PHOTOGRAPHY
AND
A CITY IN YELLOW AND BLACK

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I began taking photos in 1995 during a vacation in South Dakota. I had always taken pictures of my children and their first swim, first day of school, first birthday cake—many firsts. However, it wasn’t until 1995 that I began taking photographs of life from my wanderings. I began with minute details and mini-events—a spider on a flower, tiny bumps on the leaf of a fern, the placement of objects, sunlight, and color. They were images that captured my attention, challenged and delighted me—an everyday moment from a new perspective. I no longer “take pictures” of firsts, rather I “photograph moments,” particularly the interaction of colors, shapes, and space framed in the dialectic of complexity and simplicity.

In April 1996, I attended a conference in New York City and felt a little dismayed at the thought of the dreary city in early spring before the green of Central Park appeared. I had been there in summer when the dark stolid colors of the buildings virtually blocked out the blue of the sky, but at least the Park acted as the haven it was envisioned to be—a respite from the city.

As I walked from my hotel on Central Park to the conference center, I was struck by the color that surrounded me that day in April. Yellow everywhere I looked—forsythia in Central Park, taxis from a seventeenth floor window, tulips blossoming in a window box, and most predominantly, yellow flowers at every corner stand. All of these yellow images were framed against that same dark stolid color. With these photographs, I share with you my revised impressions of New York—a city in yellow and black, a city as vibrant and complex as the colors themselves.

An aspect of the creative process is described as the combination of seemingly disparate parts that provides new insights and perceptions. Photographing New York through yellow and black provides me with a new perception. For those who love New York, I hope these photographs illuminate another view of this city. For those who, like me, have been less enthralled with New York at times, I hope it affords a glimpse of the beauty and dynamism that the city holds.

Kathleen J. Martin (kate j.) is a lecturer and researcher in educational leadership and teacher education at the University of California, Davis. Her research interests explore issues of social interaction and interpersonal relationships as expressed through leadership, organizations, and culture and language. Photography is of particular interest since it captures the myriad dynamics of relationships as they intersect across social contexts. Kate is a recent recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for her work photographing American Indian symbols in the Catholic Church. She also is the author of articles on the use of narrative and storytelling in teaching and learning as well as the preparation and development of teacher leaders in schools.
as I look through the windows of my life
many faces crowd the way

sometimes I arrive
in style
sometimes through
vehicles of time
sometimes simply
on the river
I call my life
without a doubt
never to go back

often I wonder
where I will go
what I will see
maybe New York
in yellow and black

what the camera sees happens once in a moment of time
my mind’s eye holds the moment in memory
and in the camera’s eye
a glimpse of the moment remains
never to go back—always to go back
on the river I call my life.