

IRIS IRINA SILVA

Enchanted, 2013
Collage and Photography
Digitally transferred on Wood, 24 x 36 in.



courtesy: the artist

RCA O'NEAL

What Lay Around the Bend

My grandmother had an immense garden that descended from the back of her house. It was a white Victorian with blue trim that possessed all the accoutrements of such a building: bay windows, turrets, high ceilings, wooden floors ... But the inside was old and dusty and filled with aging things that I was forbidden to touch, so I would escape to the garden. The garden was carpeted with flowers—tulips and daffodils mostly—who would, almost magically, poke their heads out of the grass in spring. There were numerous hedges and trellises as well; blue morning glories had slowly invaded the hedges so that the dark green was covered with blue polka dots, and jasmine and honeysuckle grew on the trellises, their scent permeating the entire garden. The birds and bees of the garden filled it with their singing and buzzing, which on some days would reach cacophonous levels; all these things together produced an atmosphere so vibrant as to be almost overbearing, but which I found rather comforting.

In the middle of the garden there was a pond that contained a little island upon which there was built a white gazebo. Large rocks had been placed in the pond, forming a path above its surface that allowed one to reach the island, and when walking on these, or by the pond's edge, or when looking out from the gazebo's railings, one could see giant ornamental carp whose bright forms would slowly rise up through the water, until their heads poked out and their begging mouths opened and closed in supplication. If one humoured them—and whenever I visited the garden, I was always sure to nick some bread from the kitchen—more of them would come until they were three or four layers deep, the carp below pushing those above them in such a craze that they would literally be lifted out of the water, their lustrous bodies glittering in the sunlight and the sound of their flopping frenzy drowning out the singing of the birds.

I had a favourite carp that my grandmother called Duke Wellington. He was as long as my arm span and an iridescent white, like the inside of a shell, with patches of a deep, dirty gold. When I first started reading chapter books, I proudly illustrated my new-found prowess by taking them with me when we visited my grandmother so that I could ostracise everyone by burying myself in my book. (Photographs taken of me during this period show a boy in dutiful ignorance of his family, nose in book—sometimes even when walking—taking especial care to