

# Enough

Eileen Quinlan  
June 28–August 4, 2018

**Hi Eileen, Dear Julie**

**A conversation in letters between Eileen Quinlan and Julie Pochron**

For *Enough* at Gallery TPW, Eileen Quinlan has developed a new installation of black-and-white photographs made across the last two years. Like the title suggests, her installation implies a rupture-point within this cataclysmic present: images of environmental collapse, random violence, and Sisyphean labours intermingle with new openings and apertures—the transformative magic made possible when learning to look and touch differently. For Quinlan, this horizon of possibility is a feminist one: faced with a deeply troubling political moment, she has re-invested in the intergenerational networks of women that sustain her work and life. The following epistolary exchange between Quinlan and Julie Pochron—her long-time colour printer, fellow artist, and friend—is an effort to trace the forms of allegiance, collaboration, and friendship that remain vital to our survival.

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Saturday, April 21, 2018

Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Hey Julie,

Rather than trying to turn this into a faux conversation, let's let it live in the realm of letters. I wish I could figure out how to fold them up like the notes we used to pass in

highschool, remember that elaborate 1980s origami? And our bubbly script?

Let's give this a try and see what happens. Can you tell me how you became a professional printer? Feel free to respond to this question, or with anything else that comes to mind.

Thanks again for doing this,

X Eileen

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Friday, April 27, 2018  
Redhook, Brooklyn

Hi Eileen,

My career as a printer was purely accidental. I happened to be very good at printing. I loved every moment in the darkroom and followed the advice of a friend/client who told me to go out and pursue a career in printing. He told me that I had an eye for color and magic hands in the darkroom, he said that this set me apart from most printers. He also said I could make my own work and support myself through a career in printing.

When I was a student we had our own personal darkrooms and I literally lived in mine. A darkroom was—and is still is—a magical place to me. My darkroom and studio is an



Julie Pochron, *One For the Road*, 2016. Type C-Print. Image courtesy of the artist.



Eileen Quinlan, *Marred Social Development*, 2017. Silver gelatin print. Image courtesy of the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, and Campoli Presti, London.

extension of myself with music, plants, endless coffee: a place you love to go to! When I was a student, no one printed color because we had to do it in small Jobo [film developing] tanks and blow-dry them after. Needless to say, it was a long and annoying way to make a print but I loved it. I was so excited when they installed a color processor my senior year, I was the first student to put a color print through it. Funny enough, I was teaching the last color photography class at the Pratt Institute three years ago when my students put the very last prints through that machine. After that semester it was broken down for good; color analogue printing being a thing of the past. It felt very full-circle.

As a student, I took any freelance work I could get my hands on. One of my favorite jobs was developing film and printing black and white glossy 5x7"s for a local Brooklyn newspaper called *The Phoenix*. I was printing all night on crazy deadlines in a dank, damp basement with too many roaches and bad air, but there I learned to love working on other people's images. Around the same time one of my professors, Anne Turyn, recommended me for a position at a darkroom rental lab called My Own Color. It changed my life. I worked the night shift for three or four years and it was there that I met amazing artists who were printing their own work. Joel Sternfeld, Sally Apfelbaum, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Jan Groover (just to name a few) all printed there and asked my opinion about color and their work. It was terrifying and amazing at the same time! I ended up assisting, printing, and spotting prints for so

many of them. I ending up leaving that job to freelance print and assist another color printer.

Back in the 90s, all the fine art and commercial photographers printed their own work in rental labs with assistants. It was such a great time because we were together at these rental labs, so you saw all the work everyone was doing and actually talked to them about it. It was super social! I was printing for mostly commercial photographers back then. I got a reputation for crazy color and crazy darkroom manipulations. It was so exciting to get paid to play in the darkroom all day with someone else paying the bill and supplying the cases of photo paper. I worked so much that I hired an assistant, then another, and another. Eight years later I was shopping for my own color processor and studio space. It was right about that time I started teaching photography at Pratt.

Becoming a “professional printer,” with my own print studio, was also a very self-involved decision. I needed a processor and my own darkroom to make my own work and I totally knew that. While I was working my ass off printing, I was also shooting my own work one day a week. It was a form of discipline I learned in school. If you make work consistently, it will shape itself though the literal practice of making it. My thesis professor also told me to treat making my work like my job. It has become a discipline I have sustained since 1990!

As a student, I did not want to shoot commercially. I wanted to preserve my eye for my own work. It’s a really old-school idea that was stuffed down our throats in art school. My eighteen-year-old artist self really believed it too. I told myself I would only print for ten years. I didn’t want to be a printer! I was so concerned that no one would take me seriously as an artist because I was a printer for artists, and even worse, commercial photographers. I was written up in some magazine back in the mid 90s as a printer for the stars and one of my former classmates called me a sellout. It was so fucked up. Now, I work really hard to give students room to make money with their fine art skills and to not be ashamed of supporting themselves. I will admit, it pops up for me personally here and there. At the opening for *Her Wherever*—the 2016 group show at Halsey McKay Gallery we were both in—someone asked me if I became an artist because I print for other artists. I caught my breath and explained to him that I have been consistently making work since 1991, but for a brief moment I felt like a fraud. But I quickly got over it! What did that guy know about printing anyway? My printing informs and sometimes challenges my thoughts and beliefs about color and light. My printing also informs my teaching and it all becomes full circle. Everything I do makes me a better artist and printer! I am sure the reason I am an amazing printer is because I make work.

x Julie



Eileen Quinlan, *The Crow*, 2016. Silver gelatin print. Image courtesy of the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, and Campoli Presti, London.

Friday, April 27, 2018  
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Dear Julie,

I love the darkroom too. Sometimes it makes me sad, but I love it. I hate how as photographers, we're often basement dwellers. Our work is all about light—capturing and corralling it, writing with it, bouncing it—but we are rarely installed in places where light is abundant and beautiful. Your lab is such a place, overflowing with windows, plants, and even pigs. I never had my own darkroom, I always had to share, but I found a way to enjoy the commonality you're talking about at My Own Color. I hung out over at a lab called Print Space and made friends there too. It's where I first met our shared buddy, Miranda Lichtenstein, who was instrumental in bringing you and me together as colleagues and friends.

What I love about the darkroom is the fact that you make photos there, as much as you make them with a camera. Until you do it, you don't understand how much of the art—how much of the meaning contained in a photograph—is imbued and discovered in the dark. It's not a fully-formed thing when it hits the film. Your hands, your body gets inscribed in the process. It's a physical activity that requires finesse, a little like cooking, no?

We talk, you and I, about what it's like to teach photography to young folks now. They have a problem with tangibility.

They're used to looking at, and touching photos on screens. With the really young teenagers, I sense a blossoming desire to get reacquainted with materials. To have photographs exist as objects, but it's still not like it was when we were coming up in the 90s. Photographs manifest now as illuminated ghosts, living on clouds, piling up in the thousands on servers, almost impossible to untangle from their nowhere-ness.

You fell into printing because you were good at it and wanted to carve out a space for yourself to make your work—to have access to the resources you needed, to survive in this city. That totally makes sense to me. I was frustrated by lack of access too and looked for places I could volunteer so I could continue to print. I never thought I could make a living as an artist. I knew I wanted to be one, but I figured I would ply my skills in a number of commercial ways. I too was warned that working commercially would ruin my eye or compromise my creativity. In my perversity, I wanted to know what that looked like. What would I see with a distorted lens? Maybe something cool? I did some assisting but quickly realized that girls don't get a lot of callbacks to interview. I should have put a *nom-de-plume* on my resume. Then they'd have to say "no" to my face! Most male photographers assumed I couldn't carry fifty pounds of lights up several flights of stairs, let alone figure out how to set them up. Only one was kind enough to take me on.



Julie Pochron, *Color of Pensiveness*, 2018. Type C-Print. Image courtesy of the artist.

When I wasn't assisting, I was working in dot-com companies on web-based advertising. It was a total fluke, due to living near the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston where a lot of these outfits were forming in the mid 90s. At my first programming job, I didn't even know how to turn on the computer. Soon I was writing HTML in simple text for a proto-Amazon, and later I was doing branding and identity for products. It was so weird. I liked having money and working this way got me and Cheyney to New York, but eventually, I had to stop. Corporate culture was too gross. Unlike you, I had reached a point where I wasn't making things at all anymore. I was surrounded by artists I admired who were writing screenplays, making music, and paintings, and clothes. I was marketing cigarettes (and smoking tons of them). It was time for a course change! That's when I decided to pick up the pieces and go to grad school.

I'm thinking about what you said about the Halsey McKay opening. Feeling like a fraud is something I struggle with too. But being able to act in the face of doubt is essential to any artist. It's absurd, what we do. I think your commitment to your own pictures makes you an even more radical printer and it makes communicating with you much easier. There's a shorthand between us. I was amazed when I really spent time with your work. It was unexpected. I had spent so many years fighting the urge to work in the studio, feeling like it was illegitimate somehow, "staged", "pictorialist" photography that was "trying to be painting or something it's not." What BS. When I met you, I had only

recently given myself permission to be fully studio-based. Your work was much more developed in that way, you had created a world with its own rules of gravity, time, allegory, inference, humor, eroticism, fearlessness. Your pictures are an ongoing source of inspiration and enjoyment for me. As the years progress and I'm also working with my own body, we have more and more to talk about. And no one unabashedly embraces color, as treacherous as quicksand according to the lore, like Julie!!!!

Until soon,  
x e.

ps - I'm about to re-watch 9 to 5, a TV show worth revisiting in this current post #metoo moment. Talk about reasons to be self-employed!

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Wednesday, May 2nd, 2018  
Redhook, Brooklyn

Hi Eileen,

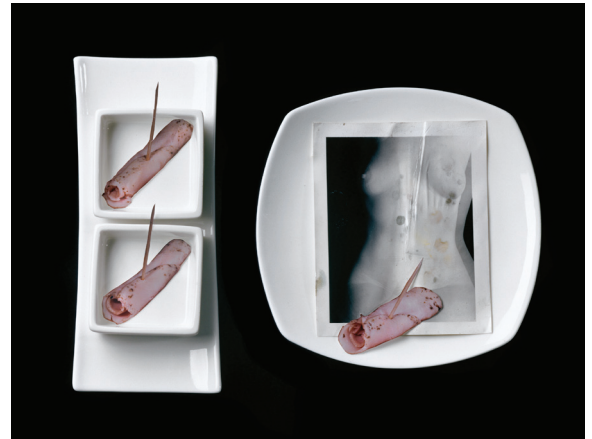
I am finally home and have a glass of wine in front of me. Thank you for your letter, there is so much to respond to! Reading about your previous life as a lady assistant and your life in the corporate world brings back all the drama of the 90s. It also reminds me, yet again, how grateful I am Miranda Lichtenstein brought you and so many amazing women my way! I am so happy to be printing for artists



rather than magazines and advertisers. I remember a job back in the day when we were working on for some vodka ad campaign and our retouching directions were to shrink the model's head, give her more hair, and make her boobs bigger. I think that was the final straw for me. Do you still have residue from your previous life? Does it show up in your work today? I struggle with my past-life demons from time to time but I do feel like they are often worthy adversaries!

Tangibility is something I have been thinking about lately. What is the tangibility of color, making an image, making a print? Can we make our thoughts and beliefs tangible through a photograph? Recently, I noticed some of my students stepping away from print and using their iPhones to make videos that they feel make their ideas tangible. I try to encourage them to embrace the limitations of a single image but this idea is met with blank stares! Maybe it is the instantaneousness of image-making for them. Most of my students never were in a darkroom prior to college. The chemical process of photography is not something they grew up with or even fully understand yet.

I love the way you wrote about a photograph being discovered in the dark. It is such an eloquent way to think about it! It is funny, as a student I was in such a hurry with my work all the time. I rushed through it all. Now, I find myself loving the time it takes in the dark, waiting to get film processed. And when I get the film back, there's the rush



Julie Pochron, (top) *Bok Choy 2004 2014*, 2014. Type C-Print.  
(bottom) *Cracked Pepper Turkey*, 2013, Type C-Print. Images courtesy of the artist.



Eileen Quinlan, *Aftermath*, 2017. Silver gelatin print, gold toned. Image courtesy of the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, and Campoli Presti, London.

of anticipation to get back to the studio and make contact sheets! Amazing! It is so satisfying! So yes, because of all of my own experiences with shooting, printing, waiting, dreading failure—and sometimes dreading success—I take my role as a printer for artists very seriously. Oftentimes, I am the first person to see an artist’s image and hear all about the ideas, vision, and ambitions for the work. I am sure it is an incredibly vulnerable moment to bring someone else in. I try to be a good listener, picking up clues so I can make the print fall in line with the artist’s intention. A gallerist once told me that she had heard that I was an “artist whisperer.” It was such a compliment! I think the reason I can fulfill that role is because I also make work and strive to make an image speak for me through color and light.

I hear you when you write about being surrounded by artists you admire and how complicated that can be! Back in the day, I was also marketing cigarettes and smoking too many of them while everyone else was exhibiting regularly. I don’t feel that dread of not making enough anymore. I do struggle with what it is all for— particularly in our current social climate. The last time I felt like this was September 11th, 2001. I had a commercial client throwing a fit because I couldn’t print that day. I couldn’t believe it... it was the first time I didn’t love my job. It all seemed unimportant. I realized I had to use my skills and voice with intention. It was in the next few years that I made a shift to working with artists rather than fashion and ad campaigns.

In terms of my own work, that’s when I took off the gloves and stopped being careful

I envy your grad school experience! Speaking of smoke, I love your *Smoke & Mirrors* work. That came out of your grad experience, correct? When I look at them, I want to smoke again! They are so satisfying in color and content—they are so visceral. You write about the struggle with working in the studio. Did that come out of grad school? The idea of studio work being illegitimate and staged seems so crazy to me! I remember you telling me this a while back and being totally floored. I am lucky that no one mentioned that to my young artist self as I am sure it would have tripped me up. I once dated a painter who called my work “feminine feather art.” I am laughing as I write this! What a fool he was! That is an entirely different conversation but it makes me think about how you and I have been affected by others. Maybe that is the plight of being a female artist. Ah, so much to think about!

Thursday, May 3rd, 2018

Studio

Hi Eileen,

I kept your last letter in my bag, taking it home and to the studio and back again so I can think on it. The letter is now crinkled and worn, it feels good to unfold it on my desk! I keep re-reading, thinking, then re-reading. Your work with your body inspires me. I remember you telling me that you started making work in the bathroom because it was the only time you had to yourself. You talked about your forty-year-old body and all the facts written within it, photographed for us to evaluate. I feel that urgency in that work. I gravitate to the grit and intrinsic beauty in the rawness you put forward. Another reason my job is amazing is that I get this inside view of your work that is not public, *per se*. I don't take that lightly! Does motherhood come into your work? Not having kids, I wonder about these things! Your body made them and I can't even imagine how profound that can be as someone who uses their body to make art. Again, so much to discuss but I need to run!

PS- OMG 9 to 5, right! I love Dolly Parton! It is indeed a good time to be self-employed! On a side note, did you read the article "Who's Afraid of the Female Nude" in *New York Magazine*? Again, so much to talk about!

Until later...

Julie



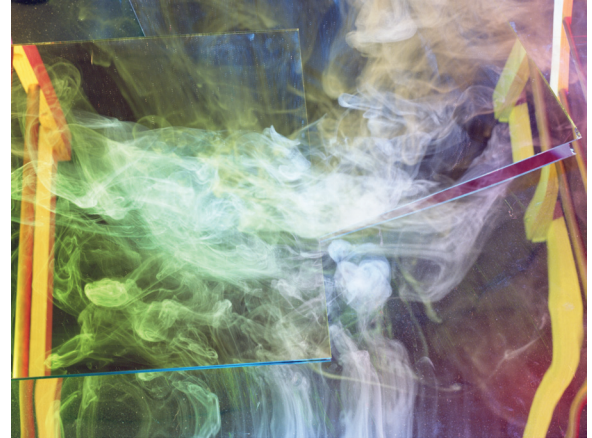
Eileen Quinlan, *Let Down*, 2016. Silver gelatin print. Image courtesy of the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, and Campoli Presti, London.

Tuesday, May 8, 2018  
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Dear Julie,

I'm sitting down in my studio, the washing machine whirring in the background, with coffee in hand and the hope in my heart that I can get through this letter without interruption. I wonder which residues cling from my commercial days.... The most strongly felt is a sense of ineptitude. That I am a sloppy photographer. I used to lie awake at night worrying about fucked-up wedding pictures (analog, folks) coming back from the lab, or light leaks appearing on the bosses' architectural assignments. Now I have made a life of courting accidents and embracing "evidence of the hand." I really have to thank Dana Hoey for that. While in grad school, she taught me to claim my weaknesses as strengths. Power to the clumsy conjurer!

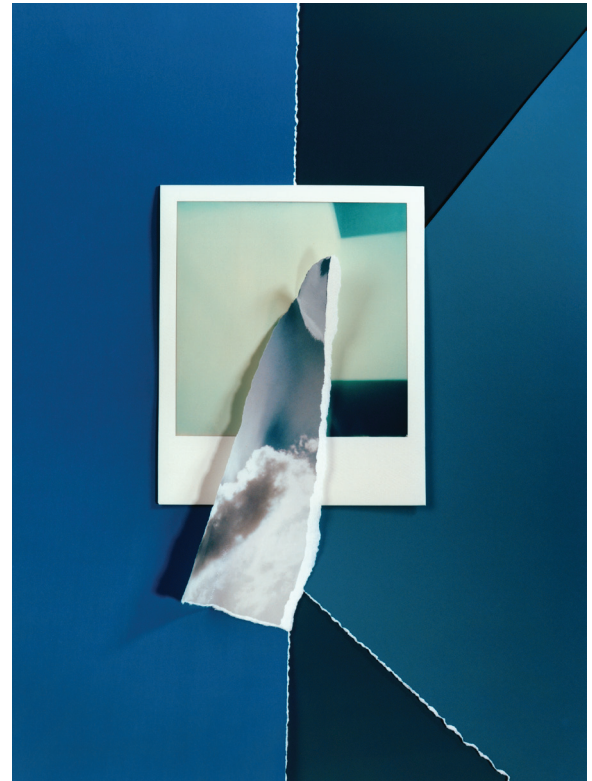
You asked about *Smoke & Mirrors*, I did begin that series at Columbia. I was thinking a lot about seduction and how to manifest that, about the spaces where products are staged. It started with spirits, but I gave up the ghost and went in a much murkier and slipperier direction. I was flummoxed by the need to talk about what I was doing (not a good place to be in an MFA program), but I was following my considerable nose in the direction of something that smelled like abstract photography. Those past demons you mention—of having to make perfect women even more so—they can be generative. How can you not take that on in your own naked pictures?



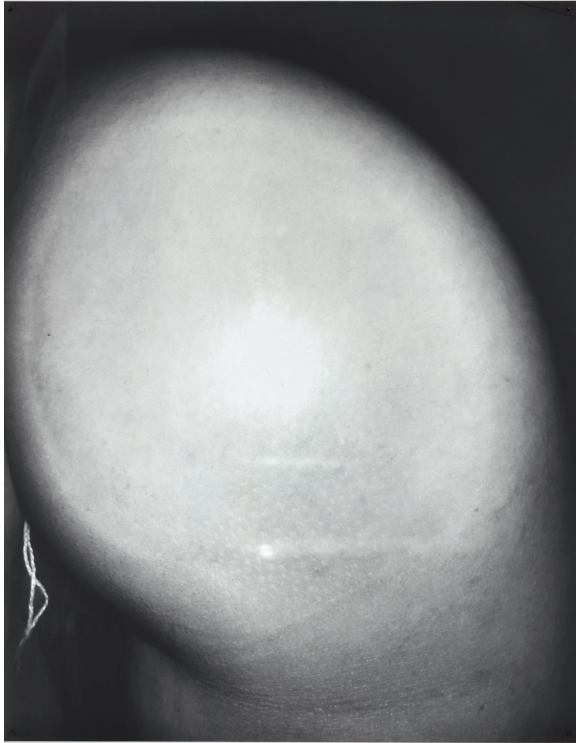
Eileen Quinlan, (top) *Smoke & Mirrors 10*, 2005. C-print.  
(bottom) *Smoke & Mirrors 2*, 2015. C-print.  
Images courtesy of the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York,  
and Campoli Presti, London.

I am stuck on what you said about photographic singularity. I sometimes think people lean on video's authority—as something that engages more of our senses—having sound, movement, existing in time, demanding attention, even taking up more space as a large projection and producing the architectural command to sit and watch. This is not to dismiss video art and moving pictures, they have been very influential on me, but some weak things cloak themselves in video spectacle. The limitations of a single image—existing as a fragment where so much must be inferred by the viewer—are challenging and magical. But I rarely respect them either. Usually I think of photographs as existing in constellations or syntactic arrangements. They complete and inform each other across multiple images, though they can also be delinked. They sometimes exist poetically, creating a kind of refrain and rhythm, or musically—with sonic rising and falling, softness and bombast.

Another groove in my mind is your story about “feminine feather photography.” I'd like to meet the guy who coined that phrase! What does it mean to make something feminine? And why do we see it as a slur? Because we've been taught to equate the feminine with a gauzy sensibility? Your pictures are anything but THAT. When I mentioned needing permission to work in the studio, I was talking about the early days of my photographic study and the ways dominant photo history celebrates what it perceives as authenticity, even now. Windows over mirrors. Truth over fiction. Straight over queer. Street over



Julie Pochron, *To Languish*, 2018. Type C-Print. Image courtesy of the artist.



Eileen Quinlan, *Statuary Marble*, 2017. Silver gelatin print. Image courtesy of the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, and Campoli Presti, London.

stage. It took me ten years to have the courage to invent things for myself to photograph. I was still hoping to be presented with subjects in “real life.” Now I realize that setting things up can sometimes get you even closer to a kind of truth. And no matter what we’re shooting, we’re always both finding and creating it along the way.

When Trump was elected, I had another moment of doubt. Is what I’m doing going to make this messed-up world a better place? I was working on a show for a gallery in London, Campoli Presti, and suddenly I felt deeply American. How was I going to represent where I’m from to a Brexit-addled London? It resulted in *Dune Woman*, a show about environmental collapse, entropic forces, misogyny, mass shootings. Post 9/11, I had the same kind of reckoning. Weirdly, that was the day I decided to truly commit to being an artist. Why wait? Why be “practical”? In a destructive world, maybe making things IS a political act?

Having kids has definitely changed the way I think. I have more empathy for beings of all kinds (something you are truly blessed with). I now realize youngsters have a lot going on upstairs. And having kids has given me a sense of curiosity about this body where I once felt only shame. Or maybe that’s a plus of middle age?

Speaking of weans, I must go. They will soon be home from school and these thoughts will not hang together well in their company.

More to say, but so it goes.

x e.

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Thursday, May 24th, 2018

Redhook, Brooklyn

Hi Eileen,

I am home, back from my trip to California. Again, I have been carrying your letter in my bag, reading and re-reading, trying to process it all! I do appreciate all your thoughts and words. First off, I do love the “evidence of the hand” in your work. It’s often its lifeblood or magic. It is the prodigiousness of photography and printing! There are prints out in the world where you can see the outline of my actual hand if you look closely enough; when I was doing crazy color burns on old-school darkroom prints. That’s also why I did in-camera multiple exposures for such a long time. I got so excited seeing mistakes, flaws, or the literal outline of my hand! This also connects to you talking about making a singular image speak volumes. I absolutely strive for that as well. It is a challenge. I always try to imagine how to make a photograph taste like a chocolate éclair! I want to look at an image and taste it.



Julie Pochron, *Metaphysics*, 2016. Image courtesy of the artist.



I am also very intrigued by the idea claiming your weakness as strength. Wow, it has served you well! I have always been drawn to the confidence and defiance in your work. Do you still think about that, or is it now second nature? Lately I have been processing the idea of perceived weakness, which also seems to be coming up in our correspondence. What do artists perceive as weakness? What do I perceive as weakness? Like you said, where do those perceptions come from? Our upbringing? Culture? Yes, the equating the feminine with that gauzy sensibility still prevails in advertising, music, and definitely in my classroom! It shows up in so many ways I often don't notice it at first. So much of my earlier work was made in pushback to being "a piece of tail" or for making "feather art" and feeling weird about loving it.

I truly believe that making work is speaking our absolute truth. I don't think art can lie and therefore it is so political. Think about it: to tell the truth is so political now that no one does it or even believes it. So yes, why wait? Why be practical? Fuck that.

Shame and the body is a prickly thing. I think that is why I am piecing together my twenty-something body parts with my forty-something body parts in my work. For me, aging and self-perception are new subjects. Who am I without the identity I have created through making art, teaching, and printing? Since I lost everything in Hurricane Sandy, I have been trying to rebuild or recreate myself through the outtakes that survived the waters. It was similar to your Trump moment.

In your artist lecture at Pratt a few years back, I remember you talking about your own doubts around knowing if your images were good or not. I was floored. It was such a profound moment for me. I had never heard another artist talk about that struggle in a public way. In those moments the "feather art" insecurities come in and vex me. Aggh, it's the beauty of vulnerability, I suppose. You can't have one without the other. This idea of allowing oneself to be vulnerable is something I have never stopped trying to be open to.

On that note I need to stop writing, eat dinner, and walk the pup. Did I tell you I found a parakeet at 6am in the park the other morning? I was walking Fugu and I wasn't really awake yet. I just called to the bird and put out my finger out and she flew to me. I put her in the pocket of my hoodie to take her home. So crazy! I now have 5 parakeets! She was rough around the edges but after a vet visit and a few weeks of TLC, she is as good as new and loves my other birds. The funny thing is she is the only one that sits on my finger! I named her Perica (Spanish for parakeet) and she is a sweetie!

Until the next time...

xj ■

**Eileen Quinlan** (b. 1972, Boston) earned her MFA from Columbia University in 2005. She had her first solo museum exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston in 2009. Her work is in the permanent collections of Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Hammer Museum, Institute of Contemporary Art / Boston, Ackland Art Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester and the Seattle Art Museum, among others.

Recent exhibitions include *Viva Arte Viva*, the 57th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, curated by Christine Macel (2017), *SYSTEMATICALLY OPEN? New Forms for Contemporary Image Production* at the LUMA Foundation, Arles (2016), and *Always starts with an encounter: Wols/Eileen Quinlan*, produced by Radio Athènes and curated by Helena Papadopoulos at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens (2016), *Image Support* at the Bergen Kunsthall (2016), and *Transmission, Recreation, and Repetition* at the Palais de Beaux-Arts Paris (2015), *What Is a Photograph?* at the International Center for Photography (New York) (2014), *Outside the Lines: Rites of Spring* at the Contemporary Art Museum Houston (2014), and *New Photography 2013* at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2013). Her most recent exhibition of new work, *Dune Woman*, was on view at Campoli Presti in London in the summer of 2017.

**Julie Pochron** moved to New York in 1987 to study at Pratt Institute. She had her first solo exhibition at Peter Madero Gallery in 1996. Her last solo exhibition, *Umami*, was as in 2008 at Safe-T Gallery in Dumbo Brooklyn. Selected works from *Umami* are also included in *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography* by Susan Bright published in 2010. In 2013 she presented an artist lecture on her work at the Center for Alternative Processes. She had notable works in *Coming Together; Surviving Sandy, 1 Year* at the Dedalus Foundation in 2013. Her work was included in *Her Wherever*, an exhibition at Halsey McKay Gallery curated by Sara Greenberger Rafferty and Sara VanDerBeek in the fall of 2016. She has been teaching at Pratt Institute since 1998 and is currently an assistant adjunct professor. Pochron owns and operates Pochron Studios LLC, a photographic printing studio catering to exhibition analog and digital type c-prints for artists, galleries, and museums. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

*Enough* by Eileen Quinlan was generously sponsored by Gallery Express Fine Art Services.



Gallery TPW also acknowledges the generous support of our funders:



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