

Marcel, Sara, "In Tribute: Sarah Charlesworth (1947-2013)", CAMERA CLUB NEW YORK, 2 July 2013.

### **In Tribute: Sarah Charlesworth (1947-2013)**

Tuesday, July 2nd, 2013

Sarah Charlesworth left us a week ago today. I didn't plan on beginning my run as CCNY's guest blogger on such an unexpectedly sad note, but here we are. I guess I should start by saying that I had the great honor of having Sarah as my thesis crit teacher at SVA's MFA Photography, Video, & Related Media program from Fall 2010 till graduation in May 2011. Over the past seven days, I've shared a lot of somber and loving texts with my fellow crit members and read every tribute to Ms. Charlesworth that I can find online. These articles tell of Sarah's amazing accomplishments as an artist and speak of her as a loving mom and good friend. What also gets mentioned, but not nearly given as much attention as I think it deserves, is Sarah's role as a teacher and mentor and her devotion to her students. Matthew C. Lange, my friend and former classmate and Sarah's assistant, said it best: "I think that the influence she had on younger artists was not only a large part of the legacy she always wanted to leave behind, but also an important part of her practice."

As a teacher, Sarah had a reputation among the students for being tough, and she was. Like a mama bird in a pencil skirt that pushed her babies out of the nest whether they thought they were ready or not. The work being made in our class was all over the map, but somehow she was able to lead us each down our own path. Before grad school, I had trouble finishing projects. I was a terrible editor of my own work. While working in Sarah's class on my project that would become "May the Road Rise to Meet You," Sarah once met privately with me and we laid out over 250 small 3x5" photos along the edge of 4 big tables. She circled the table a few times, pushing certain photos up into the center of the table, while I followed behind her arguing for certain images that didn't make the cut. It took us over an hour, but eventually we had a final edit and sequence for the book. Watching her edit and seeing my project come together through her eyes taught me how to tell a story through sequencing. Then, she sat with me helping me tape them together and fold them like an accordion while explaining that she saw this project wherein I followed my dad on his travels as a telephone pole salesman as "eulogizing and celebrating something." That phrase struck me so much that I wrote it down. I'm looking at it in my notebook now. Boy, she was good. I could go on with more stories, but I'd like to open up the discussion. If you are a former student of Sarah Charlesworth and have something to share, your comments and stories are welcome.

Thank you, Sarah, for giving me and all your students something to eulogize and celebrate.