

**Captions:**

# FINAL DAYS IN THE COUNTRY

Photographic essay by

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Photo 01- Spring 2014. The last image of my mother amongst the myosotis. I wanted to do a tender photo of her. I took her by the hand and helped her to sit down. Initially, she was afraid to lie down, but my encouragements helped her to overcome her fear. She was happy once she was on the lawn, stroking the flowers or lying prone on the grass. I selected this image, the most mysterious, where she seems to fade into the décor and almost disappears.



Photo 02- My mother looking at herself in the mirror, as if in surprise. Does she even recognise herself? Is she still aware of her own existence?



Photo 03- Empty gaze over the garden. Most of the time my mother seem absorbed by her thoughts, or rather was imprisoned by her illness. You could see that she took less and less care of herself, her hair was never done and she was unable to dress herself alone nor to think about her most basic needs. Very quickly she became as dependent as a baby.



Photo 04 - My mother took refuge more and more frequently in her car. She ended up by taking her meals there. The more her illness progressed, the more the spaces she occupied shrank.



Photo 05- I had dressed her for this photo. She posed sitting, still with that childish grin.



Photo 06- The very first image of my project: my mother holding a branch in her bony hand. I had noticed that taking her out of her routine (made up of actions and gesticulations that she did without thinking) brought her some joy and excitement. I thought at the time that it could slow down the progression of her illness.



Photo 07- She ended up eating nothing but yoghurts. She couldn't chew any more, she had forgotten how.



**Photo 08-** Right up to the end, my mother still remained elegant, even though she didn't dress alone anymore and sometimes lost some clothes during the course of the day. Strangely, it is not her face that strikes me most here, but her little feet, the shoes that she wore often, and the orphaned sock. They remind me of that fragility, the state of innocence of the last few months, and that delicate frame that she had all her life, and which I loved when I was a child myself.



**Photo 09-** Normal daily actions had become foreign to her. She was no longer able to dress alone, and if we left her alone in the bathroom, she would get into the bath fully dressed.



**Photo 10-** It was in the bath that she found some inner peace. While she was always agitated, never able to stay for more than a few seconds in one place, she found some respite from all the bustle in the bath and rediscovered her body and her senses.



**Photo 11 -** I find that her strength of character shows through in this photo. Almost a hardness. But the image is misleading because it was already a long time since she had that sort of presence. However photography had that strange power to make her appear to me like she was before. It was also having taken this photo that I was convinced that I had to continue with the project.



**Photo 12-** Scrabble for the initiated. She had played Scrabble all her life and now played almost without thinking. Initially we helped her to find the words, like as if it was a way of exercising her memory. Then we let her do as she pleased, finding something really poetic in the words she invented.



**Photo 13-** Disorientated after waking up. Whenever she woke up, it took her some time to come to her senses. Nevertheless it was in the morning that we found she was brightest.



**Photo 14-** In front of one of her paintings. She painted for more than ten years and even showed some paintings in an exhibition in Marseille. Outsider Art, or Art Brut, was her style, but she hadn't touched a painting in two years.



**Photo 15-** I helped her to recognise people in the photo, people who loved her. I did the photo for her birthday so that she wouldn't forget us.



Photo 16- My mother always carried herself in this way, head down and hands clasped across her stomach.



Photo 17- At the front door, looking down as was her habit, as if in a permanent dream, but in reality it was her illness that locked up her mind in a cage.



Photo18- One of her last walks on a forest track. It was before she designated her car as sole place of contact with the outside world.



Photo 19- One of the silk blouses that she liked to wear.



Photo20- A photo that she kept carefully: Laurent (my brother) and her grand-father, who she adored. .