

*There are also men in the world.*

—Lydia Davis

## **Juliana Halpert | *Bountiful Years***

October 5th - October 31st, 2024

What to say and how to say it are questions that have hounded these photographs for years. More than a few people have insisted that words would be necessary. Understanding needs some ushering-in. There's the problem of legibility. The significance will be lost on those who don't know the story. Others have warned against being too forthright, caging the narrative like it's a wild animal, language becoming nothing but a short leash.

If Knight's office phone displays the correct date, then I took these in the early afternoon on Thursday, May 18, 2017. I had been working at the magazine for three and a half years and had given my notice about a month prior. My last day was set to be June 2. I was twenty-seven years old. The plan was to leave New York and move back in with my parents. I craved a real souvenir.

People take stabs at the discursive problem. Hamza W suggested a small book with an essay, maybe mine or someone else's. Alex G proposed an interview, or a talk, the two of us, as former coworkers. Tim M thought it better to never say Knight's name at all. Molly N asked whether I have told Knight what I did—or am doing now. Jean R warned against ever using the word "statement." Chris K thought I should just write the damn thing myself. Nick A agreed. Harrison G offered the title "October." Hannah H said writing was integral to my art practice. Jamillah J wagered that someone else would probably pen something about these, eventually. Sebastian G needed a text to accompany the PDF.

I knew Knight would be out that afternoon and that my own boss would be also. It's likely that they were over at the fair, or at one of the fairs, probably together. I locked his door and pulled the blinds down over the windows. I stood on his stool, I crept under his desk, I held my Hasselblad as steadily as possible. I was careful not to touch anything. I shot one roll of film, which I developed in Brooklyn the following week. I stuffed the negatives and the CD-ROM of digital scans in a box and left New York.

Language, more than pictures, seems vulnerable to slant. Choosing how and when to show these—not to a few people, but to an ostensible public—also adds the tarnish of attitude. Aram M cooked up a scheme to place them as ads in the magazine, à la Lynda. Elena F insisted they must be staged in New York. Danielle J said that there's nothing wrong with frames on a wall.

Bruce H urged me to be totally anal, to go full fucking Christopher Williams on this shit. Shahryar N told me I should probably get a lawyer. Kristina K wanted other works alongside, as further evidence of a penchant for prying. Sam P said no gimmicks. Heji S told me to just show them already.

In November of that year, I was sifting through all my negatives and jpegs, scraping for some pictures that could impersonate a portfolio for art-school applications. I came across these again. Their meaning had changed abruptly. Maybe their meaning continues to change? Maybe meaning is just a moniker. I can't say I know exactly what means what.

—Juliana Halpert