

## WHAT ONCE WAS HERE: A Rhapsody

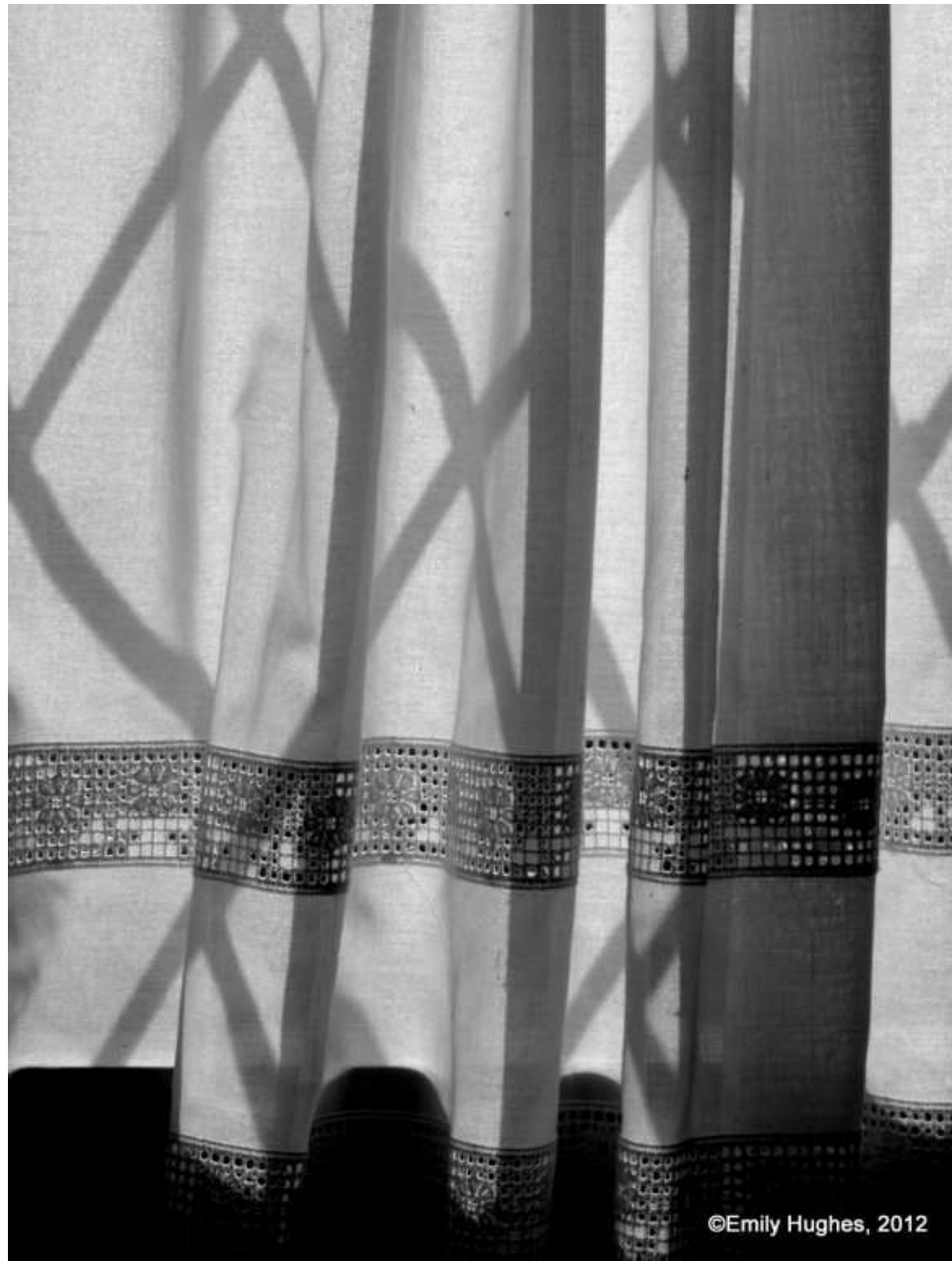
(photographs by Emily & Alex Hughes / text by N Filbert)

Rhapsody: n. [via Latin from Greek *rhapsōidia*, from *rhaptein* to sew together + *ōidē* song]

(Collins English Dictionary)



1. What's left hanging, a dangling or loosened shadow, often ends determining. A note you left with simple instruction opened on unprepared mystery. Unable to handle and afraid of the dark, tiny conduits tunneling everywhere. The twine wobbly and knotted, but the lines of the threshold so clear. When things are left hanging, though exciting and ominous, possibilities frighten. The key to what once was here is risk.



2. Light flooded in, deepening our shadows. Made us strangely opaque while leaving us veiled. We overlapped and enfolded, X'd-out and crossed over, offering ourselves to this light. Details increased but wrinkled together and shaped themselves new in our joining. Some things were lost in the edges. Gaps dotted the patterns we formed. Love imbued what we made with exposure – tracings and bars from behind and before. They'd stay with us. What once was here was not easy to see in its layers.



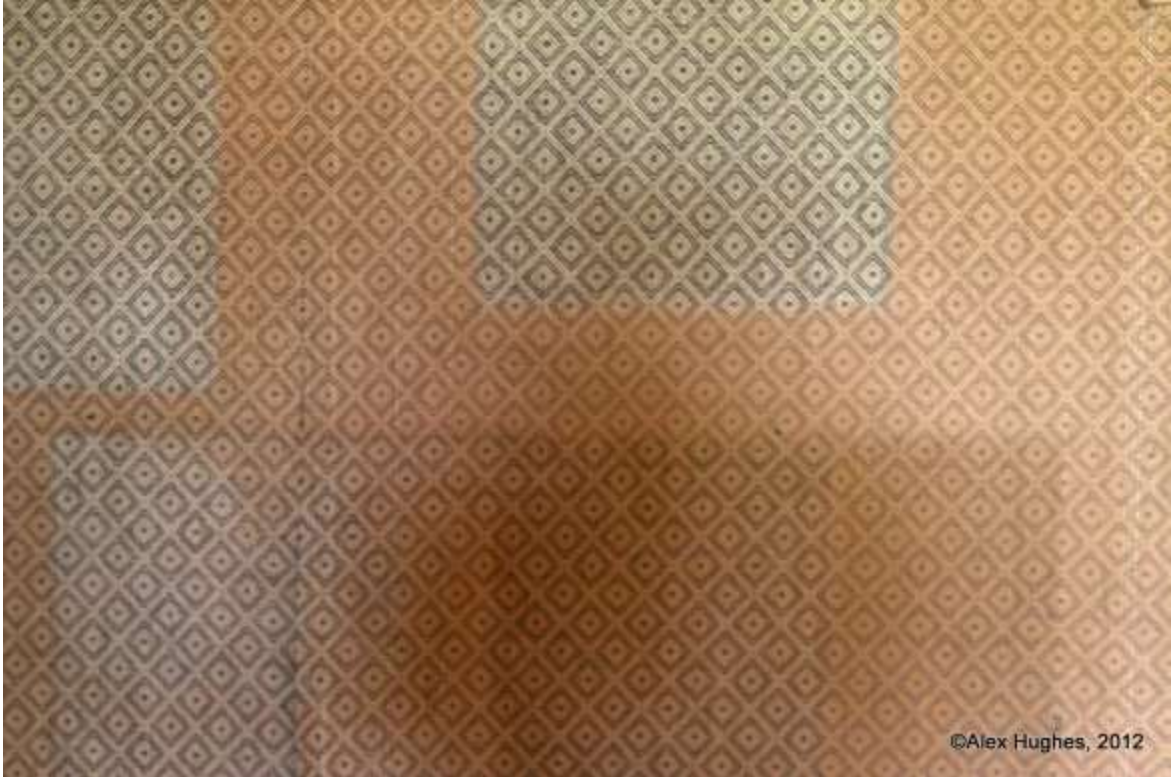
3. A sewing of selves in our mating. Geological ruts shaped in our time, cross-cuts we dug and uncovered. We compared, we abutted. The ripples and tremors from you became mine; I gave you my rifts and my fissures. This continental shift and dramatic drift, with we stitching seams like a medley. Rolling fro to our solace and shadows, rolling to in tempestuous waves. What once was here was a rhythm, a rocking. What once was here – a confluence of dreams.



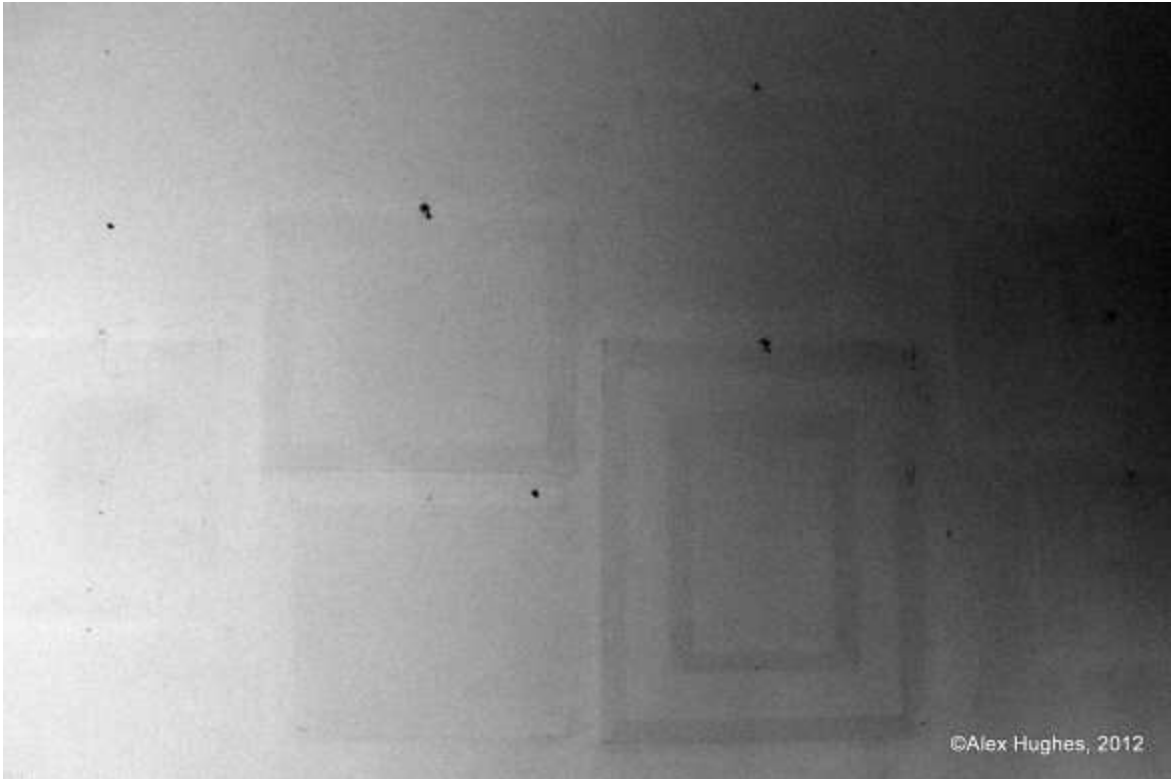
4. Little by little unmasked. The landscapes and portraits had been our decor. In the gaze and reflection of us, our stories and fables were stains. We erased and absorbed, we retold. And with time began peeling away – at each other, at us, at our space. Seeking faultlines and secrets, hidden keepsakes and such. We wanted it all from each other – the truth unadorned – but stripping it down wasn't wise. What once was here was the color, the dreams, the feelings and fictions of persons. What once was here was the different story, what signaled us one to another. What once was here was ourselves, the many and varied, the each calling each, the creations we stripped in our glare.



5. But look close, it remains. The mold of your thoughts, the worn edge of my fears. The stiff stitching we wove will not hold, it is cracking. We press against things that won't change in the changing. Structures refusing to bend. Like a bite we attacked and we tore and we warped. The surface beginning to seep. What once was here was a study discovering. What once was here had been making more life. Some substances proved an impossible impasse. Unassimilable to growing the web and its fade. What once was here became focused on hard things, losing sight of a world all around.



6. Stepping back, we observe a merged shadow. A discernible action now blanched and unsure. We set out on a search for markings and signs, some tokens of whom we had been. Somewhere for imaging whys. Dissolving and tarnished our outlines were bleak and colluded. Identities patterned with time. No doubting there had been an other – but whom? We'd come to be looking so same! Let's begin, we begged, rediscover – let's restore and provide a fresh space. What once was here had been sharper - with purpose, intention and luster. We moved back, turning toward, growing dim.



7. And uncovered the remnants of frames. Spaces held, oh so vaguely, but there, all the same. We marked what we found for the future and asked. Intent toward content and memory. Divvying out and agreeing what's yours, this is mine, we must place them again, we must fill. We moved into a seeking as finding, the wishing we had it to make. Shading the borders we shared, we founded the boundaries we needed, saving establishing place. We engaged and departed, forging and foraging, inventing anew what once had been here.

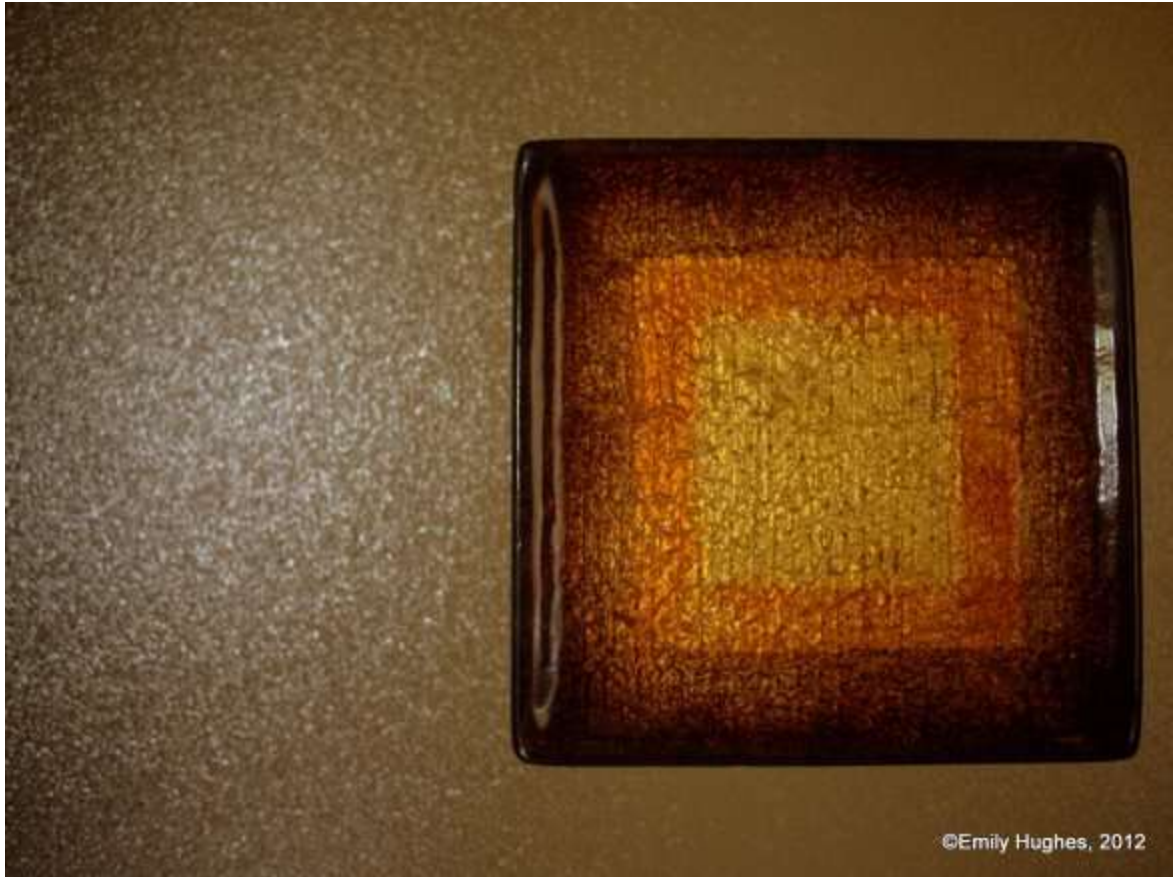


8. Lines had to be drawn to secure us. The grilling and divits were rough. We hardened and scaped, we stamped out a sieve, we were leaking with sounds in our silence. Austere. Our limits grew cold and unyielding, fears and defenses with no room to expand. We were forcing a form like a unit; marching our freedom to death. Our love wouldn't give, it insisted. What once was here had been meant to protect. What once was here became prison, severe. What once was here needing flow.





9. You pushed out of your hollow, your void. Swooped in and then turned. I respond with a circling back, a new dance. Move forward, retreat; hold back, singing out – fresh motions withdrawing our lines. I ache, you arched forth, we recoiled into balance, a mysterious call and response, and it held. We'd slice out and dash back against movement, swelling forth in compelling return. Unwittingly, exchange was emerging in this – freed up yet in-formed and recursive. What once was here was springing to life, swirling and drawing out depths. What once was here was transposing with all of the requisite tones – melody, harmony, dissonance too, a swoon toward new resolutions.



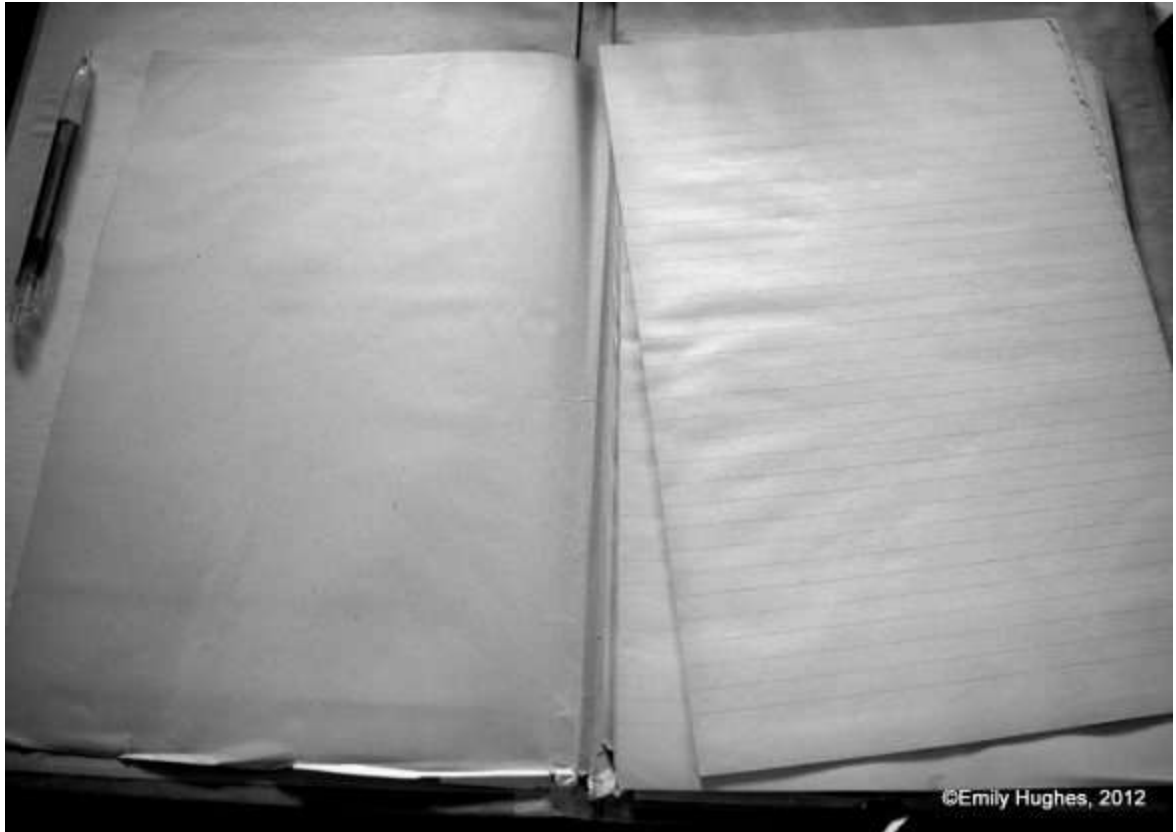
10. A zone we're commencing to build. Fashioning a firm and porous, liquid border we texture a gradual glow. Each day we thicken and act, enabling both darkness and light. We increase, inward and upward, fluid yet firm, purposely crafting a realm while leaving clear traces, together. In tandem, we say, we are many – what once was here become now and then an also, and also a plus. A joining like earth to its sun – such necessary interdependence – a complex and dissimilar symmetry.



11. What once was here is bursting out. From damage strange flowerings grew. Whenever, wherever, the tearing, and laughter. We each drew in lines at odd angles. Somehow it cushioned our falls. Worn from use and worried with play, we threw ourselves reckless in joy. Secrets crept out and wounds would appear, then we'd carefully tongue to their health. There seems no intransigent ruin, our inevitable demise rhapsodized. What once was here is incessant, reborn.



12. And thus we map our journeying worlds. Retracing trajectories this way and that, no lines slip away, but are definite paths. Each wriggle, each stumble and stray and excursion; riffing versions of high points and vales. The recording of what once was here the organs and nerves of our bodies, divining effects and undoing – no occurrence not finally seen. We call it the Geography of Now/Here” or “What-Once-Was-Here-In-Process,” without end in our limited sphere.



13. What once was here is where we begin – an open field with loose leafage – the lines and the tears, the staining and ripples are there inscribing relief, but what once was here is always, just before what is will be, and what's here right now is this pure between.