afflatus – n
a divine imparting of knowledge or power; inspiration
Sometimes when traveling to metropolitan areas, we are so caught up in the moment that we forget to just take in the sights and absorb the immense amount of surrounding history and culture. In this issue of Afflatus, titled Metropolis Afflatus, I will take you to six cities that I have traveled to within the last year, and share my experiences and interactions with each city. As photographer and designer, the city is a thriving place to explore. Upon arrival to these destinations, my mind was immediately drenched with ideas. You could say I experienced a metropolis afflatus six times over.
The Traveler sees what he sees,
The Tourist sees what he has come to see.

—G. K. Chesterton
These words are an instant identifier of the TV series Full House, much like the “Painted Ladies” are with San Francisco. For those who happened to miss every episode of one of the most popular shows in the 90s, the intro to Full House featured a Tanner family picnic in Alamo Square Park with a full view of the famous “Painted Ladies.”
I don’t know about you, but I find it exciting (in a semi-nerdy way) to visit locations prominently featured in television and film (or even literature). I think it’s partly because visiting these locations triggers a cherished memories, and often takes me back to my childhood, or makes me feel like part of the TV family (or some stalker). Other than that, I find it interesting from a production and photographic standpoint to see how the shot was crafted, or if it even accurately depicts the location. I know I’m not the only one that feels this way—I’ve seen the other tourists snapping their cliché photos and secretly wishing for Bob Saget to come out of one of the houses (though the house used for the exteriors of the Tanner’s house is across town). I wonder how many locals just trying to enjoy a day in the park are rolling their eyes at relentless tourists. Unfortunately there is no way to avoid the tourist stigma when walking around with a camera. Therefore, I aim to be a the non-annoying tourist.
Locations such as Alamo Square Park or the Golden Gate Bridge are undoubtedly scoped out for their beauty or synonymity with their respective cities, and often encompass areas less frequently explored. For example, near the restrooms in Alamo Square Park there are nearly 50 pairs of shoes and other random objects serve as a display of whimsical garden planters and a sort of public art that invites the public to participate in. Like many others, I love public art that is displayed for all to enjoy. The “Hearts in San Francisco” installations (official public art) simply makes me smile. Not only do these hearts act as a display of San Francisco culture in a variety of custom paintings, they have raised over 2 million dollars for the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation. These sorts of public works should remind the everyday San Franciscan to slow down and admire the beauty of the city they are in. Maybe while everyone is taking an extra second to appreciate the sights they will look up and admire the beauty of the surrounding architecture. Beautiful architecture is public art in its own way, and often a snippet of a previous time. I personally am drawn to the marvelous Golden Gate Bridge time and time again because of its bold color and strength in form. The Transamerica Pyramid also displays strength in form in its precise geometry and stable shape. There are a slew of other buildings I have found inspiring in Frisco that I don’t even know the name of. Just the walking around the block is inspiring enough, and I would highly recommend it to anybody visiting the city.

I LEFT MY ART IN SAN FRANCISCO

LEFT The 100 year old Palace Hotel
RIGHT The historic Transamerica Pyramid and the Golden Gate Bridge.
“WHEN I COME HOME TO YOU, SAN FRANCISCO, YOUR GOLDEN SUN WILL SHINE FOR ME!”

—I LEFT MY HEART IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1962
A trip to San Francisco is not complete without a Giant’s game at AT&T Park. If you’ve ever gone to a Giant’s game while they were still at Candlestick, you will appreciate this wind haven of a park. It is much warmer, and the view of the bay is a great backdrop to a game on a sunny summer Saturday. I’m not even a huge baseball fan, but there is something about being at a game that is so relaxing. Perhaps it’s the live action. Perhaps it’s the food. Perhaps it’s all three of these. Also, there are a few requirements for food at a Giant’s game just so you know. You must have 1) Red Vines, 2) peanuts (in the shell) 3) the best garlic fries ever. Just make sure you go with people who are garlic fry tolerant (it’s a little much for unsuspecting patrons).
SERIOUSLY. Don’t come to LA and try to avoid a great amount of time highway driving—it’s an essential part of the livelihood down here. (Oh, in case you were wondering, it’s called Highway 101, not the 101—the locals are wrong). To get to your next destination, be prepared to drive on at least four different highways, all of which will be jammed with traffic.
For those highway rats, this is a cake walk. This is your equivalent of Templeton’s smorgasbord. Personally, I’m not really into insane highway driving. If you aren’t going at least 15 miles above the speed limit, you are going way to slow. I’m sorry, but that just sounds unnecessary (and unsafe considering the lack of common sense of drivers). Luckily, I’ve successfully avoided driving in and around LA (choosing to ride/carpool/bus around instead) until just recently. And now that I have actually driven down here, I know why I have avoided it. People are dumb on the road. Sorry, they just are. I know I’m not the best driver out there, but at least I try not to annoy the other drivers on the road. All the lovely annoyances of driving can be found on an LA freeway: tailgating, cutting off, rush hour traffic, construction, headlight abuse, and so on. Furthermore, once you arrive at your destination you must pay through the nose for parking (after circling for 10 minutes to find a spot). Clutter on the highway, clutter at the attraction, clutter in the mind. It’s a bummer when the places that are meant to be fun and exciting must be shared with thousands of others at the exact same time. Santa Monica, Disneyland, and Hollywood are some of the busiest places I have been in the LA area, and a part of me cringes with the thought of going back during peak visiting hours.
TRYING HARD TO LOOK LIKE **GARY COOPER**
– *PUTTIN’ ON THE RITZ*, 1929

LOS ANGELES 21
The City of Angels can actually be quite relaxing and picturesque if you find the right location free from clutter and hoards of people. My favorite in the greater Los Angeles area has to be Griffith Observatory—a refreshing break from the craziness of the city (and people), above layers of smog, and with the closest view of the iconic Hollywood sign I’ve seen. I just can’t resist a sweeping view above the city (albeit LA isn’t the best thing I’ve laid my eyes on). Although I have yet to explore the nature trails surrounding Griffith Observatory, I would love to jog around the trails sometime... maybe with my camera like Jim Carrey. Also, I can’t mention Griffith Observatory without mentioning its focus on space and science displays. A morning spent here is much more worthwhile than a morning spent in traffic, or in a stuffy coffee shop. I couldn’t help but think while on the roof, that it would be a great place to have an assortment of events.
The second gem of Los Angeles is the Walt Disney Concert Hall downtown. Designed by Frank Gehry, this magnificent piece of architecture is likely the most photographed building in the city. Whenever visiting these photographically beaten locations I strive to capture the location in a non-obvious way. I step back, analyze the form and attempt to honor it in a new composition. Here’s too creating new images in a cliché world.

the CITY of ANGELS
After visiting for a chilly few December days, Chicago has proven to be more than a city known by wind and Oprah. The rich art and architecture alone can keep my creative juices running for days. Sure, with wind chill it was probably well below freezing, but the sights to see in Chicago are well worth the cold. Bundle up and go explore this toddlin' town!
Walking down Michigan Avenue in Chicago boasts many activities worthy to fill a day in the Windy City. It’s no wonder they call it the Magnificent Mile. It truly is magnificent, from the booming architecture, the public art (especially the Bean in Millenium Park) which greatly encourages the public’s interaction. At some point along the walk, you’re sure to feel hungry—and you can’t beat Giordano’s Famous Stuffed Pizza. This was by far the best pizza I have ever had. Now that’s inspiring.
“PAINTING IS POETRY THAT IS SEEN RATHER THAN FELT, AND POETRY IS PAINTING THAT IS FELT RATHER THAN SEEN.”
—LEONARDO DA VINCI
“ONE TOWN THAT WON’T LET YOU DOWN”
—MY KIND OF TOWN, 1964

BELOW Giordano’s Pizza certainly didn’t let me down.
RIGHT Chicago at night from the observation deck in the John Hancock Center.
Enchantingly historic, yet wicked freezing, Boston was quite a sight. Just walking around it feels like George Washington sneezed all over this city. From the sheer quantity of bricks, to the statues and gravestones of historic American figures, every corner turned presents a handful of history.
One of the first pit stops in Boston was Harvard. Just being there makes you feel smarter. I wonder how many Harvard students take the time to enjoy the beautiful architecture they are surrounded by. I know if I went to school there, I would love all of the brickwork and architectural details. Sometimes with places like Harvard, it seems the visitors realize its place in history much more than the actual students. I observed many tourists, in addition to myself scoping out Harvard yard, observing brainy students pass by. Currently the only critique I have of the place is the weather—man it was freezing. Yet that didn’t stop joggers from exercising in short shorts. And they think Californian’s are crazy.

“You got into Harvard Law?”

“What? Like it’s hard?”

—LEGALLY BLONDE, 2001
George Washington statue in the Boston Common.

In 1773 over 90,000 pounds of tea was dumped in Boston Harbor in political protest. But how much is 90,000 pounds?

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Please come to Boston

For the springtime

I’m stayin’ here with some friends

And they’ve got lots of room

You can sell your paintings on the sidewalk

By a cafe where I hope to be workin’ soon

Please come to Boston

**LEFT** Boston’s trademark brick

**TOP** Walkway in Boston Common.

**MIDDLE** Benjamin Franklin tombstone.
The Observation Deck at the Top of the Rock undoubtedly provides visitors with the best views of Manhattan. With views of the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building and Central Park, this elevated vantage point leaves nothing to desire. At 70 stories above “the Capital of the World”, that’s more than enough for a “I’m king of the world!”
I’ve tasted just a morsel of this great city, yet it was so incredibly delectable, I long for more. Unfortunately, living in California does not allow for the easiest of travel back to New York, so I am left here, hungry. Which reminds me—the best bagels I have ever had were in New York (Long Island actually). They were warm, fresh, and topped with some of the best schemer I’ve ever had. ¶ And although I was informed of the “wonderful” New York pizza that you fold to eat, I was disappointed with the one encounter I had with it there. Next time I vow to pay a visit to John’s in the village, which I’ve heard only great things about. ¶ Dinner at Carmine’s on the upper west side felt like a scene from an Italian flick. While the restaurant was fancifully decorated with flowers, chandeliers and Art Deco prints, their business card leaves much to be desired (is it completely design nerdy for me to critique their business graphics?). But in all seriousness, I expect more from a successful business in New York City, yet the streets are still a sea of bad typefaces and design.
I’m sure it comes as no surprise the astounding number of cabs in New York (though I wish more than one was the Cash Cab). A sea of yellow swims up and down Manhattan’s grid (which was especially evident when viewing from above). I’m not rich enough to take a cab though, thus the subway was the mode of transit (in addition to walking). It is interesting how the subway system is a culture in itself, complete with a myriad of characters and live entertainment. I was even drawn by a subway artist, which was quite an experience for me, and other passengers, though I’m not sure I appreciate the double chin he gave me. Nonetheless it was excellent to actually feel like part of the culture, at least for a little bit.
Given a telephoto lens and a city of 8.3 million people, naturally I was encouraged to people watch. No, not in a stalkerish manner, but more akin to a phycologist researching human behavior. The most evident behavior noticeable is the fast pace of New York walkers. I took much delighted in this fast moving foot traffic, especially as my walking commute to school and around campus has trained me for such rigorous lollygagger dodging. Other than that, people watching allows the viewer insight into other people’s lives, even if it is just for a moment.
“ONCE MAN HAS HEARD
THE CITY’S VOICE,
HE WILL BE HAUNTED BY IT
FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.”

—THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, MAY 23, 1964
As with San Francisco, I made it a point to visit locations prominently featured in TV and film. While New York is widely represented in TV and film, I specifically desired to visit the intersection of Bedford and Grove in the West Village. The apartment building on this corner served as a theoretical home for the *Friends* cast for 10 years. Although this building was filmed only to establish location, it was very inspiring to see something in person that I’ve seen so many times on TV. And even five years after the end of *Friends*, there were groups of tourists walking by this spot pointing and photographing. I can see what the creators of *Friends* were thinking when they set the show in Greenwich Village. This neighborhood of Manhattan is completely different than uptown, especially since the streets were much smaller and do not follow the same rigid grid pattern of the rest of the city. It was fun and charming, and definitely a place I wouldn’t mind living with a group of my closest friends.
Sitting Steady in the Northwest, Seattle accomplishes something that other large cities do not—it has both a city feel and a small town feel. This may be because of the wide range of characters present in Seattle, along with the general geography of the location. An active, outdoorsy area, with hardworking locals makes for a thriving location to live.

Hello Seattle, I'm listening.
I've discovered that as my travel experience increases, so does spontaneity. For example, I write this at 34,067 feet above Oregon on my way to Seattle (I should actually be in class right now). A trip planned a few short weeks ago is now a reality. Just as I am cramped for time to finish this project, I am cramped for space with my laptop tilted at an angle matching the reclined seat in front of me. I've never been to Seattle (just as I've never seen a mother lift her child up like Simba to stiff her butt on an airplane). This one is different because this trip is in the midst of the execution of this project. I hope that this will work to my advantage. Growing up in California, I haven't really experienced true seasons. Thus, with the decent of the airplane to Sea-Tac airport, the first thing I noticed was the brilliant colors of the trees. This was my first real fall—and instantly I knew Washington was a great place to be in the autumn. This became a recurring theme with my visit in Washington. Everyone I met in the greater Seattle area was extremely nice and hospitable. I feel as though Washington welcomed my sister and I with open arms.

Our first day in Seattle we made our way easily into the city via one highway, just the way I like it. I prefer the method of payment for Seattle public parking much more than the traditional meters. I rarely carry change, so having the ability to pay with a card was so much easier in this case. This is one of the things that make the city "consumer friendly". Adjacent to Elliot Bay, Pike
the EMERALD CITY

Pike Place Market is a wonderful public market attracting both locals and tourists alike—and for a good reason. This 102-year-old houses countless merchants, restaurants, vendors and musicians ready to meet the needs of a variety of shoppers. That may sound like copy for an ad, but this place is seriously really cool. It doesn’t hurt that all the people we encountered here were extremely friendly and welcoming. We made the obligatory trip to the Pike Place Fish Market to see the famous flying fish (which was actually more fun in theory). However, the crab we tried was quite tasty. If I lived in Seattle, I would most definitely visit the market regularly for great fresh seafood and the restaurants with a magnificent view of the bay.

Along with Pike Place Market, the Space Needle is another sight synonymous with Seattle. The sleek tower constructed for the 1962 World’s Fair exquisitely completes the wondrous Seattle skyline. The whole area surrounding the needle is rather intriguing. Another signature Frank Gehry piece of architecture (The Experience Music Project) may be ugly in some people’s eyes, but I find the whole structure very appealing. The mood was set with atmospheric music saturating the air of a crisp Friday autumn afternoon (my sister and I spent nearly a half hour taking photos in this area). Oh Seattle, what a joy!
LEFT  Experience Music Project
ABOVE  The Space Needle seen through an autumn puddle
Seattle may be notorious for its pluvious weather, but it doesn’t even make the top 10 for cities in the 48 contiguous states that receive the most rainfall annually.

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