

## **Celine Marchbank**

### *A Stranger in My Mother's Kitchen*

As an artist my most significant works have explored autobiographical stories around death, loss and grief. My work explores complex emotional experiences through delicate quiet everyday domestic details, making work that is warm, familiar and accessible.

I propose to present a body of work *A Stranger in my Mother's Kitchen* recently published into a book by Dewi Lewis. This work, made over a five year period, a mixture of photography, writing and archival material, is an exploration of my grieving process whilst retracing my mother's life and legacy after her death.

After discovering my mother's archive of recipes, a collection of 40 years as a head-chef, I felt an overpowering need to do something with these. I wanted to feel the warmth of eating my mother's food again, to feel the feeling of being nurtured and cared for once more, so I decided to cook all the recipes. This process allowed me to feel closer to her, but it also became a distraction from my grief.

The recipes were haunted with memories; the smells took me back to moments we shared like nothing else, and the more I continued the more I felt connected to her. I photographed the process, but this is no cookbook. I wrote about and explored my grief and recovery; this creative process became my grieving process. The action of making allowed me to explore complex and confusing emotions, and learn about my new life as a daughter, a daughter without a mother.

The published work in book form unpacks these layers of memory, grief and time. The recipes are tucked into the pages like a scrapbook of culinary memories, encouraging the reader to take out and cook from. This accessible form allows the viewer to interact and feel involved, and importantly it opens up conversations around their own memories or grief.

*Celine Marchbank is a British photographic artist and lecturer (Falmouth University and UAL London). Her practice explores deeply personal stories through photography and writing. Her first book Tulip (Dewi Lewis 2016), the story of the last year of her mother's life, was met with widespread acclaim including being named Photo Book of the Month by Sean O'Hagan in The Observer. Her recent book A Stranger in My Mother's Kitchen (Dewi Lewis 2022) is an exploration of the grieving process told through cooking her mother's recipes. It was shortlisted for the Kraszna-Krausz Book Awards 2023 and exhibited at Photo London and the V&A Museum. Previous conferences; Perspectives on Motherhood Symposium, V&A Museum (2024), Facing Death Creatively, St Christopher's Hospice (2021), Death Writes: Picturing Death and Dying, University of Glasgow (2020, keynote speaker).*