

Laurie Freitag is an iPhone photographer specializing in documenting children and their habitats in Los Angeles, California. As a nanny she has intimate access to children and feels she is a witness to the countless moments that the child won't remember.

She is based in Los Angeles, California. Her early years, spent in the Bronx, Coney Island & Far Rockaway N.Y. influence her work with themes of childhood, memory & mortality.

Her series, 'The Lost Years' and 'In the Garden at Chislehurst' have been exhibited internationally in galleries from Los Angeles to Greece, Paris and Barcelona. Her documentary work with children won the Julia Margaret Cameron Award for Women in 2022.

'In the Garden at Chislehurst' AND 'We are Stardust, We are Golden' are represented by the Susan Spiritus Gallery.

<http://susanspiritusgallery.com/artist/laurie-freitag/> -Listed as 1 of 20 best female photographers for 2021 ('The Lost Years' series) by The Phoblographer Magazine.

-Named Top 100 YourDailyPhotograph, 2023, 2022 where her work has sold numerous times to private collectors via Daniel Miller of the Duncan Miller Gallery in Los Angeles.

See this work here:

<https://shop.yourdailyphotograph.com/collections/freitag-laurie>

-Founder and Director of L.A. Photo Curator & N.Y. Photo Curator, online international competitions that promote emerging photographers with 20% of each competition's fees donated to various charities.

The Work:

'THE LOST YEARS':

"I have been working on 'The Lost Years' for almost 15 years. It documents the years that most adults cannot remember, before the age of seven-years-old.

Psychologists at Emory University documented that age seven is when earliest memories tend to fade into oblivion, a phenomenon known as "childhood amnesia." Emory psychologist, Patricia Bauer, says, "Remembering yourself in the past is how you know who you are today."

Working with infants and children as a nanny watching them day to day, I was hit with the realization that these wonderful days filled with giggles and struggle would not be something the child would remember. I became a witness to their stories and took on the role of documenter. In my role I have intimate access to everyday life that appears as mundane moments, but in fact are the beginning stories that help to define a life. When I left my 20 year career in local TV news, I worked jobs here and there but nothing felt like I had hit the jackpot like when I became a nanny. I went back to school and took every Child Development class offered.

When Covid-19 hit, we entered a bubble and I expanded my documenting to the children in that bubble.

Luckily the children had access to a large yard so they could just be kids. It will be interesting to see if, as adults, they remember what they are told of the pandemic, or of these days that I documented.

My work as a nanny and also as a fine-art photography photographing children has been influenced by the child-development pioneer Magda Gerber, an early childhood educator who resided in Silver Lake. Gerber is known for teaching parents and caregivers how to understand babies and interact with them respectfully from birth. Her principles were very popular in the years I nannied. Many parents were following her ideas of allowing babies, then later as children, to explore their environment, giving them free movement and uninterrupted play, giving them the opportunity to develop confidence and self-esteem.

I take my photographic cues from that approach, one where I am photographing as a fly on the wall.

'IN THE GARDEN AT CHISLEHURST':

"This work, 'In the Garden at Chislehurst' was my navigation through 2020-2021. My day job is a nanny and by entering the world of a four-year-old I was able to escape the stress of the pandemic and find a beautiful space in the garden, a reminder that beauty is always here for us, no matter what unfortunate circumstance is around us.

It raises the question, do we believe, as Einstein said, "Is the universe a friendly place?" I had forgotten that it was. The news was telling me everyday that it wasn't. So many deaths. Every sneeze, every cough, was it the pandemic? Was death closing in? How close could I get to another human? Would this child understand why I was masked, why he couldn't see my smile, why we couldn't hug? What a way to live!

I was lucky to be in a situation where we could be outside in nature and to remember how lucky I was to live in Los Angeles where we have access to nature most of the 365 days of the year. It was the nature and curiosity of a four-year-old that led me into the world of order and harmony, sunshine and flowers.

As the child played in the dirt pretending to make berry pie, I looked up from my low vantage point and saw these dracaenas and captured the bounty of life above me. I leaned close to the stalks of dracaenas with my iPhone and entered another world."

'WE ARE STARDUST, WE ARE GOLDEN': "My latest series, 'We are Stardust, we are Golden', addresses my mortality.

Carl Sagan, one of our generation's greatest science educators, said we are stardust. Meaning, most of the atoms in our body were formed inside of stars, supernova, and neutron star collisions. Those same atoms that make your heart, your brain, your skin, hair, teeth, bones as well as the trees, plants, birds, bees, dogs, cats, squirrels and hippos all share the

same atoms that came from the stars. These particles have been in existence for billions of years and will persist billions of years after we move on. As I'm reaching my 7th decade my thoughts lean towards leaving. My father, just months before he turned 75, said to me out of the blue, "It goes so fast." He never saw 75. One morning as I was getting into my car I noticed leaves spread out across the floor of the street. It had rained the night before and these multi-colored leaves were dazzling in the morning light. I was instantly swept away into a landscape of what appeared to resemble the vastness of the universe. These leaves, like falling, floating dancing stars, seemed to glide through space, on a timeless path. How I wish I was a floating dancing star. It's not something we like to think about, the end of our lives and I may not even be near the end of mine, but there is some consolation knowing that poetically as well as scientifically we return to where we came from. We are Stardust, we are golden..." Laurie Freitag