



[art21.org/lucasblalock](http://art21.org/lucasblalock)

## Lucas Blalock

### ABOUT

#### Born

1978 (Asheville, North Carolina)

#### Education

Bard College, BA  
UCLA, MFA

#### Lives and Works

New York

#### About the Artist

Citing the poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht's insistence on a theater that reveals its labor, Lucas Blalock is interested in revealing the process behind photographic images. Equally invested in both the history and the possibility of photography, Blalock shoots with a large-format camera on film and then scans his images in order to digitally alter them.

Blalock's practice is defined by his use of Photoshop. Rather than using this tool to refine or perfect an image, he employs them to emphasize his edits. Noting his attraction to "objects that have something pathetic about them," he often chooses subjects from dollar stores or from the streets.

### TEACHING CONNECTIONS

#### Media and Materials

photography

#### Key Words and Ideas

abstract  
compositio  
edit  
humor  
Photoshop

large-format camera  
process  
still life  
surreal

#### Related Artists

John Baldessari  
Daniel Gordon  
Guan Xiao  
Oliver Herring  
Barbara Kasten

Florian Maier-Aichen  
Adam Milner  
Erin Shirreff  
Laurie Simmons  
Stephanie Syjuco

**"The trick with the photograph is to get it to act up."**  
—Lucas Blalock

**How to Use This Guide**

Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Lucas Blalock into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

**NOTE:** Please view all films before sharing them with your students. In the film *Lucas Blalock's Digital Toolkit*, there are images of tobacco use.

**Before Viewing**

Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

- ① What kinds of things do you do and think about before taking a photograph?
- ② Describe one or more everyday objects you find interesting. What is it about them that catches your attention?
- ③ Describe any experiences that you've had working with or looking at images that have been altered using Adobe Photoshop. How can Photoshop change the meaning of a photograph?

**While Viewing**

Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

- ① List some of the steps Blalock takes in order to make his photographs.
- ② What kinds of objects does Blalock use in his photographs? What words describe their qualities?
- ③ How would you describe the way Blalock uses Photoshop?

**After Viewing**

Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

- ① Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of Blalock's process. How does this compare with your own when it comes to taking a photograph?
- ② In Lucas Blalock's *99¢ Store Still Lifes*, the artist states, "I use a backdrop and all sorts of materials to sort of help bring things into life and really get you to look at objects." What kinds of features, characteristics, images, or ideas does Blalock make you see in the objects he photographs?
- ③ Share your reaction(s) to Blalock intentionally emphasizing the editing process in his photographs. How does leaving evidence of the process affect your experience seeing the images?

**Related Activities**

Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

- ✓ On your own or with a partner, create a still life with everyday objects. Consider the shape and color relationships before deciding on a final arrangement. Then photograph the still life from four or more different perspectives. Before printing a select number of photos, enhance those photos in some way by altering the print settings, using Photoshop, or even hand-coloring photographs after they're printed. Share your photos with others.
- ✓ Choose an object you find interesting or special in some way. Take a series of photographs or make a small series of drawings that attempt to get the viewer to notice the details or special qualities of your chosen object.