

NEW RELEASE

Richard Gosnold It Starts With Silence

Texts by Richard Gosnold
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Northern Ireland's abortion law causes deep pain for parents of a fatally ill baby – a personal but also politically relevant story

It Starts With Silence is a poignant story, in which the artist takes the reader on a deeply personal journey, a search for understanding and solace. It depicts his struggle to see beauty in the world, whilst knowing that he is powerless to help his wife and daughter. Richard Gosnold and his wife were told, at twenty weeks' gestation, that their expected baby was fatally ill. If the baby survived birth, she would suffer terrible pain, until she stopped breathing. Abortion was illegal in Northern Ireland, so Denise was forced to carry the dying foetus and wait for the inevitable.

Employing photography, texts and ephemera, Gosnold powerfully communicates the complexities of his emotions, while reflecting upon state sanctioned violence, forced birth, baby loss and lack of access to compassionate healthcare.

It Starts With Silence was shortlisted for the Unseen Dummy Award in 2019.

From the text by Richard Gosnold:

I knew she would die. But the reality. 112 days of waiting over. Horror. No escape. I thought I was prepared. I was wrong. I think forward, a year, two years. No baby. No child. Nothing. I'm a parent. Except I'm not.

It's June. It's hot.

The windows don't open. She's in a basket, cooled by a machine. The room is hot, filled with her smell, sweet, sickly. It's hot and the windows don't open. A nurse comes. She's sincere, kind, thoughtful.

»Do you want some photos?« I think no. Denise says yes. We pose. Should I smile? I look like a freak, false smiling, like a contented father. Except, I'm not.

There's a box with mementos. For me a task. I try to make hand-prints. I fail. I try to make footprints. They're passable. Her cold, thin skin, so delicate, clammy to touch. It hurts me. I want to be elsewhere. I'm ashamed. We stay another night. The room is hot. The food is rubbish. The toast is good. White toast, salty butter.

Tuesday morning. Time to leave. Do we want to take her? I think no. Denise says yes. We pack the bags. She is placed in a small, white, cardboard box. She is wrapped in a blanket. A shawl. A shroud. Bright red blood seeps into the soft, white wool. I get the car and park at the emergency exit. We'll leave by the side, as we might upset other people. Dead babies can do that.

I collect Denise and Alenja. We named her Alenja, a not so ordinary name. We creep out in silence.

A parking ticket on the windscreen obstructs my view. I was only five minutes. Who cares? Denise does. I pretend I don't. Except I do.

It's June. It's hot.

Richard Ian Gosnold is a photographic artist, based in Northern Ireland. His practice is influenced by his interest in the relationship between sociopolitical issues and the vulnerability of humans and the environment. Gosnold holds an MFA from the Belfast School of Art, Ulster University.

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Barbara Karpf, barbara.karpf@kehrerverlag.com
pr.assistance@kehrerverlag.com
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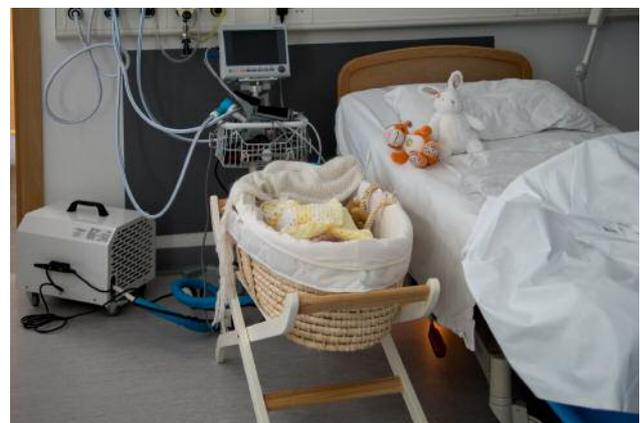
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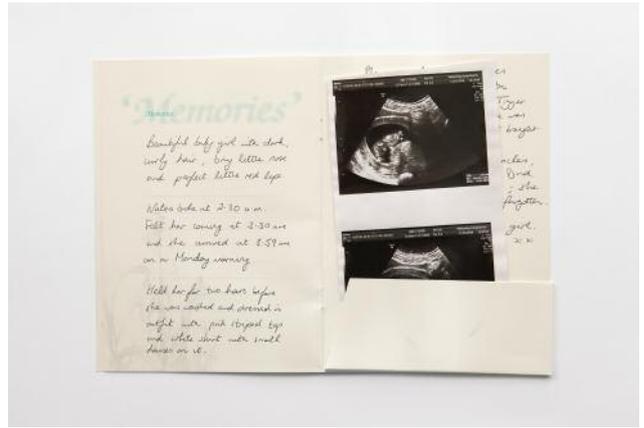
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