

Letters to Forever

Natalia Millman and Casey Francis

Letters to Forever, is a deeply personal and experimental film and sound performance by multimedia artist Casey Francis and visual artist Natalia Millman. Created over nine months of remote collaboration, this work brings together two parallel yet intersecting journeys through grief, healing and transformation.

Combining archival family footage, analogue and digital photographs, poetry, field recordings, and a layered soundscape of acoustic and electronic instrumentation, the piece invites audiences into an emotional terrain that is both intimate and universal. Fragmented in form, the story resists linear resolution — instead flowing like memory itself: disjointed, recursive and deeply felt. Audiences are asked not just to watch, but to feel their way through, assembling meaning from emotional fragments.

Francis's contribution emerges from the raw immediacy of losing his mother in late 2023. A key thread is a cassette tape — long discussed between Francis and his mother — capturing a conversation between her, his grandmother and a clairvoyant. This once-distant recording now resonates with unexpected urgency, becoming a spiritual anchor that connects generations and illuminates Francis's own beliefs about the soul's journey, shaped by his mother's deep ties to Wicca and the natural world.

Millman's narrative moves differently — her mother is alive and present in the film. In some sequences mother and daughter sit together mending a dress: Millman mends fabric by sewing while her mother cuts. This act becomes a living metaphor for the evolving dynamics of care — once nurtured by her mother, Millman now becomes caregiver herself. The moment reflects how grief can rebuild closeness, how loss teaches new forms of tenderness and how pain can be shared in acts of quiet creation.

The absence of Millman's father, who died in 2019, is felt gently throughout the film. His voice and image appear in subtle, fleeting ways. This quiet inclusion

speaks to the lingering nature of loss, how it continues to shape relationships and memory without needing to be explicitly named.

Threaded through the film are original poems by Francis and readings of selected letters that Millman received as part of *Letters to Forever* project. Some are pre-recorded by collaborators; others are read live, bringing immediacy and vulnerability to the performance. These letters act as connective tissue, amplifying the central themes of loss, love and endurance.

Letters to Forever draws loose inspiration from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, allowing the performance to unfold as a meditation on death, rebirth, and the continuous transformation of the self. Its visual storytelling is expressive and intuitive — not always logical, but emotionally true. Fragmentation becomes a language: the disassembly and reassembly of being, memory and meaning.

Beyond the personal, the work is also political. Francis's lived experience as a young carer and his ongoing fight for justice in the face of social housing neglect are embedded within the piece. His grief is inseparable from the systemic failures he has endured, lending the work its emotional urgency and a call for compassion in a society that too often fails its most vulnerable.

You are invited to close your eyes if and when it feels right — to soften visual stimulation and connect more deeply with what you feel.

Casey Francis @_madtruth_ / www.madtruth.co.uk

Natalia Millman @nataliamillmanart / www.nataliamillmanart.com

This film is created with the generous support of Arts Council England.