

Torrance YORK: *Semaphore*

September 8 - October 15, 2022

Reception and book signing with the artist: September 22, 6 - 8 pm



Through these pictures we are invited to consider our physical selves, the flesh and blood that gives us presence in the world. It seems impossible to be unaware of our own bodies, and yet, it also seems likely that many of us take for granted the miraculous way the body works and all the processes - digestion, respiration, healing, circulation, thought, growth, reflex, hearing, sight - that happen without our conscious awareness. York's images inspire a series of questions for me: Is a body the seat of the soul? A temple to be cherished? A frustratingly mortal vessel destined to betray us? All of these? All of these within a single day?

Rebecca Senf, PhD., Torrance York's Fabric of Light from Semaphore, 2022

Can I be this adaptive? • Is it my DNA? • Balance itself is a goal. • I turn towards the sun. • There are no days off. • I never felt asymmetrical before.

Torrance York, artist's captions in Semaphore

RWFA RICK WESTER FINE ART

RWFA proudly presents a selection of photographs by Connecticut based photographer Torrance York from her just released monograph, *Semaphore* (Kehrer Verlag: Heidelberg, 2022). It is the photographer's first exhibition with the gallery. The eleven works are curated from the book's 67 illustrations, representing the breadth of subjects and approaches York's refined eye gathered in the quest to seek a new definition of life.

Few of us can know or understand the disorientation and lost sense of place that grows from the gradually fading balance and bodily strength accompanying the onset of Parkinson's disease. Torrance York chose to face the unknown head on with the tools she is blessed with as a photographer. Dr. Senf, in the essay in York's monograph, writes, *"being forced to examine and accept her mortality - the literal existential challenge each one of us will face - she comes back to us with tales of profound observation, of questions and considerations, of careful slowness, and always there is light."* She goes on to describe her focus in making photographs as *"a restorative meditation."* Like a contemporary O'Sullivan or Jackson intent on documenting a journey into a wild, unknown terrain, not of the conquered territories of the American West but of the besieged interior landscape of her own body and illness, she has created her own topographic survey of the neural country she is guardian and defender of.

The images comprising *Semaphore* unfold sequentially and lyrically, as a visual narrative of her quest, distilling her heightened meaning from the literal recording of her world. Images taken of the natural world feature an evening moon hanging perfectly in a sky seemingly just out of reach; peeling birch bark revealing layers below the surface - a delicate wound in a living organism. Figurative studies show two pairs of holding hands, perfectly arranged geometrically, a portrait without bodies. Another is of the photographer and a close friend hugging in an intimate exchange as a reminder of the connections we need. Medical imagery is included in the form of X-ray and MRI images of her skull, her hands, her feet - another reminder that examination and testing is a constant. Several still lifes are interspersed throughout making use of as diverse objects as a Zen prayer bowl, a Brussel sprout newly sliced and a germinating seed in a cloud of milky white cotton.

"There is a peculiarly modern predilection for psychological explanations of disease," writes Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor*, but in York's work psychology is secondary to the stoic acceptance of reality and its poetic rendering in imagery. There is no denouement alluded to in *Semaphore*. The title says it all: York conveys her discoveries from her journey to the interior back to us, coded with lyricism and a celebration of the continuing expedition forward.