much hemming and hawing, I decided that I liked all of the pictures in black and white and on glossy paper except one. The picture of my teammates cheering needed to be in color to capture how loud and exciting the scene was in real life. To make the placards that would accompany each picture, I picked several quotations that I have found especially inspiring during my years of competing. Five of the quotations fit perfectly with my pictures, and I found a sixth one to describe the final picture. I titled several of the pictures with accomplishments that I had achieved personally or that the team had achieved collectively in my four years at MIT. Finally, I mounted one picture and its accompanying placard on foam board so that it stood out from the canvas.

In the end, I am satisfied with my project. I feel as the pictures capture the senses that I experience on the track, and the placards preserve four years of accomplishments and emotions. I am glad that I picked the subject that I did, and I am excited to have this project to hang on my wall and remind me of my running career at MIT.