

Timeline: Learning to See with My Eyes Closed

by Tom Young



Timeline is among the most poetic photographic projects to emerge in the art world in years. For many of us, the photo album is a way to preserve memories of personal and family events that are worth noting, worth sharing, worth saving: pregnancies and birthdays, day trips and child's play, time with our pets, friendships and reunions, portraits of our house and garden, and even scenes of spirituality and despair caused by news of cancer. Each album thus becomes an archive of who we are as a person, as a family.

Tom Young has taken this old idea and created a new genre: *visual fiction*. Using iconographic, layered images to tell his story without the usual tools of vivid contrast, bold colors, or sharp, finite detail, Young's visual assemblages are personal and evocative, sharing a complex internal landscape of love and loss, seen as through a shadowy veil. Here, then, is a marriage of landscape and portraiture that suggests not only a visual narrative of the photographer's life, but also, through the power of memory and shared experience, the reader's life.

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128 pages with 60 four-color photographs
by the author
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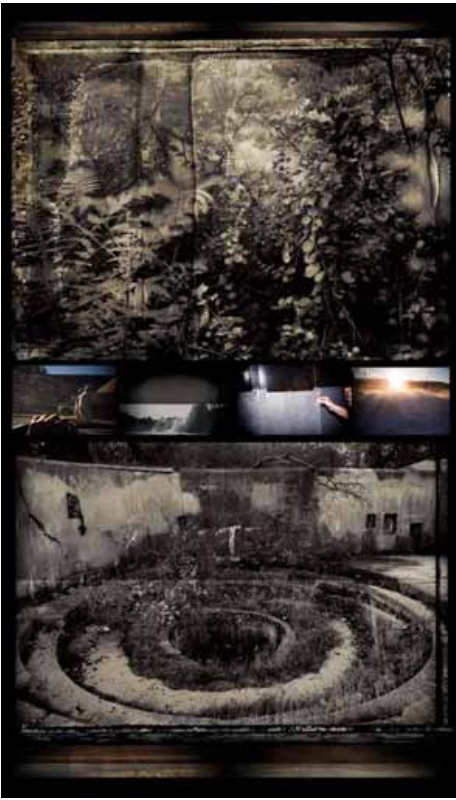
When Young was only ten years old, he had a medical procedure that left his eyes fully bandaged for weeks. Without sight, all of his other senses changed. Despite the darkness, he would imagine the world around him and the power of light as it relates to memory. In *Timeline*, one senses that the artist is seeing his entire world unfold before him like an end-of-life dream recollected in a few split seconds. One image leads to another, building in nuance and subtlety until we come to understand, as if by way of a sixth sense, how the little details of life create a larger retrospective. "If pictures could talk, what a tale they might tell." That thought lurks behind every image of Young's masterful visual story of a life: his? yours?

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"This is a fascinating photography book like no other. You could spend days, weeks, years pouring over each image and trying to understand whether it represents pleasure or pain or a combination of years. Tom Young damaged his eyes at age ten and spent some weeks with them bandaged and unable to see. With this experience he learned to use his other senses more fully and could imagine various images. He has translated this experience to these most unusual images, which appear to be some sort of digital collage of totally unrelated pictures that somehow in the recesses of your mind come together in some supernatural comprehension. They are mystical, and you sense them as much as you see them, each provoking a strong feeling deep within the viewer, making you wonder what the photographer experienced and how much he is trying to convey or hide. It is a very unique and mystifying photo book you'll want to own so you can spend hours studying it and solving the mystery while being moved by the unusual images."

—Bonnie Neely, owner of Real Travel Adventures and book reviewer for Amazon

"Tom Young's *Timeline* is the summation of a lifetime of conscious seeing by a master artist. Both highly personal and generously universal, Young's dream-like photographs probe the fault lines between memory and experience—a potent and creative fusion of past, present, and future that allows us to contemplate our own lives." —Aprile Gallant, Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, Smith College Museum of Art

"Tom Young's photo-collages in *Timeline* are poetic, beautiful, and complex evocations of memory, family history, the body, and life's mysteries. His layering of visual elements into a non-linear narrative leaves us with questions not only about the artist's life, but our own existence. Pondering both the questions and their possible answers is what makes Young's work so wonderful and enjoyable to experience."

—Glenn Ruga, Executive Director, Photographic Resource Center

"Tom Young's delicate and enigmatic assemblages are rife with recollections of a time past. Like webs of synapses firing through tightly held mental pictures, his images trace the temporal slipperiness of memory. The film-like compositions fuse intimate glimpses of a family's life with scenes from unfamiliar spaces and places often ravaged by time. In *Timeline*, Young presents a beautifully singed portrait of the fragmentation of memory that speaks to the intensely human desire to reconstruct personal narrative through shards of remembered and misremembered moments."

—Lexi Lee Sullivan, Assistant Curator, deCordova Sculpture Park + Museum

"In Tom Young's superbly designed and printed new book, *Timeline: Learning to See with My Eyes Closed*, he presents a series of images that incorporate the fundamental elements of both photography and design. Color. Scale. Balance. Proportion. In the 60 images included in the book, Tom combines his objective and nonobjective photographs into a single, harmonious composition, displaying his refined mastery of the visual language.

"That said, Tom's images are not just examples of striking design; they are visual tone poems that possess an abundance of emotion. To me, this emotion is markedly dark and pensive. Many of the images (even though they were shot in color) give the immediate impression of being rendered in black and white. The greens and blues are minimal, often hidden in large areas of black and grey. The palette is dark, but the images have an intense, otherworldly beauty.

"The images are mostly vertical in format and give the viewer a sense of gazing out (or in) a window. His framing of the photographs with solid black heightens this impression. Tom plays conspicuously with the scale of the photos. Some photos command a large portion of the overall image, while some are hardly noticeable at all. In each of Tom's pieces, the photos are expertly composed to create an elegant balance of image, design, and introspection." —Jim Fitts, Fitts & Wolinsky

"Tom Young is a retired career art teacher at Greenfield Community College (MA). He is also a photographer of radical vision who continues to teach in four-year art schools and whose work is represented in more than thirty permanent collections, including the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), and the Eastman Museum of Photography. This book of his work (oversize: 9" x 12") is produced by George F. Thompson Publishing. Young's medium is photcollage. Each is a single, subdivided image whose geometric format resembles a strip of film (the artist describes his childhood inspiration as a TV which had lost its vertical hold). Within the larger image, inset images involve staged objects, snapshots, interiors, landscapes, or manipulated photographs, all in black-and-white with understated, skillful color. The overall effect is haunting; domestic, revealing, and almost narrative, in ways reminiscent but not derivative of the work of Joseph Cornell. The artist calls the genre 'visual fiction.' The book's design, by David Skolkin, keeps things rooted in a spare, ordinary space. The images juxtapose faces, bare branches, worn-out cloth, empty interiors, and other intimations of mortality, but Young's small, deft evocations of casual moments in the everyday lives of people we might meet in the grocery store keep the work sad, lovely, and mysterious without falling into gothic extremity. The images carry great emotional weight. The book will be interesting to artists in many media and to anyone who has been fascinated by that old box filled with photographs, faded letters, a medal for heroism in a forgotten war, and a mysterious scrap of cloth."

—Eithne O'Leyne, Editor, Reference & Research Books News of Book News, Inc.

