

Basic Detail Report

**Title**

Broken Column: Mother

Artist

Kathy Vargas

Date

1997, print 2004

Dimensions

(Sheet) H: 24 in. (61 cm); W: 20 in. (50.8 cm)

Medium

Hand colored gelatin silver print.

Classifications

Photographs

Credit Line

Gift of the the Toledo Friends of Photography and Stephen Johnston in honor of his grandparents Elsie and Stephen J. Rutkai

Object number

2005.1E

Published References

c.f. The Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, *Kathy Vargas: Photographs, 1971-2000*, 2000, pp. 25, 32, repr. p. 25.

Label Text

Layers of images unite childhood, age, death, and religion in Kathy Vargas's hand-colored photographs. Broken Column: Mother, arranged in the shape of a cross, celebrates and mourns the artist's mother, seen lying on her deathbed. X-rays of her spine, superimposed with thorny branches, make up the center sections. Feathers suggest angels' wings, while roses symbolize both love and mourning. Vargas's Mexican-American heritage plays a significant role in her art. The title, Broken Column, refers to a self-portrait by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), in which Kahlo depicts herself with a shattered architectural column for a spine. The attitude towards death in Vargas's imagery—sad, morbid, and celebratory at the same time—reflects the Mexican Day of the Dead festival, when deceased relatives are said to return for one day and night. Vargas uses her art to record the memory of what she calls the "'quicksilver,' non-solid moments" of life. "After all, art is life," she explains. "And one always answers death with life." © protected by copyright

Not On View