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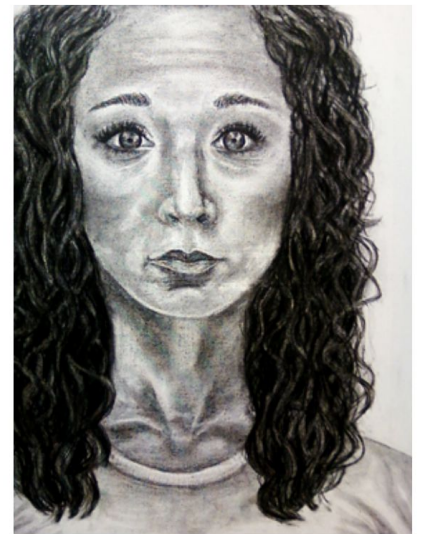
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Beauty through the Ages, Jane Alden Stevens



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Beauty through the Ages, Jane Alden Stevens

As the last publication of the Anna May Project, what better place to end, than where much of it began?

I have known Janie since 2007. She was a professor of mine for a short time during my undergrad at the University of Cincinnati in the fine art photo department. She was someone who I, and everyone else, admired and respected. When I shared this project with Janie and told her that our initial discussion would focus on beauty, she invited me to her studio to see her "new" work.

She shared with me that she had been photographing her body since the day she conceived her twins. This work includes excerpts from thirty years worth of photographs depicting changes over time.

Much of self portraiture is performative in nature, and this is no exception. The beauty of that is the ability that we have to see Jane both as both a multi-faceted woman and as an artist, allowing us a view of her experience of her body as it changed over the years. Our discussion about beauty must reference the woman as the body, and the body far beyond its objecthood. This work provides a complex narrative full of meaningful gestures.

"But I am not in front of my body, I am in my body, or rather I am my body...I do not simply contemplate the relations between the segments of my body and the correlations between my visual body and my tactile body; rather, I am myself the one who holds these arms and legs together, the one who simultaneously sees and touches them...If one can still speak of an interpretation in the perception of one's own body, then it would be necessary to say that it interprets itself...What unites the "tactile sensations" of the hand and links them to the visual perceptions of the same hand and to perceptions of other segments of the body is a certain style of hand gestures, which implies a certain style of finer movements and moreover contributes to a particular fashion in which my body moves."

-Mzerleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception

Amy Whitaker

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I asked Janie to share her thoughts, which I include with her images below.

"Beauty is strength, resiliency, and conviction. Because I am drawn to these qualities, beauty often finds its way into my work.



Beauty emerges from a combination of elements—the setting, the light, the ambient sounds and smells, the way people move—in the way these elements interact and connect with each other. I thus can find beauty in any setting and in people of all ages, because it is not just about how things look.

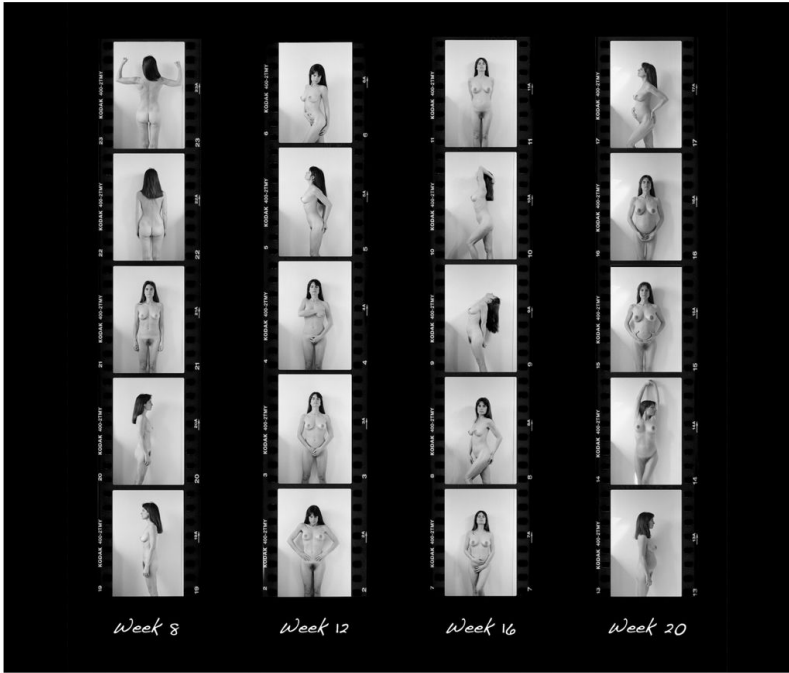




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Making a picture that contains beauty is never a specific goal; rather, it is a byproduct of how I see and experience the world and what I want to say about it through my photographs.





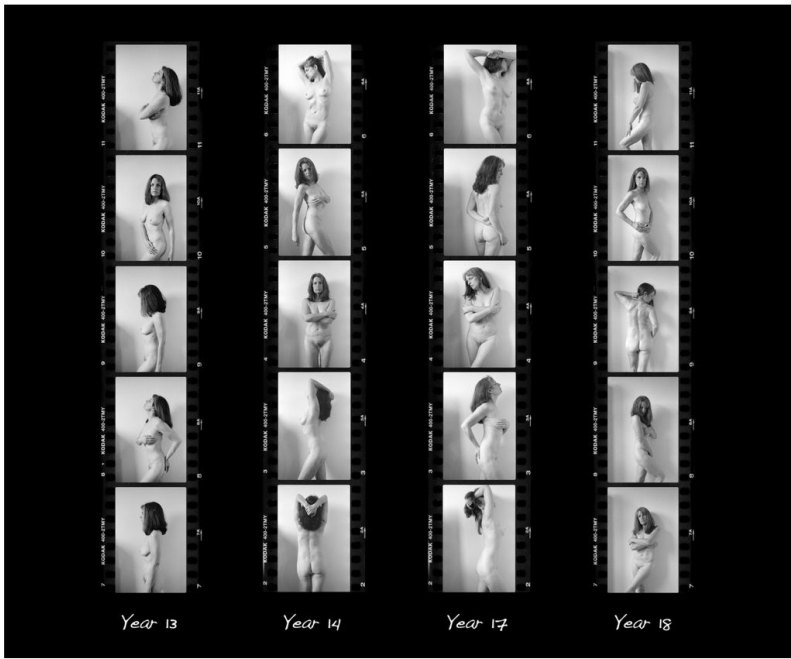
A mentor once advised me to never apologize for making pictures that speak to beauty, and to embrace it as part of my creative self—and I always have."

- Jane Alden Stevens

Differences induced or produced by repetitions constitute the thread of time.

— Henri Lefebvre, Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and

Everyday Life





After receiving her undergraduate degree from St. Lawrence University with a major in 19th Century European Studies, Jane Alden Stevens lived and worked in Germany for a number of years, then returned to the US to earn an MFA degree in photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology. Stevens taught in the Fine Arts Department at the University of Cincinnati for 31 years and is an active artist who has exhibited and published her work extensively in the US and abroad.

Her photographic work examines the ways in which personal experience and historical events psychologically resonate in people's lives. This focus is a result of her liberal arts education, her experience in living abroad, and parents who encouraged her to read the encyclopedia in order to learn about things she had not yet encountered or imagined.

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