

Life through a lens

*Arias uses camera
to explore world*

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A model stands in front of a bright blue screen, fluorescent paint covering her face and arms. Lights flash in quick succession, blinding the scene with their intensity. The model stares at the camera as she moves her arms above her head, dancing with the blasting music. In the magical moment, time stands still. One can't help but become mesmerized by the art they're witnessing.

Amidst the fancy cameras and the studio, it's easy to forget that the man orchestrating it all is 17-year-old Caleb Arias. For him, age is no limit.

Arias didn't start out loving photography. It all began with videography in the eighth grade. Once he started playing with flash and taking pictures of people around the Decatur square, he realized his true calling.

"As soon as I started to really grasp onto photography, video just kind of fell to the [side]," he said. "Photography felt like it came more naturally."

Arias's involvement with photography is

recent. It wasn't until the past year that he started teaching himself how to edit and really pursue it as a career.

Luckily, Arias comes from a family of photographers. His father, Zack, is a well established portrait photographer in Atlanta. Arias attributes a majority of his success to his father's influence.

"A lot of the basis of everything I know comes from my dad," Arias said. "I owe 90 percent of my photography knowledge to him."

Not only does having a dad in the business help with guidance and knowledge about photography, but Arias is also able to utilize top-of-the-line equipment in a professional environment. A studio, thousands of dollars in photography equipment and props fill Arias's free time.

"My dad owns a studio in Kirkwood," he said. "I'm very fortunate because he doesn't use it often, so I have access to it when I need to shoot. He also has a bunch of photography gear. I took advantage of the resources I had available."

In his dad's studio, Arias creates magic.

Vibrant backdrops hang from the ceiling and props scatter the floor as he works with the model, helping her feel comfortable in front of the camera. He makes funny faces and cracks jokes as the model laughs, the shutter clicking as he captures the moment.

"Shooting with [Caleb] is always a lot of fun," junior Thalia Garoufalidis said. "The first time I shot with him it was just a bunch of friends and an open call for people to come by. From there we became friends."

Arias builds lasting relationships with his models that go beyond the shoots.

"I remember I was shooting [models] Olivia and Iris, and it was the first time I'd met them," he said. "They'd hired me to do a shoot, and we ended up becoming friends. Realizing my clients could become my great friends was so cool to me. They're awesome people, and the fact that I could be paid to take photos and make friends with people was really amazing. It was on that shoot that I found that I wanted to do photography."

As a 17-year-old, Arias found it hard to balance school and his passion. He decided to leave the halls of Decatur behind for a life





Dauda is one of Arias's most photographed models. His modeling and presence contribute to what Arias feels is the "avant-garde" aspect of his photos. "I describe my photos as very colorful and editorial portraiture," Arias said. "They're all very vibrant and I love to play with color."

of adventure and photography.

"The main reason I wanted to leave was because I just wasn't about high school," he said. "It wasn't that it was too hard. I already knew at that point that I wanted to be a photographer. School was just taking up so much of my time that I would've rather spent working on my craft and traveling with my dad."

For Arias, traveling meant going to three continents, visiting the Atlas mountains, experiencing crowded markets of Hong Kong and meeting Vanilla Ice. Exploring the world and meeting new people was something that Arias felt was pivotal in his photography career, and more importantly, something school would have held him back from experiencing.

"Had I been going to school, I might not have been able to have the experiences I did," he said. "I'm really grateful my dad was able to take me out of school and I was able to focus on what I really love. Now I'm at a point where in the near future, I'll be established and be able to start a career instead of finishing up high school and going to college and starting from there."

Developed film has allowed Arias to experience the world through a new lens. His trips not only provide him with inspiration, but invaluable experiences that photos just can't capture.

One night, while in the Atlas mountains of Morocco, Arias asked his driver to take him to see the stars. Layered in three jackets and several pairs of socks, they drove for half an hour until they arrived to an open field. Then, as he looked up, a blanket of stars covered the sky. Though it was windy and cold, Arias laid on the ground and looked up at the sky, an ocean away from his friends back home.

Photos, opportunities and new friendships – that's what these trips have brought Arias.

"I cherish the connections I've made with people because of what I do," he said. "I'm a really extroverted person, and I like hanging out and being with people. I get invited to places, [so] I'm all about traveling and putting myself out there."

Through these trips with his dad, Arias was able to shoot with a professional crew and work with the rich and famous. Some

of his favorite experiences include shooting Steve Harvey, The Property Brothers and Vanilla Ice.

All of these experiences have added to Arias's expertise within the industry, allowing him to produce professional portraits on his own.

Arias is well on track to meet his high aspirations, he says.

"My five year goal is to shoot Jaden Smith for Sephora," he said. "Mainly because Jaden Smith is photographically such an amazing subject, and seeing him in an ad for a company that usually uses female models would be amazing."

Whether it's shooting for Sephora or local friends, Arias doesn't lose sight of what he strives for long term.

"My lifelong goal is to be able to sustain a comfortable lifestyle for myself and whoever I need to take care of," he said. "If I can sustain myself and my family, then that's when I'm truly successful."

Though the streets of Hong Kong, Barcelona and Palo Alto are calling, for now, all that matters is the model covered in paint. ■