

## *Joshua Lutz: Hesitating Beauty*

ClampArt

521-531 W. 25th St., (646) 230-0020

Through May 18

Joshua Lutz (b. 1975) established his reputation with the publication in 2008 of "Meadowlands," a large-format book with meticulous pictures of the much-abused New Jersey wetlands. The 43 "Hesitating Beauty" pictures up at ClampArt were published last year in a much smaller format, but no less ambitious, book. The Beauty of the title was Mr. Lutz's mother, who was a schizophrenic, bipolar mental patient, and died in 2011 at age 63. Most of the pictures were taken by Mr. Lutz, some when he was a teenager, but others were lifted from the family archives. Only about a third of the pictures are actually of his mother; others are of unidentified people, or scenes the photographer associates with his mother and her illness. Mr. Lutz has said growing up with a mother who was mad—she searched license-plate numbers for hidden patterns, and unscrewed the telephone receiver to see if it was bugged—was terrifying, and it is that experience he tries to convey.

The saddest picture is the one that shows her happiest, because we know she is doomed: She is an attractive young woman posing on a bicycle, a sweater tied around her waist, her thick, dark hair framing a glorious smile. Another picture shows her in the hospital in middle age, shapeless, hair cropped, staring blankly into space. A close-up of her arm at a different period shows the hospital wristbands, one of which identifies her as a patient on Haldol, an anti-psychotic medicine. The precise intent of several pictures is unclear, perhaps suggesting the condition of this troubled soul.

Mr. Meyers writes on photography for The Wall Street Journal. See his work at [williammeyersphotography.com](http://williammeyersphotography.com).

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