



# Brian Ulrich

**AGE:** 36  
**BORN:** North Port, NY  
**RESIDENCE:** Chicago, IL  
**EDUCATION:** Columbia College, Chicago, IL  
**CLIENTS:** *Spin, Wired, Adbusters, Seed, The New York Times Magazine*

**B**rian Ulrich clearly remembers the day he registered for his first semester of grad school classes at Columbia College in Chicago. It was September 11, 2001.

In the days that followed, Ulrich paid attention as the country's mood shifted from unity and compassion to political sloganeering. In particular, he remembers politicians calling for Americans to go shopping to support the economy. "Shopping was now kind of this patriotic duty," he says.

Ever since, Ulrich's photography has been shaped by the country's reaction to the 9/11 attacks. He even co-opted the slogan "Not if, but when" as the title for his Web site.

In an ongoing series called "Copia," Ulrich shows the world of commerce as everyday Americans see it: rows of identical red checkout stations at Target, carts rolling across the cracked concrete floor of Home Depot, junk computers cluttering the shelves of a thrift store. Often, the shoppers in the photos have a blank stare as they survey the bounty of pasta, produce or fishing tackle arrayed before them. In stores, Ulrich usually shoots looking down into a medium-format camera at waist level—an angle with the practical benefit of making him unobtrusive in chains where photography is frowned upon.

Ulrich began taking pictures as an undergraduate at the University of Akron, he says, after suffering a concussion in a bike accident. For a short time after the wreck, he saw the world around him as a series of still images. Taking photographs helped him reconstruct what happened after the accident.

He soon changed his major from graphic design to photography. He learned how to use the Web to promote his work and moved to New York to work in galleries.

Ulrich's "Copia" work has been shown in galleries and museums. Last year he was one of the three photographers collected in the Aperture book *MP3: Midwest Photographers Publication Project*, which he says was a good example of the communal spirit photographers have in the Midwest.

He also shoots editorial work for magazines, notably *Adbusters*, where his photos seem to match the magazine's politics.

Among his other projects: "TrashCam," a series of photos showing people interacting with garbage cans on city streets. Because all that stuff we bought while fighting the terrorists has to end up somewhere.

—Daryl Lang



ALL THREE PHOTOS © BRIAN ULRICH