

The Mourners

Georgia Metaxas

Artist Statement

" This surface functions as a kind of 'black hole' in reality, as a limit whose Beyond is inaccessible."¹

The Mourners is a series of portraits documenting the ritual of wearing black as a sign of perpetual mourning. In remembrance of those they have lost, the women that sit for a portrait in the series, regardless of background or faith, wear black every day for the rest of their lives. All portraits are of women from the State of Victoria. Untitled #25 was introduced to me, and the project through the Greek community group that meets at Community House in Edinburgh Gardens, of which she is a member.

This project, through considering the act of perpetual mourning, addresses the symbolic notions attributed to the colour black, its inherent connection to photography, memory and death.

Existing backdrops of nursing home corridors, living rooms and church halls are replaced by the controlled environment of a traveling studio. *The Mourners* employs this framework in order to maintain consistency and allow for a repetitive series of actions to be engaged in by the photographer, and the subject alike. The use of the frame, literally and figuratively, isolates the subject from their environment, strips the elements back to a point where, only the faintest trace of the sitter's surroundings remains. The portraits bring the viewer to the periphery of an ultimately private space.

Deflecting the unflinching eye of the camera with an averted gaze, those who sit for a portrait are absorbed by the void that is black; they are living mementoes, vessels for mourning a dead husbands legacy, alternatively a totem of power. Nevertheless when a mourner comes into sight in these photographic portraits she also disappears, hovering somewhere in-between, affording us a constant reminder of death. A doubling up of death; that of the deceased husband that the mourner mourns, and of the mourner's own identity, which it could be argued, has in effect been effaced.

The Mourners, clad in black mourning dress inherit social and cultural connotations. These values and conventions associated with the 'widow figure' can be found throughout literature, popular culture, mythology and religion, along with a long tradition of representation in Western art. This depiction is complex and often ambiguous, the widow figure is pious and pitied, reviled and yet feared, defying any attempt of a single definition. This series aims to encourage rumination on the complex nature of this depiction, its connections to identity, representation and to the photographic portrait.

Georgia Metaxas has exhibited in Australia and abroad. Her work has been selected for many award exhibitions, including multiple shortlisting for the Bowness Photography Prize and the Josephine Ulrich and Win Schubert Award as well as finals nominations in the 2012 National Portrait Prize, and the 2009 Centre for Contemporary Photography's Documentary Award. A selection of her work was included in the Big City Press monograph *Hijacked Volume 2: Australia and Germany*. In 2011, Georgia was awarded the Fundacion Botin Residency Award facilitated by Paul Graham (UK), in Spain. And in 2012 Georgia was awarded The Peoples Choice Award in the Monash Gallery of Art Bowness Photography Prize. Her work is held in numerous public and private collections.

The Mourners:

Archival Pigment Ink Prints, housed in a bespoke frame with flocked interior.

Edition of ten + A.P

www.georgiametaxas.com

¹ Slavoj Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: six essays on women and causality*. London: Verso, 1994.