

Celebrating Women in Photography Today

CHAOS AND THE FURIES

Kim Shaw

One of my favourite pieces of film, ever, was the opening sequence Danny Boyle created for the 2012 London Olympics which began in the parish of Kemble in Gloucester, the source of the River Thames. For the next 3 ½ minutes, we took flight and understood, maybe for the first time, how everything grows from nothing. I think as humans, we are hardwired to seek “the source,” the beginning of the things we want to understand more fully.

Chaos and the Furies came from my personal preoccupation with the source of female identity. In Greek mythology, chaos is the time or gap before the beginning, a void state. So what, in contemporary society, fills the void that eventually spits out a person who identifies as female? Biology surely throws a bit into the void, society chucks a few things at it as well. But as one of three sisters and mother of two daughters, I can attest to the fact that, at some point, the void starts to draw things into itself. The stuff of dreams.

In “The Second Sex,” Simone de Beauvoir describes how female identity takes hold: “The little girl’s sense of secrecy that developed at pre-puberty only grows in importance. She closes herself up in fierce solitude...She is also convinced that she is misunderstood: her relationship with herself becomes even more passionate: she becomes more intoxicated with her isolation, feels different, superior, exceptional: she promises that the future will take revenge on the mediocrity of her present life. From this narrow existence, she escapes by dreams.”

And so, the unformed mass that is “Chaos” begins to order itself into “The Feminine.” None of this plays out against a blank background, of course. In “Mother-Daughter Wisdom,” Christiane Northrup writes that “every daughter contains her mother and all of the women who came before her. The unrealised dreams of our maternal ancestors are part of our heritage.” In the title of this work, the Furies allude to the spectres of our mothers, our mothers’ mothers, all of our maternal ancestors waiting impatiently, hoping that finally a generation of women will demand retribution from the world that denied them the chance to fulfil their own dreams.

These images are built from a cyanotype inventory of my eleven year old daughter’s bedroom, a survey of the things she has drawn to herself, her stuff of dreams. The cyanotypes have been digitally layered against a backdrop of my own landscapes, created with film cameras, including countless Holgas and a 4x5 pinhole camera.

Kim Shaw is an American, London based photographer whose work is experimental in nature, often made with “toy” cameras such as Holgas and a Di Vinci pinhole camera. Her work is almost entirely analog, having been captured on film and printed in the darkroom. Her Holga work has featured in New York City’s Soho Photo Gallery’s annual international Krappy Kamera show on three occasions, being named the best in show in 2017. In 2014, her solo exhibition “Paper Ghosts” was shown at Jenny Blyth Fine Art at Art Jericho in Oxford.

Kim is the Executive Director at Photofusion in Brixton, and a regular speaker on photographic practices, materiality, and experimental work.

MORE INFO

Website: kimshawphotography.com
Instagram: [instagram.com/kimshawphotographer](https://www.instagram.com/kimshawphotographer)
Email: kim@kimshawphotography.com