



[front cover]

LAURA BETH REESE  
THANK YOU FOR THE FLOWERS

AUGUST 26 - OCTOBER 20, 2019

In *Thank you for the flowers*, Laura Beth Reese explores a community that she almost, but didn't, grow up in. Shortly after birth, Reese was put up for adoption, growing up in a quaint New Jersey suburb, the daughter of two loving adoptive parents. Her biological parents eventually married, raising three children somewhere in Iowa.

Using her personal history as a point of departure, Reese takes aim at an imagined Iowa. Introspection undergirds the work, as images of everyday Iowans are employed in service of a fictional autobiography. Alternating between narrative and conceptual frameworks, Reese's portrayal is of a place she longs to know. This plays out through hyper-saturated images that approach magical realism, contrasted by washed out dystopian or dream-like vignettes.

Some works feel like documentation while others are purely ephemeral, and yet each oversized photograph is displayed as if a poster on a teenager's bedroom wall. Posters are often aspirational images for young people - frequently depicting teen-idols or Lamborghinis. Reese employs this presentation strategy to fetishize this nondescript heartland community. Her work blows up suburban banality to heighten simultaneous feelings of familiarity - and distance.

Her combination of varied perspectives, angles, and shooting distances alludes to conflicted thoughts and feelings. Reese was fortunate to have ultimately landed in a loving and secure home. But she communicates her vacillation, by exploring and contrasting the real and imagined pathways her life did take, versus the one it could have taken. When a photographer creates an image, they are telling us something about the subject, but perhaps more so, they are sharing glimpses of their own concerns. In doing so, they tip their hand to allow the outside world to look inward, if only for an instant.

Paul M. Nicholson  
Director Martin Art Gallery



Alonnia



Oceans of Fun



Chicksee Quarry



Shutterstock







*Dubuque (no. 02)*



Dubuque (p. 2)



Bailey and Machine



Taco Time



Chicago



Devoport



Kerry



Spirit Lake



Laura Beth Reese (b. 1987) holds an MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and a BA from Muhlenberg College. Her work has been exhibited nationally—most recently at the SPRING/BREAK Art Show in New York City and the Colorado Photographic Arts Center. She was a 2016 recipient of the Traveling Fellowship from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and has been published in Boston Art Review, Paper Safe and online at Feature Shoot and The Huffington Post, among others.

Reese was born in Iowa and raised on the east coast of the United States. She resides in Boston where she has taught at Harvard University, Boston College, and currently works as a Studio Manager and Part-Time faculty member at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.



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August 26 - October 20, 2019  
Martin Art Gallery at Muhlenberg College  
2400 Chew Street, Allentown PA