



Prysia Wytwycky ©LIDA SUCHÝ

Nancy Keefe Rhodes

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE:

LIDA SUCHÝ AND THE COMMUNITY CHOIR PHOTOGRAPHS

As public portraits of a company of performers in our age of celebrity, they are a strange lot, what Lida Suchý calls “an unflinching look at the visible wrapper.”

Suchý’s photographs of the Syracuse Community Choir first appeared in exhibition as *Voices of Diversity* for a month last winter at Syracuse’s ArtRage Gallery. More than three years* in the making, her set of photographs comprises one hundred and ten black-and-white images of individual Choir members. Arresting and powerful, some are large format single shots and others arranged in grids of up to twelve images (an echo of the Choir’s annual practice of raffling off a member-produced quilt during the winter holidays). For a project whose subject is inclusive community-building through musical performance, these direct and straight-on portraits are at first mildly disconcerting. They utterly lack the quality of “social grease” and over-amped affect that often marks the glib, ad-based visual style of such efforts. Instead, these are images of individuals at rest, both embraced and given space by the photographer’s patient attention. They are in every sense “stills,” in whose presence you turn down your own volume in order to return that attention.

Syracuse Community Choir director Karen Mihalyi initially wanted a conventional video record of the anniversary concert as event, but something more complex emerged as a film essay about the rehearsal process. Then Suchý brought her own method of producing composite community portraiture, a history of collaboration with her husband, and a particular receptiveness to this Choir as subject.

“I first learned of the Community Choir when I was looking for a way to help my then-five-year-old son, Myko, make new friends and develop musically,” she recalls. “I had no musical background, but wanted my son to experience the joy of singing and performance. Myko joined the Choir and soon afterward sang in his first Winter Solstice Concert. During this performance, the older kids pushed him to the front, where he spent most of the time fidgeting. When the audience applauded, he obstinately clasped his

*In tandem with Suchý’s Choir photographs, her filmmaker husband, Mišo, produced a documentary of the Choir’s 20th anniversary concert in 2005.

hands over his ears. My husband and I were mortified, but no one besides us seemed to notice. Only later did I realize that, like all the other choir members, Myko was embraced and accepted for being the five-year-old that he was. When you're a parent it can be really hard to let go. You see yourself being that child, so this really moved me. It was a breakthrough point."

The Syracuse Community Choir has a broad history leading to such moments. In 1984, Mihalyi witnessed efforts to use the arts to build community when she travelled widely in the villages and countryside of Nicaragua. She had spent a decade in Women's Movement projects that struggled with diversity of age, race, sexual orientation, class and disabilities, as well as evolving peace, justice and green issues. The next year, after Mihalyi returned, she decided to start a no-audition choir that anyone—really anyone—could join. During the early years she wryly told one interviewer that the Choir also had "singing disabled" members who needed extra help too. And Mihalyi, who had grown up in a small town in northern New York, wanted to recreate the same sense of "knowing people all their lives."

"We've seen babies grow up and we've lost people too," she said of the Choir.

Though Central New Yorkers who have watched or who sing with the Choir of course know the specifics of that history, anyone considering these photographs will grasp that passage of time simply in the span of members' ages. This made the choir an apt subject for Suchý, with both local and wider resonance.

Growing up hearing that "home" is always somewhere else can be one lens for the struggles to "fit in" that all diverse peoples endure. Finding a way to be "at home" matters profoundly to both Suchýs, who met in Eastern Europe while each was exploring ancestral lands after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Lida grew up in a refugee family in Rochester, New York. Her parents left Ukraine when the Soviets took over during Stalin's era. In 1992, Lida had just finished an MFA in photo at Yale, where she studied with Tod Papageorge and Richard Benson. Her parents had planned a trip back to the Carpathian Mountain village from which her father had come, but when her mother fell ill, Lida took her place. A year later she returned by herself to one Hutsul* village she and her father had visited, Kryvorivnia,

*The ethnic Hutsuls are the subject of Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky's celebrated novel, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, and Kryvorivnia the village where that novel was set and where Sergei Parajanov filmed his 1964 screen adaptation, available at Netflix.

on an art-exchange fellowship. There she met Mišo. A native of the city of Bratislava—then part of pre-partition Czechoslovakia—he too had been exploring the region from which his father had come in nearby eastern Slovakia. (This period has continued to yield rich work for the Suchýs. In 2007, Mišo produced the award-winning film *Pictograph* entirely from the smaller 35-mm range-finder camera that Lida used a bit like a sketch-book in Kryvorivnia.)

In Kryvorivna, Lida made her first composite community portrait from large format individual photographs like that which she began with Prysia, an aging Ukrainian refugee widow she met while in graduate school.

Suchý is both temperamentally reticent and believes that her photos “ought to speak for themselves.” During a series of conversations she and I had last spring for this article, she mused that photographers’ statements about their work at times seems to overshadow the images themselves. But, from early on in her career, her journalistic photographs have appeared here and abroad in publications such as *Life*, *Geo*, and *National Geographic*, and her art photographs have been seriously reviewed—in Bratislava’s annual Month of Photography, in the Washington Project for the Arts, in London (where *Survivors: Photographs of Gypsies in Slovakia*, a joint exhibition with Mišo, debuted at the prestigious Photographers’ Gallery in 1990) and other major European and U.S. cities. Since 1991 she has been a visiting artist nineteen times, held university-level faculty positions (she now teaches at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse), has work in ten public collections, and has regularly been supported by commissions or substantial grants.

In 2004, Light Work Gallery in Syracuse exhibited *Ukrainian Photographs*, a group of portraits from the Carpathian Mountains alongside others from Ukrainian immigrant communities in upstate New York, both struggling with identity and change. In Light Work’s publication *Contact Sheet*, Boston documentary filmmaker Brian Truglio wrote:

What gives Lida’s portraits their unique perspective is that she stands simultaneously inside and outside the community she is photographing. They are at once intimate and solitary portraits, not simply a search for identity but a genuine attempt to connect.... Looking West from Ukraine, Lida saw how far apart the two cultures had grown.... Like Lida, we are left to resolve the myths and realities of these two portraits and, ultimately, find a place to stand in between them.

Last spring, Suchý also began articulating a more specific statement of her own aesthetic practice and how it relates to this project. She writes, for example:

The strategy is to include as much detail in the image as possible. Seemingly banal details—the sheen of an earring, the clasp on some overalls—take on a new resonance. In most portraits direct eye contact is sustained. The eyes are the sharpest, clearest part of the image. This is a careful look at ordinary people.

The statement, “My photographs are the antithesis of the celebrity portrait,” then seems a point at which she had arrived rather than started from, although she has long been interested in the relationship between celebrity and photography. She readily recalled, for example, that in 1999 the Museum of Modern Art in New York City had a massive 600-item exhibition that traced the evolving relationship between photography and fame since the medium’s dawn in 1839. Intriguingly, our conversations also unfolded just as the Susan Boyle phenomenon occurred. So often reduced to the single word “frumpy,” the Scottish church choir singer was a contestant last April on the televised *Britain’s Got Talent*. Her performance shocked judges and audience alike, resulting in world-wide media coverage, record-breaking Internet viewings of the video clip and a feverish surge of commentary on the tension between appearance and value that bizarrely centered on whether Boyle should get a “make-over.” Beside observing that this was an example of why there’s no television in her home, Suchý noted that Syracuse’s Community Choir had helped by its public example to create an environment in which Susan Boyle’s local counterparts are treated very differently when they choose to engage in musical performance.

For her portraits Suchý uses a large format 8 x 10 view camera with analog film stock that requires an unusually long exposure, on occasion even up to three seconds. For the Choir project she used digital post-production and printing to a greater extent than she ever had before, through a grant enabling her to work at Light Work Community Darkroom at Syracuse University.

She began making portraits like this in 1992. Besides a selection of the 2009 Community Choir portraits, we’re including here their forerunner, a silver gelatin print made at Yale. The very first such portrait Suchý made

in this way concluded a series entitled *Prysia's Garden*, of Prysia Wytwycky, the Ukrainian refugee widow in her 80s who lived in New Haven, rented rooms, lived frugally and gardened extensively, and was one of the largest donors to Harvard's Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI).

Suchý owes the portrait's existence to a near-calamity. When her apartment was robbed of her camera and all her gear, Suchý thought she might have to drop out of graduate school.

"When people in the Ukrainian-American community found out," she recalled, "they let the priest know and he had an old camera in his basement. And right along that time I'd been working with a 35-mm range-finder camera, and I had felt that I had sort of exhausted its potential. I wanted to make a kind of a picture of Prysia that I hadn't made before. A straight forward portrait of her that had more to do with working with her somehow, giving her space but in a very direct way. And we hadn't done that, quite like that, before. I wanted to transition to a view camera with a negative large enough for contact printing because I'd started to make platinum prints. The camera that the priest was offering me had belonged to an old portrait photographer. And it was a pretty amazing thing, this wooden 8 x 10 view camera, because it was something I had been contemplating at the time. I put it to use right away and I made the portrait of Prysia that I had hoped to make—that I didn't know I could make before. I just didn't have the one key ingredient that was missing in this series of images. I think the large negative and all the detail it revealed was important in that. Because of the long exposure it tends to have a blur. There is a breathing going on. Something in our collaboration changed—it was more direct, more face to face. Instead of me running after the image, it was about both of us being still and finding it from the inside. So it was a discovery for me. I made a 20 x 30 print on Irving Penn's old enlarger at Yale and I haven't found a really good enlarger for 8 x 10 since then. That's ironic, actually, given the kind of portraits Penn made of celebrities! Richard Benson was a real lover of the large negative, a fan of the physicality of printing—he would change the paper to fit the image. He's just published a book [*The Printed Picture*, 2008] and he taught a whole generation of photographers of people these old processes. I was pretty clumsy with the camera when I first started using it. I felt I would like to use it extensively and get to know it well."

II.

NKR: Would you talk a bit about the composite community portrait and your idea of collaboration?

LS: The film was Karen [Mihalyi]’s idea, though actually Mišo had said it would be an interesting project. I thought maybe somehow his film could open with a series of portraits of the different people. And then I thought, oh that’s the village in Ukraine—the composite portrait, and what’s really interesting is the diversity, and seeing close up how the faces actually become more than the sum of the parts. I always include the person’s name because that retains the individual within the larger community. I’m photographing singers, yes, but not as singers—as humans. I do see the pictures as being about unmasking and the portrait-making process as one of collaboration. When the pictures are successful, I think they tend to break down some of the façade. A picture where the sitter—or the photographer—is in complete control is really not interesting to me. That’s the kind of picture that you go to Sears or J.C. Penney to get. I’m more interested in seeing something that’s intimate and in some way, real. I don’t say “true” because I think that’s not the right word to use. In the picture-making process, I open myself and I make myself vulnerable too. It’s a process that goes on between both people. Sometimes there’s no talking, which might be awkward. It’s not that it’s embarrassing. I’m willing to wait. When I work with a 35-mm camera I probably overshoot. But when I work with an 8 x 10 camera, often times I can only shoot one sheet—maybe that’s all I have or all my budget will allow. So for me it was a process of learning to wait, learning to be still. I think about things afterward, and in between, and when I’m teaching, I tell my students how they can go about trying to utilize light so it’s all percolating inside. But when it comes time to make the picture, I act intuitively. I don’t think it through at the time.

NKR: These are really the opposite of your conventional show business photo.

LS: Well, I find those pictures, as I said before, unbelievable. And I think it’s important to see certain blemishes. I started thinking what if I frame this idea of portraiture of singers as being against the celebrity portrait? Not “against”

but my response to. I just don't believe these plastic surfaces—these slick, slick finishes. I don't want to be bombarded by this kind of imagery. It's too hard to try to live with. But my own work responds to this idea of glamour and what we should look like. I feel that it's hollow. Documentary-style photography that is reality-based has really been debunked—yet I still love it. I don't feel that because it's out of style I shouldn't be doing it and that I should be doing something else that's gonna click.

NKR: Would you talk a bit about the process that evolved for this series of portraits—you've said you like to photograph at the fringes of events?

LS: I don't photograph performers during performances. The pictures are not publicity photos. They aren't done in a studio but often in my backyard or the sitter's backyard. I do like to photograph sometimes during a concert, and of course I can't photograph the singers by pulling them out of the concert. During the breaks and sometimes before and right after, or sometimes the kids will finish and the concert's still going. There's a certain kind of tension that comes from being on the fringes of an event that I like. There have been practices that I've gone to and various picnics. I think my very first shoot was a group of people who were working on the quilt. And usually I just ask one person and I can take however much time I need—which is more than people think.

NKR: Almost always photographers and filmmakers, artists, say, "I was just doing what felt right." And that the interpretation comes afterward. How do you balance the fact that you teach history of photography with that?

LS: When I teach history of photography I always tell my students that I teach as a practitioner of photography, not as an art historian. We cover all the facts and we get the basic interpretations from the textbook, but what I can bring to the course and make relevant for the students, who by and large are photo majors, is to show how they can use that, how they use the knowledge that they gain from the course in their own work. I always say it doesn't make sense to reinvent the wheel. You have to know your history of the medium and look to that for inspiration. That's what I've always done.

NKR: Where do you fit in the history of your medium?

LS: Certainly there are influences. August Sander, of course. Judith Joy Ross, a more contemporary photographer than Sander, whose work I love. She brings a feminist sensibility to portraiture. I met her very briefly at Yale. Both she and Sander are able to capture the complexity of a human being in a direct, straightforward way. The kind of work that I do has fallen out of favor lately and fabrications and constructions have been much more in fashion. It's only very recently that people are looking again at the work that's very descriptive about the world out there. But there's a really strong tradition in the work that I do that is not any less creative than it is to construct something. And in the history class, I try to show both worlds to my students. I'm pretty excited, actually, about some post-modernist works, some constructions and fabrications. But at the same time I don't want my students to think that documentary is somehow second-rate or less creative. And I think too often, because photography is based in the world out there, people confuse it with the truth. I think it's all about telling stories. But because the medium itself is so steeped in the real world, it's hard to distinguish between them sometimes. Especially in portraiture that's difficult—the people who are in pictures, to realize that it's not them that we're looking at. It's a picture of them. You know, that it's just one interpretation, that it's a fiction. In terms of moving away from the 35-mm pictures, they have a certain kind of—I guess, pathos, and I'm not sure that much more can be juiced out of it. It's been done so well by different photographers—from Robert Capa to current photographers who work in the subjective journalism approach. I wondered how I might make images that were somehow more contemplative, yet still compelling—to go from something dramatic to something subtle. So that they could speak in a more quiet way, but have an equal voice.

NKR: Why do you make photographs?

LS: I have a passion for it. It's quite exciting, as the process unfolds—to make the pictures, to process them. The physicality of it—I enjoy working in the wet darkroom and seeing the negative and the print. It's a real physical pleasure—to see the pictures later, to work with them, to print them, to sequence and arrange them. And lately I've started working in the digital

darkroom for post-production and that's also exciting, to see the quality that can be achieved. That capability is relatively new and I've been exploring it through this choir project and I'd like to do more of that.

NKR: Do you have a sense of why you prefer black-and-white over color?

LS: Black-and-white is more potent, it feels more like alchemy. The c-prints have that plastic feel to them—the surface. I guess it's that the black-and-white has a tactile nature that color doesn't have. The color really becomes about surface and about façade, it becomes about masking. I love the way in some of her older works Cindy Sherman used the Cibachrome, the seductive nature of it, and with her subject matter that that really worked well. So maybe there's something about what I photograph and how I go about it that fits with the black-and-white. I really like paper. I like the way the bite of the paper feels—the paper's texture—and I miss that in the c-prints. Now with digital it's more possible to use different kinds of surfaces. But when I first began to toy with the idea of a larger camera, it was partly the tooth of the paper and the surface and the hand-coating of the platinum on that watercolor paper that fascinated me. The whole process was an inspiration. But I was still exploring that surface quality in the print with the Ukrainian pictures. And the Choir project is the first time I've used digital post-production. I hadn't seen really good results until very recently with the kind of paper that had the feel to it that I like. I'd like to experiment with that in the black-and-white. The advantage of digital post-production was it was easy to make enlargements and easy also to make the grids. Now I'm interested in seeing how good a print I can make with a digital tool.

III.

Jacqueline Corbett is a neighbor of Suchý's. This portrait may look the closest to conventionally glamorous of any in the series, yet Suchý explains how at odds with the usual method of glamour this photograph is.

LS: It was the very best light is at the end of the day, when there's not a lot of it left and it doesn't last a long time, and I think it started raining too. And the wind also started blowing and I had I think made a couple different exposures. Some where the wind wasn't blowing and some where it was.

I really consciously chose this picture over the one that was sharp. And I know that after I made the picture, I didn't feel it would be possible to make another picture. That was the end of the light. Too often, I think that images that are typically thought of as glamour portraits, you know, show complete, total control on the part of the photographer. As an artist one of the things that interests me is being on the edge of things. Sometimes that means being on the verge of going out of control—technically. Sometimes it's working with chance. But it's also planning for that, knowing that that's probably going to happen and trying to work with the chance and have the chance fall in a favorable way. I think a lot of portrait photographers work in a studio because it means they have complete control. They don't have to worry about the weather. They don't have to worry about the wind. And Jacquelyn has this definite way—she's very, very personable, extremely warm—but at the same time she's quite beautiful and can be very glamorous. But also I think it's without pretense. That's what really attracted me.

Bob Shenandoah is one of a number of choir members from the Onondaga Nation, whose present territory lies just south of Syracuse but once encompassed much of the upstate region, including the city of Syracuse and their sacred body to the north, Onondaga Lake. From the start, the Choir has built a partnership with the Nation, holding some concerts there, acknowledging that Central New Yorkers live on Onondaga land, and incorporating Onondaga values such as public thanksgiving into Choir events. After a time, gazing at this image, one can almost see lines emerge in the composition of its horizontals and angles that evoke Native design, in particular the Onondaga wampum.

LS: This photograph was made on Onondaga land, at the time of a concert there. I did photograph him once before and even before I saw it, I knew it wasn't the way I wanted it. He was very patient with me! The gesture of his hands is important to this image and repeats in some others.

Roberta Mills was photographed just before the Choir's concert at the Onondaga Nation just south of Syracuse.

LS: It was a difficult because the concert started around right around noon which is typically the worst time for the light. And also it was unpleasant

for people to be outside. It was the summer and pretty hot. There was just a narrow sliver of shade. Roberta has a disability in terms of seeing and someone was helping her get to the position and stay balanced. There was a stucco wall behind her. I know that it was difficult for her to stand still without swaying and to keep her eyes open in the glare instead of blinking. There's something about her I admire so much. The image just draws me in. I hope that I did her justice. I feel that it's one of the strongest photographs in the group.

Dick Mundy has passed away since Suchý made this photograph. As a Quaker long used to the practice of “sitting” and hence settling quickly into a calm alertness—though she remarked that she hadn't known that about him—he may have found Suchý's method congenial.

LS: He was a volunteer at the Westcott Street Festival a couple years ago, manning one of the booths. I had recruited him to walk two blocks over to where I had my camera set up in a place that would be kind of quiet, on the edges of things. I remember it was kind of a long, slow trip. He stood the whole time. I do remember being surprised at how patient he was and how long he was willing to stand. I asked him several times if he wanted to take a break, if this was enough or he needed to sit down, and he really seemed to feel it was okay to continue. I was surprised at the degree to which he wanted to collaborate.

Mary Swenson's is an image that almost resists comment in its quiet starkness.

LS: In the end I decided to photograph Mary very directly. Originally this image was printed as one of nine on a grid for the show, blown up very large. I wanted to make her part of the group in that way and it was the photograph I felt strongest about. I have a recollection of her, not singing, but playing the piano, songs that the audience knew and resonated with—John Lennon's “Let it Be” and another time, “Lean on Me.”

John Heard's is one of the more remarkable photographs for its quiet luminance.

LS: His features are very striking but I was more interested in photographing him as John Heard than as John Heard the actor. With him I think it was harder to reach across that, because I think he was invested in a certain idea he wanted to portray and, while I felt that was an important aspect, I didn't want to just have a façade. I think that with him there were two different images that I made. One where I felt that he maintained the façade and then this one where I felt it was more of a collaboration.

Gabrielle Pascal is one of a number of children in the series. Suchy has the capacity to catch a quicksilver quality in children that evokes their old souls, perhaps in the angles she chooses and the dappled light and shade often behind them.

LS: I wanted to give her space to be herself. She already has such presence. I made this one in my backyard, after photographing her mother and sister pretty close-up.

Jason Frost was just getting ready to leave on a trip out west. His mother also sings in the choir.

LS: I think he was going to go to Burning Man Festival—something in California. He was leaving his family, I think for the first time as a young adult to go away for a period of time. He was leaving the next day. In some sense that's on the fringe of something. I know it was significant to them, and I think this photo session was also in part a ritual that was part of that process of his family releasing him. I think a lot of people respond to this image. It's very straight-forward, a direct image where he fills most of the frame with his face.

Colin Burns' photograph is one of the few in the series with so much movement.

LS: This is probably one of my favorite images. Partly I really like the background. But I feel like he was quite giving. I think that generally he has a good time for himself. And that's something quite special, a quality that he has, that he's able to let go of certain things that most of us hang onto and maybe keep us from enjoying the moment. Because I think that he really is in the moment. Or at least, that's the way I interpret it.

Tamika de la Roza's image expresses a self-possession verified by the picture's back story. The dark cloth is Suchý's, who added it for contrast.

LS: Let's see, she would have been in eighth or ninth grade at the time. She's home-taught. She was one of the few people who had a real clear idea of how she wanted to present herself. I was photographing three or four people and she was the first. I asked whether she wanted to sit or to stand and she was really clear that she wanted to sit. I wasn't so sure about that so I was a little tentative but she was very assertive. So she sat and I think I just made the one negative. I'm suspecting that she had seen a presentation about the portrait project and she had come with her own idea about how she should be presented, or how she should present herself. I found that really interesting and I found her a strong collaborator. And for someone that young she has a very well-developed sense of self and she projects that strongly.

Karen Mihalyi is the director and founder of the choir. Suchý said that made her photograph a particular challenge, both in making the picture and then in post-production where she wrestled with the print's degree of contrast.

LS: The photograph of her needed to somehow be distinguished—to reflect her position. I think with Karen I was more self-conscious. With Karen there were a number of pictures and most of them I felt weren't successful. I like this photograph quite a bit. I started out with this image of an earth goddess where, somehow, she was head to toe with some space around her—like, some sky. When I got rid of my preconceived idea and just photographed Karen as Karen, the image was more successful. I wasn't sure that she herself really liked this photograph. But she told me about an experience she had with the local photographer Mike Greenlar. He had been to the exhibit and seen this photograph, then shortly afterward he was photographing at an event where she was. He ran up to her, hugged her and said, 'I just love that photograph of you! It's wonderful.' I feel like for her that was a revelation. I think that made a difference.

Violet Vasquez's photograph is especially striking for its use of background, almost tender in Suchý's choice of foliage and light, balancing a sense of having faced the world with a restored innocence.

LS: This is another transparent image of somebody who I think has a strength. Having the natural background of the leaves is something that always attracts me. The background here is almost inspired by that famous Rousseau painting of the lush forest, the natural world.

Mardea Warner stood for this photograph in another situation of quickly waning light.

LS: She just exudes calm and steadiness. She is stately, and often speaks for the Choir at concerts. I chose a central composition to match that, with open space above her head. I had to set up rather quickly. Mišo and I had just shown a group of Choir members the first rough cut of his film and I had a camera with me, so I set up really on a whim.

Eleanor Russell has decades of work as a performer and has a charismatic presence even at rest. This photograph was almost the first that one saw upon entering the original ArtRage exhibition and has remained firmly among my favorites.

LS: I think she's been an activist. She's part of a lot of social history. We spent an hour or so just talking about certain things that she had done. Initially I avoided this image and chose one that was a straight-on. I was afraid this would be too visually different. I felt that the straight-on one was perhaps less compelling, but I have to go with what picture speaks in the end, especially with such a large group of images. They needed to have a certain kind of a rhythm and to work as a group, and for that reason I chose this image of Eleanor.

Barb Lane's photograph is the only horizontally-oriented image in the series. It's a layered, visually sophisticated image of someone who was initially willing to tolerate having her picture snapped. But making the image turned out to be significant.

LS: This is one of the first portraits I made on this whole project, either the very first shoot or there was maybe one shoot before this. But this was at someone's house where they were working on the quilt. She was barefoot and she was willing to sit on this little stool in the yard. There was the same kind of feeling as what we talked about with Karen—that these are really

strong women in the choir. I think it's a combination of a sense of strength and a sense of vulnerability together that create a tension that makes the picture. I think that comes from having two things that are disparate come together. When I was tweaking it for the print, I wanted a particular softness in the background. There was this horizon line with the trees coming out and this area right here was really important to me—it was like a little hole into the forest—and the combination made this really important. I felt like the process with her didn't stop with the photograph. And in the end she was one of the strongest supporters—she helped me a lot, when I needed help getting people and identifying who was missing and so forth, she was very supportive in that. Later on she was pretty excited about the whole show. I felt like she understood the whole process and how it came together in the end.

IV.

“To make pictures in my very direct way, I find I first need to disarm myself. As a result, I often find the sitter also disarmed. From my end, acceptance is an important part of this process, for I find that I cannot photograph that which I do not love.”—Lida Suchý ☞



Jacqueline Corbett ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Bob Shenandoah ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Roberta Mills ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Dick Mundy ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Mary Swenson ©LIDA SUCHÝ



John Heard ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Gabrielle Pascal ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Jason Frost ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Colin Burns ©LIDA SUCHÝ



Tamika de la Roza ©LIDA SUCHÝ



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