Metagestures
Carla Nappi, Dominic Pettman

Published by Punctum Books


⇒ For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/75666
She was born eyeless but with a kind of sight in her fingers, her cameras, her takers of touch and outline and her little spinners of apparition. She saw in moments that connected themselves or not, and so she lived sometimes frame by frame and sometimes in a sequence of small pannings across and back and then again. As she grew her fingertips shed themselves like snake-skin and new patterns grew in their place, new perspectives and new forms of truth and new illusions and new trickery. She kept a box of her fingerprints, and when she picked them up and pressed them to her lips they let her see again in the ways she had when she was younger.

One finger saw the way birds see, draping surfaces with more color than she knew how to understand or share. (This was a lonely kind of sight.)

One finger saw like a frog.

One finger saw like an octopus, touching the colors of things into being.

One finger was a kaleidoscope, briefly and sweetly, during a great and consuming love.

One finger only saw in the light and night of an erupting volcano, reds and oranges and smoke.
One finger saw underwater.  
One finger saw like a snake, in waves and pulses of the heat coming off bodies as they moved.  
One finger saw the world in slow motion, like a dragonfly.  
(Shé had once dipped a fingertip into a glass of gin and from then on it spun and whirled the vision that it gave her.)  
One finger was for a wide-eyed taking of the world, like a child takes.  
One finger saw the world as if lying down and looking up through its canopy.  
One finger was only for recognizing faces.  
One finger could see constellations in the daytime.  
She was careful to wear gloves in company. (If she stroked a finger across your skin, she would give you visions. If she used two fingers, she would send you into ecstasy...but only for a moment. Three fingers had driven people mad. Once she touched a lover with all of her fingertips, very softly and very carefully and very very slowly, one at a time.)  
(Shé had only done that once.)  
As she picked her way through the box of fingerprints — the box of photographs — she took each one out and carefully taped it to the wall. By the time the box was empty she had used up her tape and the wall was covered in ridges, a map of forms of vision, a map of herself, and she gently brushed her lips across them, one by one, and tasted the worlds of her past. And after she had spent some time this way, she chose from among them, and plucked them off the wall, and put them in her bag, and went to sleep.  
The next day she left the room and walked down the street with her bag of fingerprints to visit a tattoo artist she knew. It took a day and a night and by the time they had finished she left his studio and returned home covered in fingerprints. She spent a week, and then another, alone and still and healing.  
And then one evening she made a call, and the doorbell rang, and she opened the door, and she reached out one fingertip (this was a finger that saw like a prism) until she felt the bridge of a nose, and a cheek, and a chin, and she used that finger to hook
the collar of the shirt of the man attached to these parts, and she drew him inside and shut the door behind them. (If you could see him, you would notice that he was also born without eyes. And if you had visited his home, you would also find a box of tactile whorled and ridged prints from his own life seeing with fingertips. He had never shown her that box.)

And so he readies his lips, and the photographer — her body now covered in her work — prepares for her first exhibition.