



Becky Wilkes - The Palette of Grief 2021 Limited Edition Pigment Print 40" x 40"

Exhibition Proposal

By Becky Wilkes

BeckyWilkesPhotography.com





Becky Wilkes - Rest with me a while April 15, 2020 Pigment Print 16" x 24"

Till Death Do Us Part

By turns tender and heartrending *Till Death Do Us Part* celebrates Bob and Mary's final year, captured in raw photographs by their daughter. Fully compliant with her request to document their enduring relationship, they rarely shut the door, allowing access to their most intimate moments. Joy, care, love, loss, and grief are laid bare in this most honest and unflinching portrait of the realities and beauty of aging and their grace in accepting its limitations and implications.

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Becky Wilkes - Take me with you January 2, 2021 Pigment Print 20" x 30"

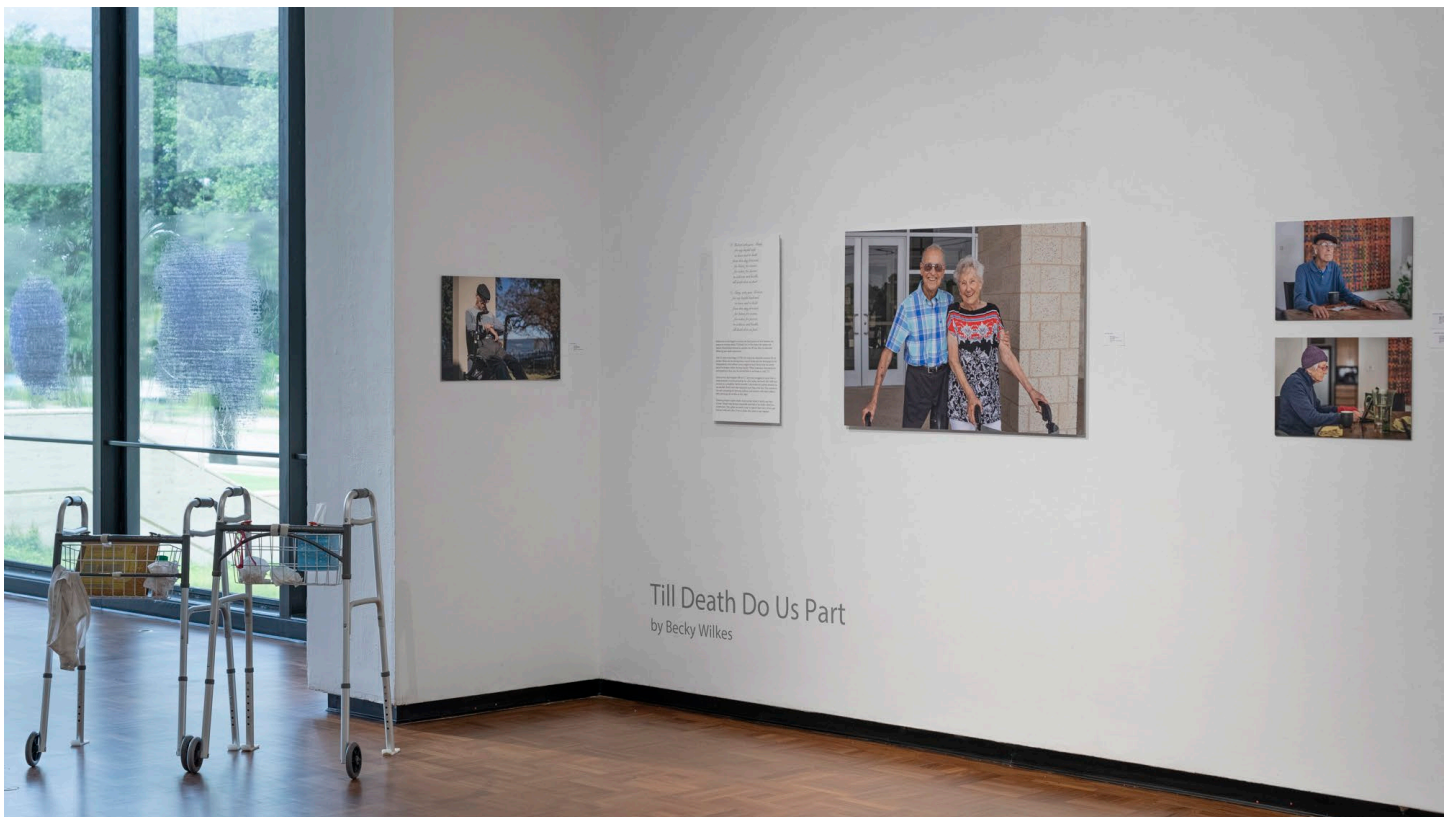
About the Exhibition

Till Death Do Us Part is a multi-media experience that layers the emotional complexity of mortality, aging, and grief uplifted by the abiding love of my parents. Photographs chronicle their final year of life challenged by competing health needs, advanced age and the intrusion of Covid.

In January 2020, the pandemic was barely a blip on the horizon. Mom and Dad were enjoying the ease of living at their senior facility. During a regularly scheduled checkup at the congestive heart clinic, Daddy's condition required immediate hospitalization. The day before he was to be released, Mom had a stroke. They spent 3 weeks in adjoining rehab rooms before Mom was released to live independently and Dad was placed on hospice in a distant wing of the same facility. My siblings and I spent alternating days assisting in their care and watching Daddy's rapid decline.

When Covid erupted within the United States, their facility closed its doors, separating my parents from each other and eliminating our participation in their care. We made an immediate decision to move my parents to live with my husband and me in our home in Azle TX. I realized that I might not be able to keep Covid from entering our home, but at least I could ensure that they would spend what little time they had left together. Although I had been in regular and increasingly significant contact with my parents throughout my life, nothing could have prepared me for the transformation that I was to witness, not only in their health and mental state, but also their relationship with each other and my relationship with them.

As I shared images with my siblings, I felt compelled to document this tender and poignant story in detail. I asked for and they granted me unlimited access to photograph their daily lives. As we moved about our day, scenes captivated me and I would reach for the camera to record a newly discovered aspect of my parents' relationship. I photographed in *cinéma vérité*, gazing unapologetically through the lens to capture an unbiased portrayal or 'fly on the wall' perspective. In retrospect, I recognize there were times when I used the camera to separate me from the moment I was witnessing often delaying the emotion I would later experience. Only with time would I realized that I was documenting a love story instead of their end-of-life story.





Becky Wilkes - Should I tell Daddy that we're dying? April 15, 2020 Pigment Print 16" x 24"

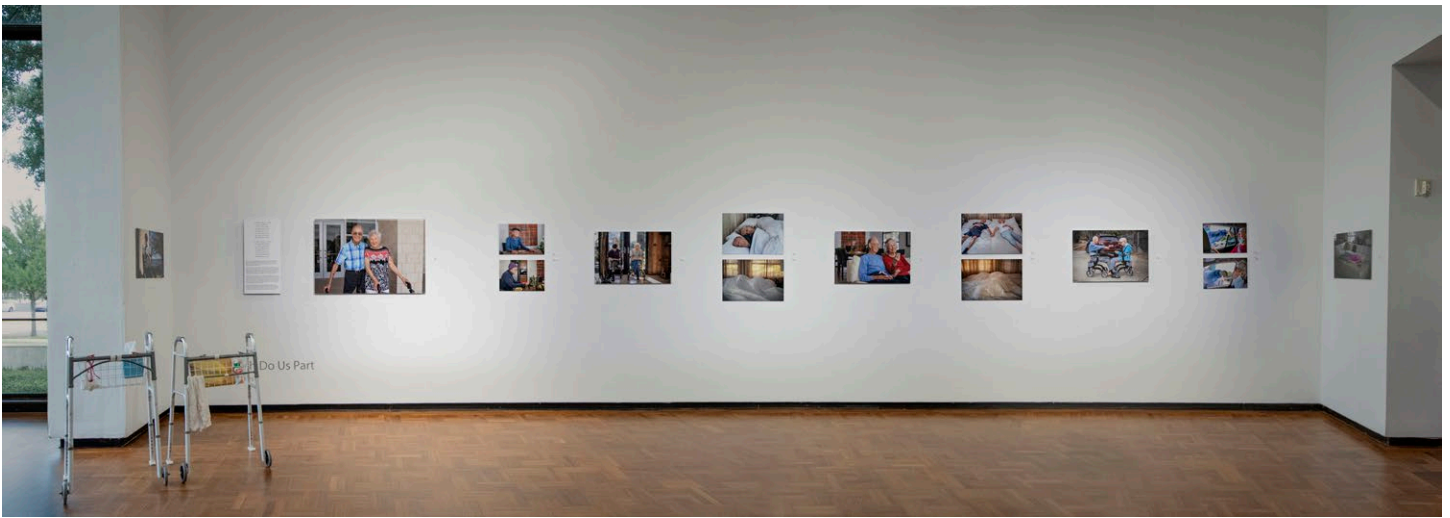
Daddy was 106 pounds at 6'1" and Mom struggled to stand from a seated position having lost much of her post stroke rehab. Due to their fragile condition, I contracted hospice for Dad, arranged therapy for Mom, engaged teams of medical professionals, educated myself to properly dispense their medications and modified my home to accommodate two compromised 89 year olds. Removing rugs, installing bathroom bars and purchasing waterproof bedding were the first of many changes.

We fully expected Dad to pass within weeks if not days. The first weeks were difficult but slowly my parents saw recovery as a possibility and began to enjoy life again. As they gained strength, they were rarely separated from each other, moving about our home and property with their walkers, often spooning one another as they slept. Rarely had I experienced such profound intimacy between my parents and myself.

Mom and Dad gifted me nearly a year to document their love story made anew by the knowledge of their impending mortality. When my parents passed within two months of each other, I turned to art to process my loss. Using messages of comfort written by many friends and relatives, I crafted large scale photographic collages to express my grief.

The inaugural exhibition in Fort Worth, TX was extremely successful and well covered by our local media. I had not anticipated the emotional impact sharing this experience with the public would have on me. Some patrons made repeat visits, sharing with staff that they found the exhibition to be the most meaningful they had seen in years.

I derived the title for this project *Till Death Do Us Part* early in its infancy. Only with time did I realize that I, too, was a participant, that they separated from me as well as from each other. Titles for the images are words spoken by Mom or Dad, giving them ownership of how their story is told and shaping how these images are perceived.



*Collaborating with Becky Wilkes on her profoundly personal documentary project, **Till Death Do Us Part**, began by exploring the context of her work. While it portrayed a singular family during the unprecedented collective experience of the 2020 pandemic, it was more than a visual narrative of grief. It captured a rare and intimate glimpse into the final chapter of a love story.*

Once Becky and I began conceptualizing the exhibition and installation of the project, several formats presented themselves as vehicles to convey the breadth and emotional complexity of aging and confronting mortality. We found ways to express the humor, absurdity, infuriation, helplessness, and joy experienced by each member of the family. We activated and animated the fullness of her parent's love for each other, their children and grandchildren, and the wonders of love and loss.

In multi-media fashion, this exhibition provides a space for viewers to encounter their own vulnerability to these deeply human universal experiences. Infused with beauty, respect, and a graceful honoring of the inherent challenges of letting go of loved ones, we are offered the experience of the gratitude of knowing profound love.

J. Sybylla Smith, Independent Curator and Consultant

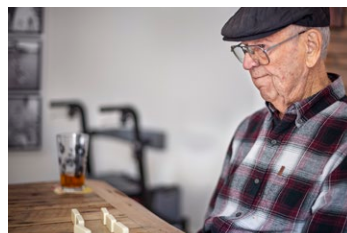
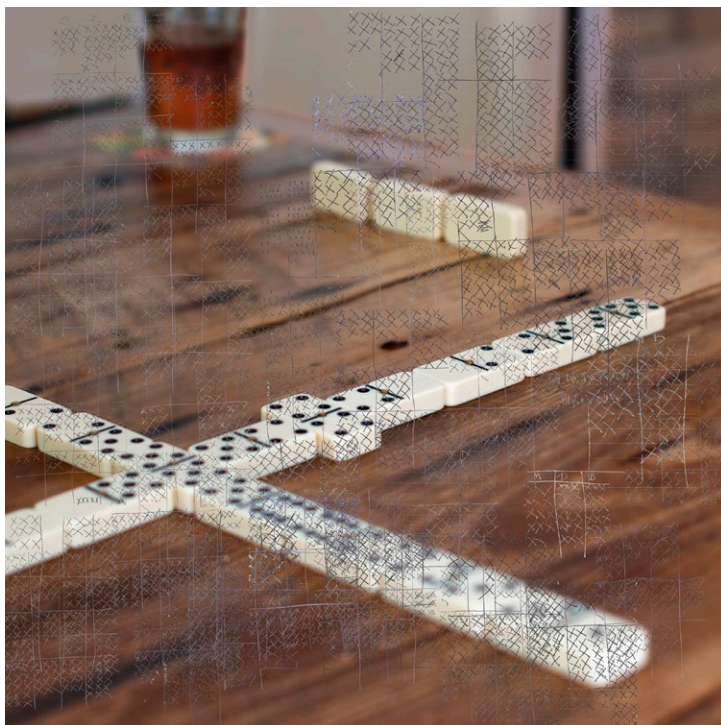
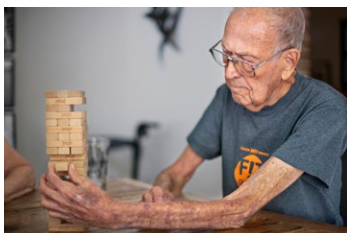




Becky Wilkes - We miss you too April 17, 2020 Pigment Print 20" x 30"

It really showed how a husband and wife love each other till the end. Sometimes the struggles they go through in life are not always easy. As you get older, things get complicated but they get complicated together. Being recently married, it made me understand that this is the journey and it won't always be roses all the time, or glitz and glamor. Sometime it's just our unconditional love shining through.

NeCole Curry - Gallery patron Arts Fort Worth





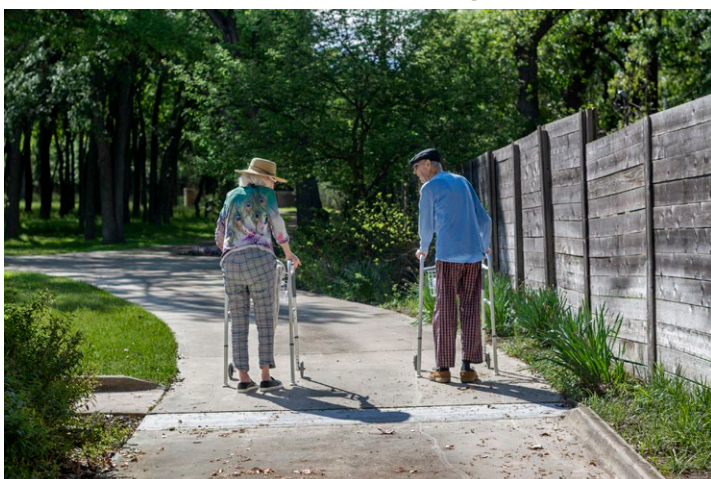
Becky Wilkes - Can you do me next? November 20, 2020 Pigment Print 20" x 30"



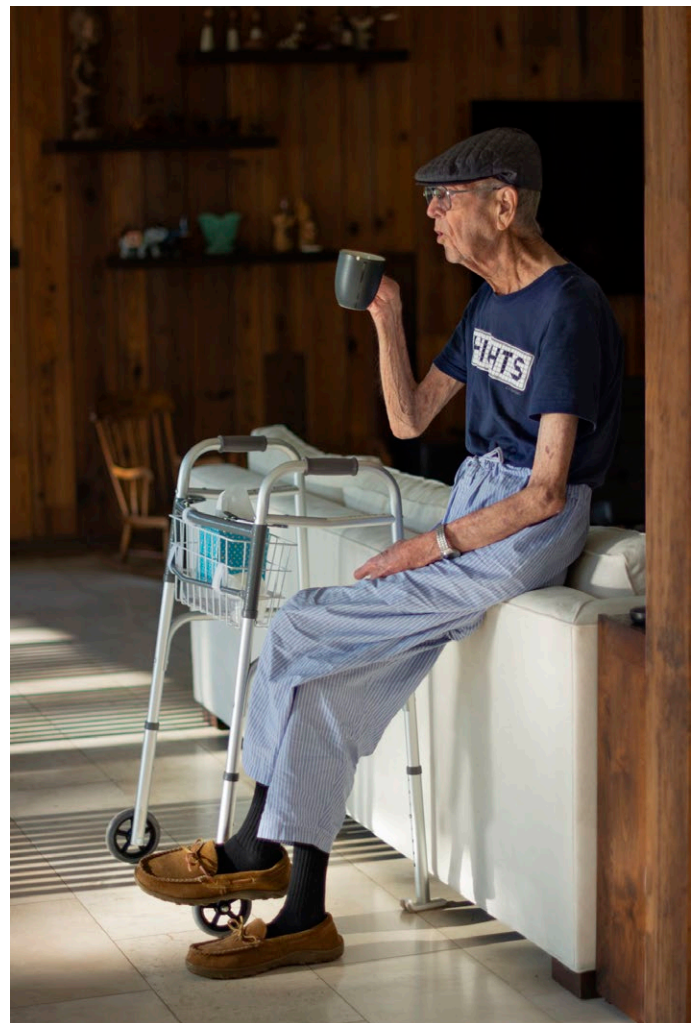
Becky Wilkes - God this sun feels good November 30, 2020 Pigment Print 20" x 30"



That water just talks to you May 29, 2020
Becky Wilkes Pigment Print 16" x 24"



Can you imagine having the mind of a duck? March 31, 2020
Becky Wilkes Pigment Print 16" x 24"



Ahhhh, Nectar of the gods April 10, 2020
Becky Wilkes Pigment Print 18" x 12"



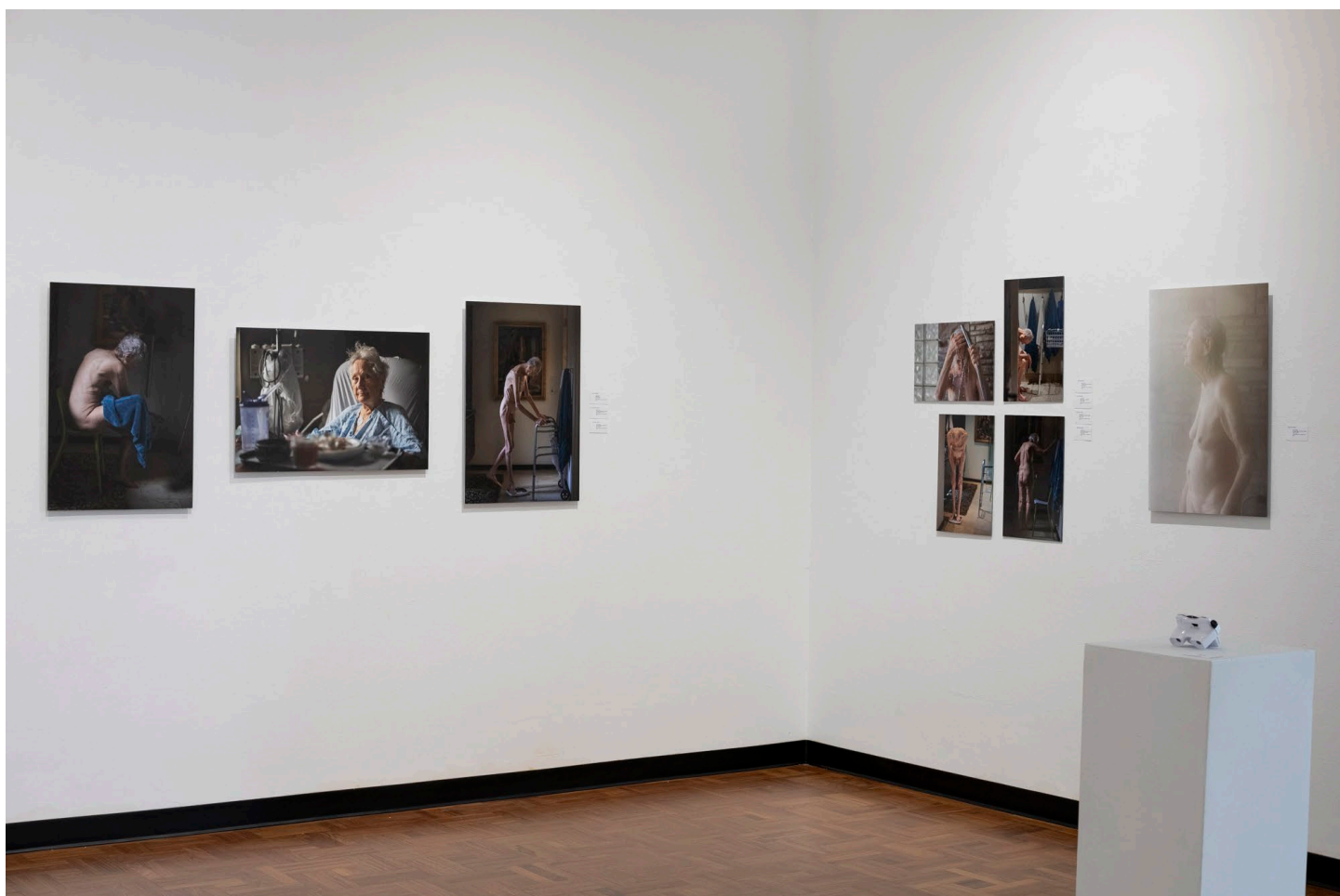
Becky Wilkes - This book has everything in it! November 13, 2020 Pigment Print 12" x 18"

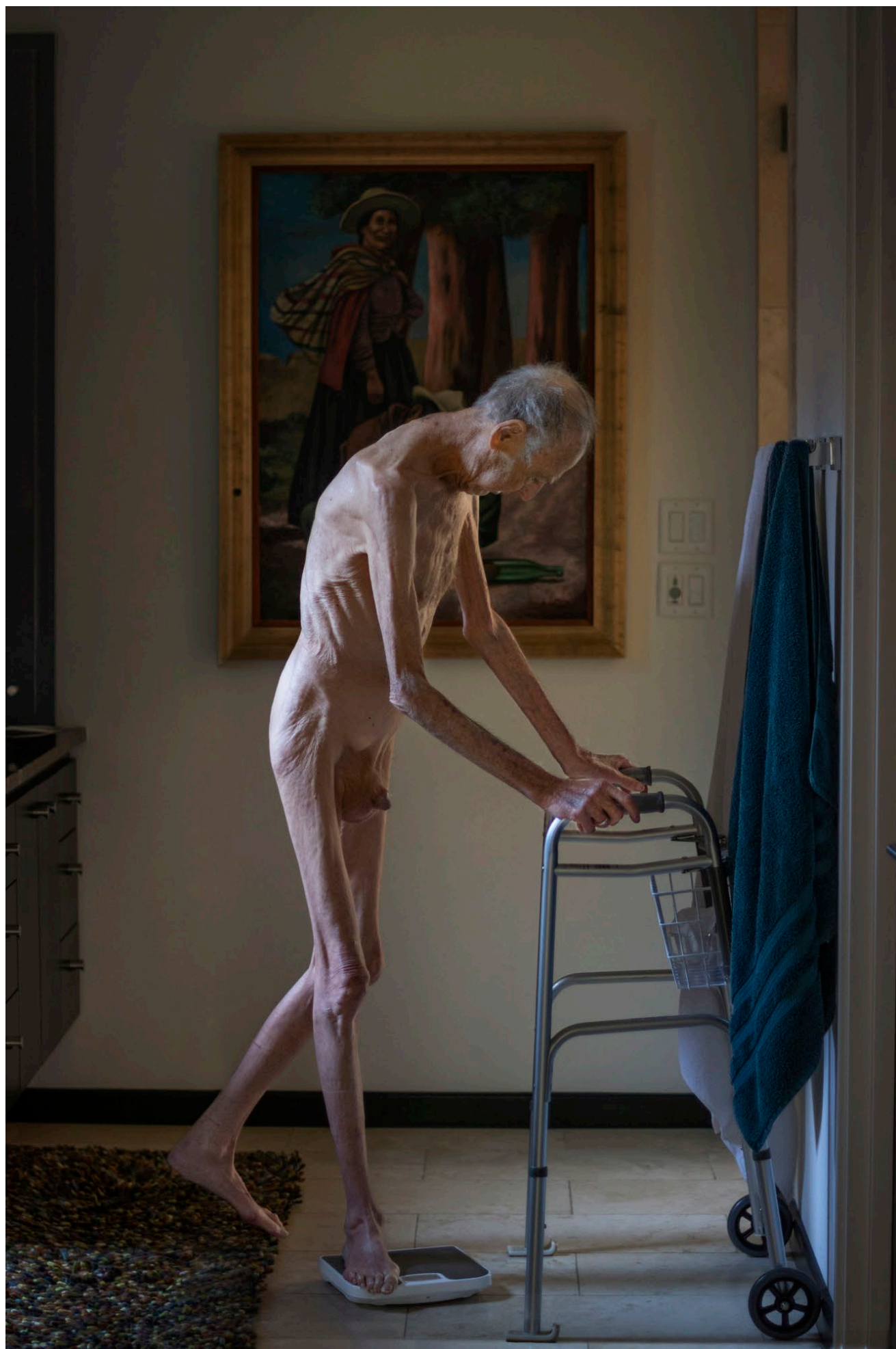


Becky Wilkes - Maybe if I sit right where he sat February 2, 2021 Pigment Print 12" x 18"



Becky Wilkes - I thought I asked for a day at the spa September 5, 2020 Pigment Print 20" x 30"





Becky Wilkes - Have I moved that needle any? April 10, 2020 Pigment Print 30" x 20"



Becky Wilkes - I never felt I was beautiful June 26, 2020 Pigment Print 30" x 20"



Becky Wilkes - Bob come over here and keep me warm December 7, 2020 Pigment Print 16" x 24"



Becky Wilkes - Bob, Its gonna be OK November 19, 2020 Pigment Print 12" x 18"



Becky Wilkes - Bob, are you going to be OK? December 31, 2020 Pigment Print 12" x 18"





Becky Wilkes - Is it my turn? January 1, 2021 Pigment Print 12" x 18"



Becky Wilkes - What am I supposed to do now? January 2, 2021 Pigment Print 12" x 18"

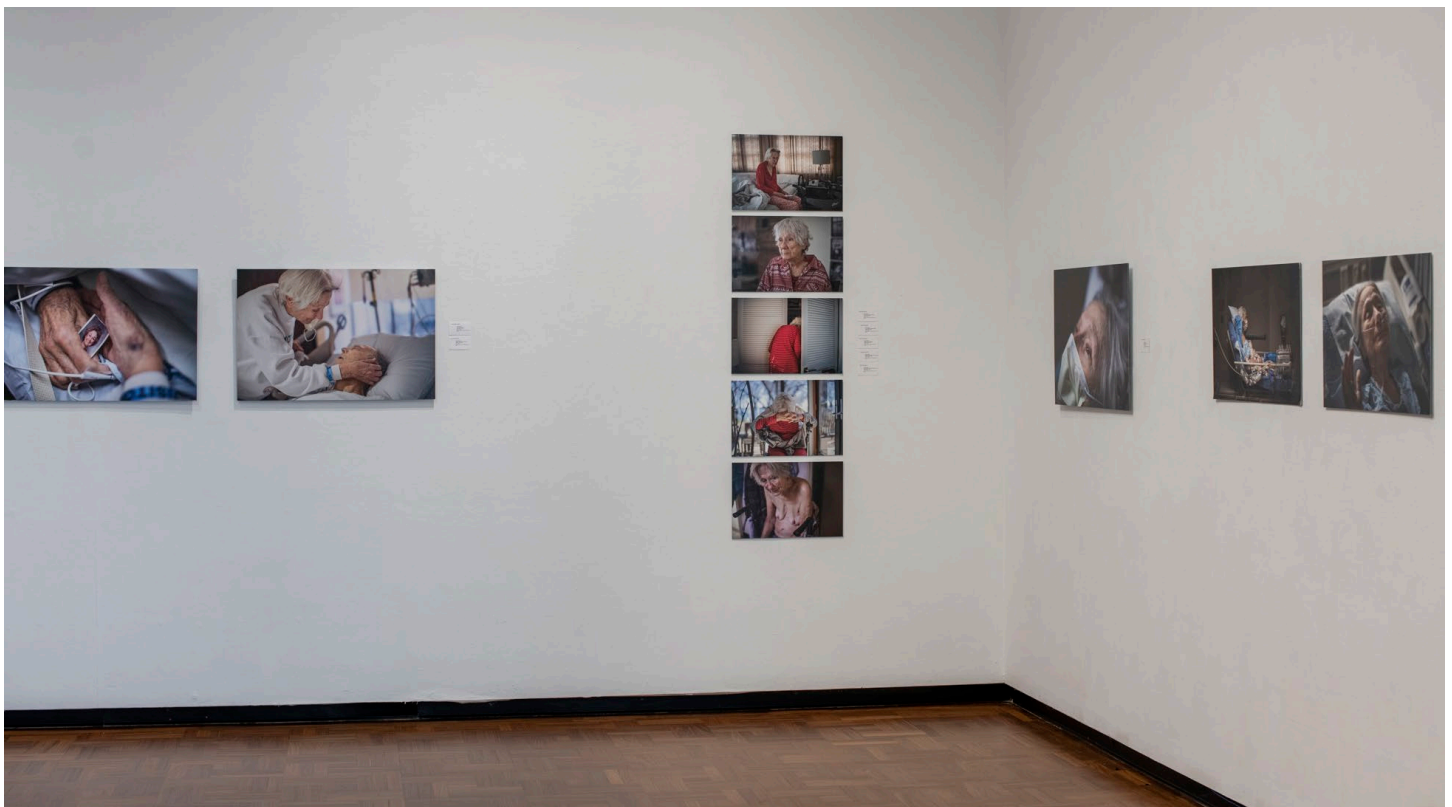




Becky Wilkes - Take me with you January 2, 2021 Pigment Print 20" x 30"



Becky Wilkes - I really did always love you January 2, 2021 Pigment Print 20" x 30"

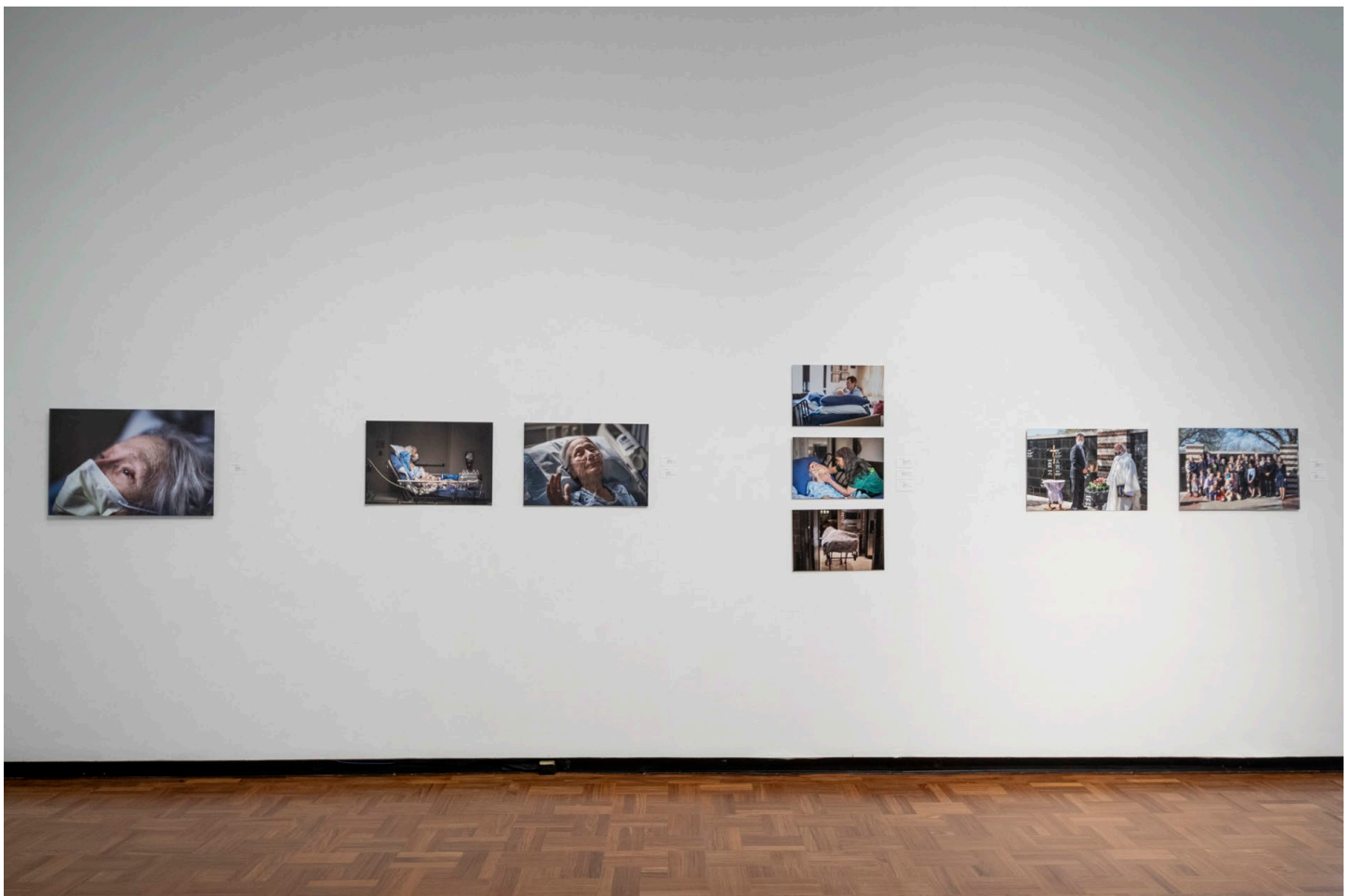


It's incredibly rare for a still image to invoke such a huge emotion within someone, especially myself. I cried. I had tears streaming from my face. Even now as I say this, as I met Becky, realizing the pain, not only her parents went through but as she went through in photographing these moments. This is not just an art exhibit. This is a life. This is a lifetime of grief and pain, but also happiness and joy. And to be able to see these images in just such a thoughtful and thought provoking manner, ah, it's so refreshing.

Brandon Pool, gallery patron Arts Fort Worth on his second visit



Becky Wilkes - Can I please go back to bed? February 8, 2021 Pigment Print 12" x 18"



Becky Wilkes - I'll see you soon March 2, 2021 Pigment Print 20" x 30"



Becky Wilkes - I never thought I would have children March 19, 2021 Pigment Print 16" x 24"



Becky Wilkes - I just wish I could hold you one more time March 17, 2021 Pigment Print 16" x 24"

Exhibition Details

Briefly: *Till Death Do Us Part* unfolds utilizing up to 80 full color photographs. A video illustrates the dire circumstances that drove our urgent action when Covid struck. Additional material can include an installation of “furniture” crafted from my empty boxes of incontinent pads and other ephemera and a grief center where viewers are offered a means to process their personal feelings of loss.

The exhibition is available for an expansive exhibition or limited curation in more intimate spaces. The size and shape of the each installation is customized to the space of each venue. Please see the appendix for an index of all available prints.

The exhibition is installation ready in its current form. Images can be resized, printed and mounted on aluminum substrate or peel and stick vinyl if needed for specific site application. The printing and preparation of alternative sizes would take a minimum amount of additional time.

Traveling Exhibition availability: 2024-2028

Booking Period: 4-12 weeks

Space - up to 250 linear feet

Documentary Prints - Approximately 80, size ranging from 28” x 42” to 8” x 12”
Full Color Pigment prints on Canson Infinity Platine Rag
Installation ready, mounted on Aluminum substrate with integrated French cleat



Becky Wilkes - Hangin' out to dry Pigment Print 12" x 18"

Additional prints

'Palette of Grief' digital collage print (for installation on a wrapped pedestal) 40" x 40"

'Hanging out to dry' underwear grid 28" x 55"

'I'm so sorry for your loss (10,000 words of condolence)' text transcription - Lexjet Print-N-Stick vinyl, sized to fit area

'Fog of Grief' (up to 10) cling vinyl text compilations for window installation 52" x 52"
can be resized and reprinted to fit window, or printed and mounted on Aluminum substrate

Other Installations

One panel mounted introductory text

Video installation utilizing two short throw, high definition projectors, provided

Retroviewer with 1 photo reel

Ephemera including "furniture" crafted from boxes of incontinent pads, two walkers, Kleenex boxes



Video

In Sickness and in Health.....

Feb 17
Becky Wilkes

Rehab for daddy has ended. Moving him into hospice 3rd floor.
We're seeing a rapid decline in mental and physical state.

Mom is not safe alone. She can't manage her meds and needs help.



video link

The video runs on a continuous 6 minute loop and is designed to project on two adjacent walls using two provided short throw high definition projectors. If space and layout preclude this, the film can be reconfigured to utilize either single or double LCD screens which are not provided.

The video provides an important back story of my parents' fragile health upon arrival at my home and is layered with text communications from the time period illuminating the disastrous consequences of being denied access.



Related Educational Programming

Gallery Talks - Wilkes is available to offer artist talks about her photographic practice and process and/or her digital presentation “Preparing for Dependency and Inheriting the Dependent” which includes additional background information and imagery and incorporates her experiences and insights gleaned from caring for her parents.

Related Programming - This exhibition can be utilized to engage local professionals in conversation with the community to support the elderly and their caregivers as they confront difficult issues. Gerontologists, hospice and funerary providers, grief and spiritual counselors, senior housing and community resources are a few that would be appropriate. A goal of this exhibition is to increase community understanding and adjust expectations confronting this aging demographic. How can we better serve their needs? Forums might touch on issues such as those below:

- Aging in Place vs Senior living communities: benefits, risks, costs
- Policy issues: affordable housing, institutional restrictions separating levels of care
- Community Support: isolation, worship, meals, transportation, safety, activity centers
- Loss of Independence: decision making, finances, driving, mobility, bodily functions
- Legal: wills, living wills, medical directives, medical and legal power of attorney
- Medical and dental: coordination and communication with medical professionals, benefits of gerontology, advocacy, hearing loss
- Nursing: the senior body, skin care, incontinence, health and vitality, nutrition, fall risk, safety, security, hygiene, exercise
- Medication: side effects, drug interactions, misuse, safety, frequency of changes
- Therapy: benefits, expectations, coverage, expenses, commitment
- Mental Health: Alzheimer's, dementia, depression, isolation, fear, anticipatory grief, Covid loss, surviving the loss of a life partner especially at advanced age
- End of Life: funerary decisions, grief support



Becky Wilkes - Blood Lines 2022 Retroviewer photo reel 4" x 4"

About the Artist

Bio: Becky Wilkes (American, b. 1956) Becky Wilkes is an accomplished photographer living in Azle TX. She has enjoyed critical success with [Ditched](#), her body of work in which she manipulated photos of trash collected from the Trinity River watershed into powerful, and at times whimsical statements that challenge viewers to consider the ecologic impact of our casual attitudes toward the world around us.

When Covid erupted, she brought her elderly parents to live with her and her husband and began a photographic journal of their final year. Twice recognized as Photolucida's Critical Mass Top 50, [Till Death Do Us Part](#) bares witness to the struggles of mortality, aging, and grief. [The New Yorker Magazine](#) published this deeply personal chronicle on Instagram garnering more than 111,000 likes.

Contact Information

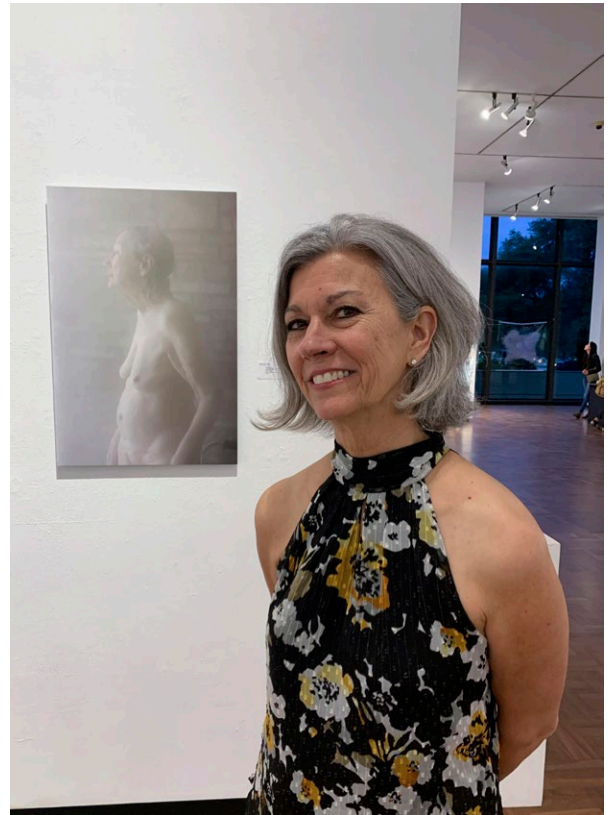
Studio: 119 S Broadway Rd. Azle, TX 76020

Mobile: 817-797-7008

E-Mail: wilkes.becky@gmail.com

Website: BeckyWilkesPhotography.com

in/fb @BeckyWilkesPhotography



Education

1974-1978 B. S. Texas A&M University, TX Chemical Engineering (Magna Cum Laude)

1981-1984 Abilene Christian University, TX Post Graduate Studies, Business

1984-1986 University of Texas at Arlington, TX, Post Graduate, Business

2012-2018 Tarrant County College, TX Photography

Professional Organizations

2022 - present Fort Worth Art Collective

2018 - 2020 500X Gallery Member, Dallas TX

2018 - present Fort Worth Public Art Pre-Qualified List of Emerging Public Artists

Texas Photographic Society, Texas Artist Coalition, Houston Center for Photography, Atlanta

Photography Group, Center for Fine Art Photography, Center for Photographic Art

Bibliography - *Till Death Do Us Part*

Jones, Cheryl [Good Grief with Cheryl Espinosa-Jones](#) Podcast, September 27, 2023

Orbey, Eren [“A Photographer’s Frank, Tender Portrait of Her Parents’ Final Year”](#), The New Yorker: Photo Booth, August 21, 2023

Alterwitz, Linda, [“Art and Science: The Pandemic, Becky Wilkes”](#) Lenscratch December 14, 2022

Kail, Ellyn, [“A Photographer’s Love Letter to Her Parents in the Final Year of Their Lives”](#) Feature Shoot January 3, 2023

Photographic Resource Center [PRC Nights Online](#) hosted by J Sybylla Smith October 13, 2022

Fornoff, Marcheta, [“They were married for 67 years. Their daughter captured on camera their final days”](#). Fort Worth Report July 2022

Kessler, Meda, [“A Love Story”](#), 360 West Magazine, May 29, 2022, pg 8-9 Print and [Online](#)

Solo Exhibitions

2024 Till Death Do Us Part, Episcopal Diocese of Texas, North Region, Fort Worth, TX
2022 Till Death Do Us Part, Arts Fort Worth, TX
2021 "Lishui Photography Festival", Guo Jing, Lushui, China
2020 - 2024 Ditched, Camerawork Gallery, Portland OR
2020 A Bit of Plastic, 500X, Dallas, TX
2019 Ditched, Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, Lubbock, TX.
2019 From Janie To Janie, 500X, Dallas, TX
2018 From Janie To Janie, FWCAC, Fort Worth, TX
2018 Off the Grid, FWCAC, Fort Worth TX

Awards

2023 Texas Photographic Society MOS 35, First Place
2022 Critical Mass Top 50, Photolucida, OR
2022, 2019 Center Santa Fe Alumni
2021 Critical Mass Top 50, Photolucida, OR
2021 Center for Photographic Art "International Juried Exhibition", Carmel CA, Peoples' Choice
2021 Aline Smith Gallery, "Art + Science" Honorable Mention
2020 Art Center of Waco, "Wonder", Honorable Mention
2020 Texas Photographic Society "Listening to the Land", Honorable Mention
2020 Women in the Arts Recognition Award, Daughters of the American Revolution, Captain Molly Corbin Chapter, Grapevine TX
2019 Critical Mass Top 50, Photolucida, OR
2019 TPS Urban Landscape Honorable Mention
2018 TPS FotoTexas II Honorable Mention
2017 Critical Mass Finalist, Photolucida, OR

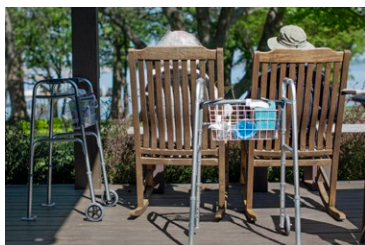
Collections

Center for Creative Photography's "The Qualities of LIGHT", University of Arizona, Tucson AZ



Appendix: Thumbnail Index of all available Images

The exhibition is installation ready in its current form. Images can be resized, printed and mounted on aluminum substrate or peel and stick vinyl if needed for specific site application. The printing and preparation of alternative sizes would take a minimum amount of additional time.



Should I tell daddy that we're dying?
April 15, 2020
16" x 24"



It's so good to be here
July 5, 2020
28" x 42"



God, this sun feels good!
November 30, 2020
20" x 30"



That water just talks to you
May 29, 2020
16" x 24"



Great gracious granny!
August 28, 2020
12" x 18"



Can you do me next?
November 20 2020
20" x 30"



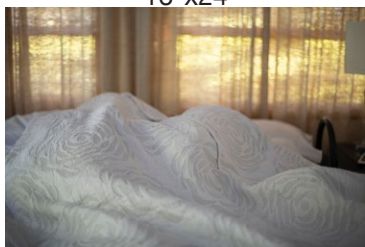
Can you imagine having the mind of a duck?
March 31, 2020
16"x24"



I sure hope its not Covid
August 28, 2020
12"x18"



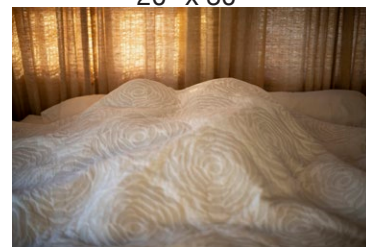
We miss you too!
April 17 2020
20" x 30"



Afternoon delight
November 2, 2020
16" x 24"



Rest with me a while
April 15, 2020
16" x 24"



I would miss this so much
December 16, 2020
16" x 24"



Just hold my hand for a while
June 8, 2020
16" x 24"



Bob, come over here and keep me warm
December 7, 2020
16" x 24"



Bob it's gonna be OK
November 19, 2020
12" x 18"



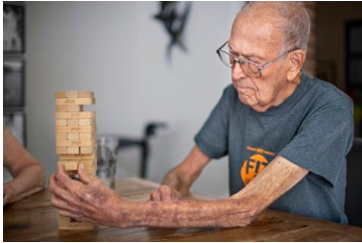
Its on the tip of my tongue
August 16, 2020
8" x 12"



I'm just holding up this fence
April 10, 2020
12" x 18"



Just resting my eyes
November 10, 2020
16" x 24"



I like this fella right here
July 15, 2020
8" x 12"



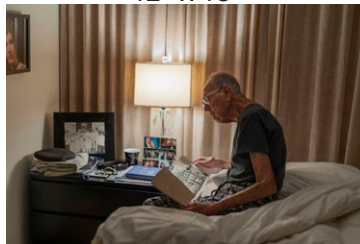
Have you ever noticed?
July 16, 2020
12" x 18"



Just a little shut eye
October 12, 2020
16" x 24"



Bob, are you shaking the table?
July 15, 2020
8" x 12"



These were my buddies
July 17, 2020
12" x 18"



This book has everything in it
November 13, 2020
12" x 18"



Does a-s-s-i-s-t work?
August 16, 2020
8" x 12"



This used to not be so damn hard
February 16, 2021
12" x 18"



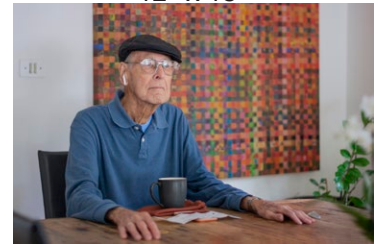
Maybe if I sit right where he sat
February 2, 2021
12" x 18"



I hate this damn cough?
November 23, 2020
8" x 12"



Can't we play one more game?
2021
25" x 25"



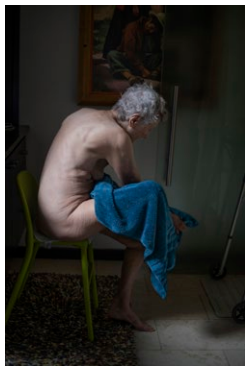
These are amazing!
March 31, 2020
12" x 18"



This is a revolting development
November 23, 2020
8" x 12"



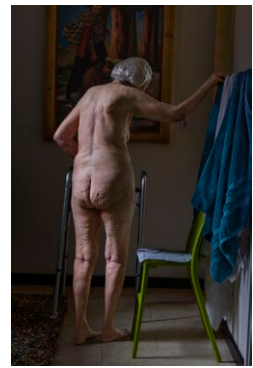
I'm so cold (can't you do anything about the heat?)
February 17, 2021
12" x 18"



I never felt I was beautiful
June 26, 2020
30" x 20"



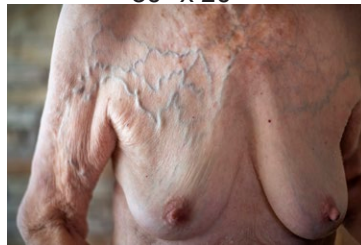
It's scary when your body forgets
April 14, 2020
30" x 20"



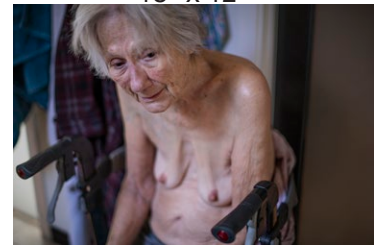
I look pretty damn good for an old woman
April 8, 2020
18" x 12"



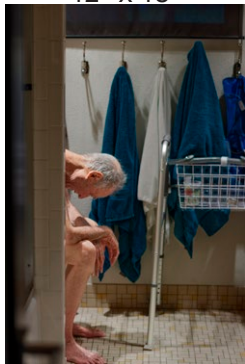
I think I'd like to be a fountain
April 10, 2020
12" x 18"



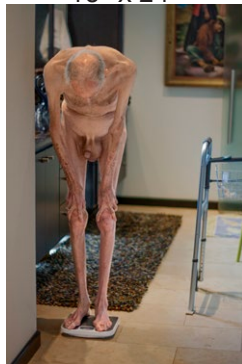
Sort of like a road map
June 26, 2020
16" x 24"



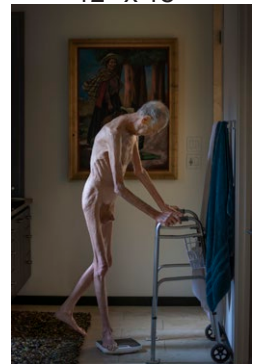
I didn't want you to see me like this
February, 19, 2021
12" x 18"



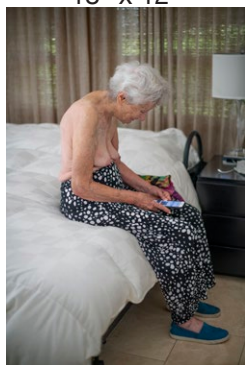
Seems like a lot of work for nothing
April 2, 2020
18" x 12"



Does it say 1 0... is that a 6?
April 6, 2020
18" x 12"



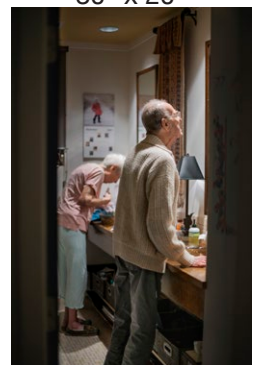
Have I moved that needle yet?
April 10, 2020
30" x 20"



I'm just checking my Facebook
April 16, 2020
12" x 18"



Ahhhh, Nectar of the gods
April 10, 2020
18" x 12"



Did I get my chompers clean
September 30, 2020
18" x 12"



I thought I asked for a day at the spa
September 5, 2020
20" x 30"



Shit, this is impossible
May 5, 2020
12" x 18"



Bob, Are you going to be OK?
December 31, 2020
12" x 18"



Take me with you
January 2, 2021
20" x 30"



I really did always love you
January 2, 2021
20" x 30"



We knew this day would come
December 31, 2020
12" x 18"



What am I supposed to do? (Now)
January 2, 2021
12" x 18"



I'll see you soon
March 2, 2021
20" x 30"



Is it my turn?
January 1, 2021
12" x 18"



Can I please go back to bed?
February 8, 2021
12" x 18"



God, grant me the serenity
March 2, 2021
16" x 24"



Bob, I'm signing your life away
January 2, 2021
12" x 18"



Do we know anything yet?
January 2, 2021
12" x 18"



Bye, I love you
March 5, 2021
16" x 24"



We're all here Daddy
January 2, 2021
12" x 18"



Bob, are you in there?
February 22, 2021
12" x 18"



I'm here. You can go now.
March 8, 2021
12" x 18"



Oh Daddy, why didn't I know to say goodbye?
January 2, 2021
12" x 18"



Daddy died living, I'm living to die
February 22, 2021
12" x 18"



It's just so hard to say goodbye
March 8, 2021
12" x 18"



It is what it is
March 8, 2021
12" x 18"



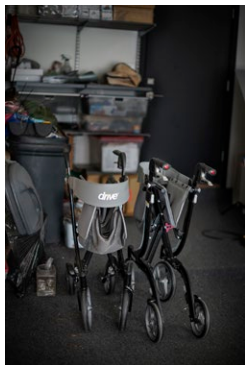
This is harder than you think
March 19, 2021
16" x 24"



I never thought I would have children
March 19, 2021
16" x 24"



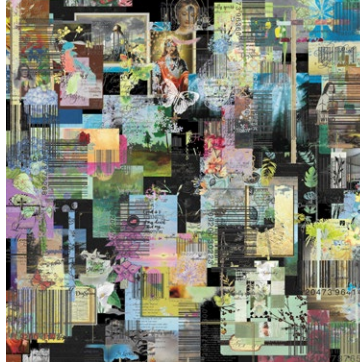
I just wish I could hold you one more time
March 17, 2021
16" x 24"



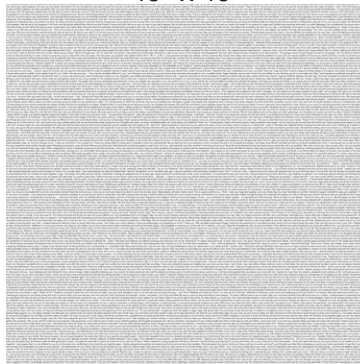
It was really great to spend this time with you
March 21, 2021
24" x 16"



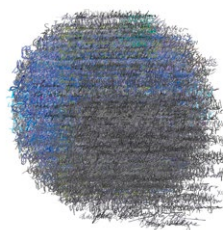
Hangin' it out to dry
2021
28" x 55"



The Palette of Grief
2021
40" x 40"



I'm so sorry for your loss
(10,000 words of condolence) 2021
10' x 10'



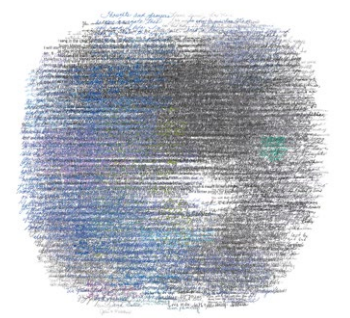
The Fog of Grief, Opus 10
2021
52" x 52"



The Fog of Grief, Opus 2
2021
52" x 52"



The Fog of Grief, Opus 3
2021
52" x 52"



The Fog of Grief, Opus 5
2021
52" x 52"



The Fog of Grief, Opus 6
2021
52" x 52"



Images on Retroviewer reel

I have been an observer of documentary photography for many years. In all that time, I've never seen such good photos of older people in their final days, or even just later years. There is so little understanding of the enduring nature of affection and intimacy as we age. You have given us not only an artistic achievement but also a new level of understanding that could be helpful to the greatly increasing older population.

I know about your exhibit because a friend in Florida posted a link to the story about it. That prompted me to follow the links and look up the art center and follow its links to your website and the array of photos in the exhibit. That then prompted me to send the links to my northern Dallas suburban stepchildren and grandchildren and suggest they might want to see the exhibit before it closes.

I live in New York and would not have known about your exhibit except for the wonderful connections the internet can make possible.

Your photo story dominated dinner conversation at our home last night. And from the message I received from Tim, my former son-in-law who lives in McKinney, I know it also dominated discussion in his home. That's quite an impact. I imagine it's similar for many people who see the exhibit.

But, as we looked at your photos, I think we thought of both our past loss and of our future as aging people who will have loss again. Tom also immediately recognized the beautiful artistic quality of your work. He saw the Vermeer-like qualities, especially in the photo of your mother seated using the blue towel. It is so lovely. There were tears here as we absorbed your images again before dinner.

I hope this exhibit travels around the country. Given its beauty and power, it deserves a great deal of attention.

Betty Medsger, former chair of the Department of Journalism and Professor Emerita at San Francisco State University
investigative reporter and author of *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI*

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