

# Lights, Camera, Brooks Students Say, “Action!”

## Brooks Institute Uses Fifth-in-a-Row Kodak 35mm Project Grant to Shoot a Film

By **Julie Bifano**

For the fifth year in a row, Brooks Institute received the text Kodak-sponsored 35mm Project grant. The photography school based in Santa Barbara and Ventura is the only school in the United States to have received the grant so many years in a row. It gives 30 students the opportunity of shooting a 10-minute short film with the guidance of more than 40 professional film mentors. These students also have the privilege of working with some of the best rented film equipment in the business, estimated a value of over \$1 million.



PHOTO: JULIE BIFANO

**A Brooks student shoots the film.**

PHOTO: JULIE BIFANO



**Tracy and Judy Trotter**

Featured equipment includes **two 35mm cameras, the trendy red digital camera, and a time-lapse camera.** Mole Richardson donated lights and a massive **power generator.** The **grip truck,** filled with myriad cinematic tools, was donated by Bullet Grip.

Your typical film set is hectic. Directors and actors, producers and crew have scrunched foreheads and dark circles under their eyes that scream, “Leave me alone!” But those overworked expressions were simply not present on the Brooks students’ film set on Friday night, near the Funk Zone campus at the corner of Mason and Anacapa streets, where they were working on this year’s short, ***Hard Boiled Eggs.*** To the contrary, the students and their mentors were busy, but excited.

I was warmly welcomed by faculty sponsors and executive producer mentors, **Tracy and Judy Trotter**. They were happy to be donating a weekend of their time, as well as many weeks of preparation to help students gear up for the weekend of film-making. **“They’ll be able to go out when they graduate with a film and show it to people.** They’ll be able to say I did the art direction or I did the lighting, or costuming,” said Judy Trotter.

Students that are a part of the 35 MM weekend show their dedication to be there. Walking around the campus building, you could feel the air of tenacity and drive. **“One hundred and thirty-five students apply for this class and they let in 30,”** said Tracy Trotter. “Underclassmen are not allowed to take the class.” But Tracy explained that sometimes they let a few underclassmen come for part of the weekend filming to shadow upperclassman and mentors, as well as get a taste for a big film shoot.

The Trotters, referred to as “Mom and Dad” by some of the students, also enable pupils to make connections with mentors at the shoot. Through these connections, students have the possibility of internships and jobs in the future. Some of the notable participants are casting mentor, **Linda Lowry** (*Grey’s Anatomy*), a three time Emmy winner. Also in the mentor line-up are director **Perry Lang** (*Underwood*), producer **Steve McGlothen** (*I, Robot*), and director of photography **Chuck Minsky** (*You, Me, and Dupree and The Producers*).



PHOTO: JULIE BIFANO

Ryann Weller's storyboards



PHOTO: JULIE BIFANO

Director Aaron Lee (right) with a classmate.

Lang, a Santa Barbara resident, expressed how meaningful it was to work with students from Brooks Institute. “When you get a chance to help somebody else do something you do all the time, you look at it in a new way and you learn from it.”

Students also praised the weekend. “This is my third time doing the 35 MM project,” said student storyboard artist **Ryann Weller**. “The reason why I keep coming back to do this every year is because Tracy and Judy

bring all of these mentors out here and up the level of a film shoot. It's their dedication to the students. They put in 110 percent.”

Third-year student director **Aaron Lee** worked diligently for hours behind the camera next to a cage of chickens that provided eggs for the film. It was breathtaking to watch Lee's seat raise high in the air for certain shots, and slowly come back down to the ground. In the shocking finale of the film, the inside of an egg reveals a white puff of powdery drugs.

PHOTO: JULIE BIFANO



The mascots of the film, whose eggs are filled with drugs.

*Hard Boiled Eggs* takes a close glance at the twisted underbelly of crime and drug trafficking. Violent scenes with gunshots and fake blood aid students who want to learn about special effects. Using guns and producing other special effects also teaches students the importance of going through the right business and liability procedures for using such equipment.

“Being on the 35 MM film project is a really worthwhile experience,” said student **Federic Benito**. “You don't get that experience every single day. We're learning something new and we wouldn't be able to have this experience at a different college or university.”

Leaving the campus, walking back to my car past heavy duty equipment, lights, and countless cameras, I felt an extra bounce in my step. I was left to eagerly await the final version of the film, which continues production through the weekend in Ventura. Following the completion of the Kodak 35 MM weekend, the Trotters will send the film to numerous festivals, giving the students something to look forward to after all their efforts.