



ARTIST

Michelle Gabel

TITLE

Facial Prosthesis from the series Light, in the Dark

DATE

2017

DIMENSIONS

9.25" H x 14" W

MEDIUM

Inkjet Prints

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2018.213

CURRENT LOCATION

1620-10D

DESCRIPTION

An accidental shotgun blast in 2009 destroyed Michelle Fox's eyes, nose and upper palate, leaving her blind and unable to smell. After painful surgeries, including a failed reconstruction attempt, Michelle now wears a facial prosthesis and raises her two young daughters in an addition to her parents' home. Although the prosthesis makes Michelle feel more comfortable when she goes out in public, she receives a lot of stares and sometimes hears hurtful comments. "I am so much more than my face," she said.

MICHELLE GABEL

BORN

1965

BIRTHPLACE

Lansing, MI

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Light Work Grant, 2018
Light Work Hallway Gallery, 2018
Light Work Grant Exhibition

BIOGRAPHY

For a more recent CV or bio please visit the artist's website, michellegabelphoto.com

Michelle Gabel is an independent photographer and visual storyteller based in Fayetteville, New York. Her photos have been published in National Geographic PROOF, New York Magazine, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Syracuse Newspapers (Syracuse, NY) and the Global Post, among other outlets. Her work been displayed at Light Work in Syracuse, NY; the Sheffield Doc Fest in Sheffield, England; Photoville in Brooklyn, NY; and ArtRage Gallery in Syracuse, NY. A former photojournalist with The Post-Standard newspaper in Syracuse, NY, she has received several awards from the National Press Photographers Association, the Associated Press and received a Light Work Grant in 2018.

circa 2018

ESSAYS

The 44th Annual Light Work Grant recipients are Nydia Blas, Michelle Gabel, and Jerry Lim. Part of our effort to support and encourage Central New York artists working in photography, the Light Work Grant in Photography, established in 1975, is one of the longest-running such annual fellowship programs in the country. Each recipient is paid a \$3,000 stipend, participates in the opening fall exhibition, and appears in Contact Sheet: The Light Work Annual. The 2018 judges were Kris Graves (publisher, photographer, writer), Qiana Mestrich (photographer, writer, founder of Dodge and Burn), and Allyson Torrisi (Director of Photography at Popular Mechanics). Nydia Blas uses photography, collage, video, and books to address sexuality, intimacy, and her lived experience as a girl, woman, and mother. She holds a BS from Ithaca College, and an MFA from Syracuse University's College of Visual and Performing Arts. The Wing: Home Base & Social Club for Women featured her work in New York and Washington, DC, and her exhibition, Vigilance, Struggle, Pride: Through Her Eyes, recently traveled in Europe. Blas says of her work, "I delicately weave stories of circumstance and magic inspired by girls and my time with them, and use my work to create a physical and allegorical space presented through a Black feminine lens. It is impossible to do this without exposing the constructs of sexuality, gender, and race that are historically based on pervasive and distorted European standards. It is a slippery slope between acknowledging the way society ignores, limits, and values you and working outside of these confines to create realistic and complicated ways of seeing and looking at oneself that are empowering and propel people toward new narratives. How do you do this when the very body you reside in is in opposition to what is deemed normal, proper, and worthy of protection? ...[]In order to navigate often-harsh realities of circumstance and maintain resiliency, a magical outlook is necessary." Michelle Gabel is an independent photographer based in Fayetteville. Media outlets publishing her work include Detroit Free Press, Global Post, National Geographic PROOF, New York Magazine, ONE.org, The New York Times, The Syracuse Newspapers, and USA Today. The Associated Press, National Press Photographers Association, the New York Publishers Association, and the Syracuse Press Club have recognized her work as a photojournalist. Exhibitions include Syracuse's ArtRage Gallery and Brooklyn's Photoville. Gabel has worked on her grant project since 2014. She explains, "A traumatic event is at the heart of these photographs—an accidental shotgun blast that took away Michelle Fox's eyes, nose, and upper palate, leaving her blind and unable to smell. It is a classic case of how one moment, one action, can change not only one life, but several lives forever. For the past four years, I've been collaborating with Michelle, who now lives in her parents' house with her two young daughters. This ongoing project delves into issues that are not as apparent as Michelle's drastically changed appearance. Gun ownership and responsibility, beauty and identity, the impact of trauma on children, family and faith, disability, and the costs, financial and otherwise, of caring for people who become injured by gun blasts...Woven throughout are themes of strength and vulnerability—Michelle's and her family's. These images provide clues to how Michelle has survived the nine years since her ex-husband accidentally shot her, and raise questions about the future holds for her and her two young daughters...I hope viewers have a strong empathetic reaction to Michelle's story and all involved." Jerry Lim works in photography, text, sound, and video. He examines how we make history and knowledge, how they operate in the world, and how they influence individuals within community. Recent projects include photographs made at a North Korean school in Japan and video and photo-based works about language and loss in modern Korea. He holds a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and an MFA from Cornell University. Lim's grant project documents the thousand-year-old pottery tradition of Imbe in Bizen, Japan. Despite revival in the 1930s, its community of potters is thinning and dispersing. Lim describes his time there, with many of the shops and streets empty, in elegaic terms: "I was told by a young artist from a multigenerational Bizen potter family that the clay in Imbe is running out. He lightly shrugged and without a hint of despair added that the remaining people who make Bizen are also dying away so it all evens out. His matter-of-factness was disquieting especially from someone who is so deeply tied to the tradition and land. This rationalization filled me with disbelief and sadness. A strangely familiar feeling I've had in other places...where change is rapid and brutal. What we've lost is impossible to keep track of—let alone remember. This body of work looks at this ancient way of life and how it exists in a present filled with uncertainties." Cjala Surratt Promotions Coordinator Light Work