

Tate Schmergel '19

Photographer and University of Southern California Student

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My interest in photography began with my fascination with my sister's purple Polaroid point-and-shoot at age nine. From there, I began to photograph everything around me, taking in my surroundings with my new third eye. I developed a particular taste in aesthetics, and this enabled me to continue my pursuits in the art with a style that matched.

As a photographer, my eyes capture the world around me. Like a good book, my images tell a story. Behind the camera, I am not just clicking a button—I am stopping time to depict the authenticity of a single moment.

Portraiture is my niche because of the intimacy I find in its human connection. My subjects trust me to display their most genuine selves. Senior portraits, for example, are not just a two-hour session of thoughtless shots, but rather an opportunity to showcase my clients' identity through the camera lens. Like a tango, my subjects and I are in tune; our steps synchronized. I read their personality and character, drawing out the details that perhaps they do not even see in themselves. And then, in a split second, my camera captures their story.

From the sixth grade on at Kent Denver, I was encouraged by my teachers and peers to take risks with not only my academic work but with my art and photography as well. Teachers including Ms. Pringle, Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Fortmiller, and, of course, Mr. Dean (knowingly and unknowingly) acted as catalysts in the development of my photography skills. They challenged me to fully embrace my talent and gave me the determination to always go a step beyond my comfort zone.

Now studying at the University of Southern California, I am proud to say that KDS inspired and empowered me not only in my education but also in my extra-curricular activities and talents outside of the classroom. I would have never been able to take seven years of art and still gain a diverse and well-balanced education anywhere else. Photography will continue to be an integral component of my life.