

Emily Lindskoog
Making Arrangements
November 6 - December 2, 2024

Exhibition Statement:

In the last year of his life, my dad was taking four pink chemotherapy pills every day. If his kidneys were suffering or his bloodwork looked iffy, he would need to cut back or delay. Otherwise, he would take them for three weeks with one week to rest between each stretch of doses. "A maintenance drug", his doctor called it, with the shared understanding that a cure was off the table. Longevity was the new goal, and my dad chased it with everything he could. On each day he was well enough to take a dose, he would arrange his pills in the palm of his hand or atop nearby objects in a sort of pictogram, which he'd photograph, title, and text to the family – an invitation to participate in his treatment and share his final stage of life.

I started archiving these text messages almost right away. At the height of Covid, while teaching art classes online from a small apartment with two kids under four, this archive became nearly the full extent of my studio practice. I was grateful for his project for many reasons, and I told him so over the phone one day. He replied, "I think there's something for you here, Emily."

And there was. After he died, I started thinking about all the ways we were making arrangements as a family. My dad's pills, our collage, drawing, and music compositions, the arrangements for a new baby, and finally... end of life and funeral arrangements, the flower arrangements delivered almost daily, and the sorting of my dad's 71 years' worth of objects.

Included in this exhibition is a book which compiles the 484 pills arranged in the 131 photographs that my dad texted to us. In conversation with his compositions are my own pieces that take their cues from FaceTime screenshots and other pictures shared back and forth from Phoenix to Chicago. My dad would send pictures of hospital rooms or progress updates on their house rebuild, and I would send pictures of my living room overwhelmed by toys and forts. Then came my mom's pictures documenting the daily tasks of sorting sympathy cards, piles of paperwork, and my dad's clothes in the house that she now lived in alone.

My previous methods of creating unfixed collages in early motherhood have taken on new and deepened layers of meaning in grief. Like a camera roll creates a flattened space, the paper serves as a shared stage that collapses the time between two objects: a one-million-year-old rock and a broken plastic tail light are now together in a new existence, pointing to the cosmic interconnectedness of all things and the miracle of having a conscious life on this planet. The biggest events can deliver a new way of making, a new symbolic language, and sometimes, a new way of seeing. I hope there's something for you here, too, dear reader.

-Emily Lindskoog