THROUGH ADRIEN BROOM’S LOOKING GLASS

In late October photographer **Adrien Broom ’98**, whose whimsical photo graces the cover of this *Connections*, had just wrapped up her first commercial gig with Disney – shooting an advertisement for children’s nightlights – and was gearing up for the long days of post production. That Adrien’s first big commercial break came from Disney – a company founded in a world of fantasy – should be of no surprise to anyone familiar with her work.

“I like telling stories. I’ve always liked creating other worlds,” Broom said. “I think anything that kind of doesn’t make sense, I’m usually drawn to.”

A glance through Broom’s portfolio [www.adrienbroom.com/portfolio](http://www.adrienbroom.com/portfolio) clearly highlights her talent for storytelling and creating and capturing cinematographic scenes. Her distinct mixture of art, literature, and fantasy reveals a photographer whose story unfolds in a world of imagination right beyond her lens.

What her portfolio won’t reveal, however, is that Broom is an artist who has never taken a photography class.

**A STUDENT IN THE 1990S**

Broom, who is from Connecticut, was attracted to Brewster because of its arts vibe back in the ’90s. Once here she found a community that nurtured her creativity and an art program that made school more interesting for a student who at times found classes challenging due to dyslexia. At Brewster, though, she also found a value added that no other school could offer her at that time – a laptop computer.

Broom and her classmates were among the first students to go through the Brewster Model in the 1990s, and she attributes her early introduction and use of technology (the Academy had had a 1:1 laptop program since 1993) to giving her an edge and the confidence to continue exploring the creative side of technology.

For a young woman who would rather not dwell on her adolescence, she recalled her former advisor and tennis coach Byron Martin as someone who pushed her to find meaning in school and believe in herself.

Martin remembers Broom. “Over the years, Adrien became just a bit more confident in herself. Every little bit more that she believed in herself, the more her abilities, intellect, and her youthful soul could shine on the Brewster campus,” said Martin, a team leader and instructional support teacher.

“I follow her career on her website and still marvel at her talents. I show current students what someone can truly do when they follow their love and create what they believe to be truly important to them. Her story is just so cool.”
Broom remembers that genuine sense from faculty who really wanted her to find her passion and succeed. “[Brewster] was a very supportive community if you had different learning styles. … I was definitely not an academic. I thrived in the arts stuff. … I loved that little art building,” she said referring to Brewster’s stand-alone art building, which still houses studio arts and pottery classes.

“I really vibed with Brewster because of the arts. … being supportive of the arts was big here. … All the computer graphics stuff we did really influenced me. It made me comfortable to be in a digital world.”

She took her knowledge and interest in the digital world to Northeastern University where she was a double major in computer animation and graphic design. Later she earned a certificate in fine and decorative art history from Christie’s Education in London, and in 2006 she lived in Florence and studied at SACI (Studio Art Centers International) University.

After London and before heading to Italy Broom worked at a graphic design firm and around this time, it was photography that pulled her out of a particularly difficult time in her life. “My friends from the band Grace Potter & the Nocturnals dragged me out of the house to take pictures for them and that’s when I realized that photography was what I was supposed to do … I just started taking pictures and it made me really happy, and I started doing it nonstop all the time and put my heart and soul into it … and now it’s finally paying off.”

In November the hardcover photo book, Inside Looking Out: A Decade On The Road With Grace Potter & The Nocturnals was published. In the book’s forward, lead singer Grace Potter describes Adrien’s work with the band. “Adrien has been deeply entrenched inside our world, capturing images of me and the band since before she even realized that she was a photographer.

“She has never been an onlooker, sitting in a corner waiting for something interesting to happen. Instead she has been part of our unfolding story – injecting plot twists of her own throughout our many years traveling together.”

**INSPIRATION AND PROCESS**

Broom’s experience in London and then later in Florence exposed her to works that continue to influence the structure, composition, and painterly quality she tries to achieve in her work.

Broom, who now lives in Brooklyn, looks close to home for inspiration these days with walks around Chelsea, visits to museums, and, even the online arts and images collection Pinterest. “[Pinterest] is a total time suck but I love it,” she admitted.

She dreams up, designs, and builds her own sets. It took her a month to plan and design the set for her Day Dreams Collection, which she then built on site for the one-day shoot.

She keeps a notebook close by to jot down ideas, and once a week takes time to brainstorm her ideas about her next project. Broom admits that one of the hardest things for her is to stay focused on the current project and completing it before delving into the next blossoming idea. She’s getting better at it, though, thanks to advice from another photographer who told her to always, always finish a project before moving on.

Although Broom credits the digital opportunities presented to her as a young student and the supportive arts environment she encountered at Brewster for helping awaken a passion for the immensely creative, she says of her boarding school experience:

“The people are who you really take with you.” She referred to her Brewster friends as “super inspirational” and spoke of some she’s kept in touch with, including, AJ Brustein ’98, Adam Gross ’98, Josh Wald ’97, and Shunichi “Ippei” Takahashi ’98 with whom she recently had dinner.

As this magazine went to press, she was headed to Berlin, Germany, to visit one of her best friends, former Brewster classmate Katharina Zeitz ’98.

It’s no illusion that Adrien Broom’s passion for the fantastical shines through in all her work. At Brewster she found a supportive community that allowed her creative talents to flow, her confidence to rise, and her spirit to blossom. The footing Brewster provided Broom set the scene for her story to unfold and that is also no illusion.
BY JACK SENGSTAKEN ’14

As a student with a passion for learning, touring the Academic Building at Brewster was like walking into a whole new world. Before Brewster, I went to a large public school and by the end of my sophomore year, I knew I needed more. I craved more education, more interaction with my teachers, and more time at school. I wanted to make a difference in my school community.

Organization has always been a constant battle for me. In the first week of school, my AP U.S. History teacher, Mr. Palmer, identified that difficulty. He spent hours in his classroom after school helping me with organizing my binder, improving my writing, and studying for tests. One of my fondest memories is eating one of Mr. Palmer’s famous cheeseburgers at his house as he playfully quizzed me on the upcoming AP exam.

Not only do Brewster teachers advocate for students and assist them with their challenges, they celebrate their talents. In my junior year, I became passionate about chemistry. I was enticed by the hands-on science curriculum, and my chemistry teacher, Mr. O’Blenis, recognized that passion and embraced it. In one of my earliest experiments, I questioned him about the effect of hydrochloric acid at varying concentrations on different materials. He challenged me to set up an experiment. Mr. O’Blenis spent hours in the lab with me working one-on-one to test the acid in levels from 10 percent up to fully concentrated. He helped me work through finding out why pennies made before 1982 reacted differently than pennies made after. He helped me organize my results, build an interactive iPad app, and present my findings. Mr. O’Blenis spent hours with me discussing my future, including possible college options, career paths, and courses I should take in the coming years. The passion he showed for his subject fueled my love of learning and pushed me to better myself in ways I would have never thought possible before Brewster.

NO TWO STUDENTS ARE ALIKE

No class is completely uniform, just as no two students are alike. Brewster teachers do a terrific job understanding these differences in students and adapting the curriculum to challenge each individual. My 11th grade English teacher, Mr. Simoes, who remains one of my greatest role models, always challenged me. At the start of the year, he worked with me to improve the organization of my writing, even once taking time out of his busy coaching schedule to look over a paper in the middle of a practice. Near the end of the year, as my interests flourished, he continued to challenge me by introducing me to high level, absurdist plays such as Waiting for Godot and poems such as The Waste Land.

The Brewster curriculum allows students to expand their talents and interests and apply them to real projects. Every single teacher celebrated and bolstered my love of engineering. They encouraged me to customize my course load after that passion and exercise it in the form of project-based learning.
At his 50th Reunion in 2012, Rome Aja (on right) with wife Harriet caught up with David Kerin (holding Joanna Kerin). Aja taught Kerin at Montpelier High School and then Kerin returned to coach track and field with Aja. Kerin is the husband of Brewster Advancement Director Kristy Kerin.

At the end of each year, students are asked to complete a project over a two-week period using the skills accumulated throughout the year. My group of four quickly fell into place as we all had a passion for engineering and working with cars. We decided to convert a car to run on vegetable oil. With a massive project looming, we each quickly found our niches – presenting, conducting research, building. We learned about the required accountability when working in a group and about utilizing each others’ talents to divide up the work load. Our greatest accomplishment throughout the project was not the building of the vegetable oil car, but rather learning how to function in a group. Each of us exercised our talents, while gaining valuable insight for the future on how to work with a group on a life-size project.

My time at Brewster so far has been the most educational, collaborative, productive, and fun time of my life. Throughout my junior year, the campus became my home, my peers became my best friends, and my teachers became my family. There is something incredibly unique about coming together to learn with domestic and international friends, teachers, and experts who I know care as much about me, as they care about learning. Ultimately, what makes the Brewster campus such a unique place are the people that fill it, and its solid foundation: the incredibly passionate staff members who connect with each student on an individual level to develop an education that suits their learning style.

**ROME AJA ‘62**  
Romero “Rome” Aja enrolled at Brewster Academy in 1961 as a postgraduate looking for both challenging college preparatory classes and help balancing academics and athletics. What he found was an environment of teachers committed to helping him attain success in that postgraduate year and preparation for the rigors of the military college, Norwich University, where he would attend and play basketball for four years. After Norwich, he taught for 30 years at Montpelier High School in Vermont (European history, psychology, and sociology), and for 25 years coached track and field at the school.

**HOW DID YOUR POSTGRADUATE YEAR HELP PREPARE YOU FOR COLLEGE?**  
Brewster teachers helped us improve in areas that were weaknesses in our previous high school. … The structured study halls in the evening were very helpful. Teachers were there to assist us with our homework, and time management was also addressed and was very helpful as I made my way through military college. Brewster very definitely prepared me in study habits, organizing my time, and challenging me in the academic arena. An area not focused on that I needed was difficulty with standardized testing (i.e. SATs). I hear they have special [prep] classes for that now. Sure wish we had them!

**HOW DID BREWSTER PREPARE YOU FOR COLLEGE ATHLETICS?** The Brewster coaches really challenged us to be the best we could be. They had high expectations with conditioning and focus on our sport. Sportsmanship was a key theme from coach Ed Murphy.

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How Do I Download the App?

1. Search for Brewster Alumni Connect in the App store for Apple devices or in Google Play for Android devices.
2. Use your primary e-mail to log in and create a password.
3. Enjoy reconnecting and remember to send updates to the Alumni Office.

Questions? Visit the FAQ page online at brewsteracademy.org/alumniapp or contact Beth Hayes ’81 in the Alumni and Development Office at 603-569-7133 or beth_hayes@brewsteracademy.org.

Want to reconnect with Brewster friends? 
THERE’S AN APP FOR THAT!

It’s totally cool! I travel a bit and I like seeing who lives in the area. I wish everyone had their contact info. updated as I’ve wanted to reach out to a couple of alumni.

– Dobro Goodale ’89

I like the Brewster app because it’s easy to get into all of its features.

– Ed Isenberg ’62

I look to see where people are - I like to see how many friends I can find.

– Patricia Hodgdon ’47

WAS THERE A DEFINING MOMENT WHEN YOU KNEW TEACHING WAS WHAT YOU MOST WANTED TO DO? I really knew I wanted to teach and coach from the time I was an adolescent. Brewster gave me the chance to help me on my way to that profession. Mr. Vaughan was awesome when I told him that I wanted to be a teacher and a coach. I remember him saying at my interview ‘let’s get you started right now.’ I will be forever indebted to Brewster for giving me a chance to prove myself in the academic and athletic environment.

DID YOUR TIME AT BREWSTER OFFER YOU ANY SKILL SETS FOR SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE? Yes, discipline, a work ethic, time management, and always that we should strive to be our best.

WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF BEING A PG AT BREWSTER? The independence; working for my scholarship with kitchen duties; the wonderful and caring teachers assisting me with proper study habits; understanding the importance of academics; my terrific coaches – coach [Ed] Murphy and coach Wilkins; the leadership of Principal [Burtis] Vaughan; wonderful classmates and a great roommate; outstanding unselfish teammates. … The overall environment on the Brewster campus and the community of Wolfeboro provided an absolutely wonderful year in my life.

Brewster was the perfect fit for me and fulfilled most of my needs – Brewster has and will always be in my heart. Brewster gave me a chance to get me on my way to fulfill my dreams of teaching and coaching.