

A Search For Home

Nicholas Dynan

“As you float now, where I held you and let go, remember when fear cramps your heart what I told you: lie gently and wide to the light –year stars, lie back, and the sea will hold you.”

– First Lesson, Robert Booth

I came to this workshop following a six-month internship at a newspaper in Turkey. There, my life was wrapped up in the grind of seeking accomplishment through work - through the approval of others. I created images in which the viewer was merely the recipient of information. I felt my heart race only at possibility of danger; when police attacked protesters and rioters lit fires. I saw my next step as combat photography. I was driven by the opportunity to create an image where no photographer would go.

Arriving in Houston, I threw myself into a project focusing on the lack of job opportunities in the Third Ward. Specifically, I followed residents who lived in the community, but worked beyond its borders.

There is a saying in the photographic world that goes, "Every good photograph is about at least three things: the photographer, the subject, and photography." As the photographer, if my choice in focusing on a story about employment tells anything about me, it was of my desire - just like that of my subjects - to achieve. Yet as my images emerged throughout the week, it became clear that they were not only about achievement, but also about how detached I felt.

I found myself making images in cars on endless asphalt highways, coming and going between the worlds of employment and home. It was the experience of transience, I was unsure of where my foundation lay. For so long, as I was striving for achievement and a sense of worth, my feelings were dictated by the standards of others.

Halfway through the workshop, I put my camera down. I spent hours in front of paintings at museums here in Houston. I searched for what it meant to feel *for myself*. How were emotion and feeling transmitted through an image? How did these paintings, as representations of emotion, make *me* feel? I was searching myself, for my core - or for what others call *home*.

During this process, I started to find that home within myself. Strangely enough, one place it became clearest was in the home of another - that of the Barnes family. Having gone to the Barnes home a week before during an arrival dinner, I was graciously welcomed back. Over the next three days, I created images of their family; their interactions, and the space they lived in. The motivation for this work stems from a desire to create a dialogue regarding the perceived expectations of Black families living in the Third Ward. The images that I made during this time are not the same as I hoped to make in Turkey, they ask questions, provide little answers, and challenge viewers. At

the same time, my desire to experience their emotions, maybe a longing for childhood and family, also drives this work. There, under their roof and in their presence, my heart beats not due to possibility of danger and violence, but rather for their love for each other.

I can only offer these images and my sincere thanks to,
The Barnes, Matt, Anne, Benjamin, Olivia, and Ellie and,
my instructors, Sara Terry and Jeff Jacobson