

Introduction
Twenty-Three Series
Essays & Photographs

January, 2025

Introduction - Twenty-Three Series

Photographs & Essays

Every photograph holds a secret. The twenty-three series of photographs in this collection were made between 1983-2001 and the essays were written in 2023-25.

IN the second grade, while waiting for my mother to pick me up from St. Patrick's elementary school in Corpus Christi, Texas, I buried a penny, deep along the edge of a sidewalk. It had something to do with not forgetting and all the questions that surface during childhood. Today, the coin still buried, still waiting in the dark on the side of the aging pathway. A child's hand was the last to hold it. Abraham Lincoln was on one side, on the other, "One Cent - E. Pluribus Unum".

Photography is not just about Photographs.

Photographs are also about what is experienced, imagined, learned and remembered inside and outside the borders of the photograph. Mood rearranges understanding. Care attaches weight and gravity. Experience is often amplified and wraps its arms around a moment. Perception rises like bread and is rarely limited to what is directly in front of us. Photographs specialize in time travel, moving from now to then. The language of "looking" goes deeper than surfaces. My fingerprint on the buried penny was a topographical map, but it offered no clear guidance on how to live.

All of my photographic series (including the many portrait series and documentaries projects) are connected to wanting to know more - a desire to understand individuals and communities and places and ideas unlike my own. I fell in love with the medium of Photography with all of its limitations and irregular destinations. Photography teaches that experience is best understood by paying attention. I think of a camera not as a barrier that separates the photographer from what was seen, but more as a passageway, like stopping while walking to have a conversation. Randomness and intentionality stroll hand in hand.

I used photographic film, processed and printed in my darkroom. Most of the photographs were made using a large format 8x10" and "5x7" Deardorff View Camera. Film takes time. I might carry only 14/18 sheets of film because of the weight of the camera and film plates. When loading unexposed film in the dark into the film plates, I wondered, what focused light would land on the sheets of film?

Every photograph is ambiguous, susceptible to multiple meanings. That seems to be both a limitation and a strength. Photographs are not quiet nor are they untroubled. So much is missing from a still photograph. It could be the bite of cold air in the early mornings - the moving, murmuring of voices - all the questions floating in air. It might be the smell of smoke, dried leaves or the memory of rain. How does a person photograph the serious remoteness of landscapes or the emotional longing many feel and share? Emotions and desires and bent propensities are illusive. Even with all of a photograph's uncertainties, a still image, a photograph can be so mysteriously powerful. The act of photographing is also the act of holding on to something. In the middle of the night, in the darkroom with a soft orange glow of the safelight, photographs resting in running water are owners of their own light.

Working as a photographer has always been about setting an idea or question or attention into motion to discover what photographs – experiences - revelations might emerge from that hopeful endeavor. Like rain-water swirling down a valley, where will it end up? “Light and dark” are invitations to critical thinking. “A flash of light” in our peripheral vision is an exclamation mark. Uncertainty and unpredictability are symbols in the same way as satisfaction or delight. What images should we tattoo on the surface of our skin? A face - a single tree or maybe a wish? Every person, every place is a map to somewhere else.

Four long-term Audio & Photography traveling exhibitions made between 2000-2023 are not a part of this collection. (Children of Children- Teenage pregnancy) - (Fine Line – Mental Health/Mental Illness) - (About Hunger & Resilience) and (My Heart Is Not Blind - On Blindness & Perception)

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