

Toby MacLennan  
Art Statement

I come from a career as a filmmaker and a performance and installation artist. These various mediums have led me to my current photographic practice, which focuses on collage.

What inspires my work is the belief that we belong to everything around us; that we are not separate, not alone, not locked in on one side of our skin.

I see proof of this belief daily, particularly dealing with my own body. I have a thyroid condition and take medication made from a pig's thyroid to substitute for what I am lacking. Because of this, I wanted to create an artwork that gave praise and gratitude to pigs for their sacrifice to me. For this work I needed to photograph pigs, so I put out a request asking if anyone knew of places in New York where I could find them. The first response I got was from an old friend I hadn't seen in thirty years. He wrote, "Dear Toby, in my triple bypass surgery, the doctors replaced the membrane on my aortic valve with one taken from a pig. Please add a thanks for the pig membrane that is keeping my heart ticking!"

These relationships are what I express in my work by photographing people, animals, objects, and nature, collaged together so that they skip the boundaries of their skins, share their identities, and belong to a wider world.