

## COLIN GRAY - CAUGHT BETWEEN

11TH FEBRUARY - 23RD APRIL 2023

---

*Caught Between* is a new monographic exhibition by photographer **Colin Gray** and forms the third chapter in his auto-biographical exploration of memory, loss, and the family album. Gray began to take photographs of his family in the 1960s when he was five years old at family occasions, holidays and celebrations where he was allowed one shot from the single roll of film in a square box brownie camera.

Earlier chapters of this photographic journey formed two highly influential exhibitions, both of which were exhibited at Street Level Photoworks. *The Parents* comprised of a series of playful and elaborate staged portraits exploring the relationship of his mother Rene and father Ron, which he commenced in 1980 and was shown in 1997.

*In Sickness and in Health*, first exhibited in 2010, formed the final stages of 'The Parents' series. Begun in 2000, the photographs show his parent's deterioration and ultimately his mother's death. This new exhibition is the culmination of a body of work which he commenced over four decades ago.

The exhibition begins with a series called *Do Us Part*, made in 2013 when his father was given just months to live following a cancer diagnosis, and somewhat naturally Gray picked up his camera to mediate the impending loss. In his series *Terms and Conditions*, the photographer trains his gaze on himself and his own children, having surpassed the age his parents were when he first photographed them more than forty years prior. This shift in generations was brought into sharp focus in the series *Liminal*, a series of self-portraits made in response to Gray himself becoming critically ill and finding himself in the limbo between life and death. As a result, this new body of works provides a multi-layered approach dealing with the challenges of intergenerational family life: ageing, the space between life and death, the shifts in roles of dependence and the ongoing cycles of life.

An exhibition minigraph featuring a newly commissioned essay by writer and curator Alasdair Foster has been published to coincide with the exhibition.



## **Do Us Part**

My father was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus in February 2013. He was given six months to live. Faced with the unbearable sadness of life's final parting, I made pictures to help us both cope with his illness and imminent death.

Slow Forward: A withering life held gently in the empathic embrace of youth, sharing without words. Time will ultimately overtake these moments of slow embrace, where past and future fold in together. My father and daughter in a suspended moment of silent parting.

## **Liminal**

In 2017 I was unfortunate enough to find myself in Intensive Care. With machines supporting my vital functions, I was caught in a liminal space between life and death. When I recovered, I grappled with what it might mean to become trapped between these two states. This series of photographic self-portraits is my attempt to visualise that terrifying state of limbo.

## **Caught Between**

I found myself back in Intensive Care in 2018. Thankfully, I fully recovered, but I can truly empathise with those suffering the more serious and long-term effects of Covid-19. In extending this work into a second series, I am reaching out to others who have experienced altered realities due to physical or mental illness. I am also exploring the more fundamental question of what it means to be conscious. When my grip on life appeared to be loosening I had many profound visions and experiences that linger in my memory. Here, I am trying to recapture those experiences in a visual form.

## **Terms and Conditions**

While I was grieving the loss of my father I was reminded how my son is perhaps more like my father than I am. I see elements of my father's history in my son's future. As in the past, it is through taking photographs of my family that I find a way to capture my feelings through their reflection. I want to look beyond my physical self; to address continuum and dichotomy as we slip from one plane to another, passing from light to dark, waking to sleeping, conscious to unconscious, a rhythmic flowing.

---

**Colin Gray** was born in Hull, England, in 1956. He received a first-class BA (Hons) in graphic design in 1980 and a MA in photography from the Royal College of Art, London, in 1982. He has exhibited widely in Europe and his work has toured to China and Australia. His images have been featured in several books including *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* (Thames & Hudson 2004) and *Family Photography Now* (Thames & Hudson 2016), and in two monographs: *The Parents* (Fotofeis 1995) and *In Sickness and in Health* (Steidl-Mack 2010).