

# Photography Student Highlights European Landscapes in Exhibit



One of Monson's photos: a stone symbol, fashioned by human ancestors.

“Altered Landscapes” is the product of almost five years of research and creative work by Brigham Young University student photographer, Tyson Monson. Twenty-eight of his prints were displayed in the Harold Fine Arts Center’s main gallery this summer.

Monson was able to complete the extensive task with the help of an ORCA student research grant and his mentor, BYU professor and accomplished photographer Val Brinkerhoff. The black and white photos that decorated the HFAC’s main floor demonstrate Monson’s ability and potential to be an artistic force as well.

Monson’s photos depict landscapes in Great Britain, Ireland and northern France that have been affected in some way by human hands. Some show large stones positioned to signify an important place, and others show more modern architecture that contrasts the surrounding nature. They are beautiful and disturbing, depending how one views the mark of man upon the land.

Monson traveled with Brinkerhoff to many of the sites, learning much about photography while literally in the field. The student relied on his teacher to help him acquire the skills to create a lasting image, captured digitally with 4x5 and 6x7 format cameras. The experience paid off, as the shots Monson produced are spectacular.

“It was really good to go with him (Brinkerhoff) because I learned a lot about making good decisions when you’re on location,” says Monson. On taking a good photograph, he says that the subject should be approached from every angle, a lesson he learned the hard way when he took only a few shots at one location and wished he had taken more. “I didn’t learn until later about the value of what he was talking about,” Monson says. “Photograph, photograph, photograph when you’re on location because you’re never going to be there again, and moment might flee.”



Monson stands among his artwork, exhibited on campus.

Monson’s work was first captured in color, and then transformed into black and white prints with the shades enhanced

digitally, the modern equivalent of traditional darkroom development. “No lens can accurately reproduce what we can see with our own eyes,” says Brinkerhoff. “They can only try to show it, but will never do it justice.”

Justice is partly served through Monson’s art. The photos, first shot on transparencies, were scanned to make larger print images. The prints were then reduced again for editing and the final products were reproduced on watercolor paper, then matted and framed for the exhibit.

Monson says Brinkerhoff not only served as his teacher but also his motivator. “I wouldn’t be who I am without him,” he states. “He prodded me to achieve goals.” Monson says he would like to follow his mentor’s example and teach photography one day. Brinkerhoff says he has also learned from his student, working with Monson on a daily basis outside of the classroom. “You learn so much more about them and they about you that you couldn’t except in this environment,” Brinkerhoff says about the mentoring experience (see “A Mentor’s Perspective.”). As a result, several of Monson’s photos, showing landscapes altered for religious reasons, will be used in Brinkerhoff’s final project on sacred places throughout the world.

As a married undergraduate student with children and a home, Monson considers the ORCA grant indispensable. The funding helped pay for items such as film, processing, printing, framing and others. The grant also alleviated Monson’s travel expenses while on the project.

Brinkerhoff also helped Monson get his art exposed to a professional audience that can help advance his career. He was able to meet an editor of a popular photo magazine, and book publishers are examining his work.



## A Mentor’s Perspective

Val Brinkerhoff helped Monson capture the images he used for his gallery presentation. But the visual arts professor says he also gets something out of working with his students in places far from BYU’s classrooms.

Over the past couple of years, Brinkerhoff has traveled with some of his students to places like England, Peru, Easter Island and Nauvoo in an effort to photograph sacred landmarks.

He is a “big believer” in mentored activities. “If you love teaching and you love students you’re helping them more than you can in a classroom, because you’re with them all day, in circumstances that aren’t anything like the classroom,” he says. “With all that time together there is a lot of discussion and feedback.”

On the trips the professor got to see the spiritual side of his apprentices that is not always evident in class. “I came to respect them as people and as Latter-Day Saints, rather than just students,” he says. “They were often the first to suggest we have prayer to begin the day, and I was encouraged by that.”

“I’m learning from them. We learn all the time from our students.”