

Tennessee sure knows how to make 'em

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture in
the Department of Sculpture of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island**

**by
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Blasco", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right and ending in a small circle.

Eli Blasco, Guest Critic

To Seyl: I love you

Because when I was

Very young.

Very foolish.

And very much alone.

You paid attention to me

And. Without seeming to.

You opened for me the door to

Everything I love in the world.

-Albert Camus

To Ryu and James: "If I could have done it all again, I would have loved you better. But I could not have loved you more." Sue Zhao

To Chug and Prince: I'll be home soon

And this is for Mary: who, at some level, the work has always been for

And my deepest appreciation to:


My father- to whom I couldn't have done this without, and who I realize wishes could have supported me in this way growing up,

Jaimie An and Julia Murray (I love you both), Doug Borkman (the hidden treasure of RISD), Heather Rowe, Taylor Baldwin, Derrick Woods Morrow, Shori Simms, Suiyuan Jin, and Da eun Lee

Grant Smith (thanks buddy!) Joan Barham, John Campbell (goes without saying), Shannon Swenton (my biggest fan), Eli Blasko (insert comment here), to the people that have cheered me on (Jeff, Frank, Taka, Morgan, Susan, and Mo.....), my to adopted RISD cohort- Jasem, Dway, Emma, Enid, Marika, Lillyanna, Buzzy and Bec (You are all brilliant! And it's been an honor to learn from every one of you)

And most all- Seyl.... Thank you. I promise I'll never do something like this again

I'm grateful to you all.



I could do it, I'd do no writing at all here.
It would be photographs: the rest would be
fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of
earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and
iron, phials of odors, plates of food and excrement....

A piece of the body torn out by the roots
might be more to the point.
As it is though, I'll do what little I can in writing.
Only it will be very little. I'm not capable of it;
and if I were, you would not go near it at all.
For if you did, you would hardly bear to live.

-James Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

Two Headed Calf

Tomorrow when the farm boys find this
freak of nature, they will wrap his body
in newspaper and carry him to the museum.

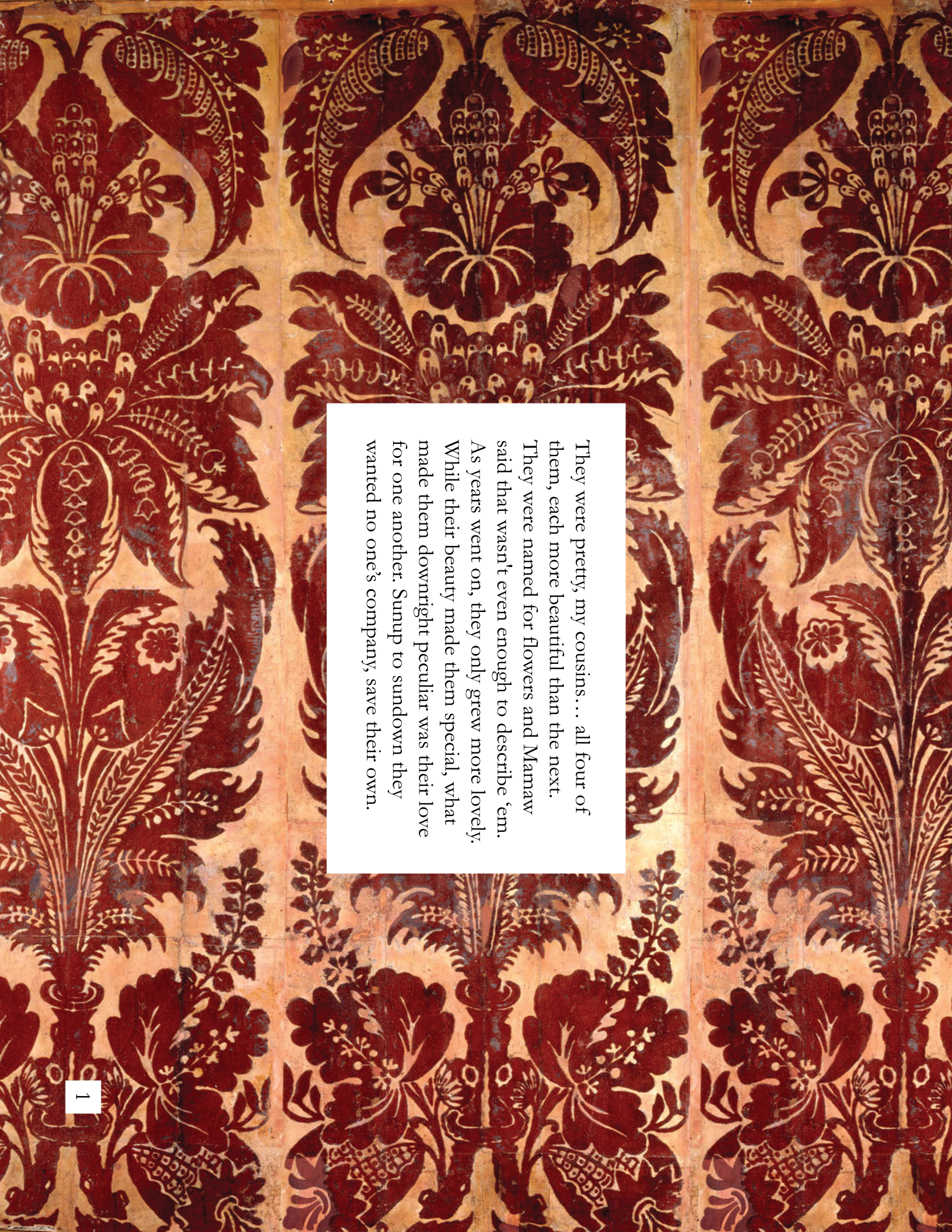
But tonight he is alive and in the north
field with his mother. It is a perfect
summer evening: the moon rises over
the orchard, the wind in the grass. And
as he stares into the sky, there are
twice as many stars as usual

Laura Gilpin




The Murfreesboro Cousins



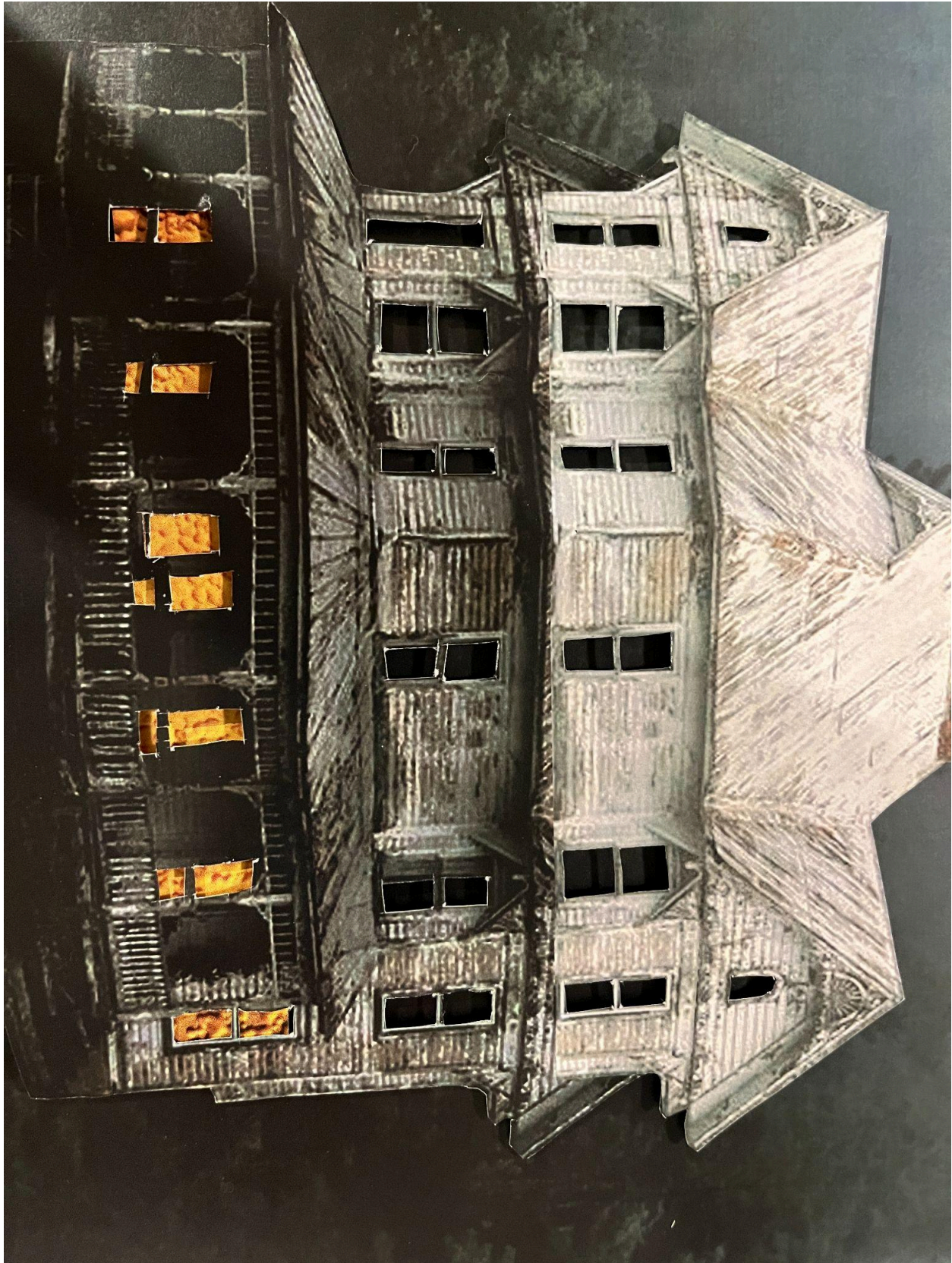



They were pretty, my cousins... all four of them, each more beautiful than the next. They were named for flowers and Mamaw said that wasn't even enough to describe 'em. As years went on, they only grew more lovely. While their beauty made them special, what made them downright peculiar was their love for one another. Sunup to sundown they wanted no one's company, save their own.






They laughed, cut up, and carried on...
goblin' up life and everything in between.
And that everything was food. Lord, those
girls love to eat, sweet tooth like you never
saw... pecan pie, peach cobbler, chocolate
cake, Little Debbie's, Mountain Dew, Moon
Pies, and Coca-Cola... (they'd eat) enough
food to choke a horse.





And my God that house. You never saw
such a house! Stairs and rooms that liked
to go on forever and that house shook with
their momma's hollerin'. But every passing
year, they grew more wide and less wild
And as their bodies swelled, their house
shrank- till one day, not overly special in any
way, they never left their kitchen.





Meals were made, wheelchairs banged,
laughter screamed, fingers got poked...
They never left each other's side except
to go see the doctor. That man hacked
them off bit by bit. You'd go and visit
less and less of them.

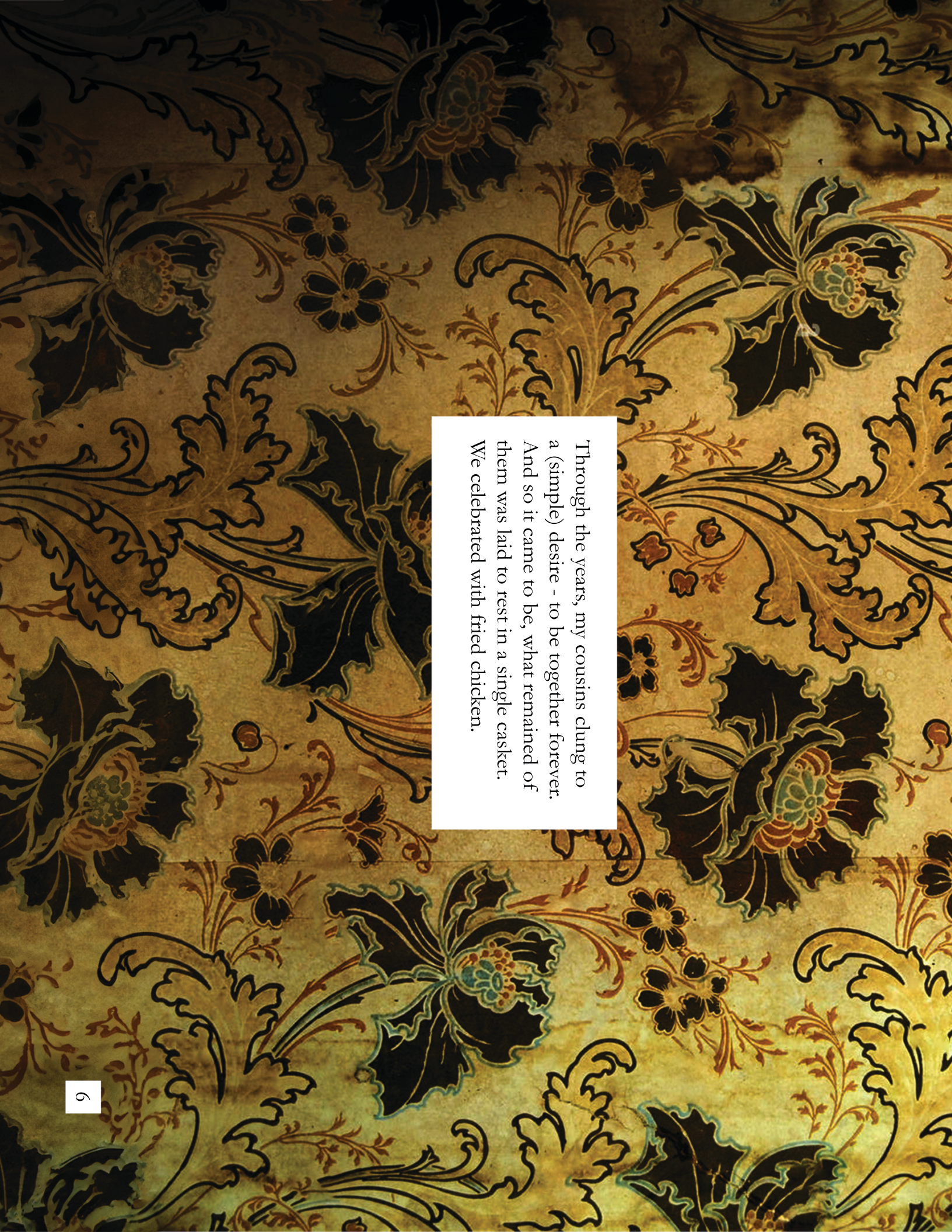




“Lori, they took my foot”
“ I see that.”

Fingers, toes, hands and feet, all that
saving them left them but one set of
limbs between ‘em.





Through the years, my cousins clung to
a (simple) desire - to be together forever.
And so it came to be, what remained of
them was laid to rest in a single casket.
We celebrated with fried chicken.

My Papaw covered his yard in whirligigs that he made out of used coke cans and mountain dew bottles. It was a sight to behold. You ever see such a thing?

How could my grandfather, who terrified me so deeply, create something that I found so damn exciting? I have never been overly interested in easy things. My instincts are rooted in unsettled places. And mistakes.

Your brain and your guts speak two different languages and I want to slide in between them. Like when a singer is so taken, so completely overcome, the voice can't keep up. That point where the heart overwhelms the brain and then you hear it - the crack. That is the most beautiful sound in the world. That is what I am always looking for.

I am interested in things that once seen, cannot be unseen. I want to connect in the deep spaces within us. That space that you forget about, or perhaps choose to ignore. The place that all the therapy in the world can't quite get to. This is where I am trying to meet you.

My work is an attempt to have a conversation between the dualities we navigate on a daily basis. Can you hold that horror and beauty can coexist in the same moment and are all the more powerful, not in spite of but because of one another? I am interested in the intimate relationship that power and poverty have, the genuine love and absolute monster that resides inside a mother...

I ask you, my viewer, what is your capacity to hold discomfort? And complicated ideas?

And are you willing to see those things within yourself? Are you willing to go there? I realize the difficulty of what I am asking ... But I want you to know that I tried to do my part- and if a connection is going to happen, you must show up as well. And I am open to what you bring. This is all an attempt to use visceral language to engage in the rawness and complexity of our shared lived experiences. In the words of David Foster Wallis
“...it's about what it means to be a fucking human being.”

illustration :

- (1) Sisters
- (2) Food
- (3) House
- (4) Doctor
- (5) Parts
- (6) Funeral

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Abstract

I would say that I have a preoccupation, as well as a complicated relationship, with “the truth”. I was fortunate enough to be raised (and I use the term raised quite loosely, for I was downright ferrell) by pathological liars. This did an excellent job of preparing me for the world, I understand the deep horror and utter hilarity in life’s condition. I felt as though I was set upon a different path than most of the people I’ve come across. There was no intense disappointment when I was introduced to the ideas of the constructs of time and reality, that nothing is in fact real, but just one’s perception of things. There is no line between fact and fiction. This work is a fable. In the south, the truth is so exaggerated that it no longer bears any resemblance to fact, and tales hold more factuality than science textbooks. This story was told to me as a child. Or at least I think it was. I don’t actually recall it being told to me... and I have no idea how the characters are related to me... and I’m absolutely sure I didn’t make it up. And that’s exactly what I am interested in....the complicated relationships between our emotions and what we deem to be “real”.









