

Looking Through the Lens... of Courtney Rile

By Georgette Nicolaides | Photo By Michael Barletta

"Interest and serendipity," Courtney tells me, when I ask about her artistic process in creating films. Most that have crossed paths with Rile would agree she is a talented storyteller with strong technical skills who is prepared to meet opportunities when they arise. She has the ability to work well in a team, a characteristic that is vital in filmmaking.

Originally from Philadelphia, Rile remained in Syracuse after she graduated with a degree in film from Syracuse University. After establishing a reputation in experimental video with works such as "Beat the Paint," she decided to create documentaries. One of her first projects documented The Institute for a Now Culture, a Syracuse arts organization. She combined existing footage with her own work to create this film, but shortly after she completed her work, the executive director resigned and the film was outdated. Rile learned a valuable lesson from this experience. "Make sure your subject is timeless because you never know what is going to happen."

She then turned to the history of the 15th Ward, an interest spurred by her work as editor for the 100th anniversary of the Daily Orange. In learning about the history of SU, she caught a glimpse of the history of the city of Syracuse. She documented the Southside Initiative's bus tour with the former residents of the 15th Ward as they discussed their memories of the neighborhood. The film has been screened several times in Syracuse, and there is interest in it from across the country. The website for this project debuts June 18 along with a screening of the film at Syracuse Stage.

Rile is the co-founder of Daylight Blue Media Group. It offers film, website and other media work to business clients. She's become more successful at the business end of art through involvement with SU's entrepreneurship programs. She intends to serve her fellow artists by teaching a course in arts entrepreneurship. Rile mixes traditional video cameras with DSLR cameras to create her videos and she edits using Final Cut Pro software.

Daylight Blue recently received a commission to document the career of local artist Arlene Abend. They combined interviews with people who know her with an interview of the sculptor, then visited some of her works in situ. The film ends with the gallery opening for Abend's retrospective. Throughout the film, Rile effectively captures the "spunk" of the artist, and the caring attention of Abend's friends and family.

In the midst of this film work, Rile has also been active in art curating at venues from Ohm to her own gallery, Price Check. She also creates the information-filled newsletter for the Cultural Resources Council. One of her current projects is an academic piece about perceived valuation of artworks using the upstate/downstate mythos. Her co-researcher is Roslyn Esperon of NYU, also an SU graduate.

After all her accomplishments thus far, Rile is always looking ahead to her next inspiration and her next adventure. What's her advice to fellow artists? "You have to keep yourself interested."

