

EVELYN'S

“These photographs are a lyrical elegy to Evelyn Campbell and serve as an extended portrait of her. We sense her continuing presence through her possessions — her brush and mirror, coin purse, keepsake spoons, and cake taker. These evocative still lifes are imbued with a sense of memory and personal history.”

*Jean Caslin, Director,
Houston Center for Photography*

The Evolution

On December 6, 1999, I was forced to say goodbye to the greatest woman that ever walked the face of the earth. I was alone, holding her hand as I did many times before. A powerful, magical presence always radiated from within her soul that could scare off any dilemma of mine. This just could not be real. Mom did not embrace death, and to me she was the idealism of a giving life. A dedicated teacher, her resonance left several challenging tasks for me to complete in my life.

For the next year and a half, the care of my disabled father became my brother's and my responsibility, as Dad could not manage by himself. My wife and I took Dad in to our home in Longview, Texas. As often as we could, my father and I would make the 90-mile journey through Northeast Texas to their house in the small farming community of Clarksville. The visits to the house gave him a sense of place during a very uncertain, upside-down time in his life. His wish was to keep the house intact, as if he and Mom still lived there. Within those walls Dad allowed time to stand mysteriously still.

During these visits, time and time again, the house revealed her relentless presence to us. Flower bulbs stored in the garage over winter were ready to plant. An unfinished “to do” list was left in a kitchen drawer. Her hairbrush on the dresser smelled of aerosol hair spray. Cooking utensils hung at attention, ready to be used. Despite neglect, the Christmas cactus on the front porch would continue to grow and bloom. Reflective surfaces retained fingerprints and smudges. Fascinated, I started to photograph. As my lens probed this reality, the medium of photography afforded me a therapeutic way of saying goodbye. In fact, it was an awakening of resonant hellos.

My father's passing intensified my feelings of revealing a symbiosis of the house and my Mom. I continued the visits alone. The items photographed are not of much value, even by garage sale standards. Many times I photographed what one might think of as trash, but it is my mother's trash; monuments to a surviving son. Within the commonness of being a good mother lies a supernatural being known as Mom.

Scott Canterbury Campbell





“Elegant, reflective, and evocative photographs imbued with memory and the patina of time. Scott Campbell has created a true House of Spirits.”
Keith Carter, Photographer



The Project

Over a three-year period more than 1,200 negatives captured this prudent testimonial. Working with a Hasselblad medium format camera and using only available light, Scott captured what he refers to as a renewed relationship with his Mom. “Dad made the project possible by being reluctant to disperse the house’s belongings after Mom’s passing. It truly was a gift.” Driven to photograph for himself, Scott had no intention to show or promote the work. Scott put the negatives into storage boxes after he made contact sheets in the darkroom.

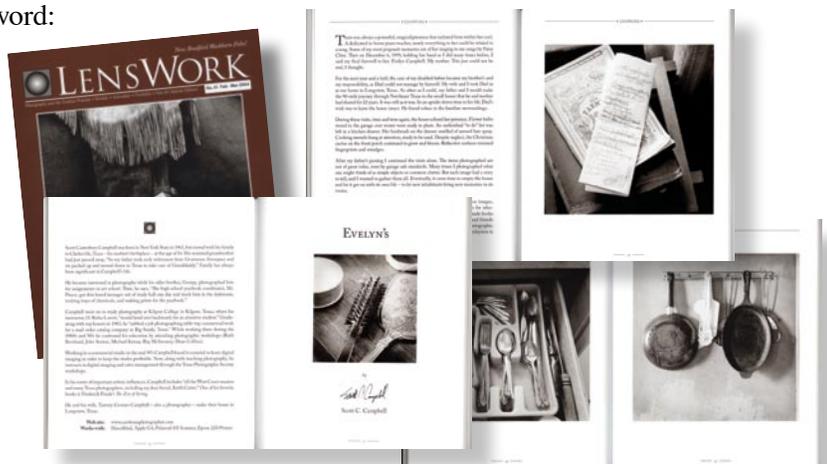
Intrigued by the new iPhoto software that came with his Apple computer, Scott scanned several negatives and made linen bound photo books that iPhoto offers. He gave the books to his brothers and sister as gifts.

Encouraged by friends and family, he submitted some of the images to several juried competitions. The Houston Center for Photography awarded Scott the 2003 Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship. The Fellowship allowed Scott the means to prepare the project for an exhibition at HCP as well as furthering his digital printmaking skills. Scott continued to create images and take care of the house until he reached a point where he felt the project was complete. “Although I’m still haunted by possibilities of making new images, the house needs to move on and live a new life with new lives living in it.”

In February 2004 a portfolio of 15 images from the project was reproduced in LensWork. LensWork’s Editor Brooks Jensen, summarized Scott’s work in the Editor’s Afterword:

Scott Campbell applied his experience as a commercial table-top catalog photographer to a subject much closer to his heart, by photographically preserving the artifacts of his mother’s life. An intimate and poignant portrait of Evelyn, this photo essay quietly looks - really looks - at the things that describe us in our daily lives. Scott’s work has caused us to look at the “everyday stuff of everydayness” with a different eye.

Brooks Jensen



Biography

Scott Canterbury Campbell is a photographer living and working in East Texas. Graduating with top honors from Kilgore College, Kilgore, Texas in 1983, he received an Associate of Applied Arts in Commercial Photography under the direction of O. Rufus Lovett. He continued his education attending workshops including the Ansel Adams Friends of Photography and has studied with Ruth Bernhard, John Sexton, Michael Kenna, Ray McSavaney, and Dean Collins. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for The Texas Photographic Society.

For over 15 years a major part of Scott's personal work focused on the landscape of East Texas. His traditional large format black and white prints have won many prestigious awards. Other bodies of work include studio still lifes and a series on high line wires. His work has been included in several Communication Arts Magazine Photography Annuals.

Most recently, Scott's personal work concentrates on the project Evelyn's shown here. His work is included in many private and public collections including: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, The Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, The Shirrel Rhoades Collection at The Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, Georgia, and The Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern and Mexican Photography in the Albert B. Alkek Library, Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas . His work continues to be exhibited around the country.



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