

# Features



Portrait of Jonathan Thielen

## 'POSTCARDS FROM LONDON'

By Marjorie Hall  
NEWS EDITOR

"What can you contribute or give to the other students and to the experience overall while studying abroad?" That is the question the application form for the London Study Abroad Program poses to each student.

Jessica Robertson thought seriously about the answer.

"Of course the first thing everyone thinks is 'people like me,' 'I'm a good person to travel with,' and those kind of things—how they can contribute emotionally and mentally," Robertson said. "But the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to be able to really contribute something lasting."

That contribution took the form of a photo show entitled *Postcards from London*. The show contains 23 framed images, each including both a portrait of one of the individuals on the Fall '98 London trip and a headshot, as well as a short written piece by the subject of the portrait.

*Postcards*, Robertson's first solo show, was a major turning point in her college career. Robertson, now a senior, entered Guilford as a biology major, planning on going into medicine. During her sophomore year, she began to become more interested in photography.

"Suzie [Clark, art professor]

begged me to finish my biology major," Robertson said. "But I had found something I really loved doing."

Unsure what she wanted to do, Robertson decided to impose a deadline on herself. "During my time in London, I was going to decide

whether or not to continue with biology and the medical field or do a major change-up and come back as an art major," Robertson said.

While in London, Robertson did an internship with a photojournalist, working for Reuters' international news service and *the Daily Mail*, a London newspaper. She realized that she had no choice; she needed to go into photography.

She began to work on *Postcards*. She talked with each person about what they wanted his or her portrait to be and worked with them on the idea. Some people were photographed at their internships, some in their favorite spots in London; one was photographed running naked down a London street early one Sunday morning.

"It is important for portraiture to be collaborative," Robertson said. "These portraits were not just by me, but are a creation of the individuals in the group. The images represent each student's individuality."

Lauren Fortuna, a member

of the fall '98 London group and Robertson's flat-mate, feels the portraits capture the group. "Jessica's such an accepting person that anyone can feel comfortable with her," Fortuna said. "That's how she gets such genuine shots."

"The level of professionalism in this show, in addition to wonderful creative insight, is just incredible," said Clark.

Robertson worked on the portraits for an entire semester

after she returned from London, dedicating her entire spring break to finish the show, learning how to use the school's digital lab, which was donated by the Mimms three years ago.

She did not do the project as an independent study and received no credit.

"It is very rare for a student to take on an independent project of this magnitude," said Clark. "It required her to learn a whole new set of skills, since she did it digitally, and she obviously mastered them."

The show finally went up in Boren lounge last December.

This month the show was moved to the Walnut room, where it is still hanging.

Robertson initially planned to collect the portraits in a book. "I wanted it to all be together so we could look back on it in 30 years and be able to remember our experience," said Robertson. She was not able to make the book, but she does hope that the show can have a permanent place at Guilford.

"It's portraits of students, by students,"

Robertson said. "I don't see how anything else can portray Guilford so completely."

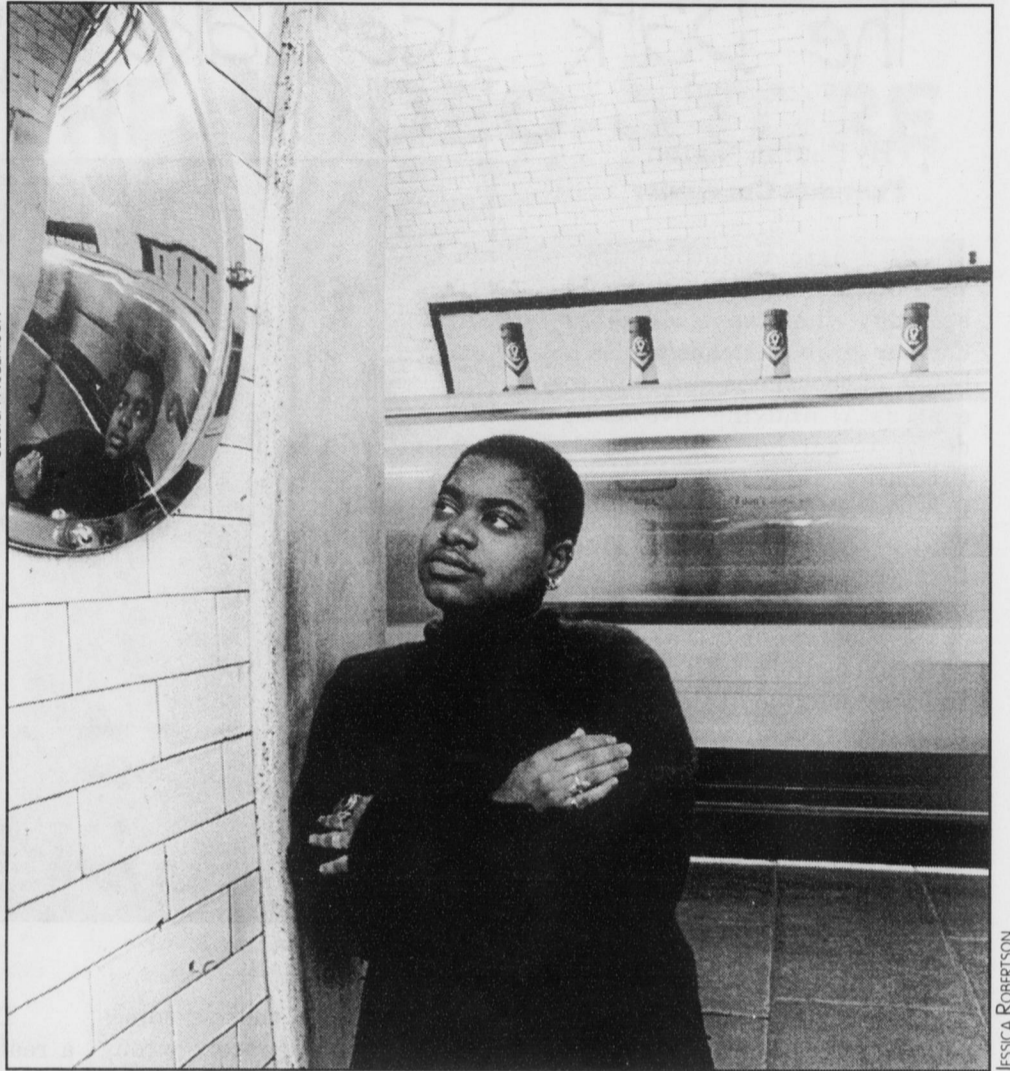
Robertson,

who has decided to go into portraiture for professional publications, either editorial or advertising, is now working on her thesis, a series on the women in her life.

"It was hard to make the transition to my thesis after working on this show for a year and a half," Robertson said.

"This show is the project I feel most passionate about. We were such a close-knit group."

The show will be in the Walnut room indefinitely.



Portrait of Tanya Evans



The artist herself.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

