

Denise Laurinaitis, New York, NY

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The submitted photographs are part of a larger series named “Memory is a Crashing Wave” on her own childhood grief and acceptance. In addition to the artist statement, there is a poem that goes with the series.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

There is a lot that I do not remember about the year my father died. I piece together memory fragments like a puzzle. He was 47 and I was 5—I thought his oxygen tank a normal part of life. I do not remember knowing that his illness meant that he would die. At 5, I was devastated. Grief lived deep within my subconscious, I needed to be held and told I would be okay. Instead, I dreamed up other scenarios to escape my reality. The stories I told myself gave me hope, until I grew older and they no longer worked.

When I turned 47, my son turned 5—the same age difference, almost down to the day. I started to examine and compare his childhood and mine, my father’s illness and my health. A box that my mother kept of my father’s items became a necessary exploration. Through handling things that were markers of his life - a camera, his wallet, his pictures of us - I was able to make the connections between his life and my memory of his absence. The unexpected scent of him was familiar and brought him closer to me, closer to making him real.

I lost my father and came to know vulnerability at a very young age. I craved normalcy, and in time, I thought I achieved it. Happiness returned, but it was different. I watch my children explore the world with wonderment and through them, I gain scattered pieces of what was quieted in myself. The swell of this loss is boundless and comes to me as a crashing wave. The profound loss of my father is my grief and it is love that lives on which I can share with my children. And while the waves still come when I least expect it, I am now left standing.

ARTIST BIO:

Denise Laurinaitis is a photographer whose work explores themes of grief, longing, and hope. She uses a camera to explore how memories and emotions can be made visible. Through her photographs, she elevates the details and fleeting moments of daily life into visual poems. Each photograph is a reminder that the past and present are always connected.

Denise holds a BA from Georgetown University, a JD from Hofstra University School of Law, and has studied at the International Center of Photography. She lives in New York with her husband and children.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2021 Bloom, Midwest Center for Photography, Wichita, Kansas

2021 Abstract, Midwest Center for Photography, Wichita, Kansas

2021 Portfolio Platform 2021, “Memory is a Crashing Wave” portfolio, Midwest Center for Photography, Wichita, Kansas

2020 Voice Collection 2019, Color, Click Away Conference, Atlanta, Georgia

2020 Voice Collection 2019, Darkness and Shadow, Click Away Conference, Atlanta, Georgia

2019 Voice Collection 2018, Color, Click Away Conference, Dana Point, California

AWARDS:

2020 Finalist, Studying Light, Voice Collection

2019 Finalist, Color, Voice Collection

2019 Finalist, Darkness and Shadow, Voice Collection

2018 Finalist, Color, Voice Collection

PUBLICATIONS:

“May I Take Your Photo?,” Click Magazine, November/December 2018.