



Image: Don Gregorio Anton, courtesy of the artist.

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Photo Lecture by
Don Gregorio Anton
on 1/10 at BRIC Rotunda Gallery

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Artist Spotlight: The Inspiring Words of Don Gregorio Anton

Posted by [BRIC Blogger](#) on January 18, 2013 at 10:36 pm

By Abby Clark and Elizabeth Ferrer



Don Anton at BRIC's Rotunda Gallery. Photo by Elizabeth Ferrer

On January 10 revered Chicano photographer **Don Gregorio Anton** lectured about his life and work at BRIC Rotunda Gallery. Attendees were treated to a thoroughly engaging talk that not only illuminated the artist's unusual process, but that was deeply inspirational and motivational on multiple levels. Anton, whose work is included in BRIC's current exhibition, *En Foco: New Works/Crossing Boundaries*, began by offering some background on his life.

Born in East Los Angeles in 1956, Anton told the story of growing up with a hard-working immigrant father who didn't understand or initially support his interest in art and photography. He challenged his son to find him one example of a successful Chicano photographer. Anton, in fact, was unable to do so; at that time, few Chicanos were working in the field of photography. But he did learn of the legendary Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo and brought a book of his work to his father. That was close enough; his father agreed to let his son take a photography class, thus beginning the path to a successful career as a photographer and teacher. Despite his success – Anton has exhibited widely throughout the United States– he is the rare artist who does not sell his work, and who is uninterested in fame. Rather, he is interested in using art to heal, tell stories, and give voice to deeply held emotions.

Anton studied photography at San Francisco State University, where he found that his moody, metaphorical imagery was quite different from the work of other students, still steeped in the language of street photography.

"The isolation I learned in San Francisco," he noted, **"was my greatest teacher."**

After college, Anton went on to have a prolific commercial photography career, but it didn't satisfy his craving to teach and pass along his knowledge to others. Anton abandoned commercial photography and eventually became a professor of photography at Humboldt State University in northern California.

Anton's path was not without challenges, however. He conveyed the story of his first solo show in Carmel, California. Upon arriving at the gallery early, Anton recalled how a gallery administrator mistook him for the waiter who would be serving wine at the reception.

Revered Chicano Photographer Visits Students at The Campos School

Posted by [BRIC Blogger](#) on February 4, 2013 at 7:40 pm



Photographer Don Gregorio Anton reviews students portfolios.
Photo by Hawley Hussey

Students at The Juan Morel Campos Secondary School in Williamsburg were given a special experience. On January 10, photographer and En Foco exhibition artist Don Gregorio Anton visited with students in the school Art Lab which BRIC has helped build over the last 7 years, as part of our [Contemporary Art Education program](#). Advanced art students in grades 10 and 11 and Special Ed students in grade 8 enjoyed two standing-room-only presentations by Anton. Once word got out about the speaker, the permission slips came flying in as more and more students packed the room, each realizing that this artist seriously cared about their futures. Anton gave them

inspiring advice on furthering their artistic practice, encouraging them to believe in themselves and understand that the world needed their presence and contributions. He told students his own story of growing up in East Los Angeles with a hard-working immigrant father who didn't support his interest in art and photography. Later as a college student in San Francisco, he found himself creating photographic work that was different from what was commonly seen at the time. At the end of his talk he moved slowly around the room and handed each and every person a key. This key was a token; a symbol of his belief in them. Students were fortunate to have one-on-one time with Anton, who reviewed their work/portfolio and gave advice and insight. Students brought book bags packed with notebooks, iPads and phones containing their work, to share with the artist, who is a professor at Humboldt State University in Northern California and has a wealth of experience teaching young people.

On January 29, a group of Campos students came to BRIC Rotunda Gallery to see the En Foco exhibition and to talk about their visit with Don Anton. One student revealed a chain around his neck where the key Anton had given him dangled. He revealed that he also had transcribed the number of the key inside his baseball hat, recalling that Anton had talked about how each key had its own identity. These students were truly touched by Anton's words and encouragement. Classroom Art Teacher Laura Pawson decided it was Anton's pace of talking with the students that she found the most inspiring. "We rush all day long with 40 students in each class. It's a sort of non-stop controlled chaos. Don showed me a side of my students that I would love to interact with and be inspired by."

As the Campos students prepare for a site-specific installation in the [25th Annual Contemporary Art Education Exhibition](#), they have made the decision to utilize the key as a core source of inspiration. They plan to Skype with Anton so that students can share their inspiration and process for the upcoming show, which opens on May 15.

For more information on BRIC's Art Education program, visit [our website](#).