

*The Untended Garden*  
Mara Magyarosi-Laytner

*They convinced me  
I only had a few good years left  
Before I was replaced by a girl younger than me  
As though men yield power with age  
But women grow into irrelevance  
They can keep their lies  
For I have just gotten started*  
An Excerpt from *Timeless* by Rupi Kaur

Throughout history, women have been held up to the exacting standards of society. These standards, taught to us as young girls and reinforced in a multitude of ways, affect the views that women hold of themselves as they age. From the start of my thirties, I've spent so much time questioning who I am and why I see myself in that way. I've been told throughout my entire life that there was a certain set of "perfections" I had to uphold to be an ideal woman. Many of those ideas clash with my own, and this fracture of thought is where this exploration began.

*The Untended Garden* is a visual reflection structured in three acts – the expectations of women as informed by society and culture, the transformation that women reach as they break through during their coming of age, and the resolution of self that comes from the acceptance of flaws and the reality of aging. By combining still life and self-portrait photographs with experimental photographic alcohol transfer methods, this project explores multiple facets of the cyclical nature of life in a garden as a metaphor to reflect on the experience of women.

At the heart of this work, *The Untended Garden* is about the universality of transforming identity and gaining the wisdom to see flaws as strengths.