

Horizon / Horse

*On Photography and
Multispecies Bonding*

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HUMANIMALIA 14.2 (Spring 2024)

Abstract: Photographs and text explore multi-species empathy and loss through a long-term companionate relationship with a significant horse as teacher, collaborator, muse, and beacon. The images were made without request or instruction during acts of reciprocal caretaking and exploration. They record the pauses and accommodations of two bodies within a landscape seemingly unchanging except with the light, seasons, time, perspective, and the infinite amplitude within the daily and familiar, between human and nonhuman. The body of the horse becomes actual landscape, imagined landscape, embodied landscape. The text derives from writings made in the horse's presence. To approach, to touch another carries a charge—whether of transgression or congruence. The feeling of close connection in any intimate relationship also carries a sense of deep strangeness and far places. Who bodies are, where and how they occupy the landscape—itsself a body—defines relationships. This project considers how human and nonhuman animals experience space and proximity, distance and absence, and how we bond to one another. Our histories and memories, yearnings, inform the through-lines of synchronous connection.

Keywords: *multispecies empathy; horse photography; proprioception with animal*

Bio: Lee Deigaard explores the topographies where one consciousness encounters another, describing a landscape given shape and substance by its animal protagonists, their sensory and imaginative worlds and their autonomy. With language, photography/video, installation, event, and drawing, her work approaches the animal from positions of equality, collaboration, and mutual curiosity and looks at multi-species empathy, animal cognition and personality, sensory processes of memory and grief, and the nature of intimacy. As an independent artist and researcher based in urban Louisiana and rural Georgia, she has exhibited and presented her work internationally.

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Fig. 1

Astrophel
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2016.

*Unless otherwise noted, all images
are by the author.*

This might as well be a love letter to a horse, two beings sunk into the pine shavings among the cobwebs, dozing and communing, attuning respiration and heart rate, as time passes and knowledge deepens.

To work with animal collaborator-teachers while producing artwork and papers for human audiences makes us translators, paraphrasers, thieves, memorialists, archivists, witnesses. . . mourners. To mix roles of apprentice (woman to horse) with caregiver and medical proxy (woman for horse) somewhat conveys the push and pull, showing and being shown, leading and following, ministering and receiving implicit in any close relationship that is based in mutual convictions of equality. If apprenticeship is training and tutelage, mentoring is believing in someone and supporting them. Creative research is the search; the art-making derives from inspiration and exists in part as tribute. One to the other. I was his person. He was my horse. The privilege of proximity unlocks knowing. He mediated access to shared meditative states, creative spaces of insights and ideas; he shared what he knew and encouraged in dialogue, in the journey.

I was never an equestrian but a hippophile¹ who sought to serve and adore and learn. We met as young adults. I was untrained which meant he had much less to undo. Perhaps I began knowing little (all relationships begin thus), but in pursuing service over mastery or control, I learned. He taught me.

Mourning involves forensic examination of shattered pieces. This essay therefore shares its form with cento poems created from fragments and phrases drawn from disparate sources. Akin to how memory works, which is not in linear sequence, this essay collects and recombines excerpts, poems, lists, and notes I wrote in his presence as he slept or grazed along with essays, exhibition statements, and presentations drawn from these documents, shared experiences, and the imagery I made with him. To love is to fear loss. An artist

1 A hippophile, in my usage here, not only loves the horse (its Greek roots: ἵππος [horse] and -φιλος [one who loves]), she loves him for who he is. There is a pair bond apart from bits, reins, and saddles, apart from riding. The hippophile cherishes proximity, seeks to serve the horse, and through both, seeks to better know him and be known by him. Meeting eye-to-eye becomes a mutualism, a knowing more deeply (from which true love arises).



Fig. 2

Photograph: "blanket triage" 2017.

fearing this loss lays crumbs for the questions that will come after and without him; she builds a database towards a forensic anatomy of love, for learning in the afterward; to remember and not forget, to hold in heart and mind the being *with* in the being *without*.

The body of work ended when he did. I write the retrospection, then, of the introspective encounters. This small essay calls out to memory and to Blue. Let him live, reader, in your imagination.

I will write like winter blanket triage when I sat bundled in the pasture mending torn straps with needle and dental floss as Blue horse stood over me marking my actions, his warm breath and whiskers upon my face so that I felt his blessing and curiosity as I worked. I am his witness; here is my testimony.

FRAGMENTS: WHAT WE DID, HOW WE IMAGINED

Excerpt from artist statement for *Moons Revolve, Moons Adore*, Dec 2018

To know another, whether horse or person, is to mix empathy and nearness, vertigo and vast horizons. Psyches and souls contain multitudes. One is held to another with gravitational pull. In deep space, we revolve, we adore. To perceive another involves limits closer to hand. Gates and fences keep out, they keep in. We peer through narrow openings and perceive in fragments.

Notes on phone, Aug 16, 2019

The memories of walking the pasture in the pitch dark,
What I drew in the dust on his skin

Notes on phone, Nov 3, 2015

His longing sustained gaze at the two skeletal horses [next door]
(the care taking impulses of horses—the mirrored body language, the crossed/met glances)

Text to [barn owner] about donkey companion and Blue, Oct 2016

They're doing the magic alignment like compasses even tho
can't see each other through solid door.



Fig. 3

Detail:
Blue Yonder [slant light], 2018–19.



Fig. 4

Detail: *Moons Revolve, Moons Adore*, 10' x 10' wall vinyl, photograph with dye-sublimation print on aluminium (moon, 30" diameter), 2018.

YEARNING / DREAMING: Steady Star / Midnight Sun

No woman or horse is replete and apart. Rather, each is a part of, and their abiding together communes within, a vastness—a universality—which cannot be itself without them, nor they without it. Every [woman and horse] resonates within the vibratory, respirating world. The landscape is a body; two bodies within a landscape are a relationship. Duration and proximity are markers of both terrain and connection. To deeply know another, horse or human, is a wide-open frontier. The horizon, the convergence of earth and the sensory with the aspirational and ethereal sky, draws us and eludes us in equal measure. This is the meeting of species, of two, in a congruence of the granular and celestial.

Between horses, between humans, between humans and horses is presumption (a form of cognitive empathy) and empathy (a form of trespass, an act of hope, a move for connection). The flight response in prey animals, their keen anticipation in being both exquisitely alive to touch while prone to startle or flee, mirrors processes of intimacy. Grazing in parallel, reclining to rest in tandem reveal the deeply tactful reinforcement of horses' companionate mirroring. The aligning of self with another (within species, across species) both reflects and deepens bonding.

A horse reads a person. A person dreams of being with a horse, of being a horse. In our dreams, signifying freedom, but more so in life, the horse shows us how to wordlessly know and convey which is also how to feel and express love. A horse is an apparition in the night, a watcher of moonrise and sunrise.

Once I sat with Blue intending to write a poem. About him or but-tressed by him as he breathed into my hair. He lowered his head, snuffled the paper in my lap, took it into his mouth gazing steadily at me and masticated it. I laughed and tugged, the paper tore. Nothing lost, everything gained. Parts and fragments become wholes; horses (and poems) reveal themselves.



Fig. 5

Photograph: “eating the poem”,
Sept 1, 2016.

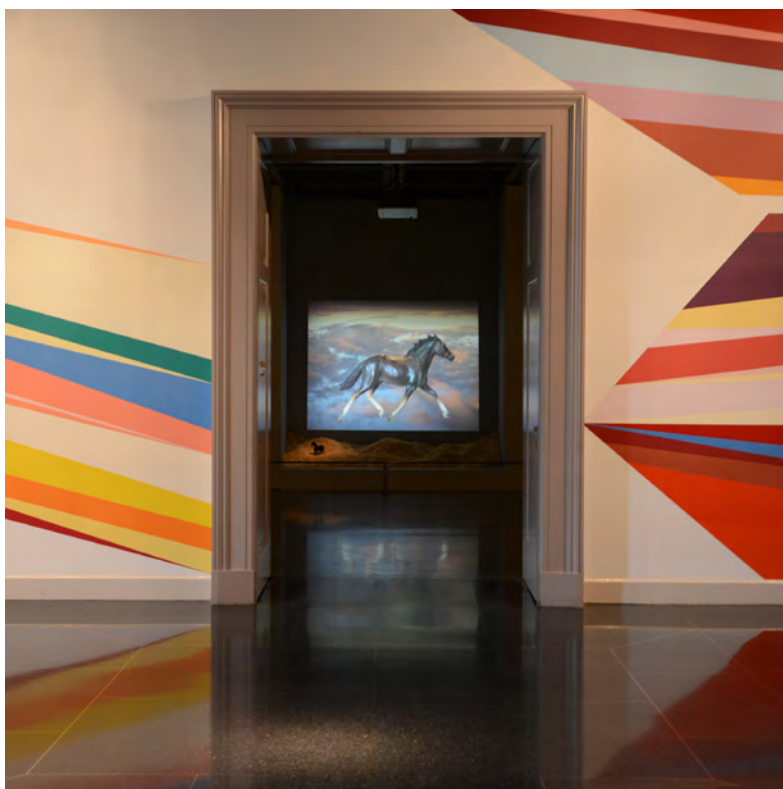


Fig. 6

Steady Star, digital video animation, installation with plastic toy horse and pine shavings, recorded audio of Blue horse sleeping, 2012, installation view: New Orleans Museum of Art, *Pride of Place*, curated by Katie Pfohl, 2017.

Artist statement for *In Your Dreams [Horses]*,
installation, videos, and photographs, 2012

Growing up, old family portraits instilled in me a conviction that horses, too, were my kin. In the old photographs, the humans and horses seemed inseparable. In one, my great-grandmother Cleo stands with Cleo the horse...

...A toy horse runs and never grows tired. A real horse breathes and snores, deep in sleep. Longing becomes a dream; dreams persist. They must be tended. Steady Star explores the chimerical power of longing, the stamina of dreams and fixations.

Can longing prefigure a great love? Can longing after losing that love preserve it? Like the toy horse in the animation, when the beloved dies, he is not running free; he remains within the frame, which is to say, within your heart and mind. Between you and your yearning is a tether. But he runs unencumbered above the clouds.

Before the horse, there was the vision and dream of him. In a way, this pre-visioning prepares for the future meeting and the opportunity, the yearning presaging the heightened emotional awareness upon meeting the Other and that convergence, what can happen in that convergence, the being *with*.

Notes on phone in the stall with Blue, Aug 6, 2015

The horse looks at himself in the mirror... presses his face to the reflection and rubs up and down, his ear tips crimped against the wall

He looks at [me] in the mirror, turns his head, [we] touch noses, turns back, [our] gazes meet again [in reflection]

Notes on phone, Aug 27, 2016

Making landscapes in colours horses [perceive]...of places they might never see like coral reefs

Making them big enough—ten times size of what I take in at arm's length?

Lifting and lowering of head to focus

20/60 vision

Studio list, 500 miles from Blue, Sept 19, 2017

...Blue looking out an airplane window

...

Landscapes for a horse

—views he likes

—where he used to live [and never returned]

—scale relative to him

—wide angle and monocular

—sunsets

—a way to embed scents into surfaces?

Make small framed portraits of what he eats [a gallery of the gustatory]

Number o'clock horse grass

Subject matter his, style mine

...

Projecting into corners...

WITH / Intimacy / MUSIC/ and other missing

Yearning risks hagiography and nostalgia. And yet longing helps us hold the beloved in our mind's eye. Love does not end with absence.

Each whisker on a horse's chin corresponds to a discrete site in the horse's brain. Through pallesthesia, the horse feels the firmament, its subtle signatures and unique vibrations, through his vascularized hooves and through his sinuses.

Touch is integral to all intimacy including companionate relationships with nonhumans. Of course his horse-ness, my human-ness informed how and where we knew each other and through which languages. As I think of him now, four years since touching his warmth or feeling his whiskers on my cheek, we enter a body-less zone of the psyche and soul, a liminal place defined by threshold. A place in life I often found him waiting for me, hot summer days under the barn fan where, marking his breathing and relaxing into the stupefying heat, I

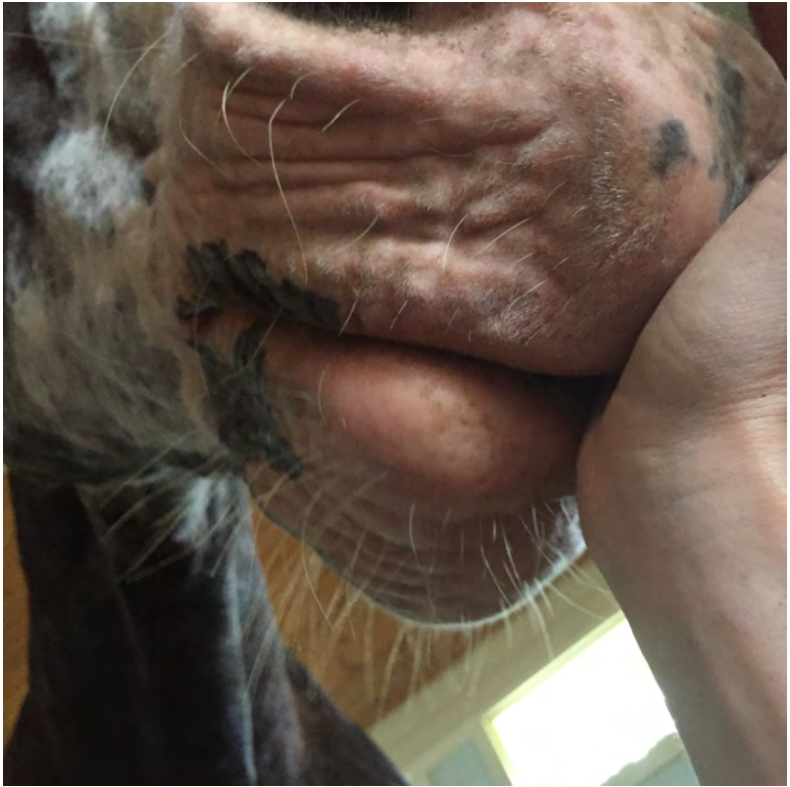


Fig. 7

Photograph: “phone screen saver
[hand to mouth]”, 2015.

emptied my mind. Or rather, I opened it to discover him there, waiting for me to arrive.

Both of us suffered orthopedic injuries in our prior lives. Our ensuing physical adaptations formed the basis, from the beginning, for our meeting each other eye-to-eye, one-to-one. Upright as we were, we were grounded, neither carrying nor being carried. But bearing and being borne. Sometimes I wonder, if we met again in some inchoate space (where longings gather), would I know him without his horse body? Being human I doubt myself. I believe he would know me. In an instant.

What does this look like from the outside? As impenetrable as any relationship until you watch for a bit.

[A list in an unsent email to myself, after a nature walk with Blue, Aug 28, 2017](#)

*Blue eats:
the scales of a pine cone
gingko leaves off a tree
dandelions
dried oak leaves
blueberry bush leaves
dirt from a pile used to set masonry stones*

[Deigaard's *Who Is My Horse?*
Audio interview with Lee \(of Blue\), March 18, 2014](#)

... It is a companionate relationship and one of deep intimacy, but that is tinged with gender a little bit because I find him courtly, I find him handsome. But not... with sexuality at all. It's... intimacy. If you can describe intimacy as feeling your best self around another individual. [...] There were some times I jerked awake in the middle of the night. As if he'd said my name. And that generally seemed to coincide with him needing me and having, like, unmediated pain [I could help him with]. But I did have a dream about him where — I guess we were going on a date [transcription is unfinished]



Fig. 8

Outback
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2016.

Excerpt from *21 (50 days × 1000 words)*,
written on phone from the bathtub, Nov 2023

...Flirting with beloveds is not a shallow gloss, an entrapment. But an art of teasing and intense focus, of playfulness.

How does one flirt with a horse?

You might as well ask how does one fall in love with a horse?

The heightening when the other is near. The brightening upon first sight. The oxytocin and the dopamine. The pleasure from presence. The reciprocal flow between two who feel similarly. I gush and laugh, tell him he is handsome. He pricks his ears. He turns his head to see me closely. He rests his chin upon my head and sighs.

Animals, horses approach obliquely. They ask and express with reserve. They watch us when we do not watch them. Their freedom, in large part, is when they move without being [perceived].

Against cosmic insignificance, we want to matter, to be held, to be acknowledged. We want, too, to want without covenant. To not be needed, if perhaps wanted. Sometimes we want to be needed...

...The brush of Blue's whiskers upon my cheek, the sweet smell of hay in his exhales, the crusts in the corners of his eyes from winter dust that I removed with the lightest of fingernails. Memorizing his body with my hands. His body was an infinite horizon. It was my hearth. And haven.

When I speak of his body, I speak of touch and rhythms (of breath and heartbeat). Of odours and fragrances. Of inchoate glow. Of proximity and the comfort within it. Of privilege in this proximity and the gratitude lacing through.

In the last years of Blue's life, I acquired a portable piano and set to learning music I hoped he would like. I could only play Beethoven, slowly, at what turned out to be more or less the speed of Blue's heart at rest. Resonance. Between trying and being, hoping to give and porously receiving.

I lugged the keyboard to the edge of the barn and field where he was free to walk far away if he chose. Blue watched me set up then stood close to me and listened. I made many mistakes! Sometimes he tickled my neck with his lips, and I laughed. I felt his encouragement. Once when I stepped away, I heard him press a single key—a clarion tenor note—as if he were confirming a hypothesis. His lips left grass stains I refuse to wipe away.

Notes written from afar while thinking of him and his donkey friend, April 8, 2019 (23 days before hospitalization)

Do they like lower tones, more sonorous, less treble?

Do they prefer my slower playing, close to their heart rates?

Do they have an expectation of the “right” note, in key?

Do they prefer major keys to minor?

Rolling arpeggios?

Beethoven vs Mozart?

The aspect of social support—they come and listen because they see I’m doing it for them. Then, do they enjoy it?...

The “invasion” of sound: to mask environmental sounds they need/want to hear can cause them stress/when does the music encourage something else?

Ear actions show “expectations” within the melody, what happens when I hit wrong notes [ears are expressive as well as receptive]

...

From a motel next to the interstate typed into a Google doc on phone, May 26, 2019

I played for Blue [while he was at the hospital] phone recordings of the piano pieces I learned for him. Because of the din of the fans, I held it up to his ear, and he listened. And he seemed to find it peaceful. He didn’t move away.

He rests his chin on my head. Sometimes he looks at me very specifically. He lets me know he's glad I'm there. And that he sees how I try to help him. And he indulges my anxious flitting about him...

I cried in the stall today just as I did yesterday. From fear of his... re-injury and... fatigue. He stood with me, tactful gentleman.

Phone notes typed with Blue in medical "stall rest", June 17, 2019

Is time more full-bodied to a horse? Their short, shorter lives. They spend proportionately fewer hours asleep. They are wholly present and alive to the slightest motion, aroma, change in the air.

Do horses take the long view...? When you cannot wholly choose where you wish to go [or be], from this does patience (abiding) arise? Does time stretch out as in prison?

Excerpts from Studio Notes on phone,
500 miles from Blue, Oct 17, 2017

Make blue a wall hanging.
Quilt, Company of other horses w texture
Knit him a cowl
Knit him an embrace
...
Make him a mural of mares...
A scene he can see himself in.
...



Fig. 9

Photograph: “a scene he can see himself in”, April 2016.

SCENES TO SEE HIM IN: within/without, Moons Revolve, Moons Adore

Wall text for installation *Moons Revolve, Moons Adore* in the group show *Love and Loss across Species Lines: The Neuroscience of Attachment* curated by Linda Brant, Orlando Science Center, Winter/Spring 2021

Horses enter REM sleep, therefore they dream. The horse appears at rest in a gossamer hammock. The artist's hair mingles with the horse's. Two moons revolve in the night sky and earthbound below.

A horse's true teaching, however direct or explicit, may arrive obliquely and embedded within life's activities. The images of *Near and Far* were made incidentally during acts of care-taking and companionship without request or instruction. They are improvisatory, recording the proprioceptive pauses and accommodations of two bodies within a landscape seemingly unchanging except with the light and the seasons, time and perspective, and the infinite variety within the daily and familiar. The body of the horse becomes actual landscape, imagined landscape, embodied landscape.

We gaze upon landscapes. We live within them. Landscapes are also interior places of imagination and contemplation. What we think we see is not always what is. What we see, our perspective, is often determined by where we stand. This is analogous to common political and social processes; what feels real must exist.

Let the artist watch what the horse watches, stand with him and look beyond. To be close takes respect of difference as much as the draw of affinity, affection.

Written at the kitchen counter in pencil
on index card, March 2022

The traumatic² loss of Blue was embedded in both the rural landscape where I could only visit—but not stay—and in a shared

2 In the being parted, as both of us wanted to continue, but also in the manner of death and an ending in runaway pain nothing could reach fast enough.

topography of the imagination that recedes towards the distant horizon with absence.

In a perspective drawing, the horizon is where all lines converge. Its etymology refers to “dividing, separating”, to being a boundary understood to be between earth and sky. The horizon — where land meets sky — is a place of possibility — where the sun rises and sets — it always recedes from us no matter the distance we travel toward it. For horses, it can be where predators first appear. Or, too, the absent beloved upon her return.

To approach, to touch another carries a charge — whether of transgression or congruence. The feeling of close connection in any intimate relationship also carries a sense of deep strangeness and far places. Since his death, I study the moon as I studied the white blaze (the moon) on his shoulder (the night sky).

If the imagination too is a landscape, intimacy is a journey towards an ever-receding horizon, cognizant of the soil beneath your feet, the vibrations and scents, the ephemeral yet utterly signifying. The horizon is the possibility; the journey is the caretaking, the quotidian, the time in proximity.

The sun does not drop in the sky; rather the horizon rises to meet the setting sun. Horizons, and we, move relative to the sun. We revolve. To watch the sunset or the night sky standing next to and at shared eye level with a loved one, with a horse, is to abide in the landscape together — and simultaneously to sense how little we know.

Binoculars and magnifying lenses amplify what the naked eye cannot otherwise see. They flatten space, not just in bringing the far distance into sharper relief but in compressing the distance between near and far. In photography, this distance is known as depth of field. Images with shallow depths of field can be largely blurry; where they appear sharp is within a narrow range of distance. As with the pupil, a camera’s aperture and how much light it admits is a central control. Inherent to greater depth of field is a bringing forward of the background in union with the foreground.



Fig. 10

Midnight Sun (iii)
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2016.

Alternatively, a microscope enlarges what is invisible yet very near—what is, in fact, inside us or living on our skin. The microscopic—cells and synapses—can look and feel nearly astronomical. The horse’s binocular and monocular vision echoes these compressions and amplitudes.

A camera on a tripod intrudes, disrupts the common frequency. The camera on the phone is quiet and does not cover my face in use. It uses no tripod and slips into my pocket. Its depth of field is deep and therefore ambiguous. The telescopic compresses (which is intimacy).

We are who we are, animated through the eye of the beholder. Who are we without the animal witness, the animal philosopher who must study us for their very lives. In being with us, what do animals give up? What might they gain?

Blue’s body is the landscape. His body activates the landscape as he explores it.

CIRCULAR BREATHING: Reciprocal / Orbital / Holding Close

In an argument for equality among species, of the longitudinal and steadfast, and the personal lyric across millennia, the poetic form most interior and embodied yet connective, let us hearken to a single horse. Why? Because one [horse] matters, all [horses] do. If one [horse] does not matter, then no [horses] do. Humans often make rules about categories: proscriptions and banishments. Individuals are not categories; they claim their space and live their lives in story, history, and in imagination (which is the future).

To be with an animal, to know them, to be reciprocally responsive, is to commit to the details of their world: to consider the direction and force of the breeze, the movements of insects, the cresting sugars of grass, rates of respiration, of whiskers like fingertips. The personal lyric in poetry celebrates, amplifies deeply singular, often idiosyncratic experiences of love and loss, and yet it can traverse the ages recognized to its core from even the far future.

In times of pandemic, mounting extinctions, and distress at impending loss, in individual lives, the dramatic arc (inexorably personal) curves to the domestic, to partnering or clustering, and to acts of connection against annihilation.

**(WITHOUT) excerpts from poem written after he died,
*Conjugation (September Poem), 2020***

...

If her yearning through dirty panes and curtains can spook a doe,
who is to say a thought doesn't carry
consequence
We don't know the architecture of it is all
Only that the metaphors are filaments and thoughts...

...sharpening, sharpening...

That hindsight tool
For photographs and grievers.
She has seen it happen...
Because you cannot see, you must imagine, you must feel

To the last,
breath
His upon her cheek and hers on his...
the brush of whiskers, of lashes
Her flank
Pressed to his
Flank
Counting breaths, willing them
to slow and ease,
to mingled be
Only stay
Because you cannot see, you hope

Beset by memory and longing
She walked into a web
Took its central strand into her mouth like a bit
Felt its light curb and
Mouth open,

Backed away from its tug
It sprang taut
To release, to refrain then

But write another verse...

(In 21 years, Blue never again felt a bit in his mouth.)

written WITH him, in fear of being WITHOUT him

Compilation, notes typed into phone next
to sleeping horse, Aug 6, 2015

Horse sleep.

SLEEP

Tadpoles in the trough dive deep when the horse sloshes the surface with his lips.

They avoid overhead shadows. Smaller than cherry pits.

Through the gate, he stops to eat the grass out of reach from inside the fence. She drapes the lead rope over his neck and goes to wait in the shade.

Things he touches: the rusted upended water trough, the plastic electric aerator, the sprayer tank with straps and wand, a bucket, three mouthfuls of crepe myrtle, a withered leaf. At the barn, the mower, the sprayer, the bucket, the grooming tools, the brush, the sink, he licks the sink, the brush again, the hat brim.

Down the hall to the rope, the manure wheelbarrow, the white horse has come inside his hindquarters turned to us his ears swiveled. The tiller, the rope, the bucket.

When he pauses on his own on the hill and for a moment looks uncertain, his horseness, his horselessness, his central anxiety, the narrow amplitude of his daily experience and the repetition of routine.

As he dozes his lower lip relaxes and flaps, his nostrils flare his ears swivel his lips work as if he were speaking incantating

...

Animal understanding and sympathy is nonverbal and feels sacred and private. Blue horse held connection and the intimate space as sacred. But he was also personable, curious and sociable. Other species recognized in him a gentle expansiveness and approached. Birds alit upon his rump as he grazed. Cats rolled on their backs and stretched beneath him. A child toddled between his legs. He and I took naps together, lying down in the shavings on our sides, facing the other. When I opened my eyes, I might find him looking at me. And when he opened his, he often saw me looking, too. I held myself utterly still. Horses sleep lightly knowing they must be able to get up quickly enough to flee. They relax best when someone is their sentinel and keeping watch. I resisted (not always) the urge to touch his face.

He had a sense of occasion, humour, and a benevolent cognizance of his charisma and beauty. To know and be known, to be seen, reinforces self-identity and sense of belonging in human and horse. Not on parallel tracks within respective species (though this is also true) but in belonging to each other.

The horse shifts his weight, his ears swivel. Watching what catches his attention, what we see arising incidentally due to proprioceptive or sympathetic movements, this is meditative. It is being present.

How do you hold onto this animal-mediated knowledge and awareness in their absence after they have died (or gone extinct)? Without them, what do you know anymore? Can you still see?

HORSE SENSE(S)

The horse sees very nearly in the round. He is alert to the long view (binocular vision) which uses two eyes. He studies you closely from the side through one eye (monocular vision). Depending which eye is studying you, you can tell if he feels relaxed or nervous. He will

turn his head to use the eye (and brain hemisphere) which suits the apprehension (or the recognition). Each eye can see around 150 degrees (combined he can see 300) from nearly the edge of his nose sweeping along his flank to just off his rump. Intra-ocular transfer — when the same object can initially seem novel to a horse when encountered from opposite sides — means he is continually negotiating different points of view.

Our hands are often within our visual fields. We look at what we touch. The horse's hand — his muzzle, whiskers, lips, nostrils — is in his blind spot. Lips are fingers, enhanced by whiskers as fingertips.

Prehensile lips sort through grains and even powders, unlatch gates and doors and open lids. They work zippers and buckles. Horses use their teeth to massage (reciprocal grooming) and to poke or nip. Horses use their mouths to investigate. Most equestrian training shoves the horse's nose away lest he bite, thereby suppressing his curiosity and understanding of his environment as well as his communication.

A horse's mouth, like a human hand, is exquisitely sensitive. The horse's "hand" can also taste and smell via the flehmen between his lip and gum. Touch mingles with taste and smell more than sight. Happiness, as with humans, shows in the mouth, in the zygomatic smile. The horse considers, chews and licks. His cognitive processing — the literal manifestation of rumination — shows in his mouth.

The human hand and the horse's mouth as fulcrums of communication both investigate and attach to touch. Touch is reciprocal in that two surfaces necessarily meet. Touch both receives and returns sensation. It requires invitation, permission, initiation, and reception. Touch establishes boundaries between bodies while also connecting them. This kind of deep awareness is foundational for empathy leading to understanding, to companionable comfort in one another's company. The horse leads the way.

Anticipation of and pleasure in the other's presence is a privilege. Recognition of presence through touch doesn't judge or categorize.

The horse naturally attunes himself—to heartbeat, rates of breathing, he is sensitive to pheromones. A horse can teach you how to be in the moment and all its fullness—which is where both empathy and art reside.

Horses weigh a thousand pounds or more and yet they perceive the minute dilations and contractions of our pupils, feel every insect. Horses know the subtle language of the body; their proprioception, their awareness of their body (and of yours), its orientation within itself and relative to another, is acute. This kind of physical awareness defines intimacy. It is difficult to hide your true self from a horse. The horse receives information from all his senses. To categorize, he seeks confirmation from multiple sources. As he is alert to the landscape, he is alert to the lens of a camera or any shift in focus of a companion.

Some horses seek novelty and are curious about where we go when we shut the door. Many horses prefer to be left alone. Horses are kept in horse places, which often means confinement. Humans, sadly, have our human places. I am interested in where we invite horses to enter (literally and imaginatively). And where horses are curious to enter. I am most interested in where a horse invites me to enter.

Blue was uncommonly open to humanity, to me. I first saw him in a backyard, his head held high, ears tipped forward, chest nearly against the fence, curious about the visitor. He looked as if he wanted to meet and be met, to know and be known. How he claimed space with his intelligence and personality, his charisma. I know that Blue drew me in immediately. I remember the feelings and the magnetism, his keenness and vividness; I had eyes only for him. How can I describe a feeling so explicit, so bodily legible, that I never looked for the words.

Animals walk through the world without carrying anything, their bodies as vehicles of motion and expression; in the Anthropocene each of them, predator or prey, feels and is utterly vulnerable. While animals have their own languages and even learn our spoken languages, they are extremely gifted at reading motives and hidden

intentions within humans, more than we are of ourselves. Our efforts in return have been blinkered.

Horses are avatars of climate change (heat stroke and anhidrosis — formerly afflictions of the tropics — are moving ever northward) and harbingers of the economy (rates of euthanasia and abandonment of horses increase ahead of market changes). Horses are seen as markers of privilege, but horses' lived experience, in too many cases, closely parallels domestic violence and processes of gaslighting and being silenced while being required to perform complete compliance at all times. The language of conquest has long been applied to relationships between the sexes; it also applies to how many of us treat horses.

Horses are powerful animals who nonetheless hold this power in reserve, employing their keen emotional intelligence (and demonstrated memory of, for example, whether a human smiled or frowned the last time they saw them). Their acute proprioception and delicate vivid sensory world, the privilege of proximity to them heighten and intensify feelings of connection and mutual understanding. Unto horses are projected fantasies of freedom yet their lives are largely circumscribed. Horses are expected to become passive purveyors and channels of human freedom and entitlement, without protest or reciprocal communication. We know from studies of trauma and domestic violence that the brain is changed with verbal and physical abuse or neglect, excessive control, and unpredictability.

Being in the presence of a horse outside of performance objectives holds one in the moment, heightens the physical sensations art seeks to engage — of sight, touch, breath, dilations, subtle vibrations, sound, and shifts in light. Horses have dichromatic vision, humans trichromatic, but there are colours, particularly in the yellow, blue spectrum that we see the same. As prey animals, horses' binocular vision — which is their depth perception (what recedes, what obtrudes) and distance vision — and neurosensory orientation is to the horizon: what or who may broach it and what will it mean to their safety. Their pupils — in a kind of formal and functional sympathy — are rectangular and horizontal.

Notes on an airplane flying over the Appalachian Mountains, May 26, 2022

Places I have summoned his memory:

- in an MRI machine
- waiting for an ultrasound technician to show films to the radiologist
- in a la-Z-boy recliner before EMDR therapy
- in an operating room, the anaesthesiologist adjusting dials (how hard Blue fought sedation) says: “Think of a peaceful place”

The word, his name only, the colour before image.

I am out, blackness, before I see his face.

In reality, I think of him countlessly and seamlessly. This unrepresentative list occurs to me on an airplane looking down on the quilt of landscape, rivers branching like trees, the suggestion of omniscience, of the insurmountable (distance, scale) relegated below the clouds. The occasions listed here are (human) medical — and derive from imaging or pre-imaging, or trying to imagine while moving your eyes to cross hemispheres of the brain (like horses’ side to side monocular vision modulating with the frontal and binocular) — or preparing for peering beneath the skin, the entering of interior places and canals with ultrasonic waves or probes with cameras. In order to enable the easier breach and penetration of the corporeal, for processes performed on and within the body, I conjure not a place as a state of mind but one who is no longer here, not even at a distance (has travelled past the horizon), who is wholly incorporeal. I make a cave of absence and flood the crater of his loss with sunlight and memories. Go beneath the surface. Make pictures ahead of pain. Stabilize the body and mind by imagining a star. A horse body as the night sky among the constellations.

Studio/process statement, Aug 2019, four weeks after his death

I’ve worked closely for many years with animal family members including a dearly loved horse who was a long-time artistic collaborator and inspiration.

I have never been interested in posing or compelling or even structuring animal participation. Rather I'm drawn to what draws them, to their personalities, to considering our shared voluntary experiences and cross-species communication. So much of my work occurs in the in-between moments of caretaking and support (mutual), between grazing and seeking shelter (which are themselves analogous to common studio processes).

Being wholly present and spending time in proximity with an animal who has sought me as I reciprocally sought him without directing and determining unfolding events leads to better ideas. My animal collaborators are beacons, pointing the way. Moving with an animal, seeing what he sees, encourages a reflexive photography, the camera as an extension of the body in movement with another body.

The time outdoors and among animals sharpens my other senses and heightens my receptivity to the unexpected, to responsive improvisation. While drawing or image sorting, the companionate presence of animal family members, the deeply tactful wordless reinforcement through their bodily alignment with mine emboldens me.

Artists often work in the interstices... I am interested in spatial and bodily boundaries and where experiences and points of view collide and merge and separate. Working in volume of imagery means that sorting and associatively batching are constant ongoing processes. Animal senses are swift and instantaneous. My understanding comes more slowly and often through retroactive review where, frame by frame, I gain insight into my animal partner, his reactions and processing.

It can feel like two separate processes, exterior and interior, the during and the after, the with and the without: the impressionistic, immersive experience outdoors, and the searching, sequencing, writing, and editing within indoor spaces and digital desktops. But of course they pervade one another. Memory and history, insight, emotional and physical connection and disconnection weave through. To be with animals, to make art is to communicate primarily nonverbally, to heighten awareness of senses and feelings of immediacy.

On a blue Post-It note pasted to studio wall, artist
residency, Joan Mitchell Center, Sept 2017

Franz Marc, *How Does a Horse See the World?*
(In his paintings, they are up to their own business.)

I study equine colour vision and make this list:

cadmium yellow medium

indian yellow

yellow ochre

raw umber

cerulean blue

italian raw sienna

I search online for vistas which Blue and I might see similarly, in the “same” colours. Like on the prow of a boat in Antarctica, its grey and blues and tinges of gold sun on white. Or through the space station window peering down at the marble earth of swirling blues and yellows and browns. Places we will never go and where no distances seem too vast.

I pin 4”×6” glossy prints of these impossible places to the studio wall and feel the thread between us, 500 miles, taut and robust.

BIOGRAPHY: His-Story

Blue, from his certificate of registration, was foaled August 1, 1988 as Wonder’s Blue.

Black roan, markings: four stockings, under jaws, under chin, bald.

Blaze and moon, flower and shadow, the names of kittens and milkmaids, the title of a knight pervade his family tree. Pride and Wonder. Shadow and Midnight. And Go Boy [*go gently*].

He was sold by other people at least three times before he came to me.

He lived variously in fields bounded by barbed wire or oak boards painted white, in a residential backyard with a dog house and a german-speaking shepherd. One barn was weathered grey, another

painted yellow like goldenrod. Another was red with white trim. One was masonry with heavy sliding doors and metal bars.

He was born in a verdant valley of farms and pasture, 150 miles long and only a few miles wide with high-walled escarpments to each side. He lived all his life on Cherokee land in the humid sub-tropical climate of the Cumberland Plateau and the Valley and Ridge portion of the Appalachian Mountains.

For a few years, he lived near the forced river embarkment of the Trail of Tears where sandhill cranes still fly overhead to Hiwassee. Perhaps one or two of these ancient tall birds alit in his pasture and met his gaze. Other species could recognize a gentleness and mercy in him.

Tornadoes came close, one an E4 $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile wide with 175 mph winds.

He lived among shale, sandstone, and carbonate (limestone and dolomite) rocks and soils.

For twenty years, he lived in valleys running northeast and southwest on opposite sides of the same long mountain. For ten years he watched the mountain sunrise, the next ten, the mountain sunset.

Why are mountains blue?

Why is a black horse blue? (Blue roan refers to a horse who has white hairs mingled among his black ones)

The mountain is a range of pale to midnight blues; it can glow russet, lavender, and pink across seasons and times of day. The mountain blushes and deepens, predicting weather. When his longtime former companion died atop this mountain, I did not know the news to tell him. And yet that very day, I wrote down how he aimed his body to the mountain like the needle of a compass and stood motionless for a while without grazing, his head lowered, his neck straight, his body like a table.

For one month towards the end he lived between mountains named House and Clinch. He knew hail, high winds, rain, snow, and floods, freezing cold and blazing heat. Flies, mosquitoes, ticks, enormous horse flies. His eyes would widen and he would, without flicking his

skin, hold still for my help, the only insects I killed, those who would leave golfball-sized welts upon his flank.

He watched at least three of his companions die. One was felled on the road next to him by a speeding car, two others by the needle who, legs buckling, folded into their pre-dug graves adjacent to his pasture.

Common animals visiting pastures where he grazed

White-tailed deer, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, opossums, wild turkeys, rabbits, bluebirds, rat snakes, groundhogs, field mice, eastern meadowlarks, mourning doves.

Where he moved and lived for thirty-one years, relative to his place of birth as the crow flies (from a Google doc *Blue's Life III*)

He first moved 45 miles east, then 32 miles sw (35 miles from place of birth), then 43 miles further sw (70 miles from place of birth). From there, he moved 20 miles se (72 miles from birthplace)) and then 19 miles east (47 miles south from where he was born). Thence 110 miles ne, 11 miles due south and then back, 22 miles northeast and then back.

Except for three hospital stays those last months, each of these moves were total and complete, without return or visit.

Written on an index card at the kitchen counter

+++“The rareness of blue in nature:”

Why does a horse have a moustache?

So he can find grass in low light and identify which are most nutrient-rich.

Names of pasture grasses:

(hay) timothy and alfalfa

fescue, orchard grass, winter rye

bermuda grass, zoysia, bluegrass

queen anne's lace, passion flowers

clover and dandelions...



Fig. 11

Blue Ridge
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2018

DX THE JOURNEY/GUILD OF PAIN

From transcript of *Proprioceptiveness and Being Creatively with the Animal* (Bartram + Deigaard), *Living with Animals* conference, Eku, Richmond, KY, March 9, 2023

...it is this...cohabitating question, the question of by and for whom and whose home it is. And there are times when animals invite you into their space, they tell other animals that you are okay. There's whole networks that develop when you are trusted not to invade or to, you know, coerce... there is a whole deep way of knowing which becomes play, which becomes: we could call it research, but it becomes resonance and knowing another which is in essence what we are working to do. Looking at empathy, intimacy and this resonance of knowledge and recognition of another.

I met Blue when he was 8½ years old and already in discomfort. I took him to the vet school hospital who diagnosed navicular disease. Until the age of five, it is likely he was shod in weighted platform wedge shoes in the cruel Big Lick style of the region which led to his extremely early onset and frequently painful orthopedic issues. Tennessee Walking Horses then (and even to present day) were still too frequently "sored" on the soles of their hooves so that, in pain, they would pick their feet up higher and faster in show rings. Blue was uncommonly stoic.

I was told that he had been bred and then gelded by age five as explanation for his demi-stallion ways. Horses' skeletons are still fusing until they're eight years old.

[Link texted to self while writing this paper](#)

The Sad Cruelty Behind the Tennessee Walking Horse,
ofhorse.com

Email letter to a close friend, July 29, 2019

July 14 ... Yesterday, I lay down in the shavings with Blue while he napped. He's back in a navicular pain crater... the searingly hot barn time with Blue is real peace, despite the worry if we will make it through this.

July 22 ... I think I hold a guild membership in the school of pain... tending dearly beloved Blue for 23 years of always lurking ghastly navicular disease pain (he's the real pain sensei) is its own form of non-medical expertise that demands his human companion demonstrate many unnatural-to-her traits of advocacy, faith, hyper-conscientiousness, slow observation, collation of details of varying sizes along varying scales, psychological strategy, holding people to account [the generosity and expertise of so many], and managing a portfolio of systems, some solvable, others less so...

[...]

I know that Blue may die, sooner rather than later, or [by what the senior vets say] we may enjoy years. I know nothing much is foreseeable, and I take this (slightly quixotic but not unreasonable) journey of ours at its face. Each day of togetherness matters. Neither of us wastes these days in that Blue's gifts of seemingly telepathic connection or at least extraordinary emotional wisdom is good at holding us both in the moment. In this way, being with him is like meditation...

...Monday morning, Blue went into surgery performed in the last week before his retirement by a slight man, deeply introverted and yet world renowned, to receive bilateral front leg neurectomies.

[Emily Dickinson poem texted to self while sitting cross-legged in the shavings: "*If your Nerve deny you—/ Go above your Nerve...*"]

I am terrified of this. And yet it releases him nearly immediately from this breakaway, this meteoric pain that grew and grew... A pain that has sequestered itself, allowed its muzzling secondary to a peaceful life these last ten years in particular. It raged and towered like a

tsunami. And then it blasted through all of our lovingly built structures and coping methods...

The solution to pain, to cut and extract the nerves to create the absence of pain. There is a price. Which is that someday, he may catastrophically fail, his deep flexor tendons sawed through by the serrated navicular bone. And he will lose the mechanical ability to stand. And this would be the clear irrevocable end.

Today I watched Blue walk normally down the hall [looking about interestedly], and I dared to hope a little bit. What I saw as a last ditch intervention is not these days a rare surgery...

All horses deserve freedom of movement, to stand or walk away at will. The management of chronic navicular pain demands this. The horse vascularizes through his hooves and legs as he walks and moves. When a horse shreds his tendon in an accident as Blue did, the medical treatment is prolonged confinement to a stall as the tendon heals. In opposition to the relief, to the release of pain in a horse is the necessity for buffering his GI tract against the risk of ulcers. Blue and I with him were determined to thread between. Could his tendon heal against the worsening of navicular discomfort in confinement? Could the buffering against potential ulcers hold off against the duration required of pain medications towards healing? Each barn at which we found ourselves in and out of the hospital and rehab, Blue horse reached out to his stall mates. He was gentle and interested, concerned with the distress of others. In his own pain, next to another horse with tendon injuries, he stood with his nose near the bars, and he modeled steadiness for the other horse. He breathed deeply and stood with them. How does he convey this? How do you describe charisma and wisdom? Except that you see the other horse stop pacing and kicking the boards. You see the other horse stand in his stall close to Blue and begin to lower his head, to breathe deeper and more slowly.

Phantom pain refers to pain experienced regardless of a limb's amputation. The pain sites itself externally-in the space of absence, but of course it arises and is piercingly internal. Deaths of loved ones can

resemble amputations in that they are total losses of familiar physical bodies once connected by touch and proximity and proprioception. A neurological treatment for phantom pain creates a visage of the missing limb in order to reconnect mind and body towards alleviating phantom pain. Photographs, artwork do not resurrect. But they communicate and buttress memory, reinforce longing and the inchoate yet haptic state of being with. Being *with* heightens primary senses. Being *without* resides in painful memory.

Somatic memory can invoke sensations, felt bodily and in the present, of being near him. Somatic memory can be how the body stores trauma but also intimacies felt deeply.

BEING WITH / attempt to predict, prepare for BEING WITHOUT

Collected from email drafts typed into phone
next to sleeping horse, Aug 28, 2014

...Separation anxiety is not the same as grief. Duration however short is not the salient point but the severing of the thread. To protest the separation preserves the thread.

Proximity is a covenant...

Afterwards you dream of him. Of the fear in his eyes, the fear in yours you tried to hide. Then later—there are dreams like this: he strains through the murky darkness to meet you in the portico—a place halfway between inside and out, between the light and the cold darkness, a place of trespass for both of you.

A big horse calls to him, stomps, and he turns, pricks his ears, and runs, gallivants, unimpeded by arthritis, by bone spurs, by stiffened joints, a foal again, all legs and eagerness and boundless hope/possibility.

...Every time it starts from scratch. The curious horse who licks your arm. The wary one who stops at your touch, stills his reflexes, and waits to see what will happen next... He has written himself in you.



Fig. 12

Fata Morgana
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2018

From Google Doc *Notes for Lost Touch*
Shared Breath, March 29, 2022

When limbs overlap, the edge between them wanders. Whose edge depends on lifting and resting, yielding and pressing. To draw this line upon a page is not always possible. The viewer, like the artist, must recall touch, the sensation of heat, covalence and photosensitivity, as if the drawing could be a photograph, transparent and burned into memory as sunlight through lashes, heavy, ephemeral... And yet one limb presses another, who presses back; their cambria merge. And the edge no longer wanders. Becomes a crease, a folding, an enfolding, a commitment of parts, one to the other. This is inosculation, proximity become whole.

A certain loss of liberty ensues.

Final necropsy, July 29, 2019

...until pain no longer controllable...
...owner requests heart fixed separately.

Heart weight: 4.1 kg
Heart percentage of body weight: 0.9%
Heart weight high or low: High (adult normal is .7%)
Lungs float: Yes

Notes typed into phone, Jan 31, 2015

...
He might like Italian
Opera
...



Fig. 13

High Desert Night
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2018

DEATH / during / after (WITHOUT) / fragments

From a letter written to a friend (3 days after), Aug 1, 2019

...The intern said afterwards... the barn owner, on one of the field service visits, had said to her... “that horse really really loves that woman. It’s [written] all over his face when he sees her.”...

Blue liked in these final months to... put one eye close to mine...

We were eye to eye as he died.

One of Blue’s many gifts in life, as it was in his death, was how he coaxed a shared meditative state... showed how to maintain presence in the moment, awareness and focus. Of being tuned into a shared frequency.

I shave the white moon on his right shoulder and place the short hairs in a baggie. I take the hair on his cheek and over his heart. I clip his chin whiskers. They get their own baggie. I borrow the vet’s sharpie marker and draw on the shaved skin near Blue’s heart (to write myself into him, upon him).

I hallucinate the rising and falling of his chest.

July 28, 2019

...

I breathed in his last exhales.

Septicemia

...

[Letter, Aug 2019](#)

Dear Friend,

The College of Veterinary Medicine would like to extend our condolences during this time of loss... It is normal and natural to experience a broken heart because your beloved animal is gone...

Excerpt, transcript from a Zoom meeting, June 2023

Earlier... I talked about reading an interview with a neuroscientist and the question being asked, “Can you love from an empty room?” Does love only exist transmissorily in two directions to have life or to mean something? And the answer is “No”. Because, you can love from an empty room... You can love from afar; you can love without incursion. You can love without claiming. You can love animals without expecting to be loved back.

What do you do with this love from a remove? It is a very real thing; it is not a figment. It is not something only grown from nostalgia or from imagination. The imagination is absolutely essential to the creative space, which is action. It is essential to empathy, because the processes of cognitive empathy are going to involve imagination and the imaginative leap. These are the processes in play... Which of them will last or matter...

It’s a kind of speaking into the unspeakable void — the words and art that we send out. It’s a form of speaking as justice that comes from principles, but is an inherently communicative act. It’s a telegraphic thing. I think about it a lot with the communications of animals and the ways I try to live my life: my awareness of them and looking for their presence always and considering where I am and my role in it.

That kind of quietness and way of being is part of deep listening... or helping with the levers of empathy, or helping accessibility [towards knowing animalness] without exposure [of the animal] — the things that poetry does, which is leaping time and space where something that is immediate and personal two thousand years ago has the same force. We are talking about those things and not about answers.



Fig. 14

Photograph: "close quarters",
July 17, 2019.

IN MEMORIAM

The horse in the dark pasture sees the same moon. He tastes the change in seasons, the cresting waning sugars in the grass. What came together from fragments is torn again. Let us pick up the pieces.

Once I was loved truly madly deeply by a horse named Blue whom I loved truly madly deeply. He taught me in love and with love what I most needed to know. Through him I see the horses on the plains, the river they make, and I am parched for the sight of them. I see them and I love them and the flow of history and horizon (which is the future) suspends there in the cooling desert air as the sun drops behind the mountain. No. As the plains rise and cover the sun.

Near and Far depicts inner topographies of shared consciousness where Blue and I met and were together and free to explore. To feel as another, to feel with another, to feel without the other: empathy can become love; and grief (through which love lives on) maps itself from the individual to the collective and back again.

I'm speaking here about animal mediated, freely offered, access to insight, to ideas, to creativity, to making the work in the presence of and with the other in reciprocal companionship, in collaboration, in mutual expressions of artistry. Art-making and laying down memories ahead of my feared loss of him shared contours, as much as we both sought understanding, in the actions of love and the preservation of this singular beacon's transmissions. His generous participation, his curious inclinations, humour and affection, his conviction always (mine too) that he mattered, that human discourse was his to join in, if he chose it (nay, he led it.)



Fig. 15

Sunset
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2018

Excerpt from 27 (50 days × 1000 words), Nov 2023

What did Blue memorize of me and I of him? He and I met telescoping the time between. His gift for abiding now and being fully: how does this not make interminable the waiting for the beloved?

Because he was himself and knew himself, he and I, we, were the grace notes without which the daily mechanics, the daily subsistence and caretaking of self must continue. To love so totally and not be subsumed? To love so telescopically and not forget or diminish? The patience inherent to great love is astonishing. In constancy is the duration. In duration the memory. In memory the recall. The return and the promise of return is the future. To be known, to know, to know further: this is the ranging, the travelling, the learning, the keening and hearkening. This is the heartening: the oxygenating, the circulating.

Until the cessation of life.

Announcement of death to those who knew him from afar,
Instagram, Aug 1, 2019

In memory of Blue horse who showed the way with infinite patience, tenderness, wisdom, and wit... Sunrise, moonrise, horizon-rise we watched together. He was the night sky and the morning glow. Partner, art collaborator, muse, teacher, poetry editor, explorer, most significant of others, benevolent and charismatic to all species, eternally beloved, Blue (1988–2019).

The photograph of blue sky is his.



Fig. 16

Photograph by Blue, Oct 2016
(taken with his lips)



Fig. 17

Daybreak
Selection from *Near and Far*, 2018

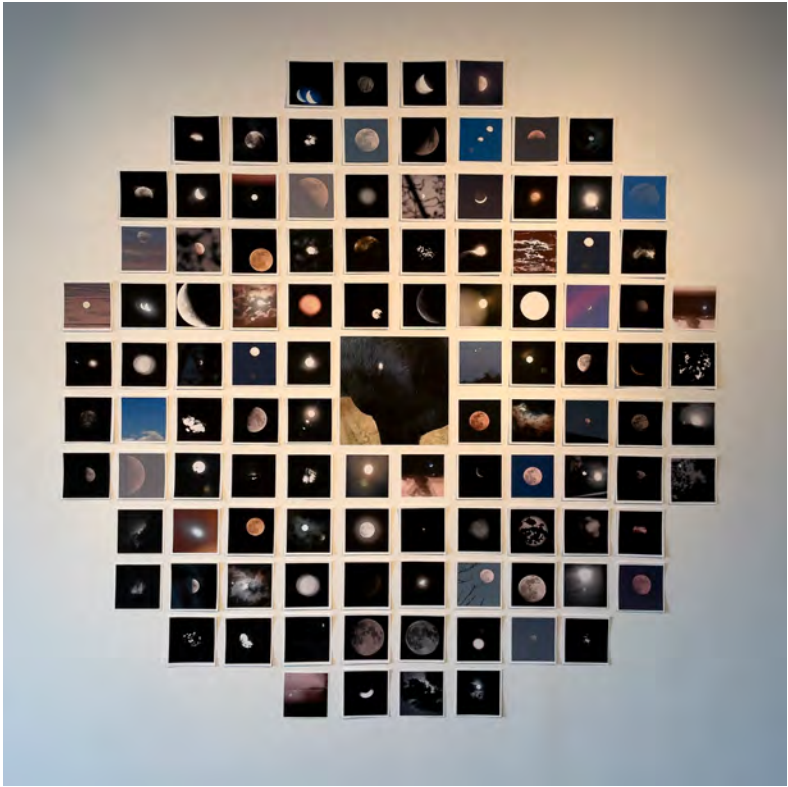


Fig. 18

Blue's Moons

An installation of photographs of the moon since his death, 2019–22



Fig. 19

Photograph: Blue's right eye, 2019



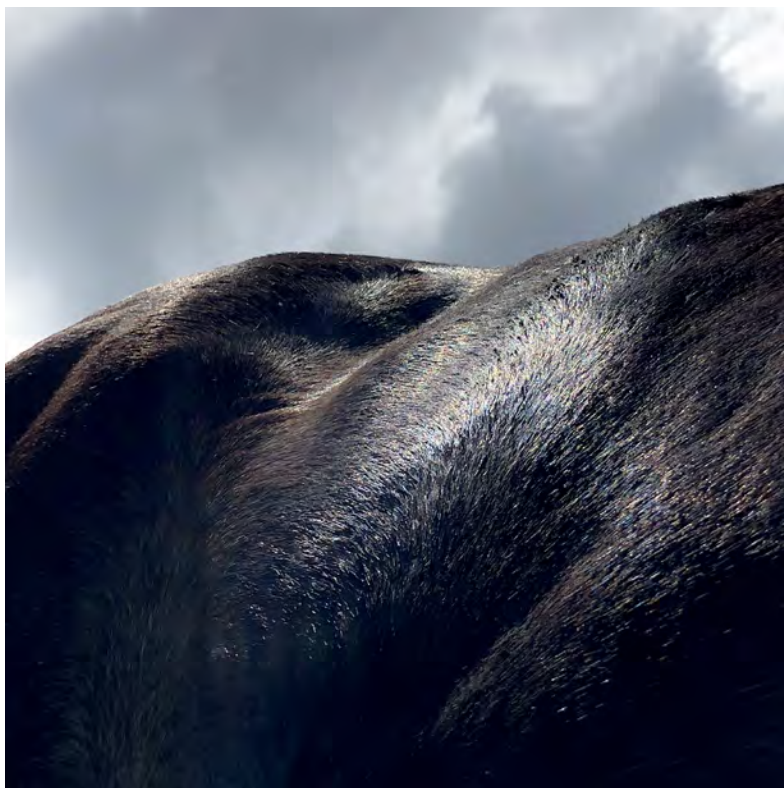


Fig. 20 (opposite)

top: *Blue Yonder*, detail [vapor trail],
2019.

bottom: *Blue Yonder*, detail [crater's
edge/cloud sacrum], 2018–9.

[note: *crater's edge* depicts two
figures on the rim of a volcano]

Fig. 21 (above)

Black Dunes

Selection from *Near and Far*, 018



Fig. 22

Detail, *Moons Revolve, Moons Adore*, two room installation, detail wall sculpture (conduit pipe and lycra), 10'×10', 2018.

Endnote

...I have been looking at intimacy as a different kind of knowledge than a rider's request of a horse or a horse's indication of tension or muscular response to his rider though there is overlap in proprioceptive awarenesses and sensory processing with any such proximity. Riding is still based in equine service to the human — and it is the very unique rider who does not employ the (even if merely suggestive or lightly wielded) essentially negative curbs of bridle and bit. Most discussions and research into horse-humanness privileges the relationship of rider to horse. I find I prefer not to cite sensory examples or research results that derive primarily from or are directed towards riding and harness activities.

I am hoping to foreground intimacy as an abiding with another without expectation of outcome or performance directive. And related to the photographic series, a thinking about horizons not only as destinations to be ridden towards but of perceiving and conceiving of the other, their unknowability, their utter specificity, the telescoping of the near and far. And the role of memory and imagination in empathetic connection and deepening understanding, in retroactive as well as anticipatory insight.

I am interested in meeting the horse on the ground, eye-to-eye, and in the best conditions of relative equality we can create for ourselves, horse and human, towards what enables and upholds emotional connection and the freedom to choose it or reject it, the porosity and mutual curiosities of two individuals, what the horse initiates and communicates to be followed by the human.

Working knowledge of many of the things research has been exploring in the last decade came to me as direct and generous teaching from the horse over the last thirty years. Any of us who have lived closely and compassionately with animals have been glad to see the accumulation of experimental results proving what animals have taught pretty explicitly in our domestic and companionate settings for a very long time. I think my essay begins and dwells within the intimate bond, porousness between two who

want to learn about and know the other, who seek companionship and deep understanding, above all else, who are not invested in the horse-rider dynamic but in the support of who the other is. And what artwork can be made of and about such an intimacy, in forms of research and of being with the other, and not permitting the pursuit of results or of formal considerations to dictate interactions. Is there a way to conduct the relationship in full presence while learning, incorporating, and understanding better through the artmaking (that is collaboratively achieved via the abiding together in curiosity and receptivity).