

The Twins

What is it like being a twin?

By

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Submitted to the Department of Photography, School of Art and Design In partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College

State University of New York

Fall 2021

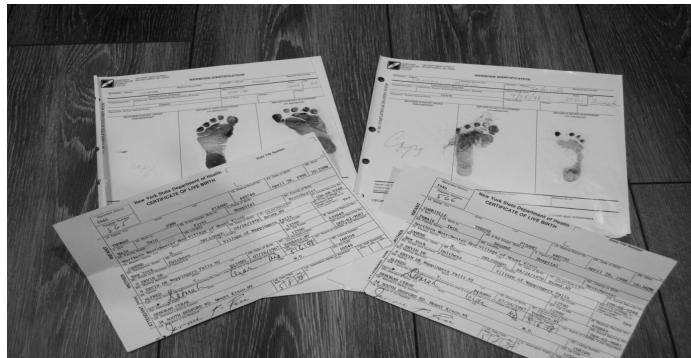
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“The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other’s life.” - Richard Bach

Surprise!! You’re having twins!! These were the words my parents weren’t expecting to hear at their first doctors visit when finding out they were expecting. It was fun for them to be able to tell family and friends that they were pregnant, and to see the joy and excitement turn to shock when announcing they were expecting twins. On April 28, 1998, at 10:24 pm my older brother Thomas entered into this world at 5lbs 8ozs. I made my entrance a long nine minutes later, at 10:34 pm, weighing in at 5lbs 4ozs. Throughout this paper, I will show what it is like to be a twin, my experiences, and my relationship with my brother as we have grown through the years.

For as long as I can remember, myself and as well as my parents have been asked what it’s like being a twin. All I can say is, it’s been an experience like no other.



The Twins Were Born, 2021, 13x19, Digital Photograph

To keep with the spirit of surprise, my parents didn’t want to know, and they didn’t let anyone else know what our sex was until we entered this world. Every ultrasound given, the technician always asked, “do we want to know the sex of your babies?” Both of my parents felt strongly about not knowing the sex of my brother and I until after we were born. They were grateful to

have had two healthy babies and were able to take us home from the hospital with no complications. The reality set in very quickly when they welcomed home two children. It meant a ton less sleep, double everything, and not much time to do anything else but to take care of us.

It became clear early on how strong our bond was, and the connection we had with each other. That bond continues until this day. Throughout our devotion to each other, my brother Thomas and I learned to support one another from an early age. My mom would tell us as infants we had separate cribs, but only really slept and felt most secure when we were in the same crib. I was the fussier one, Thomas was more patient. He was the true older brother, always looking out for me, especially when it came time to eat. He always let me go first, because I was very impatient, and he totally understood my needs. On the other hand, when it came to walking, Thomas would knock me down whenever I would try. Thomas was the first to take his first steps, and of course everyone asked if I was walking as well.



Shoes Made for Walking, 2021, 13x19, Digital Photograph

In the photograph, *Shoes Made for Walking*, Thomas's shoes are more scuffed and worn than mine are. He achieved a few firsts before me, and in addition to walking he also crawled and was potty trained before me. There was a lot of comparing of Thomas and I, mostly from my family. Thomas from when he first learned to walk, had earned the nickname of Houdini. He constantly broke out of his crib, figured out locks, and was incredibly strong. I was considered the quiet one. I would sit quietly and play with my toys when Thomas would be running around the room releasing tons of energy. He was always getting into trouble, and when he got in trouble, I would come to his rescue. If he cried, I cried, and if he was sad, I was sad. Even at a very young age we were always looking out for each other and protecting each other whenever needed. I recall, particularly when we were very young, and in an unfamiliar space, or around people we did not know, we would find each other. Our excitement to see each other would ease our anxiety. We were each other's security blanket, so to speak.



Thomas and I, 8x10, 2021

One of the starting points for this project was the rediscovery of a photograph I found on our first day of pre-school entitled *Thomas and I*. Pre-school we were placed in class together and didn't

have to worry about being separated. We had each other to lean on for support and ease our anxieties in an unfamiliar territory. The photograph of us with our backpacks ready to go for our first day of pre-school, you can see me looking at my brother for a little reassurance. He was pumped up and ready to go. He was more outgoing and friendlier, and I was a little more cautious and shy. Our differences, demeanor and personalities complimented and balanced each other out. Being in pre-school together with my brother was the first time we were compared to one another from anyone other than family. Now we were exposed to new kids our own age who we were not related too, as well as adults who were not family members. Our successes were different, our failures were different, and our personalities were different.

When we were in pre-school, we both received assistance for speech and language. It was like where the other one lacked, the other showed strength. It was sometimes hard to branch off and interact with our own group of friends. We somehow always would go back to hanging out together, almost subconsciously drawn to each other like a magnet. We always knew when the other needed support or reassurance. We were supposed to be taking naps one afternoon, and I was crying. I remember thinking *wouldn't it be funny if Thomas jumped from his bed to mine?* Well, I guess he must've been thinking the same thing, and the next thing I knew he was flying across the room. Unfortunately, he missed my bed, and hit his head on a nearby rocking chair. That was Thomas's first visit to the hospital. My aunt came to pick me up as my mom took Thomas to the hospital. Coincidentally, as my brother was getting his stitches, at my aunt's house I hid behind a chair and simultaneously held my head in the same spot he was getting his stitches. That was one of my first experiences of being able to physically, as well as emotionally, feel what my brother was feeling. We did at that age start to develop and get involved in different

interests. I began dancing, and Thomas tried baseball. I ended up dancing for quite a long time, 16 years to be exact. Thomas on the other hand was the dandelion picker on the baseball field, and soon decided baseball was not his sport. Although he wasn't involved in any specific organized athletics or clubs any longer, he was there supporting me at every dance recital, every year.

Finishing elementary school was extremely difficult for me. Kindergarten was the first time we were separated and put into different classes. Thomas and I were so scared and nervous to be apart for a portion of the day. On orientation day, we both went into our separate classrooms. I went with my dad, and my mom went with Thomas. The first question Thomas asked while taking a tour of the room was "where's my sister's name tag?" I, on the other hand, was accepting of us being apart, especially for just a small portion of the day. Thankfully our teachers were very supportive and allowed us to check in on each other periodically throughout the day. Recess was our favorite time of day. As soon as recess began and we got outside, we ran toward one another right away. It was as if we hadn't seen each other for days or weeks, instead of hours. We would spend most of our shared recess together but would also make some time for new friends we had made separately. Now we had developed new relationships and started to learn how to manage our time to include others in our expanding social circle.

Kindergarten and first grade were the only two years we were separated. We both were having some learning difficulties and were placed in a self-contained classroom through middle school. This program alternated schools, depending on which grade we were in, which for some children might be challenging to accept. Thomas and I found it an easy situation to adapt to because we knew there was always going to be one familiar face and friend in the class; each other. The only downside was that we were naturally being compared to one another. As stated earlier,

where Thomas lacked, I was strong, and vice versa. Although the teachers were aware of our strengths and weaknesses, there was still a common expectation for us to simultaneously achieve academically, as well as socially. The selection of archival photographs portrays how close we were during our younger years.

Our individual personalities began to shine through when we entered middle school, but our bond stayed strong. We would change classes and not always be doing the same class/special at the same time. When we would reconnect at the end of the day and the chatter was non-stop. My parents never needed to ask us about the day's events, they simply needed to listen to our conversations to learn every detail we experienced that day. Living in the age of cell phones, we would often text each other to check in and get the important facts of the moment. Making sure each of us was okay was a top priority. As seen in the following diptych of us texting each other asking how class/school was going.



Checking In, 8 x10 Digital Photography ,202.

Where I lacked my brother was strong, and where my brother was weak, I excelled. My parents enjoyed having twins, but sometimes were sad that they got to experience some milestones just once. Only one high school graduation, one senior prom, etc. For me, being a twin has always been great. It's fun and you basically have a built-in best friend. We know we have each other when one was feeling uncertain or in a tough situation. We know when to be supportive and when to back off. I'm sure there are siblings out there that feel similarly about each other, but being a twin is different, the bond is so unbelievably strong. We are individuals, but from time to time we experience the same thing at the same time. I was in a car accident and was banged up just a bit. I had hurt my back and neck but was so shaken from the accident I didn't realize until my brother asked if I was hurting anywhere, because he had back and neck pain as well. Feeling the same at the same time is such a unique quality to have as a twin. Often, I've said being a twin is awesome, you have a built-in friend that is there all the time, but the downside could be the same, you have your friend there all the time.

We both decided to go on to college and initially enrolled at the same school, but eventually transferred into two different schools. The first semester away, my brother struggled with not being at home and/or not being around me, but he adjusted and had a successful semester. We would have check ins throughout the week to see how everything was going with each other. Facetime and texting was our safe spot when we were not in school together. The next semester away, he was doing better, but because COVID shutdown, he was unable to navigate through the online learning, and decided to take some time off to pursue work instead. Thankfully I was able to adapt to the new learning situation and remained enrolled in classes. Thomas started working full time at a bike shop. It was at this point where our paths shifted. My day-to-day life was

college and pursuing my degree, and his was working, and learning to adjust to life without being a full-time student anymore.



Bike Shop, 2021 8x10 Digital Photography

These set of images, including *Bike Shop*, show the different paths we are on, and the different experiences we have been having. My goal is to show how our bond endures. It is in these relaxed, and casual moments at home at the end of our respective days such as in the photograph *Homework*, that my brother Thomas and I can decompress with one another and hangout for the rest of the day together. Even though we are on different paths we still manage to spend time with each other. Whether I'm doing my schoolwork, or he's watching a movie, either way there doesn't need to be conversation between us. It's just a comfort to know we're there for each other. Although Thomas isn't attending college now, he is still thinking about going back to school, he wants to achieve his goal of a college degree. The pandemic unfortunately, has made his decision to go back difficult. He's more of a hand on in person kind of person. Conversely, I

am ok with working quietly and alone, although not many educators thought I would ever achieve the goal of a college degree. I'm proud to say I achieved this goal on my own, during a pandemic, while working part time. This is the first time I did something separate from my brother. I hope my brother knows, he can do anything, no one can tell you no, and you will get through it and get a college degree.



Homework, 8x10 Digital Photograph, 2021

There are two photographers who influenced me to do this project, Lauren Taubenfield and Tina Barney. Lauren Taubenfield has a series documenting her brother and his illness. She captured the memories she shared with him during his illness. Tina Barney, my other influence, made a series about family and friends and wanted to capture the complexity of the personal relationships. In the editing process, I took the influence from Barney and developed images in black and white. Using the two photographers as influencers to capture the feelings of my childhood images. With black and white photos, I'm able to interpret feelings and I was able to capture the tone and isolate the true feeling of being a twin. Even though these two

photographers chose different routes capturing a memory, they were appropriate photographers to use to help depict the feeling of family. The tone in their pictures I connected to, and how they related their documented pictures to their lives with their family. For example, Lauren Taubenfield had one picture from the series entitled *Oh Brother*. It is a photograph I connected to the most, because I captured an image of my brother entitled *Window*, when he had come home from a long day at work. I really felt how worn out he was.



Oh Brother



Window, 8x10, digital Photograph, 2021



The Portrait, 1984

The Portrait, 1984 by Tina Barney series brought me back to when I was little and would spend time with my cousins and family. We would be at my grandma and grandpa's house for Sunday dinner with my whole family, I felt most connected to this, and it brought me back to a childhood memory, that I imagined myself in this portrait. Black and white pictures give me a sense of the past. It triggers memories that happened in the past and helps capture the feelings I have now growing up. I can connect most with her images.

Being a twin has given me so many mixed feelings and experiences. We have an amazing bond, that unless you are a twin have no idea how close we really are. Not only are we connected in ways that are unexplainable, but we truly care about each other. Significant others may come and go, but I know I always have my brother's back and he will always have mine. My hope for the future is we will continue to share our triumphs, be supportive of each other, and never let anyone come between us. Knowing I have my brother by my side, I know I am never alone. We can live across county from each other, or across the street from one another, either way we will always have that connection and bond. Either way my twin will always be my other half. I wanted to end this project that showed what my life was like as a twin and shows that the bond we had growing up and then slowly going different ways. As we get older, I look at our relationship of constantly being together as one that will eventually shift.

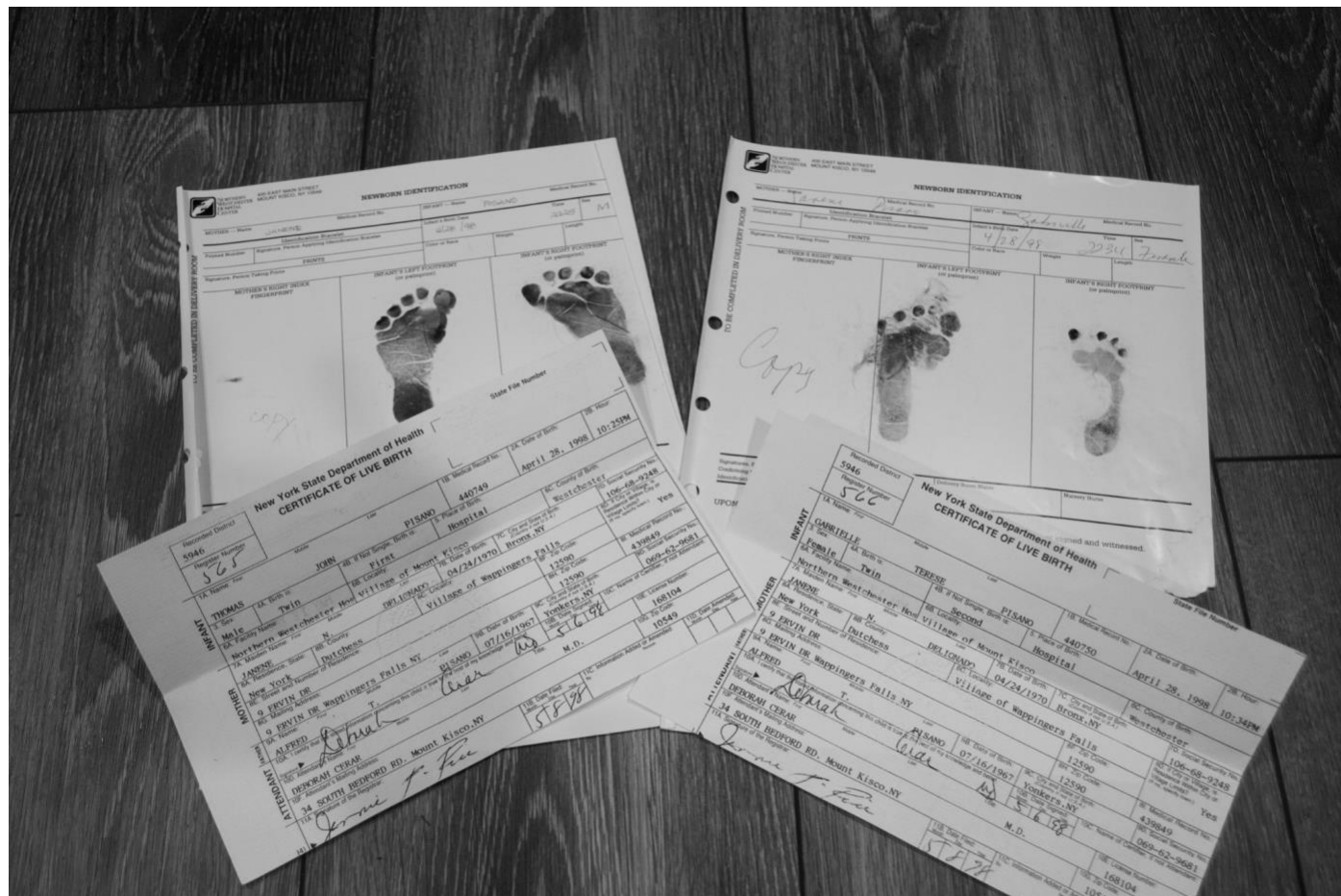


Thomas, 2021 13x19 Digital Photograph

While Thomas and I are currently on different paths, with one of us choosing to finish college and the other on more of a college hiatus, this shift has created a new title that separates both Thomas and I from our lifelong title of “The Twins.” This label of “The Twins” we have so often been called, rather than our own individual names, is habit for people. At the end of 2021, it’s not going to be “*the twins finished school,*” but instead “*Gabby graduated.*” Overall, this project has taught me a lot. It made me dig a little deeper with my relationship with my twin. This project made my bond with my brother a little closer than it has been since we were little. We learned more about each other. We are more alike than we like to admit. We still have the same gestures, laugh at the same things, stick up for each other, support each other, and still very protective of each other. As I wrap up this project, I would like to continue the series and see where it can expand in the future as we both move on to new chapters in our lives.



Home Sweet Home, 2021
13x19
Digital Photograph



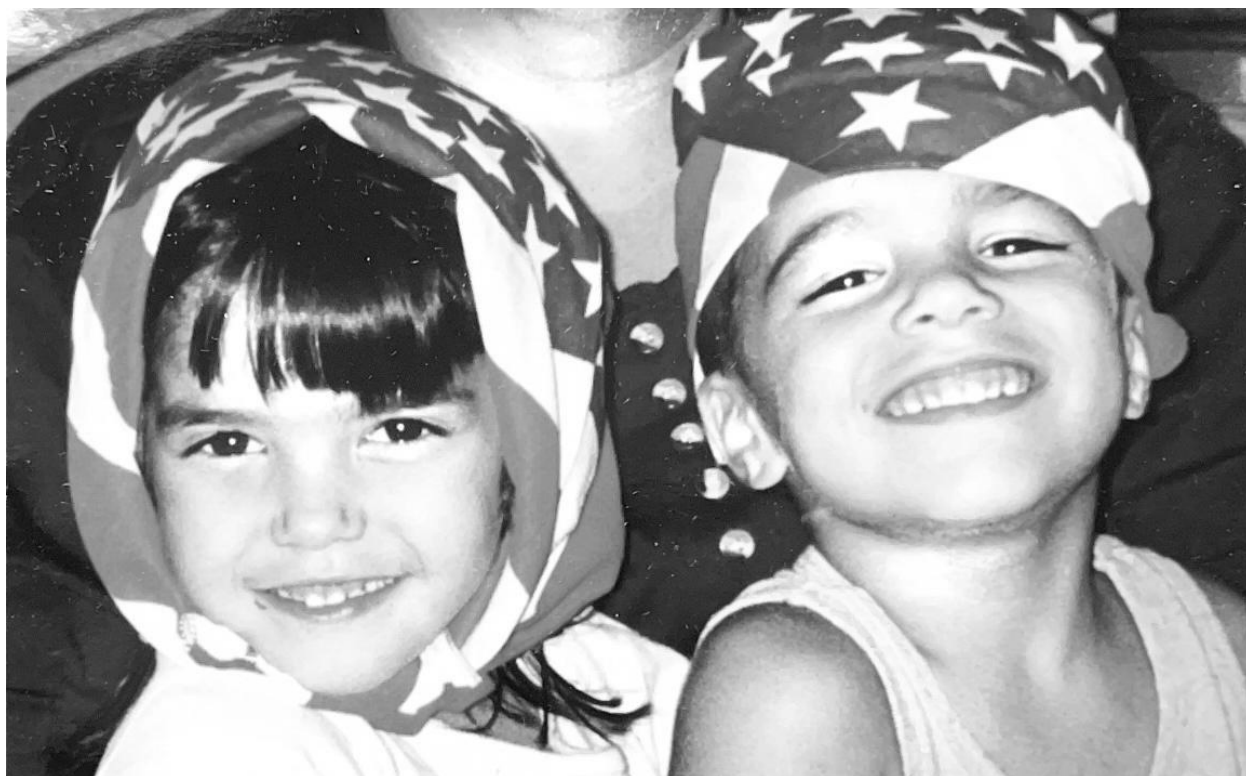
The Twins Were Born, 2021
13x19
Digital Photograph



Shoes Made for Walking, 2021

13x19

Digital Photograph



We The Kids of America, 2021

8x10

Archival image scan



Check-in Part 1, 2021
8x10
Digital Photograph



Check-in Part 2, 2021
8x10
Digital Photograph



Vibing, 2021
8x10
Digital Photograph



All White, 2021
13x19
Digital Photograph



Bike Shop, 2021
8x10
Digital Photograph



Checking phone ,2021
8x10
Digital photograph



Chester Boy, 2021
8x10
Archival image scan



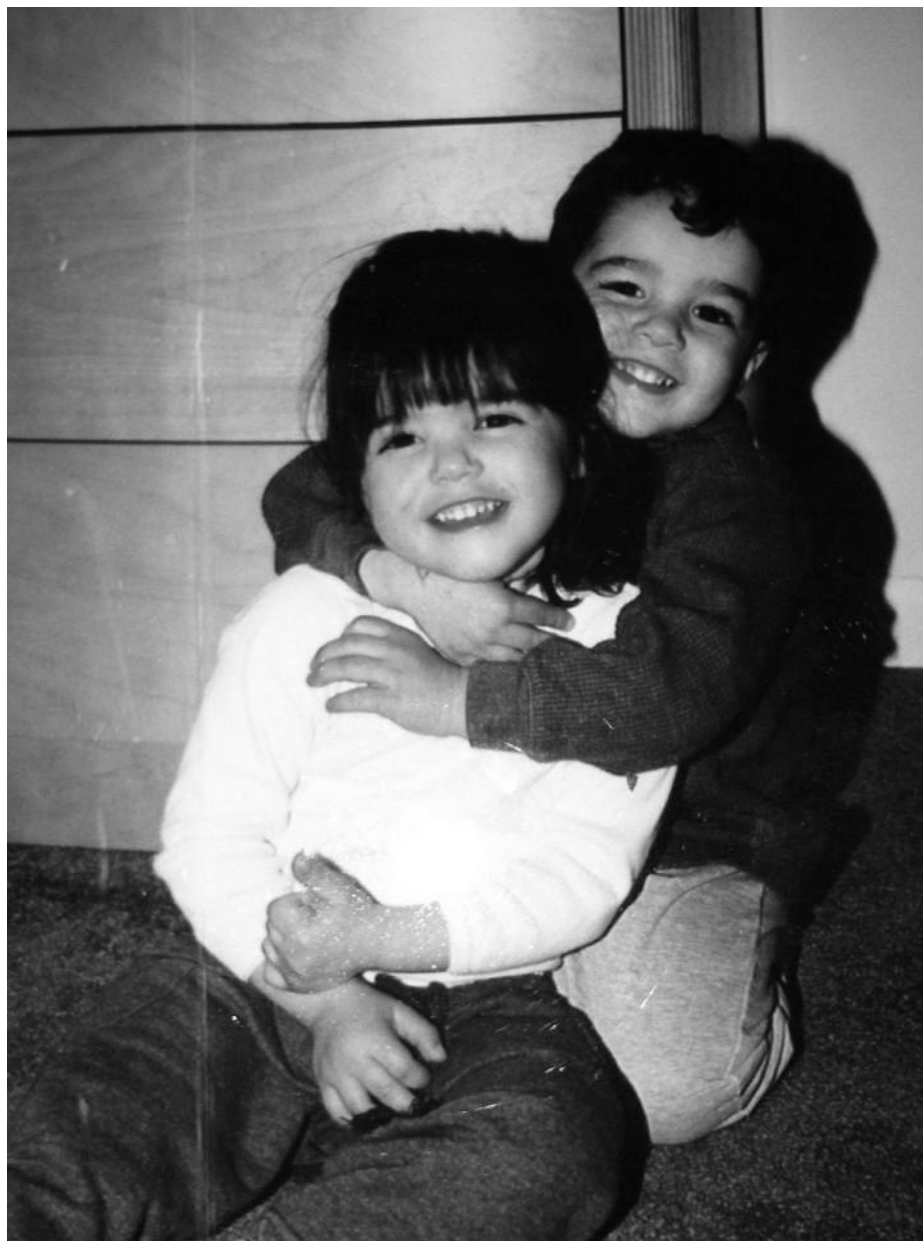
Hugs, 2021
8x10
Archival image scan



Hands-on face, 2021

8x10

Archival image scan



Smile, 2021
8x10
Archival image scan



Easter, 2021
8x10
Archival image scan



Truck, 2021
13x19
Digital photograph



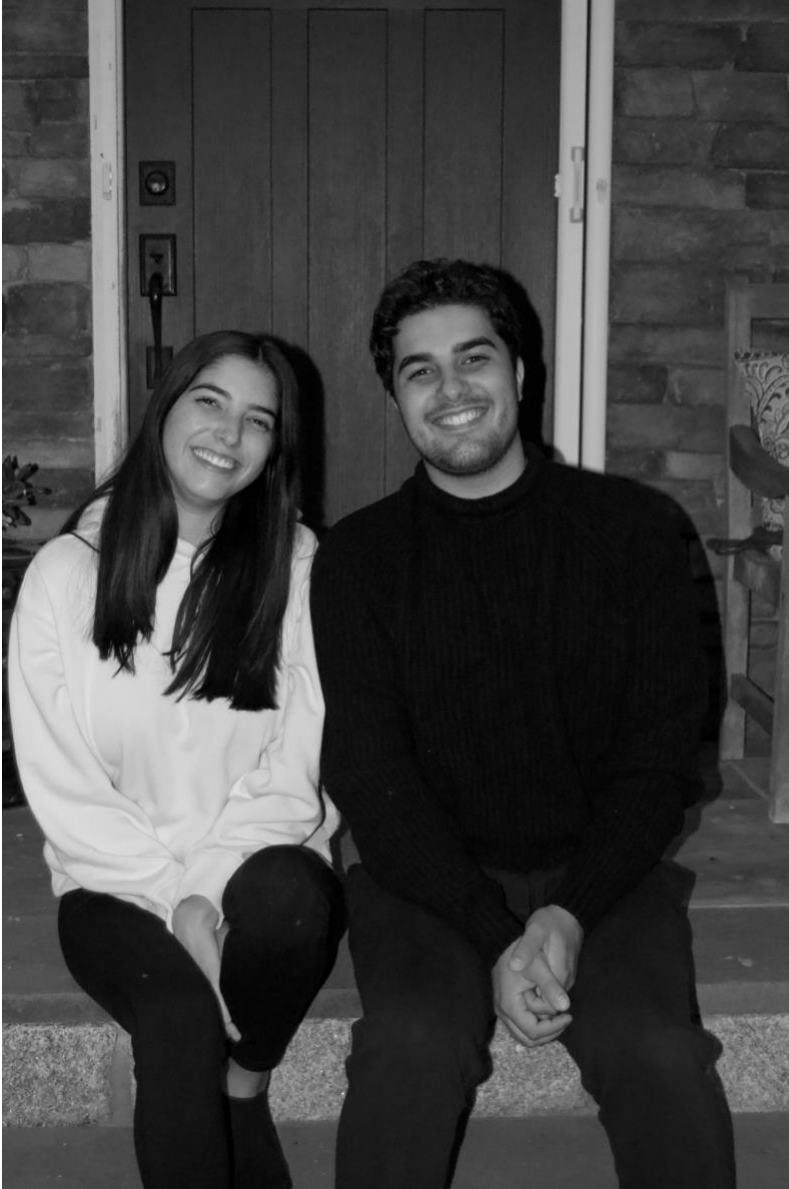
Thomas, 2021
13x19
Digital Photograph



Window, 2021
8x10
Digital Photograph



Car, 2021
8x10
Digital Photograph



The Twins, 2021
13x19
Digital Photograph

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