shore Gallery

BABYBUBU NEVER DIE

Alexandr Hackenschmied & Maya Deren, Judith Hopf, Gretchen Lawrence & Margaret Tashkova, Zoë Lund, Jennifer Moon & Laub, Libby Rothfeld, Bruno Zhu

Curated by:

Amalia Ulman

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To love an animal is to admit defeat and welcome heartbreak with open arms. That's why I mourned your death the day I met you.

I was looking for a service dog and considering buying an already-trained golden retriever with a pedigree when a local rescue group got back to me. They wanted to let me know that, while they didn't have the cute puppy I had enquired about, a female German shepherd named Barbie, they did have another dog available: a mutt who, as I had requested, was friendly with cats. That was you, Variety Magazine, and I felt that, for the name alone, you deserved a chance.

When we arrived at your foster home in Brooklyn, you received us alongside your foster brothers: a sultry orange cat and a timid black Labrador. We held you in our arms and knew you were the one. Baby Bubu, never die!

Barely three months old, and already we cried at your funeral. I knew that even as you grew into the large body your giant paws predicted, you would still be smaller than the unfathomable grief we would one day experience. Not yet, but eventually. Meanwhile, you seemed nonchalant about the whole thing, lying on the floor with your chin flat against the ground while your foster brothers tried to impress us with their politeness.

Some people go through it once and give up. They say the pain is too great to do it all over again. But isn't that the nature of true love: to willingly, even gladly, expose ourselves to loss? You aren't my first heartbreak, and you won't be the last. Is it too Catholic of me to say that hurt is the price of living?

You can pick him up tomorrow, they said.

When I hesitated, they rephrased it: You must pick him up tomorrow.

Our life together began with the mixture of urgency and timelessness. And the routine that followed was an exercise in patience and empathy: I became your servant, and in return you validated my disdain for linearity. The fact that I contain your lifetime warps my own existence. I love you. Potty training and glassy eyes all at once: baby puppy senior dog. When I look into your eyes, I'm relieved from the pressures of the clock.

- Amalia Ulman