



"I was intentionally creating a body of work that directly paralleled my current life."

Fact File

Angela Bacon-Kidwell
Wichita Falls, TX

angelabaconkidwell.
com
angela
@angelabaconkidwell
.com

Prints are available in square sizes 16 x 16, 20 x 20 and 36 x 36 inches from \$700 to \$2,500; and in horizontal/vertical sizes 16 x 20, 24 x 30 and 32 x 40 inches from \$700 to \$2,000.

For centuries, people have created and kept memento mori, representations of death as reminders of their mortality. Photography made possible even more literal manifestations of this art, affording the bereaved portraits of their loved ones before they passed eternally into memory.

In a like way, Angela Bacon-Kidwell is at war with oblivion, although she aspires to manage her emotional relationship to painful memories, and to reconcile the ineluctable reality that loved ones depart. Her thematic terrain may be dark, but the results are more subtly affecting than morbid. Her best works have an acquired poignancy like smoothed stones that arrive on a beach, scoured of their incongruities yet indelibly marked by the agitation that formed them.

We sometimes regard the photographic arts with a degree of preciousness, picturing a light-sensitive plate exposed for a deliberated duration, sealed from light, then carefully bathed and dried. Bacon-Kidwell's process runs absolutely counter to such coddling. She begins with varied photographs that carry strong personal resonance, say those related to some significant loss. These are combined, then severely distressed by freezing, burning or submersion. They may be painted over, drawn into and repeatedly reprinted.

With numerous iterations, serendipitous effects are achieved until she arrives at peace with both the images and the experiences that prompted them. It is striking how much like the construction of memory this activity is. We deal with life's vicissitudes by layering subsequent experiences over them, in time cauterizing, drowning or annealing them until we can look back at acute moments through new lenses, through having carried on.

However, with Bacon-Kidwell's images the "how" of their making seems less meaningful than the "why." Her most recent series, titled "Traces of Existence," aimed to reconcile a period of great joy — new opportunities, travel, creative success — with tremendous loss. She once stated in an interview that this series "was a reaffirmation of my belief that the act of creating can heal, reveal and release

any suffering that occurs in my external and internal worlds." (*Shots, Winter, 2011*)

Her past works emphasized the transitory; images of birds and children conveyed themes of flight and our not-as-yet fully articulate selves. Dreams, and likewise elusive phenomena such as finding home were foregrounded. Here, the immediate takes precedence, whether literally placing her distant child's silhouette in the Chinese amusement park before her ("Yangzou Chimera"), or conflating the apparent distress in a stranger's face with the textures of an oceans-away loved one's house ("Eyes"). Bacon-Kidwell stated that she is strongly "influenced by my past, and the last ten years I feel as if I've been catching up (visually) to express my experiences. This series was different because it was the first time I was intentionally creating a body of work that directly paralleled my current life."

While diaristic to a strong degree, Bacon-Kidwell's work is accessible in that the symbols she employs are universal; we may not be one, but we share a common visual vocabulary. In looking closely at her work, certain dualities emerge; that flight abandons the securities of remaining grounded, that we move forward in time by coming to visual terms with the past, or that light would not exist without dark. Rather than patly reconcile these oppositions, she posits them plainly.

Bacon-Kidwell recognizes a similar paradox in the very ways her images are made, noting that "when I was aggressive with the creative process and really pulling and tearing the photos apart the work eventually communicated peace or acceptance ... I was giving the objects one emotion and [the work] gave me the opposite emotion back."

It is a recognition of this dynamic, not a resolution of it, that allows viewers to bring individual narratives to the rich fodder Bacon-Kidwell provides. She makes evident that images can be "stretched to near disintegration," as our lives so often are, yet each can be more malleable than we might initially realize.

— **Tim White**



In the Vicinity of Wholeness



Close to Twilight



Jump Little Children



Yangzhou Chimera



Frostbound



Eyes



Silence Can't Be Cut