

## ELDERLY ANIMALS PROJECT STATEMENT

Over the last several years, I have visited farm animal sanctuaries across America to create intimate photographic portraits of geriatric animals. Roughly fifty billion land animals are factory farmed globally each year. It is nothing short of a miracle to be in the presence of a farm animal who has managed to reach old age. By revealing the beauty and dignity of farm animals in their senior years, I ask viewers to reflect upon what is lost when these animals are slaughtered at a young age.

With this work I strive to depict the unique personality of each animal I photograph in order to illustrate that farmed animals are emotional sentient beings. Many of the animals in my project were abused before they were rescued. Gaining their trust can take considerable time but is essential to my process. I spend several quiet hours with each animal I photograph. Before taking any pictures, I often lie on the ground next to the animal to help him or her become comfortable with me.

For this series I have also photographed elderly companion animals. I juxtapose these images with my farmed animal portraits to exemplify the similarities among these animals and to invite inquiry into why we pamper some animals and butcher others.

I began this series shortly after caring for my mom who had Alzheimer's disease. The experience had a profound effect on me and forced me to confront my own mortality. I am terrified of growing old and I started photographing geriatric animals in order to take an unflinching look at this fear. But after meeting rescued farmed animals and hearing their stories, this project became more than a therapeutic exercise for me. I became a passionate advocate for these animals and I want these images to speak on their behalf.

A particularly difficult aspect of this project is that the animals I photograph usually die within weeks to months after I meet them. Grief initially inspired this work and it has been my constant companion as I have created these images.

*Elderly Animals* will be published by the University of Chicago Press in the Fall of 2018.