

MICHELLE LOWRY MACFARLANE

HOURS  
of influence

of color

of the blue of the deep sea, of the sky on a clear day, of a flame, of veins seen through the skin,  
of a person sorrowful, dismayed, melancholy

of how “blue is the color of the mind in borrow of the body; it is the color consciousness  
becomes when caressed; it is the dark inside of sentences, sentences which follow their own  
turnings inward out of sight like the whorls of a shell,” writes William Gass in *On Being Blue*

of the extravagance of the blue, ground from lapis lazuli, in *Les très riches heures*, a fourteenth-  
century book of hours

of its one-hundred and thirty-one miniatures on leaves of parchment  
of its division of day and night for the purpose of prayer

of photography

of photograms made from things I scavenged on walks their one-to-one ratio of object to  
image, photographic images made without a camera, made by placing objects directly onto a  
light sensitive surface and exposing it to the sun

of the elapses of time fixed by the interaction of light with chemistry on paper, fixed moments  
otherwise infinitely divisible, otherwise lost, transfixing me

of Barthes & Sontag

of how photography and loss are bound, inextricably

for what more is Barthes doing in *Camera Lucida* than writing about his mother, about  
his loss of her, of her body, her presence, her place in his life?

for why else would he, does anyone, turn to a photograph, if not for the anticipation of,  
or the recovery of, some loss, even the simple loss of the moment previous, let alone the  
loss of a parent, of family, of health, of youth, of own's own self, of the body's wholeness,  
of the mind's innocence, with only knowledge in the place of?

of my absolute knowing then, in my body, that I was dying, am dying, will die, that my body is,  
that I am is was, nothing more than the twisted pile of metal I was pulled from, nothing more  
than the rocks and dirt of the hillside we slammed into, nothing more than the sage, cacti,  
lizards, snakes, birds or flies that surrounded the coffin our car had become, that I am nothing  
more than the tomb my body is, already was, from the moment I left my mother's womb

for what am I doing as I sift through a box of snapshots from the past when each photograph points like a finger at stars “look”, there she is by my side, my little sister, “see,” there I am, walking, there we all are, smiling, ten minutes, three days, a week, a month ago, five years before, forty years since, now, a lifetime

of the sound of the shutter, the “noise of time” click there, the moment is fixed

of this, now, I find I can never have enough  
of this, I find that I must hoard, that I must shore up against the onslaught of loss; so, while I say photography is death, I say also it is my stay against it, this compulsion, this repetition of moment, of being, of the prolongation of it

of walking now

of how I never resemble Woolf on a street haunt, Thoreau on a saunter, or Baudelaire, the flaneur

for to walk safely I must walk looking mostly at the ground where my path forward becomes the landscape I experience most intensely cement, asphalt, gravel, dirt or grass, uphill or down, wet, dry, uneven, slippery, rocks, roots, vines, downed branches

of how what I notice are stones, sticks, seed pods, worn scraps of paper, bits of metal

of how I often pick up things mother told me not to touch

on the meaning of the matter

of how, gradually, all of this coalesced into an artist’s book and  
of how, eventually, everything falls again to pieces

artist statement, Phillips Gallery, March 2026