

playbill

IX ACT X XI XII

Originally trained as a sculptor, upstate New York-based seminal performance artist Linda Montano (1942) started working with performance and video in the early 1970s. Informed by her devout Roman Catholic upbringing and two years spent at Maryknoll Convent School, Montano's practice has sought to dissolve the divide between art and life by exploring autobiography, ageing and death through durational, spiritual and ritualistic acts and gatherings. An early example of this is the video *Mitchell's Death* (1977), in which she mourns the sudden death of her ex-husband. In a ceremonial manner, she tells her story in a monotone voice reminiscent of Buddhist chanting, while her face is pierced with acupuncture needles. Practices of duration and ritual were further explored

in *7 Years of Living Art* (1984–1991), for which she dressed in monochromatic colours, spoke in a specific accent and spent a portion of each day in a coloured room in her home, listening to a particular tone. Each year of this durational performance was additionally in correspondence with the energetic qualities of one of seven chosen chakras.

For ACT X, upon the request of playbill, Montano revisits *The 5 Johns of John St. (Mildred's Death)*, a work from 1990 originally released into the world in the form of a publication. The text, which takes the shape of a hospital journal, logs the last sixteen days of the life of Montano's mother Mildred Kelly Montano, who died of colon cancer in 1988. Largely devoid of emotion, structured by day, hour and often

by minute, the notes document these final days through medication and food intake, bathroom visits, check-ups by doctors and sounds present. Through adopting a highly orderly and objective manner—mimicking a supposedly medical way of handling information—the work transforms into a meditation on death, providing a ritualistic companion throughout the grieving process. It is often said that death brings with it a loss of words on part of the griever, it being an experience wherein language often fails us. Recited over a Zoom call for the very first time, Montano revisits this text thirty-six years after her mother's passing, articulating and enunciating the ongoing and continued process of grieving through a trust in language and what it can conjure into being.

PROGRAMME

8pm
Introduction to Linda Montano

8.10pm
The 5 Johns of John St.
(Mildred's Death)
1990/2024, approx. 52:00min

9:10pm—Drinks

IMAGE The 5 Johns of John St. (Mildred's Death), Mildred and Linda Montano, ICSA Press, Ananda Ashram, Monroe, New York, 1990.



Book 1

by Linda Montano

MILL'S LAST 16 DAYS

This is the partial story of Mill's last 16 days in a hospital. Notes were taken by Henry (Mill's husband), Jennifer (sat with her at night, friend of Mill's and Linda's) and Linda (Mill's daughter). It's a somewhat complete, not always accurate clinical report because what's not included are the embraces, re-bondings, smiles, tears, sounds, smells...our last party together, my trips to the bathroom to scream and those moments of shared humor with her that reminded me that she was my survivor-mother, right to the end.

Linda Montano, Editor

Wednesday: June 1, 1988

Report from M.D.'s

7:30 p.m. Dr. P. Blood pressure and temp. good. Mill's intestines are distended again. Colostomy may be partially blocked, causing cramps. Doctor says she should stay away from food and liquids and they'll take an x-ray in the room later. She may need an N.G. tube in her nose again. He will be back in the a.m.

9:30 p.m. X-ray shook Mill up. A lot of pain. After, asked them to give her something. At 10 another x-ray. She's in and out of sleep since the shot but still in moderate pain.

BED PAN (URINATION 1/4-1/2 c.)

10:00 a.m.	3:00 p.m.	nothing
11:00 a.m.	3:30 p.m.	
12:00 p.m.	3:50 p.m.	
1:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	
2:30 p.m.	5:50 p.m.	Nothing, but pad wet. I changed it.

COLOSTOMY EMPTYES

2 p.m.
4 p.m.