
Senior Projects Spring 2012

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2012

Remnants

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Recommended Citation

Rosenthal, Lily, "Remnants" (2012). *Senior Projects Spring 2012*. 349.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2012/349

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Remnants are pieces that were once part of a greater entity, an entity that has since been removed. A remnant needn't be viewed as "good" or "bad," but just "as is" – the state of what remains, of what you physically see right in front of you. The idea of remnants and what they represent began to take shape for me over the course of this photographic project. Feelings I had not previously acknowledged found their space to come forward, embodying themselves in my photographs. As a reticent person, familiar with keeping feelings hidden, I discovered that my photos could serve as a doorway to access concealed experiences and feelings. Looking closely at the images, I began to see how they presented to me my own deep resonance with all that is left behind. Through these images I learned that I too am a remnant, a trace of something larger that is no longer in evidence.

I was found in the early morning in Wuhan, China, having been placed in the side of an old stone wall where a stone was missing. The police found me. There was no information other than what was visible: a girl toddler with bilateral clubfeet and a ball of yarn. I was given a name, date of birth, and estimated to be about 2-years-old. At the time, I was one of many abandoned daughters, a noticeable result of China's one child policy.

I was lucky to be adopted by a loving family and to receive surgery to correct my feet. Because I was raised in such a positive environment, there was no need to dwell on my early start in life. I knew my story, but never gave it special attention, until my images began to embody the dynamics that were essential to my start in life. Through these photos, I have unearthed aspects of myself that I could claim and work with. Through them, I have taken the time to honor the remnants I know about my early life, discovering parallels with many things in the world.

Following my eye led me to various "leftovers" in different towns around me. My desire intensified to photograph these remnants, pretty or not. I approached these scenes knowing each one has a special story belonging to it. While some of this story is not accessible, bits and pieces of it are. Each remnant is evidence of and a clue about the greater thing of which it was a part.

States of production and consumption can turn into excess, depending on the world around us and our definitions. These "excesses"— buildings, possessions, or children—can become inconvenient, difficult, or impossible to care for. Spending days photographing in the little towns around me, I found things and places that someone was no longer taking responsibility for, and, as a result, often left behind to fall into disrepair.

Plentiful moments and times of decline are all part of life. Through this project I was able to let periods of decline speak for themselves, showing how light shines and interacts with their remnants, reminding you, the viewer, of things that can be found on the land, down a lane, and beside a wall. When we witness a remnant, we retrieve the past for a moment. We see the strength and the vulnerability of the trace, allowing its past to be heard, and its future possibilities to be hinted at.

















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