

April, Raymonde. — «J’aurais dû naître à Rivière-du-Loup».— «Raymonde April : La maison où j’ai grandi».— Rivière-du-Loup : Musée du Bas-Saint-Laurent, 2013.— P. 21-22.— Also in English : p. 52-53

J’aurais dû naître à Rivière-du-Loup
Raymonde April



I should have been born in Rivière-du-Loup: that’s where my parents had always lived. But as fate would have it, the repair shop of the Canadian National Railway where my father worked was relocated to Moncton, and he followed. My mother, pregnant with me, soon joined him and I was born in Moncton. Six months after my birth, my homesick parents made a permanent move back to Rivière-du-Loup, where my father was hired by the police force.

I grew up in a large brick house right near St. Ludger Church. I was a quiet, serious child who loved to read, observe and daydream. I was an artist; it was not yet what I did but rather a foreshaping of it. It was only after leaving home and making new friends in the Quartier Latin of Quebec City that I began to tell stories, describe and invent. I adopted photography as a language because the camera was light, easy to operate and a natural extension of myself. Also, the field I chose wasn’t claimed by anyone else at the time and my professors at Université Laval weren’t

very familiar with it. I was free, without a master or an established culture, in a space for me alone.

In 1973 I bought my first camera, a Canon FTb with a black body. I photographed myself, my friends, my family and the places I went. People were always willing to let me do what I wanted, undoubtedly aware that it was an expression of love. My images move in the frame and float in front of their textured surfaces, beyond their subject, to catch the gaze of viewers. My photos represent very small moments, but when added together they weave an endless tale. They look at me and ask me questions. Over time, one story fades away and another takes shape before my eyes: without thinking too much about it, I've captured the passage of Time on places and on faces, and have recorded a kind of History.

I address myself to the viewer's intuition, to their intimate selves, and imagination. My reasons for putting images together the way I do stem from my experience as an artist, from the unspoken. My formal choices are intuitive; when I group images together it's like writing. I work on the spaces between the images as much as on the images themselves. I've never defined myself as a documentary photographer because I'm just as interested in the fictions within the images as in the reality from which they spring. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that there is a descriptive side to my images that makes them undeniable reflections of their geographic and cultural space and time. I'm happy that my work is positioned in this way, as an integral part of the Quebec society from which it emerged, and that it expresses and represents this society.

My parents sold our house in 1993. It's been a year and a half since my father passed away. I recall all my departures from Rivière-du-Loup – taking Highway 20 and passing the Pèlerins, my heart silenced by an ungraspable lament, still and snowy. Leaving to study, to work, to make a life, to settle in the big city, to love and suffer there, to start projects, to keep appointments, to pick up the pieces, to fly to other countries. When I return there, sometimes, on a beautiful summer night, I dream that I am once again that obedient little girl whose grandmother took her by the hand and walked with her to school.

April 6, 2003