

Portraiture is my current mode of inquiry because bodies are our best archives. In this collaborative series, I explored photographs of my friends' ancestors, especially mothers, and responded with work in 35mm color film. Many of the images tell stories of the 'Up South': the American South and Latin America in New York, which is also the trajectory of my own story. Mothers are a difficult genre for me; my own, born in Birmingham, Alabama, died when I was five. I loved looking at my friends' mother photos to make this work; and have shared some of their photos with you, here, along with the work we made together. Ixchel and I, for example, collaborated on portraits at Coney Island, a place I learned while photographing her, and she photographing me, was a site of pleasure for her parents as young people, and the beach where her family gathers each year to remember the day her parents arrived in New York at teenagers in love.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Montana Ray holds an MFA in poetry and translation and a PhD in comparative literature from Columbia University. She teaches writing and translation at NYU. Her first book of concrete poetry, *(guns & butter)*, was described by Cathy Park Hong as a mix of “Apollinaire with Pam Grier.” Her recent translations include Chilean icon Pedro Lemebel’s baroque chronicles of travesti culture in 1970s Santiago and the visual poetry of Brazilian artist Yhuri Cruz. A 2023 NYSCA/NYFA nonfiction finalist, her current work explores connections between the US South and Latin America. <https://www.montanaray.com>