Lucas Blalock

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.

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
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“The trick with the photograph is to get it to act up.”
— Lucas Blalock

art21.org/lucasblalock
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.

### 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.

**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.