
Senior Projects Spring 2020

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2020

Feathers to Flesh

Lucille H. Reback
Bard College, lr3330@bard.edu

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FEATHERS TO FLESH

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Josephine lies here by my side asleep in her rocky racoon shirt. Her arms open wide. She has the head of an angel, her body is tanned from so much swimming. A couple days back she swam on her own for the first time. Empowering moment of god. She did it right on the heels of Georgia, who leaps into the water now and swims solo until she can't hold her breath any longer and then brings her head up to reveal the biggest smile. Lucy does full-on cannonballs off the side of the pool in the deep end. Then she does the pencil and next to the swan dive. Her sisters have complete admiration. Next the twist and shout.

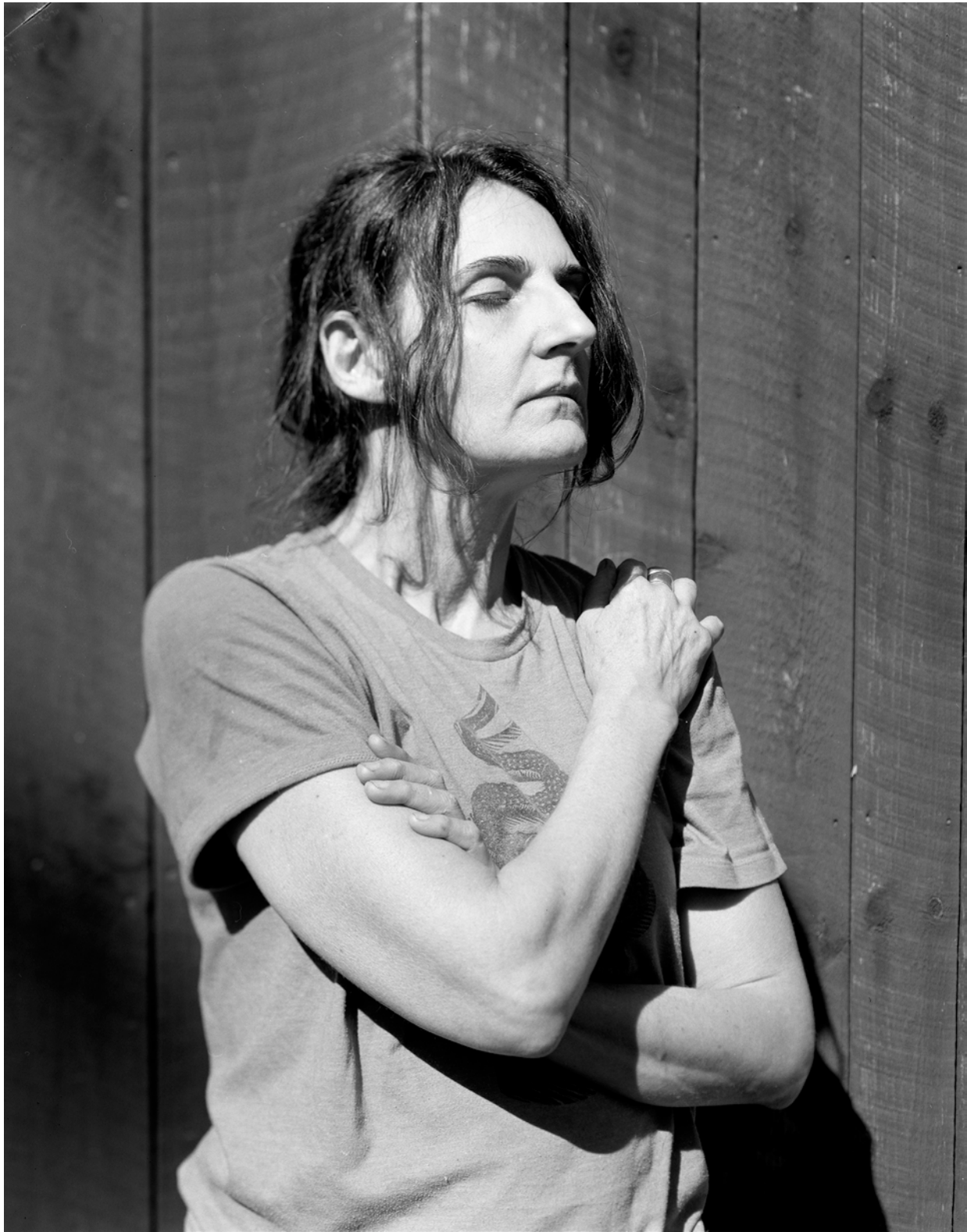
My girls, in full wild glory.

Lucy is able to comprehend the deeper parts of Alice in Wonderland these days but still has that mysterious unfettered wildness that belongs only to a nine year old.

FEATHERS TO FLESH

LUCILLE REBACK





























































I drive down the dirt road to my mother's house. The potholes have gotten deeper and more aggressive in welcoming me home. The house looks more or less the same, except the front door has been painted red. I leave my camera in the car, I don't want to give away my reasons for being here.

Twitching legs while we slept, legs that didn't take up space.
Snores and mumbles. Maroon uniforms; crests and collars not
quite white.

I stand in the front doorway, hesitant to pass the threshold. They amble about the kitchen, nonchalant and confident in faded swim team tee-shirts from middle school. They have refined their movement, limbs no longer a nuisance. Their faces have shifted; longer noses and thinner cheeks. Their expressions too, the perfected nuances of the glare. I am reminded of the changes that happen while we sleep. We wake up with growing pains, our muscles are stretched tight and we walk out of our bedrooms taller.

Our mother fights with the pastor; I am horrified and humiliated. That will be the last time we attend bible study. Our youngest admits that she prays in secret. Unsure, whether to believe or whether she's allowed to believe.

The sun shifts positions and through the window, light lands perfectly on the hairs of her arm; an image. I pull the lens board upward and click the shutter wide open. Moving underneath the dark cloth, the edges pulled tight around my chin. Camouflaged behind the camera, I am allowed to stare

She collects dead birds to paint. They lay around the house,
blue feathers turn grey, and paintings of flower bouquets
hang on the walls instead.

Focus falls on the hands; the fingers wear rings now and the nails that are no longer left bitten and bleeding. The focus moves upward; the nose has begun to sculpt an arch that is all too familiar. Darker eyebrows, and plucked too. I stare at the innermost corner of her eye, breath held, willing the focus to cooperate. If they're good subjects, or if you're a comforting photographer; they will allow you to look.

These days, the birds collected on the mantle frighten me less. I understand the fascination with being allowed to stare. Without binoculars, without tiptoeing around the yard, without holding your breath as to not scare the bluebird off the branch; my mother immortalizes the bird on the mantle, and in doing so asks us to look.

Lucille Reback

Thank you to Tanya Marcuse, Daphne Fitzpatrick, and Julia Gillard. I will not soon forget the empowerment of working alongside women that are passionate and dedicated to the language of photography.