

IMAGINATION

Mary Jane Edwards



DMD Series (Dead Mother Diaries)

Repurposed Hard Back Pulp Fiction/
Wire Binding; Paper, Rusted Metal,
Wire, Willow.

Artist's Statement

**My mother kept a diary from the time she was in high school until the day she walked into the hospital for the last time near her seventy-fifth birthday.

**I have memories of her sitting in her chair in the living room recording the activities of the day.

**I remember that she would always win an argument about where something happened or when an event occurred because she was the only one who could disappear into the bedroom closet and pull the facts out of one of the diaries.

**She also kept a trip diary each summer that we escaped from the intense summer heat of Texas to vacation in refreshing cool altitudes of West Thumb campground. She would type these trip logs up and mail them out to her old college girlfriends back in Connecticut.

**When she was alive, I never read anything she wrote. She always said that when she died, I could write a book based on her diaries. The pain of reading them is still too close to her death.

**The pioneer women kept journals as their families left the verdant peace and moist calm of "back east" to settle on the endless rolling prairies blown by frigid winds and breezes of loneliness. Did

they pour their hearts and secret lives out on the pages or was their task one of simply marking time as the hands of the clock do? I think the unspoken dialogue was recorded on those pages. Whether on the prairie or in the urban center, do women really speak their mind and reveal their souls?

**My mother told me stories and read to me as a child. I remember the large bound volumes of the Book House Tales. I still have them and cherish not only the stories but think fondly of the musty smell that age has rested on the yellowed and dog eared pages. Do mothers still read to their children? Will children have fond memories of words on the air spinning wondrous images?

** The list grows. This book. That title. How can they take that book out of the library? What is wrong with this book that it merits removal from the shelf? Will eyes never read and sound never carry the text from the pages? What is the difference between burning a book and removing it from a school library?

** What is the difference between burning a witch and silencing the heart of a woman?

**Gutenberg invented movable type and put monks illuminating manuscripts on the dole. A print revolution of type that changed the literacy of the world. The chip paved the entrance ramp to the information highway. Will I feel as nostalgic about running my wrinkled fingers over the keyboard as I do about caressing my childhood books?

** Let not eyes see, nor ears hear, nor hearts know. Keep them quiet. Keep them ignorant. Keep them from the truth.

** Her eyes are closed. Her ears are without sound. Her breathing stopped. Her heart is silent. Wrap her up. Tie the bonds. Nail the coffin shut. Put her in the ground.

** Her words live sharper than my fading memories, so blurred by time.

READING LIST

Tibetan Book of the Dead

Journals of Western Women

Biography

Executive Director of the Jentel Foundation in Banner, Wyoming, Mary Jane Edwards is the former department head and a Professor of Art Emerita at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. As an officer and board member, she has supported arts and advocacy organizations such as the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, American Craft Council, the National Association of Arts Administrators and the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression. As a studio artist, she has numerous exhibitions, received institutional grants, awarded residencies and presented workshops and lectures.

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