

IN LOVE WITH LIFE

I just lost my mother. Her passing has triggered somatic reactions that are unanticipated. Crying and speaking about those who have died are embraced by our society. But there are layers upon layers of reactions to how one grieves. In my current 'state of grieving' I have come to identify with 'my muse' from a different viewpoint than when we began together.

In contrast to my mother, she has the 'luxury' of being present in the moment. She is in her 88th year and is both mentally and physically active. She is in a loving relationship and has a multitude of people who care about her. Her face is etched by wrinkles but she carries herself with an elegance that has people taking notice when she walks down the street. She is a stylish dresser that belies her age.

When I initiated this series, I was drawn to Inge for her incredible presence and vitality. She defies the traditional 'aging' box in both her appearance and physicality. Rather than looking away, heads turn when she passes by. Our sessions, over several years, have drawn us closer together and the friendship that has taken root is an unexpected bonus.

Sometimes, aging, can feel like a disability. Even my body is not supple anymore. One looks at others and feels grateful that your situation isn't as bad as theirs. No one can escape aging. Many baby boomers are already caregivers for their aging parents while they, simultaneously, head into their 'last chapter. They are bearing witness to how their parents, and ultimately, themselves, live out their lives.

The attitude that one embraces has a big impact on how one they move through this passage. Unfortunately, many live in denial. They put their heads down and push through life with many regrets, rarely taking time to look up and 'smell the roses'. Most don't embrace aging but see it as a trial. Others do not practice preventative measures. Few work on themselves therapeutically. They often take better care of their cars than themselves.

My work is not intended to answer questions, but rather serve as a prop for individuals to interact with themselves. The project becomes an intimate space to re-evaluate one's context of themselves in regards to their immediate social circle, their society and the world.

I am hopeful that these photographs will stand as a metaphor to demystify aging and encourage the viewer to continue to embrace the 'joy' in everyday living.

On-Aging-Maya-Angelou

"When you see me sitting quietly, like a sack upon a shelf,
Don't think I need your chattering. I'm listening to myself.
Hold! Stop! Don't pity me! Hold! Stop your sympathy!
Understanding if you got it, otherwise I'll do without it!
When my bones are stiff and aching and my feet won't climb the stair,
I will only ask one favor: Don't bring me no rocking chair.
When you see me walking, stumbling, don't study and get it wrong.
'Cause tired don't mean lazy and every goodbye ain't gone.
I'm the same person I was back then, a little less hair, a little less chin,
A lot less lungs and much less wind.
But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in."

– Maya Angelou