

In loving memory of Virginia Rose Kleker



Memorial Bench, Mountain View Cemetery

Ginny spent a great deal of time at that cemetery, sometimes with friends and sometimes alone. She listed it as her favorite place in Oakland. The bench is located at the left end of the flower beds in front of the mausoleum, past the circle after the entry gates from the top of Piedmont Ave. The bronze plaque includes a quote from a song she liked and was the last thing she wrote. She believed all energy transmutes, so her intent was to start her life again in a more contented state.

Lyrics to *First Day of My Life* by Bright Eyes

This is the first day of my life
I swear I was born right in the doorway
I went out in the rain suddenly everything changed
They're spreading blankets on the beach

Yours is the first face that I saw
I think I was blind before I met you
Now I don't know where I am
I don't know where I've been
But I know where I want to go

And so I thought I'd let you know
That these things take forever
I especially am slow
But I realize that I need you
And I wondered if I could come home

Remember the time you drove all night
Just to meet me in the morning
And I thought it was strange you said everything changed
You felt as if you'd just woke up
And you said "this is the first day of my life
I'm glad I didn't die before I met you
But now I don't care I could go anywhere with you
And I'd probably be happy"

So if you want to be with me
With these things there's no telling
We just have to wait and see
But I'd rather be working for a paycheck
Than waiting to win the lottery
Besides maybe this time is different
I mean I really think you like me

Introduction

Lori Gordon

Mother

Teresa Ferguson

Father

Richard Kleker

Writings

Dominic Bruno

Dale Hoyt

Lynn Marie Kirby

Euan Macdonald

Manuel Schwab

Artworks

Matthew Hughes Boyko

Elizabeth Cook

Lynn DeClemente

Sean Horchy

Elise Irving

Ashley Neese

Jon Rubin

Pascal Shirley

Annie Sprinkle

Elizabeth Stephens

Lindsey White

Out of the darkness I see a speck of light. This grows as my heart races and the speck begins to morph into a larger ball of light. As I float closer, I finally see the shape take form. It is her face. The face that always seems to be tilting between smiling and crying. It is fragile and beautiful and enviable. It is the same as it was the first time I saw it. Everything in just the right place. Like a beautiful story where everything comes together perfectly in the end - gratifying. She smiles at me. She is eating a pomegranate, seed by seed. Such patience. She is tranquil. I want to touch her, but I seem to be grasping at air. Her eyes glance up and she shakes her head at me. Not allowed. My heart sinks and I suddenly start pushing back, away from the light and back into the abyss.

Oh how I miss Ginny. She was in a word, amazing.

We met in graduate school, collaborating on various projects, spending hours talking about art, love, longing, failure, pain, hope and yes - suicide. There were times when I felt very connected to her, and others where it seemed I was sitting across from a stranger. She sometimes lunged forward in joy, she sometimes lashed out in anger. To me, this is what her work felt like as well. Certain works are so vulnerable and beautiful, you just want to reach over and hold her. Others are so shocking, intense and strong that you are left speechless, just staring. To consider Ginny's life and art practice, these words come to mind: artist, exhibitionist, performance, endurance, gifted, tough. I once told her that she was the kiwi and I was the egg. Kiwi has a rough exterior, but inside it is sweet and tart. Eggs have an exterior that appears hard, but are quite fragile, inside something very soft.

Some years ago, Ginny left Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* in my studio, with a tiny note, "For Lori to read. Love Ginny." The quoted passage below was circled in her copy. If acquainted with her in the least, this passage opens a small window into what her work was like. If acquainted with her well, this passage speaks volumes about her approach and concerns with her work and life.

That's what I think. And of course a scheme like that doesn't make sense anymore, because simply moderate giftedness has been made worthless by the printing press and radio and television and satellites and all that. A moderately gifted person who would have been a community treasure a

thousand years ago has to give up, has to go into some other line of work, since modern communications put him or her into daily competition with nothing but world's champions.

The entire planet can get along nicely now with maybe a dozen champion performers in each area of human giftedness. A moderately gifted person has to keep his or her gifts all bottled up until, in a manner of speaking, he or she gets drunk at a wedding and tapdances on the coffee table like Fred Astaire or Ginger Rogers. We have a name for him or her. We call him or her an "exhibitionist."

How do we reward such an exhibitionist? We say to him or her the next morning, "Wow! Were you ever drunk last night!"

After graduate school she did not make much work, and emailed saying, "I really am having trouble negotiating my work in the light/shadow of youtube." To imagine that talent not continuing to creating was astounding, but with work so personal I tried to imagine how hard it would feel if the desire was no longer there. If I were forced to make work during an artistic block, it compared to walking in shoes filled with concrete. And if she was happy going about her day-to-day without making anything, then wasn't this best? After she passed away, her mother shared work she had been making. Not telling me or sharing with very many, there were videos. She had carried on after all. To find this out after her death was a relief and heart wrenching all at the same time.

I don't profess to have been a best friend or an old friend, but I was lucky enough to have known Ginny and the amazing artist that she was. The idea of her dying and her work not carrying on, somehow just left me feeling empty. Something had to be created that would act as a device of sharing who she was in this world. That device is this book.

Remember her, and share this book with others, and Ginny will go on forever.

Lori Gordon.



Our Ginny

Written for the Memorial Service in 2008.

Those of us who loved Ginny, and even those who only associated with her occasionally, knew how amazing she was. Not just her stunning looks and fierce intelligence, but her generosity and deep empathy made her nothing short of extraordinary.

Many of you saw the Ginny who was fun-loving, energetic, and always accepting and non-judgmental of everyone ...except, of course, herself. She could be outrageous and a drama queen and we all knew she sometimes had a “dark side” that could simply be excused as melancholy. But overall, she worked hard at school, her job, and at play.

So, YOUR Ginny and MY Ginny... and the Ginny that Kate and John and Sean saw was somewhat different. We were exposed to an illness that caused her to sink into sadness, regrets and fears. She was amazing for sure...and she loved with such intensity that it had a magnetic attraction. She could lose herself in others completely and that was very captivating.

The fire was devastating for all of us. Not the least for her because she was the one to find Grandy’s remains, but that was just a follow on to other tragedies, small and large, that had beset our extended family in her pre-teen years...and Ginny learned quickly to stuff her anxiety and her suffering.

Seven years ago, we saw the first signs of depression so severe that Ginny was unable to function. We later attributed it to her life-threatening anemia, but it was a turning point. It was the first time that I was exposed to the extent of her suffering ...but she told me recently that the negative tape that ran constantly in her head had started years before that. Her genius rational brain knew the truth of what we told her: she was beautiful, smart, in fact, lucky in life to have family and friends who loved her dearly. But her emotional brain worked overtime telling her something else. She told me that all her memories were all bad ones...she couldn’t remember good times. Though when she looked at photos she would admit it was fun, the tape that ran over and over in her brain, only selected bad memories...so she lived in the future working hard and always hoping for a

better tomorrow. Of course being in love was intoxicating since it filled that need for a hopeful future and when Ginny was in love her inner glow would light up the world.

Her fear and anxiety was so strong that she couldn't really go anywhere alone. She was easily overwhelmed by chaotic environments. She was proud of the fact she had learned to shop at the grocery by herself this past year. She hid all that from most of you and those of us exposed to it often saw it as her just being volatile or demanding at times. How could anyone so competent and strong be so needy?

But needy she was...and it was, at times, insatiable. It was easy to lose oneself in the vortex of her pain. Three years ago, when she had the second major depressive episode, some of us would hold her for hours, sometimes for days at a time, while she was drowning in her tears. She would rationalize her depression with a myriad of situations or people who may have said or done something insensitive. Her over-active intuition would get her into trouble because she could enter a room and intuit the emotions of almost everyone there. Your slight annoyance became her cross to bear. She began to cycle from times of despair to hyper-activity, sleeplessness and self-absorption. We now know that her first suicide attempt began the spring she finished her master's degree. She struggled to find answers and began looking for a magic solution to why she felt so unstable.

The depression got marginally better with anti-depressants and mood stabilizers but our country's disastrous state of health care is only over-shadowed by the almost non-existent mental health system. For Ginny there was a huge stigma about any type of mental illness or the medication for it and she never even told most people about it. The mood stabilizers she hid even from me. And they were only helping to some degree...falling in love again, provided the only real relief. After that, it was easy for her to believe that the medications weren't needed any more. She convinced herself that her depression in grad school had been situational ...too much stress, breaking off her relationship, not having the prospect of a good job. So with her newfound euphoria, she stopped her medications.

Things began to unravel for her again about a year ago. Not realizing she had stopped her medication, not realizing she had even been prescribed some of that medication, we all began to look at situations again making excuses for her volatility. Maybe her job was unfulfilling; maybe we were not supportive enough. Decisions such as buying a new car or her wedding were immobilizing and stressful and she began to need to be reassured on a continuous basis that she was ok and loved and had lots of friends. We knew there was something terribly wrong. Ginny said she woke up every single day depressed and not knowing why.

By last spring she was back to being fully mood cyclic, with sometimes impulsive with combative outbursts. It was a 50-50 chance if the rapid-speech, aggressive but energetic Ginny would be on the phone or if it would be the funk-ed-out dejected Ginny. And sometimes that change occurred within hours. So she tried a series of therapists, anti-depressants and then all sorts of desperate acts to try to get those who loved her to guarantee some kind of safe haven for her turmoil. It was never enough...could never be enough because by this time, her entire psyche had attached itself to validation by others in order to feel safe.

In September, she was diagnosed with bipolar and put back on a mood stabilizer.

Brain scans showed she had major over-active emotional centers in her brain, had suffered severe post traumatic stress in the past and that she likely needed to stay on mood stabilizers for life. She spent lots of time researching cyclic mood disorders and depression and accepted that she could no longer ignore the illness. She started getting better and with that came a great deal of perspective about the ups and downs of the past year but also tremendous guilt and remorse. She was frustrated because the medications were still not working completely and certainly not fast enough for Ginny's level of impatience. She started to talk about suicide.

Her therapist told us she wasn't likely to commit suicide as long as she was talking to us about it and her psychiatrist insisted she probably wasn't all that bad off if she was still able to hold it together enough to go to work. Most who knew her believed that she would eventually just snap out of it. Drinking seemed to calm her anxieties so while hanging out with friends or partying, she could seem fine. But they didn't know the Ginny who had been holding it together every day for years to protect others from her burden. She was stronger than anyone imagined in that regard....and she romanticized and often glorified suicide.

When she looked me in the eyes several times recently and told me she didn't understand how I could want her to keep living in that much pain, it was all I could do to force myself to once again convince her that this would get better, we would find the right combination of medication that would help, she would be happy again. But in truth, I wanted to tell her I would understand and forgive her...I didn't dare because I couldn't give her that kind of permission.

In the end she just lost hope and didn't believe she would ever get better. She realized that her unraveling was becoming apparent to those around her, at work, with friends. So she did the only thing she could to stop her suffering.

Someone emailed me and said "Please, please tell me this is a joke, a social experiment, one of Ginny's crazy art installations or something". Oddly, when I found her that is exactly what I first thought of...but no, she was very deliberate, intentional and just needed to end the pain of the madness in her head.

She hung herself at our home, from our back deck, at dusk...sunglasses on. Very theatrical. Unfortunately very real.

Do not grieve for the fact that I was the one who found Ginny....I would not have chosen it any other way. You see, I got to feel the final moments of the warmth of her beautiful body and I got to try to breathe my life into hers in those desperate moments before realizing she had left us for good.

So where do we go from here? We can look at ourselves and wonder what we could have, would have, should have done to ease her pain. We can point to each other as the cause of her suffering. We can find some solace in the fact that she isn't in pain any longer. But the only thing I know to do is to go out and love some more, each other and life in general.

A friend once told me after his son died and I had stupidly asked how did you ever get over it?...he looked at me compassionately and said "you don't ever get over it...it creates a hole in your life that doesn't ever go away...you can't mend it...you just have to

make the tapestry of your life bigger so that the hole becomes a less significant part.”

So that is my challenge and your challenge. My grief is immense but I intend to love some more...I'll look for you to do the same.

Thank you for the love you gave her.

∞ Retrospective ∞

That October, in the pre-dawn hours, when I wrote what I knew had to be read at Ginny's Memorial, it was the first time I felt channeled by someone or something else. The words written were not edited or reflected upon. It was as if Ginny needed the truth to be told to provide some background, to address the shock and soothe the grief she knew would not be avoided by her suicide.

Still, finding any comfort or acceptance continues to be a daily struggle. In looking through her papers and art, I realize how epic her life was. I am astounded and awed by it and feel privileged to have been her mother. This amazement is not because we were not close, or from any feeling that I didn't know her well. It is awareness that, while many of us had intense and full relationships with her, the depth of her experiences and interactions was vast and so much larger than any one of us were exposed to.

There is sadness in realizing that the richness of Ginny's art can only be fully appreciated by her death. An obvious example is the metaphor she used in the 'Red Balloon' piece comparing the spirit of life with how a balloon explodes when the pressure inside finally reaches intensity greater than the pressure outside.

Ginny's art was demanding, in no small part because she struggled with finding a craft and a vocabulary to express the concepts that were so poignant for her. Over the years, as her art moved from focusing on social commentary to analyzing and communicating her inner turmoil, the struggle to find ways to adequately articulate her concepts became intentionally more demanding. The requisite investment was too much for many and became part of the challenge of the art itself. Ginny refused to compromise on that requirement.

Still, there are lessons to be learned. For me there is the clear and simple fact that energy—and love, as a remnant of that energy—never dies. We may know our love for her will never cease, but I propose that her love for us does not end either. Although I am not a spiritual or religious person, for me, the question of what happens to a person's spirit or energy after death is no longer a question of faith. The reality that her spirit lives on in a very tangible way is so obvious that I now find myself keenly aware of the limited dimension we live in. I also now realize that for many others, the knowledge of those other realms is ever present. Accepting a lack of understanding about that life-force is a newly adopted practice in my life.

To be sure, she suffered. She was afraid to die and did not want to do this. Only after years of habituating herself to the idea of death, isolating her spirit from her body (even through the use of her body as the fabric in her art), and only through her final determination to retain her dignity by refusing to allow others to witness her unraveling, could she summon

Virginia is for Lovers

Mother

the will to leave us. Could we have saved her? Individually, the answer to that is: probably not. But, collectively, perhaps through the collaboration she so desired, we might have been able to fashion a safety net for her.

Let us not pretend she made a rational or selfish choice. It is clear from her final writings that her act was anything but selfish. It is our selfishness that prompts us to console ourselves with the thought that she died in momentary peace with her decision. Our own personal choice to live, and the fact that Ginny was unable to make that choice, are both evidence that her death resulted from a poorly treated medical condition and not from artifice or to create drama or art. This was, in fact, perfection wasted.

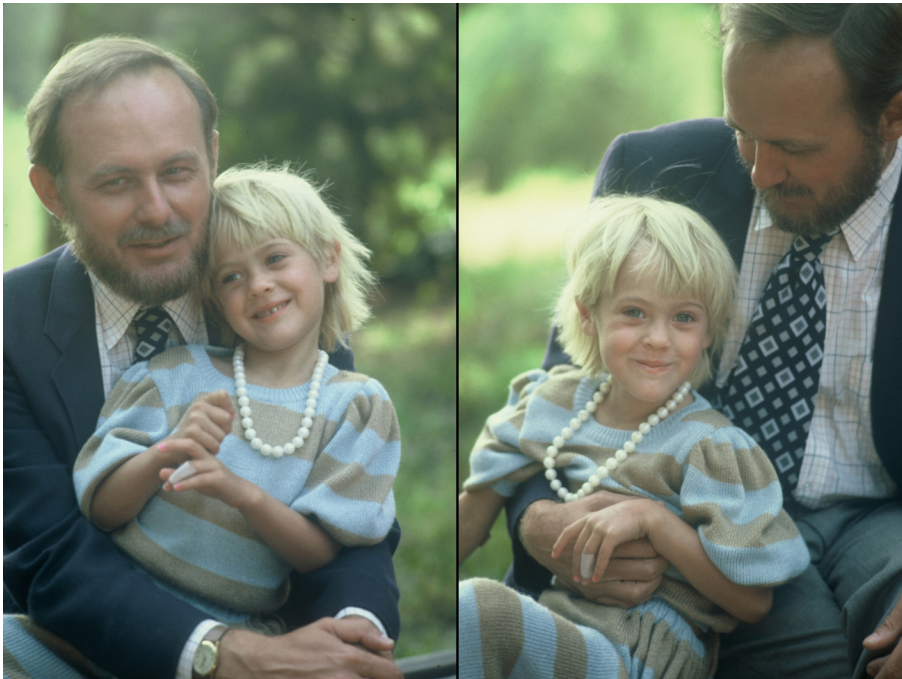
Ginny's art provides a legacy of both her life and death. Through her art she gives us all of herself and, ultimately, it represents all that she had to give.

A friend told me recently that "Ginny had a whole life." I replied, "Oh yes, she lived life fully." He corrected me and said, "No, I mean she lived her complete life. Not everyone is meant to live to 80 and Ginny's life was shorter than we might have liked but it was enough for her... it was the whole of her life and it isn't less valuable or less important or less of anything because she died young." Without any question, this is true.



A collection of thoughts since Ginny took her life:

Our love was complete.
Our love was not enough.
Our love is forever.
Dad.



Ginny was a great person. As a child she was always active and fun to have around. I will always remember the best of her. There are so many memories of her as a happy, loving, creative person. She was beautiful, smart, well educated, loved people, pets and the creative process. She had a very loving heart. She was ever willing to help out when needed. Always ready to empathize and give. Sadly, her great heart broke and this proved too much for her to handle. She ended her life. An incredible waste of all that is the best in life. She would have made a great mother.

Virginia is for Lovers

Father

A wisdom and a warning: incomplete love is stronger than complete love. If thinking of suicide consider this, in doing so the pain you are suffering will not end but will, instead, be intensified and passed on to those who care for you and love you. Please do not consider passing this terrible burden on to those you love. Ask, instead, for their help to find a better way.



Ginny,

I miss you.
I miss your children.
I miss my grandchildren.
I will miss all of you always.



Virginia is for Lovers

Beth Cook

Untitled, 2009
8" x 10" inches
Printed text and photographic reproduction on paper, vellum



Virginia Kleker, (1977-2008)

Yes Virginia, the art world is no better than the dumbest reality TV which you sought to conquer. You taught me that. A student like you is the only reason a teacher bothers to get out of bed in morning.

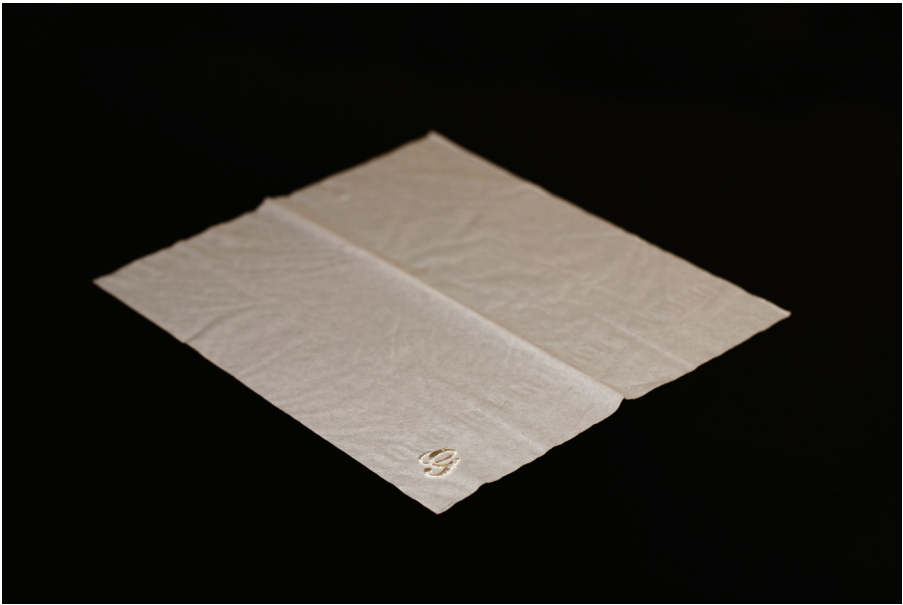
Yes Virginia, I've been cataloging/archiving every micro-second that I was honored to work with you and I ache that I hadn't heard the extent of your misery.

Yes Virginia, your keen perception and examination of the vulgarities of pop life and the nonsense of the hopelessly inadequate alternatives still rings like a silver bell in our hearts. Your devilish, dark, mischievous sense of humor still hangs in the air like night blooming jasmine.

Could any of us saved you from your horrible intention?

Yes Virginia, I know you're in a better world because nothing could be worse than a world without you.

The Space Between Truth & Untruth, 2009
Lynn DeClemente
tissue, embroidery



The Space Between Truth & Untruth is based on a piece I discovered in Fall 2005, and thought instantly, “Ginny would love this.” So, I have recreated it for her.

I believe, after sorting through the confusion of accepting Virginia to be gone from our lives, we have all wept, and, wept, and miss her dearly.

Lynn DeClemente



Time Enough.

One by one, they were all becoming shades.

- James Joyce, "The Dead"

When I first met Ginny in the over-crowded graduate studios at CCA in 2004, she was uneasy. In fact she seemed truly embarrassed by her work. Every time she was about to show me something, she would quickly tell me everything that she didn't like about it. Ginny was usually the central subject in her work, and her self-criticisms were maybe insightful, but disproportionately harsh. The main thing that frustrated her was that the ideas she had on longing, love and loss might be obscured by her self-expression.

She said something like: "I don't want this work to be just about *me*..."

I admired her honesty. I agreed that a viewer might be distracted by the autobiographical nature in what she was producing, and suggested that there was a potential issue of Ginny herself obscuring the very ideas she was trying to convey. We discussed how she might retain the honesty and vulnerability, but open up its content on a more social and complex level.

One project she worked on a lot at that time was *Strip Pole Dance*, a durational video which featured Ginny as a pole dancer, doing acrobatic moves up and down a dance pole. Perhaps this became one of her more resolved videos at that time, because even though Ginny performed in the video, *she* was not the main content of the work. Apart from the obvious social reference in this video, there is a more complex, internal awkwardness within it that is harder to define. At some points, the dancer seems to be absurdly strong enough to defy gravity in the strangest

ways, managing to stay in certain positions for longer than humanly possible. In fact instead of the expected effects of gravity on a body in motion, there seems to be another unknown force acting upon her body as she moves slowly from position to position along the pole. Ginny achieved this strange movement by shooting the video with the pole fixed horizontally in her studio. But the fixed video camera position frames the image with the pole positioned vertically, and because the pole appears to be vertical in the video, the viewer has little idea that the force the dancer is working with is in fact a *side-ways gravity*. The image of the dancer transforms into someone caught in an indefinite struggle. The video is edited thoughtfully and time is slowed down. The sound is carefully mixed so that the awkward clunks made by the dancer's platform shoes against the steel pole reverberate as if the scene is taking place in some deep, cavernous chamber. The scene opens and closes slowly, giving the melancholic impression that what we encounter has been and will continue endlessly.

Ginny was prolific and I, like most people probably only got to see a small part of her work. Her passionate and impulsive approach to making art reminds me of a line I read from an introduction in an old book of William Blake's poetry that described his idea of heaven:

...a place where every impulse is fulfilled, and forgiveness is the only law....

I didn't use this line just because Ginny died or that it has to do with an idea of heaven. I used it because Ginny was true to her impulses, following them regardless of success or failure, which sometimes made her videos hard to watch. Private performances that were often produced alone involving poetic needs of endurance, trial, love and loss. I often have the feeling that maybe I shouldn't be watching them; that perhaps the work was made for another purpose. It is the sense of isolation; vulnerability and disclosure that gives Ginny's work its uncomfortable impact. Perhaps above all, the condition of exposure was at the heart of the risk that Ginny was willing to take.

Hickey 69

Requires:

2 people

Video camera/s

Project Outline:

Recording the action of two people giving each other a hickey on the neck, at the same time.

Simple.

This was an idea Ginny and I had discussed one afternoon. Ideas are wonderful, precious things. The process of thinking of what to do, what to make and why to make it is the double-edge in art making. Being able to discuss your ambitions and imaginations with someone you trust is invaluable to life. You find someone who can interpret, who can respond knowingly to the things you are saying and help in the development of a better idea.

Ginny.

Neither Ginny nor I ever realized the above project, but we both thought it was a fabulous idea! Ideas are treasures and frequently, the best ideas help to produce a memory that becomes a part of what makes your person. Ginny was my friend and fellow artist. I respected and cherished those Ginnys as much as I could while I knew her. She remains one of my favorite people to have had the chance to have known and it is a sad and wonderful thing to think of her as a loving original.

Winter Formal Dance Spectacular: Sean & Ginny (2003)
Medium-Format Photograph with Digital Frame
Photograph by: Sean McFarland
Set Design by: Mitzi Pederson & Case Calkins
Prom Design by: Matthew Hughes Boyko



Virginia is for Lovers

Dominic Bruno

Letter to Virginia, read at the memorial service
October 13, 2008
Highlands Country Club, Oakland, CA

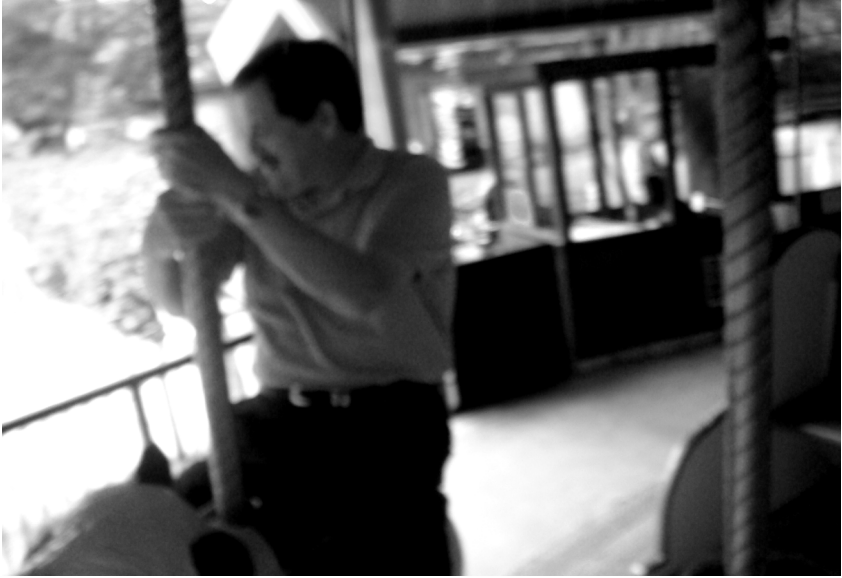
Being around you, I feel more myself. I feel smarter, funnier, more creative, better-looking; the world is less intimidating, obstacles less difficult, and possibilities both wider and closer. You make me bigger than me. You make me the person I want to be, and now I don't know how to get that back.

I don't believe in an afterlife, and so all I'm left with is a hug and an awkward parting as I get out of your car last month. But that's not how I remember you - that's not the vision I carry. ~~What I have is this:~~ What I have is this: the two of us sitting on the steps of my old apartment on McAllister Street and it's October and some local politician is walking the block attaching flyers to doors. He stops to talk to us, but he doesn't go into anything political. He is struck by your smile. You are beaming. And he says, "you look happy." And you say, "I am."

I have not said this to anyone since you - and the last time was years ago. I love you - always and forever.

-Dominic

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*This is my father on a carousel (2009)
black and white photographs, taken in Atlanta, GA
Inspired by Ginny's project "This is the last carousel ride I will ever Take"*

This project is a re-enactment of a film done by Ginny in 2004. In the original piece Ginny shot a Super-8 movie of her step-father on a carousel in California.

I decided to re-enact this piece with my father for two reasons. One was because I was invited to contribute a new work to this book about Ginny. The second reason was because I wanted a chance to spend some time with my father. We live on opposite sides of the country so we do not see each other often. Thinking about Ginny's short life made me aware once again of the fragility and impermanence of things and made the time spent with my father that much more rewarding.

Sing me to sleep
Sing me to sleep
I'm tired and i
I want to go to bed

Sing me to sleep
Sing me to sleep
And then leave me alone
Dont try to wake me in the morning
'cause I will be gone
Don't feel bad for me
I want you to know
Deep in the cell of my heart
I will feel so glad to go

Sing me to sleep
Sing me to sleep
I don't want to wake up
On my own anymore

Sing to me
Sing to me
I dont want to wake up
On my own anymore

Dont feel bad for me
I want you to know
Deep in the cell of my heart
I really want to go

There is another world
There is a better world
Well, there must be
written by Johnny Marr and Morrissey

Virginia is for Lovers*design: Naomi Pitcairn, photo: Lori Gordon*

Ginny Klecker was one of the most amazing students I have ever had the pleasure of teaching at UC Santa Cruz. She was a bright star in the middle of a field of less adventurous undergraduates and this made working with her an inspiring breath of fresh air. As I watched Ginny develop the conceptual ideas, attitudes and skills that formed the basis of her later work. I noted that she was unafraid of experimentation even in the face of failure. She always engaged in highly intelligent play in the making and simultaneously, Ginny asked hard questions. which kept me on my toes. I respected this in her and knew that she was going to be an artist.

My last memory of Ginny's work in Santa Cruz is of a hilarious robot that she had concocted from a remote control toy car. Although I can't quite picture what it looked like-I remember getting a huge kick out of the piece. I was especially delighted in its imperfect functioning. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't but when it did, Ginny had the robot chasing other students and faculty around the courtyard. Everyone loved it. This seemed much more apropos of both the human condition as well as that of technology than any of the much slicker technological work I have seen in my career. Ginny knew how to play deeply in her art and people responded enthusiastically.

In this recession era where war gets spun into peace and social generosity is at a minimum, we could all use Ginny's lack of fear and ability to engage in deep play with high intelligence as we attempt to get through this together. Although I was unaware of the depth of Ginny's battle with depression, I can see it in retrospect, as many with her degree of intelligence and sensitivity share that same struggle. And even as it seems that this shadow disease got the better of her, I know that Ginny Klecker's crazy robot car spirit looked death in the eye with no fear. Wherever her energy traveled after it left her body-it is now free to engage in the deep play that she so loved. We should all cherish our memory of Ginny as someone who made us all laugh and love deeply even as we ran. I'm blowing you a big kiss Ginny Klecker, wherever you may be.

Beth Stephens

I'm so sad to hear that Ginny Klecker is not with us in the flesh, but memories of her certainly live on. I remember... I was fortunate to have Ginny choose me to do an independent study while she was at CCA. We made pilgrimage up to the top of Bernal Hill (in San Francisco), where I taught her an ancient breathing technique called Ecstasy Breathing. It was a bright and sunny day. The view magnificent, we could even see the Golden Gate Bridge and the whole Bay. We breathed it ALL in together, awakened our senses, felt our feelings, then had a nice conversation about her art projects. My condolences to all the people in her life. Thanks for keeping the memories alive on paper.

Annie Sprinkle

To Ginny,

I remember going to your parents cabin and watching you swing beneath that beautiful tree that you used to swing on as a child.

I remember eating lunch with you at the Chinese restaurant with Steven and the delicious food we shared together.

I remember going to Santa Cruz with you and playing in the arcade as if we were children again.

I remember going to the beach with you and lying beneath the sun for hours on a hot summer day.

I remember driving with you across the Bay Bridge day after day after day.

I remember when you helped find my new home in Oakland and all the beautiful places in the hills you brought me to.

I remember when we were in that minor car accident and you kept telling me how sad you were that I hurt my knee.

I remember walking your dog with you around your block.

I remember you lying in those flowers along side of the road.

I remember your amazing work when I first sat in your studio.

I remember our drive across the desert of Nevada and the music we listened to.

I remember the way you always looked at me.

I will always remember.

With Love,

Pascal

Virginia is for Lovers

Pascal Shirley





Ginny hated painting class.

I know this because I was in the same class and I really enjoyed painting, Ginny was not impressed with it. I didn't know her very well at that time, even though she started at UCSC the same time I did, and we lived at the same college.

When I first saw her our freshman year I was totally intimidated. By the time we were in painting together I had gotten to know her better, but was still a little intimidated. We became better friends though this class, and it was as assignment for this class that first clued me into to what a smart and incisive artist she was. I don't actually remember what the exact assignment was, but by the time it was

assigned Ginny had made it very clear that she did not like painting. Her work, that I had seen up to that point, been more performative / installation based and making pretty pictures did not seem to be of much interest to her. This class was a requirement and she was filling it. When I realized what she was actually painting: a completely white canvas with only the large black signature of Picasso perfectly rendered smack in the center of the canvas, I remember being thinking “she is amazing.” It was smart, bold, and unrelenting. She had taken this simple required painting class assignment and created something that (I think) spoke completely to her interest in the construction of identity and performance, and got right at the heart of her feelings about that particular assignment. It was a bold, confident gesture that was present in all of her work. Every subsequent piece she made was an unflinching glimpse into her experience of the world that in turn made the viewers experience of the world come into sharper focus.

Ginny had an uncanny ability to get right at the heart of the matter. Whether by literally consuming a cow's heart, speculating about the life of a man through the contents of his luggage, or relentlessly submitting audition tapes to reality TV shows; Ginny laid bare the human struggle between the desire to be seen and recognized and at the same time the fear and self –doubt that are inherent in our daily lives. She was unquestionably brave, passionate and selfless in her work. She never gave herself a break or shied away from a piece or performance that may be difficult or embarrassing or too revealing. Ginny made me question myself and my work on a regular basis, She was also a great supporter and an incredible friend.

Listening for Ginny

I spent an hour today listening for Ginny.

I am visiting my mother and at the airport on my way here thought of Ginny as the suitcases went around the conveyor belt. Ginny had once borrowed suitcases from the arrivals carousels at the Oakland airport. She took pictures of the contents. Before closing the suitcases up again she put an official looking note informing the owner that an image of the contents of her or his suitcase was now part of her art project. She then returned the suitcases to the airport.

Ginny lived fast and daring.

I am listening to the sounds of cicadas; they live inside little holes and then come out when it is warm and make a tremendous sound. Ginny was like this, she would withdraw and then burst forth with tremendous energy.

Ginny made art out of her life.

My son and his cousin are playing in the garden with water hoses and are covered in mud. The thought of taking a picture of them makes me think of Ginny. I can see the images Ginny made of her mud wrestling bouts.

I can see the haunting film she shot on a carousel, an ode to her father.

You have left images in my mind Ginny and they reverberate.

Virginia is for Lovers

Jon Rubin

PLEASE REMOVE THIS PAGE

Virginia is for Lovers

Jon Rubin

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS PAGE

I taught one class of undergraduates at UC Santa Cruz and I remember that Ginny was my TA for the class. She was an undergrad herself, which is kind of unexpected, since they usually only allow graduate students to be TAs—something to do with levels of knowledge or authority. Ginny had moxie though and everyone seemed to naturally fear/respect her. At that time Ginny was thinking about going to graduate school for art or doing something entirely different, I can't even remember what, forestry maybe, or perhaps I'm just thinking that because there were so many trees on that campus. This was a long time ago. She seemed pretty conflicted about the choice. She was excited and terrified by the idea of being an artist. She had just had a tragic fire at her house and she decided to only make work with the remains of the fire. I remember thinking, she'll never be able to keep that up. She didn't, but funny enough when she finally decided to keep making work and go back to school (where I was one of her graduate advisors) she ended up continuing to make work about tragedy, and it was often really funny.

Ginny,

“Ginny is...” I discovered was the last jotting you posted online before signing off. Strange world, this one, in which the technological archives of life, with all the alienating force they may have, can also be so penetrating, and tell (perhaps by accident) of some secret terrain we might not otherwise have known.

There are so many strange ways that I have rediscovered you since you left. So many have startled me. Keep it up Ginny.

In some way, you left clear with yourself, it seems. “*This is the first day of my life,*” you wrote, and with it, you made a decision. It was one you knew none of us could really accept. Still, you trusted us to wrestle with it until we saw it, at least halfway, through your eyes. So for you, against all my instincts, I will take the peace you chose as yours, and muster the strength to follow suit. Ginny, you must realize how many people in the world you left live with your choice as infinitely harder to wrestle with than it is for me.

But still, from a distance, I thought I might write you a last letter, ‘cause I don’t really want you to forget the rest of us: those bound up with you – and who you touched – from the ends of long telephone lines that took just a bit too long to ring. Or those of us who are tethered to memories that were always supposed to have a future, resuscitated by laughter shared with you, over a drink, years later. Trouble is you left without leaving a forwarding address, so I’ll have to hope this letter reaches its destination. I don’t know really how to send it on. Still, it has to reach you, one way or another.

My first thought was I might find you among my beloveds, and so by instinct, when I learned of your death, I wrote to every nobody-in-particular that I love:

“Death is a thief, but it promises things to the beloveds it takes from me, and thus makes of them willing marks... I swear by my blood that if death does not come true on its promises, there will be hell to pay when I finally get there, because one thing is certain -- my beloveds deserve better than to be lied to just before they leave us. Keep your promises in death, and I will keep mine in life. love. m.”

That was the beginning of this letter, I realize now. How else could I write to you? Except to begin before your death, and insist that you will keep your promise, those words I want to take as a promise, those you wrote to your beloveds as you left: "*this is the first day of my life.*" By my blood, girl, I will hold you to your word.

And since I didn't get the chance before, I've gotta write it to you now. Keep your promises in death, Ginny, whatever that may mean. I guess I trust you still have that strength. But where did you go? What place did you choose for that first day?

Bullfights in winter on hardened mud seem as much the place I can imagine your spirit to reside (playful and restless, always), as on the balconies on which we drank illicitly telling open secrets for everyone to hear... Those days you would show up, your forehead riven by forked blue arteries like a divining rod at the center of your skull, your hair vertical with an electricity erupting from somewhere deep inside that mind. Those lifelines would swell when you laughed, or flash suddenly in a moment of rage, like rivers with the seasons, or like lightning splitting air. Perhaps you've decided to move with the storm clouds, taken up with ionic charges circumnavigating the globe, slowly gathering strength. Perhaps now you play in the ebb and flow of rivers, at home in the moody, surging rhythms of the atmosphere.

Here, in the last weeks, the rainy season came late and strong, and the confluence of the white and blue Nile has been swollen with water. Shall I place this letter there, and let it make its way to the deltas on the Mediterranean, blue and fertile and visible from space?

Or would you prefer air to water? In the dry seasons on the other side of the Atlantic, in this strange world of strange worlds, I've heard tell that farmers experiment with changing the weather. They fire silver nitrate rockets into the sky to gather storm clouds. Shall I strap this letter to one of those rockets, so it arrives in a lustrous metallic explosion over arid plains in the big sky country?

Or shall I ignore altogether that you are somewhere else? You know, of course, that I would prefer not to send this letter, to treat this as a temporary experiment, as a season that simply will pass. I would prefer to laugh it all off. I would rather

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Manuel Schwab

laugh with you, while we celebrate this October as your first birthday. But I have trouble forgetting that I am human, and thus can't make the celebration, because I have some time left that I must spend here. I'm sorry for that, Ginny. But even if the first day of your life began a year ago, you still started it in your way, and you couldn't take us along for the ride.

So I guess the forwarding addresses I've got will have to do: swirling rivers, and angry weather, and clouds exploding silver over parched fields or sprawling expanses of nourishing grain, and redwood balconies. I'll have to trust you're still bound in to that network of electrified lives that leaves us all entangled, and imagine that you are perhaps sitting somewhere, waiting for the phone to ring...

I'll have to be content that you affirmed your being in the last two things I know that you wrote to this world. And so I'll take you at your word that you are thriving somewhere, and just as firmly hold you to your word that you chose the first day of your life.

Anyway, I figure if you're on that long road to somewhere, you'll still stop for fuel and food. Perhaps at that moment the last phone booth left in the world will ring for the first time in decades. I have just one request: pick up and say hello with all the ferocious pleasure you can muster in the face of unexpected moments of intimacy.

Until then, safe travels, and don't you forget us on the way.

Belated, with love, always,
Manuel

*Khartoum
September 1, 2009*

Virginia is for Lovers

i believe in ghosts now

Sean Horchy

Sean Horchy

Virginia is for Lovers

i wish I could do more

"Ginny's Dance Off" (2006)
Digital Video 4min.





Matthew Hughes Boyko is often working as a photographer, director, producer and actor, frequently combining these roles into projects that rely heavily on his background in photography, theatre and design. He employs the performative aspects of photography in his video works and uses the experience of the photoshoot to highlight the theatricality of presenting your self in particular experiences, most notably proms and other ritualistic portrait projects. His work is heavily influenced by rites of passage, power dynamics in real situations and the savory, celebrity enticement of such stars as: Jennifer Love Hewitt, Lindsay Lohan, Tara Reid, Christian Bale, Jude Law, Jake Busey and many many more. He received his BA from Drury University and earned his MFA at California College of the Arts. He has exhibited widely in both solo and group shows as well as screened his video works both nationally and internationally. Recently, Matthew has continued his work on the method and effect of presenting a real self in the era of reality personalities and has continued to develop works derived from the always ample source of celebrity.

Dominic Bruno met Ginny in 2003 at California College of the Arts where he earned a MFA in Writing. Included in this book are “The Mathematician of Emotions,” written and dedicated to her in March 2007, as well as a letter he wrote and read at her memorial service. He lives in Chicago.

Beth Alice Cook is an interdisciplinary artist who experiments with collage, drawing, photography and performance. She is fascinated with human behavior, psychological theories, cultural differences and media trends. She graduated from the California College of the Arts with an MFA in 2005 and from Syracuse University in 2001 with a BFA in Photography and a BS in Communications. She lives and works in San Francisco, CA.

Lynn DeClemente is a multidisciplinary artist who is interested in lost or forgotten truths. Lynn is the Registrar for The Sculpture Foundation in Hamilton, NJ. The Sculpture Foundation is a charitable and educational organization, whose main mission is to promote public appreciation and knowledge of art by revitalize communities through the public placement of art. Lynn is also an adjunct art faculty member at The College of New Jersey where she teaches Sculpture and Conceptual Art. Lynn has worked in the field of contemporary art as an exhibiting artist, juror, lecturer and independent curator. She holds a Masters of Fine Art in Textiles from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco.

As an artist and curator, **Lori Gordon** investigates the structure and power of belief, creating projects that attempt to decipher both humanity’s and her own connection with the universe. Through collaborative endeavors, she explores the distance between coincidence and intention, with an emphasis on setting up moments that deviate from the expected. In some cases, she is more interested in providing the organized framework around which potential interactions may occur. With all her work, she is more interested in the journey than the destination. She is forever attempting to make the ineffable visible. Born 1975, Johannesburg, South Africa. Gordon is the co-founder of Social Evolution Research Gang and an associate curator at Ampersand International.

Rachel Heath is a photographer whose work addresses the exchanges of autonomy, agency and desire in photography and its history. She studied photography as an undergraduate at the University of California, Santa Cruz and at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. She and Ginny were classmates and earned their MFAs at California College of the Arts in 2005. Rachel lives in Oakland.

Dale Hoyt has been involved in the making, curation, and criticism of media art for over 30 years. His videotapes, drawings, and paintings are in numerous permanent museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. He is the founder of C.A.L.F., the Coalition of Artists and Life Forms, the world's first artist-run think tank devoted to researching Biotechnology and its impact on society. Also, along with Steve Thurston, he was granted permission to execute an official portrait of CC, the world's first cloned cat. He presently lives in San Francisco. In 2004-5 Dale taught and tutored Ginny at the California Collage of Art in her graduate studies. They remained in contact in the subsequent years. It was his bittersweet honor to write her obituary for Stretcher magazine last October.

Elise Irving was born and raised in Orange County, California. She graduated from UC Santa Cruz with a B.A. in Photography and Painting, which is where she met Ginny for the first time. After Santa Cruz Elise attended CCA with Ginny and received her MFA in Photography. Her work revolves around her interests in science fiction, quantum physics, blind spot phenomena, perception, time and the mutable nature of reality. She uses her photographs as raw material for varied projects that include video, installation, sculpture, and traditional photography. Elise currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

Lynn Marie Kirby creates works that draw upon the vernacular from domestic life and the American landscape. She explores traces of a human presence, the residue of light, the effects of history, shifting technological recording materials, the movement of peoples, plants and systems, in the landscape around us and in our psyches. She excavates what lies below the surface, looking at the links between public and private, biographical and historical territories. These concerns manifest through different materials--often through the use of media, from a background in cinema, but also through performative and dimensional forms from a background in performance and sculpture--from film to video to web, in installation forms, or in language, through short stories and prose. She is a Professor at the California College of the Arts and teaches in the MFA Program in Fine Arts, the Media Arts program and the First Year Program.

Euan Macdonald is an artist living in LA.

Ashley Neese is a multidisciplinary artist that grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2005 she earned her MFA from California College of the Arts. Her projects have been executed and exhibited in the Rosenberg Gallery at NYU; San Jose Institute for Contemporary Art;

Nuit Blanche, Toronto; TRUCK Contemporary Art, Calgary; and Koh-i-nor, Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2009 she participated in artist residencies at ThreeWalls, Chicago; The Alberta

Printmakers Society, Calgary; and The Berlin Office, Berlin. In 2010 she will launch a biannual art publication and co-curate an exhibition for a conference on socially engaged practices at Portland State University. Visit: <http://www.ineedyouso.com>

Jon Rubin is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work explores the idiosyncrasies of individual, group, and institutional behavior. His solo and collaborative projects include creating a game show for ideas, opening a fake store in an indoor shopping mall, starting a restaurant that secretly runs via take-out from its double across the street, broadcasting an office's telephone conversations through a talking piano, running a neighborhood truck that gives away free homemade goods and services, operating a radio station that only plays the sound of an extinct bird, developing a hypnotized human "robot" army, producing a cable access variety show at a senior center, running a waffle shop that is also a talk show, and developing a free nomadic art school.

Manuel Schwab is a writer, as well as a researcher, living in Khartoum and doing work on humanitarianism, local economies and political violence. He and Ginny were friends, and partners in crime, in her time in Santa Cruz.

Pascal Shirley met Ginny towards the end of his first year in Grad school at CCA in 2005. He first noticed her during open studios and remembered how her work left him with a striking impression. Then one night his friend Elise formally introduced them and their relationship started from there. He finished his MFA in photography in 2006 and moved down to LA in 2007. He currently resides in Venice Beach.

Annie Sprinkle is an artist who works in collaboration with her partner, Elizabeth Stephens. They are exploring love through art.

Beth Stephens is an interdisciplinary artist, activist and educator who has explored themes of the body, gender, sex and feminism through art for over 20 years. She has exhibited and performed in museums, galleries and festivals around the world. Stephens is currently based in San Francisco. Some of her recent works include the collaborative performance works with Annie Sprinkle, *Dirty Sexecology: 25 Ways to Make Love to the Earth*; and *Exposed: Experiments in Love, Sex, Death and Art*, the video installation, *Extreme Kiss*; the bronze sculptural installation, *The Academic/Porn Star Panty Collection*. Stephens and Sprinkle collaborate together in the Love Art Laboratory where they are in the 5th year of a 7-year collaboration. www.loveartlab.org

Lindsey White is an Oklahoma native who is living and working in San Francisco, CA. She's an interdisciplinary artist whose work in photography, video, and sculpture explores the simple magic of everyday life. She met Ginny at the California College of the Arts in the Fall of 2005, but didn't truly get to know her till the winter of 2006. They taught a class entitled: "Video Journals: Framing and Scripting Oneself" for high school students at Southern Exposure.

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Thank you to Courtney Fink and the staff at Southern Exposure for hosting the launch of this book. SoEx is a nonprofit visual arts organization that supports emerging artists and youth in a dynamic environment in which they can develop and present new work and ideas. An active presence in the Bay Area since 1974, the organization evolves in response to the needs of artists and the community, engaging the public in the artists' work. Visit: www.soex.org

Thank you to Kevin at MacArthur b arthur Gallery for hosting the exhibition of original works in conjunction the launch of this book. MacArthur b arthur is a project space in Oakland for visual arts, performance, and play. If it is creative, in can happen there. It was started in November of 2009 by Kevin P. Clarke.

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Virginia is for Lovers