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Memory, Haunting and the Sensorial

A Thesis Presented

by

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to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

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in

Studio Art

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Abstract of the Thesis

Haunting, Memory and the Sensorial

By

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This thesis is the exploration of my artistic development throughout my three years of graduate school. It follows my exploration moving from sculptural form to my rediscovery of the importance of image in my work. I am an image-based artist. My experience at graduate school has strengthened my identification of self. The thesis explores personal history and its connection to the content of my work; which has been illuminated by, memory, haunting and the sensorial.

Granny Tyl: Somebody must be thinking of us. I feel quite strong. I think we're going to have visitors. They seem to be coming near.

Grandpa Tyl: Maybe now I can finish my carving. I've been at this one for nearly a whole year.

Granny Tyl: That's because we're so seldom awake.

Mytyl, Tyltyl: Granny! Grandpa!

Granny Tyl: It's the children! Give us a hug, dears, a big one this time.

Grandpa Tyl: It's been months and months since you last remembered us.

Granny Tyl: The last time was Easter morning. The church bells were ringing.

Mytyl: Easter? Oh, we didn't go out that day. We both had very bad colds.

Granny Tyl: But you thought of us.

Mytyl: Yes, we missed you.

“The Bluebird”, 1940

The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reaches of intellect, in some material object (in sensation of which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether we come upon this object before we ourselves must die.

Marcel Proust

Relationships have been broken and the storyteller has to renew them, in order to find his moral equilibrium, but he is unable to do so. He lives with the hope that he is able to pay his love debt back, but that debt is one which nobody can get rid of.

Andrei Tarkovsky

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I. Introduction: The Importance of Personal History

When I was a child and would visit my grandparents I was always intrigued with the bookshelf behind my grandpa's chair. The shelves held "The World Encyclopedia," big pictures and words for a small child. I would go through all of the books, but my favorites were the books that held the human form in transparent pages; pages that could be lifted to show the skeleton, muscles and the separate organs, all of the layers of the human form. It fascinated me that they broke the body down into layers and that you could simply lift the pages and discover another layer, one that was just as important as the first to the functioning and completion of the human. I saw this as a larger picture, and this concept of layering has intrigued me throughout my life. I struggled when I growing up about the notion of what made me and where a person belonged. I struggled to accept all the facets of myself; I struggled to understand that events, whether positive or negative, had to be accepted and seen as creating my existence. It is a theory that I have continually nurtured and dissected. The layer of living: the construction and destruction of self that is necessary for growth. This is a process that is articulated for me best through the creation of my work; as I write this thesis I continually see my struggle in the process of written articulation as opposed to my ability to illuminate through the process of making art.

I am interested in the psychological and physiological imprints that memory carries. The elasticity of our beings: when one has been stretched so far, what are the effects, or if there is a repeated pattern, can it be broken by perseverance of self? My work communicates my personal and emotional state in relation with the surrounding world as I have experienced it. I investigate what makes a person, the moments in

one's life lives where events or individuals have made an imprint, handprint or shadow. These pivotal moments change you for the rest of your life. They are moments where personal decisions are made and their effects felt. My work derives from very personal events, but I believe the work's strength is that there is the shared experience enacted by the viewer. The continuation of the experience that is created at that moment then becomes a memory for the viewer.

At a very early age I experienced the loss of loved ones. I was about 18 months when my parents were divorced. It had been a very volatile relationship between my parents; after the divorce my relationship with my father was limited to visits at my grandmother's house (his mother). After the divorce was final my mother decided that she was going to go to nursing school. The school for nursing was far from where we lived, so I lived with my maternal grandparents during the week and she would come home on some weekends. I became extremely close with my grandparents. They were incredible individuals. They raised and took care of over forty foster children. There were many children in and out of their home but I was the first and only grandchild at this time. After my mother finished school she and I moved into a trailer (mobile home) across the highway from my grandparents. I was still with them all time. I also became very close with my Uncle Carl who was my godfather and took on a the protector role. When I was about four years old, he was killed in Detroit, MI. He was a state trooper and was helping an elderly couple who had just been robbed when the thieves shot him. To this day I remember my grandmother receiving the phone call. We were in the kitchen and she answered it and started to scream and cry and say over and over again, "Did he get shot in the face?" I

remember her falling to the ground and my grandfather taking the phone. My grandmother was so busy taking care of others that she never took very good care of herself. She had diabetes and when my Uncle was killed she was never the same; I knew a part of her had died with him. When I was five she had her leg amputated and it was after she left the hospital that she came to live with us in our new house. My mother had recently remarried and had just given birth to a boy, my half brother. My grandmother was in and out of the hospital over the next few years. When I was 8 her other leg turned gangrenous and it was to be removed. She never came home; she died in the hospital. This is one of the greatest losses that I have had. My father said that when I went up to the casket I touched her corsage, I thought it was so beautiful and it had a little deer on it. I turned to my father and asked him, “What am I going to do now?”

I no longer saw my biological father. My adoptive father was the man who raised me. All ties with my father and his mother were broken. I grew up hearing many stories of how awful he had been. This was very difficult as a child because I believed I was a part of him and that if he was bad there must be something wrong with me. I struggled with this knowledge because I desired him so much; I wanted to be loved by someone who thought I was special. Abandonment fear, anger, love, desire and hope were some of the emotions that consumed me. I also wanted to be a “good girl”. The relationship I had with my mother confused my notions of being a “good girl”, her actions towards me caused me to question myself continually. I resist the verbal articulation of this to this day. Filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky states: “After this film *Ivan’s Childhood*, I remember nothing. Memory is a gift of this minute; it is a state of

the second in which I speak, and not a look towards the past. This past, which I carry around on a shoulder belt, like a necessary but sometimes too heavy piece of baggage. All artistic work relies on memory, and is a means of crystallizing it. Like an insect on a tree, the artist lives off his childhood like a parasite. Afterwards he spends what he has accumulated, he becomes an adult, and maturity is the end.” (AT 45)

At about 10 years old I started to have a recurring dream. I would be in a house that felt like a grandmother’s house. I would walk through the house as if searching for something. I would turn corners and the last corner I turned was of an archway by a staircase, and by the top of the staircase there was a mounted deer head. The dream would then stop, and I would have no answers to what or where this was. I would visit my father’s mother (adopted), and I believe I asked her at least 4 times “Where is the deer head?” and she just kept telling me “There has never been a deer head there.”

Around the age of 13, I was outside playing catch, bouncing a ball up the stairs, and my father and brother were with me. An older woman rode by on her bicycle and stared at us she asked my father, “It is her?” He said, “Yes,” she looked and smiled at me and then she rode off. I then asked him who she was and he said, “She is your grandmother”. My worlds collided at that moment. I couldn’t believe she was right there in front of me and then she was gone. I can’t really remember if I asked them repeatedly to see her, but I do remember the strong desire. In home economics we were given the assignment to do something special for an older person. I begged to bring her flowers, and they finally agreed.

This was the beginning of our re-introduction. I came to realize that she lived only three blocks away the whole time I was in this house. The first visit was very stiff and my mother came with me. We stayed in the kitchen the whole time. There were things in the kitchen that sparked memories. An old white tin pie cupboard that I use to pretend was a refrigerator, a rocking chair, vases and statuettes. I was gradually able to visit her on my own, and that is when the exploration of the house began. The first time I walked from the kitchen into the dining room I saw the old standup radio that I used to drop coins into the speakers. The curtains, the record player, the piano and the arch-the arch from my dreams. I went through the arch, and there was the staircase, and there was the deer head. All I can remember is shock. She would talk of my father often and I would hear how much he loved me. I didn't understand then. My desire to love him and to be accepted was so strong but my sense of confusion and betrayal was also strong. I never saw my father again. When I was 15, my father was knocked out and set on fire in his truck (within a month's time I also lost my grandfather, the only man that I thought had unconditional love for me). I went to my father's funeral with my Auntie Mary and sat next to my grandmother. My grandmother hung onto me so tightly and sobbed so deeply. I cried but a part of me was so numb, all I had in front of me was a small box of his ashes. I wanted so much more and I was never going to have it, or so I thought. My grandmother and I continued our relationship until her death.

Avery Gordon is a sociologist who researches the relationship between knowledge, power and experience and links it to sociological haunting. She writes in *Ghostly Matters*, "Rather is it a matter of exploring here the particular mediation that is

haunting. As a concept, mediation describes the process that links an institution and an individual, a social structure and a subject, and history and a biography. Paying attention to the disjuncture between identifying a social structure (or declaring its determinate existence) and its articulation in everyday life and thought, I have hoped that working at understanding these gaps, the kind of visions they produce, and the afflictions and the afflictions that they harbor would enable us not to eradicate the gap- it is inevitable-but to fill in the content differently.” (AG 19) It is through this haunting that I am able to address my past through my artwork. My history, biography and placement during my developmental stages rested on an ever shifting sand foundation that I have had to mediate using layers of understanding.

I was asked to model in my late teens and early twenties periodically. I did this occasionally because it was interesting and fun. But when I was 22, I modeled in Chicago full time for a short period. I say short because it was no longer fun and it didn't feel right. I didn't feel right in my skin; I felt as though I was betraying my personal integrity and myself. I decided to go back to school and study art. When I first started to create artwork as a young adult I had a very particular vision of what I wanted to create. I would draw and paint, and these were useful to me, but with my skills I was not able to attain that moment of ecstasy one has with a work that you strive for. I couldn't express visually the thoughts that were in my head. It was then I turned to photography, a pivotal moment in my creative expression. I controlled the image; my eye manipulated what and how it was to be viewed. I turned the camera around; by taking control I was no longer “object”. My photographs are self-portraits. Avery Gordon asks, “Could it be that analyzing hauntings might lead to a more

complex understanding of the generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations in a way that avoids the twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism?” (AG 19) This quote speaks to me of my desires to challenge myself to continually question my “placement” within these social formations. It is this haunting that reminds me to continue to peel back the layers of existence and find meaning for myself and of myself.

I continued to use photography as my chosen medium for approximately 10 years. I controlled the traditional image; building layers within in the image itself and also within the darkroom process. Towards the end of this ten-year period I went through a divorce. I was now a single mother of a two year old. We moved into a neighborhood farm. It was a very difficult transition. My son’s father lived across the field “as the crow flew” and the wind would pick up voices once in awhile. He had a woman move in soon after the separation, and when my son was with them I could sometimes hear their laughter. One day when my son was with his father I was talking with my Auntie Lisa on the phone and I walked into my son’s room and noticed blood on his bed. I got off of the phone and pulled back the sheets to discover more blood; a rat had hemorrhaged all over my son’s bed. I started to scream and tear the sheets away. I ran outside and bent over, putting my head towards the ground and for a moment I thought, “Oh my god, I have to cut the grass”, and then I looked between my legs and I had a vision. It was grandparents with their arms around each other and they were reaching out to me. I slowly lifted myself upright and turned around. They were there for a moment and then they were gone. I knew right then and there everything would be all right; I knew I was going to survive no matter what.

This event was an incredible catalyst for me. I turned to whatever I could get my hands on to express the ever present knocking in my head. This led to the use of photos with found objects and sculptures made with materials such as chicken wire. The found objects were sometimes curio cabinets and sewing machine suitcases; the objects that I would use were usually in need of repair. I would take great care in repairing or recreating these objects. I continued to incorporate the photograph with sculptural pieces until about 5 years ago. It was then I created a sculptural body of work, which connected casting the human form in plaster and integrating the body cast with the found object.

My desire to continue my education to receive a Master of Fine Arts degree was stronger than ever; I knew that this was something that I needed to do for my artwork and myself. It was at this time I considered myself a self-taught sculptor. The filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's responds to a question regarding the notion that there is no master in art that art cannot be taught. He writes, "Individual experience is acquired with pain, with effort, with a degree of suffering. Only after having been impregnated by these difficulties can experience bear fruit. (AT 23)

II. Hauntings and Impressions

As I stated earlier, the “World Encyclopedia” was a very influential book for the early stages of my philosophical beliefs. I have processed the notion of layers of existence throughout my life. This guided me into a self-understanding and acceptance of all events and situations that have created who I am today. Each event in my life has helped to shape who I am. The acceptance of who and where I come from, the battles that I have fought; these events could have been devastating are, but instead they are actual fodder for reflecting existence.

The movie, “The Bluebird”, a 1940’s film that starred Shirley Temple was also very important to me. There is a scene in the movie in which Shirley Temple’s character Mytyl, is reunited with her dead grandparents, and they share with her that thoughts from loved ones can keep them *alive and active* in the *otherworld*. This was a brilliant notion to me as a child; if I could remember the ones that I had lost I would always know that they would exist in a place that I could not consciously see, but that one that did exist.

As a child I spent a huge amount of time at our public library. I went with my mother. I was dropped off, or when I learned how to ride my bike I would go as often as possible. I would look forward to the Saturday morning movies that would take you on far away adventures. There was one book in particular that I would read at the library and check out as often as I could. Even as an adult, when I would visit, I would go back to the library and search for this book. Years would pass, I would

forget the name of the author or the exact title, but I would remember the color of the cover and the images inside. Recently, I realized the pink and white gingham book cover matches the pink and white bed cover and curtains from my childhood bedroom. Is this a way in which our memories protect us, where there is the balance of haunting and visibility? The book is by Dare Wright and it is called, "The Lonely Doll". The main character is a doll by the name of Edith. Within the last few years I went back to the library and the book was no longer there. I was able to locate the book, and I now own a copy. It was not until recently that I realized the importance of this book for me both artistically and as an individual. The book is a story of a lonely doll that prays to have friends because she is so lonely. Her prayers are answered Mr. Bear and little bears came to be her friends. Then Edith and little bear made a mess and write with lipstick on the mirror that "Mr. Bear is a silly old thing" and Edith tries on the lipstick (even though she is too young to wear lipstick). In the end, wrongs are made right, and the little bears agree to stay with her forever and ever. I believe that this story related to my childhood notions of abandonment and acceptance. There is another compelling part to the importance of this book. There is very little text and the images are black and white photographs that have been created using a real doll and teddy bears; the photographs animate these objects. The copyright is 1957. Not only are these images beautiful, but they also opened another door, another existence for me, and one that I felt I could mirror in some way.

Some of the visual/literary artists who have influenced me are Louise Bourgeois, Kiki Smith, Andrei Tarkovsky, Robert Gober and Marcel Proust. Their dedication to the use of the personal as political in their work has not only been liberating but inspiring in the realization of and validation of my obsession of haunting, memory and the sensorial and it's importance to my artwork. Here I will list very important but brief references to the above artists. Louise Bourgeois's desire to mediate her past through her artwork as well as mediate her work through different mediums is something that I admire greatly in an artist. Her tenacious existence in an art world that was predominately male when she first started to make art as well as the tenacity she still imbues at the age of 98 is a quality that I not only admire but also hope to use as a role model for myself. Artist Kiki Smith's investigation of creating her own personal mythology/fable narrative using printmaking, sculpture and photography have encouraged me to validate the desire for understanding one's historical situated-ness. Although I was only introduced to Andrei Tarkovsky's films within the last year, I have found a lost companion. His films that speak more to his own personal narrative, his minimalist approach to imagery that echoes painting with light are the one's that I have the strongest connection to: *Ivan's Childhood*, *Mirror*, *Sacrifice*, *Nostalghia*, and *Stalker*. I have seen all of his films, but the images in these films are the ones that haunt me. Robert Gober's commitment in his search of personal identity in autobiography and social history transcends the cathartic. His work is deeply personal and engages the viewer, not only in what they are seeing, but

what they are feeling. His obsessive detail in creating and *re*-creating domestic environments and objects is akin to my own artistic practice. During my second year at Stony Brook I participated in a graduate seminar with philosopher Julia Kristeva and the seminars focus was *In Search of Lost Time*, by Marcel Proust. This was a pivotal moment in my artistic career and in my personal growth. I became completely immersed in the world of Marcel Proust and I realized that though Proust communicated the sensorial in writings it is the sensorial that I have been striving for in my own work. I had been searching, and I have found the ecstatic.

III. First Year

I started graduate school in the fall of 2007. I fought the connection that I had to photography when I came to Stony Brook, dismissing my connection to image and wanting to focus on sculpture. During my first semester I was exposed to digital media, sound and installation. It was also during this time I bought my first super 8-film camera. Even though I fought this connection to photography it became apparent to me by mid-year that I was an image-maker and I had a strong desire to paint images with light. During my first year I created installations incorporating sculpture and with digitized super-8 film.

“wires”

For the piece “wires”, (2008) I had a very specific vision in my head of what I wanted it to look and feel like. I remembered the type of car that my mother had when I was a very young child: it was a green Rambler, a particular green. I did extensive research in finding a car to use for this installation. I spoke with a few different salvage yards in Brooklyn and was not successful. I called and wrote to “Car Talk: Click and Clack the Tappet Brothers” to elicit their help, but to no avail. I finally found out about the salvage yards in Medford NY. I went to Medford and was finally able to find a 1969 Chevy Nova, four door. It was green, the green from my memory. For \$40.00 I left with the backseat and back passenger door from the 1969 Chevy Nova. I built a curved box that matched the shape of the back seat and painted it a dark green to match the interior of the door. I then welded a shoulder that would hold

the door close to the seat and attached to the base. The window of the back door was sandblasted for the projection of the image. I took super-8 footage from the backseat of a moving car. The view was from the back car window looking up at the passing telephone wires and treetops. There is also a sound component to the piece; it is the analog radio changing stations from a rotary dial. The radio sounds are of bits of music, static and news. There is also the sound of what could be a young girls voice; I recorded my own voice, singing a childhood song, "Bringing Home a Baby Bumble Bee." There is a phrase in the song that has always haunted me since childhood: "won't my mama be so proud of me." It is this bittersweet phrase I felt so appropriate for this piece; the idea of a small child putting itself in harms way to gain their mothers attention. The childlike voice also calls out to a mother who never responds and then the sound piece ends with a childlike philosophical question. "What if all the water was orange juice and all the orange juice was water?" I remembered many times driving with my mother, me in the backseat of the car. This piece uses that memory: connection of travel through time, from childhood to adulthood, melancholy loss and the way in which this memory affects us. This piece is communicated through the layers of my personal experience and I believe it is the roll of these layers to not only illuminate but also use the layers as protection.



Figure 1, *wires* (exterior), 2008.

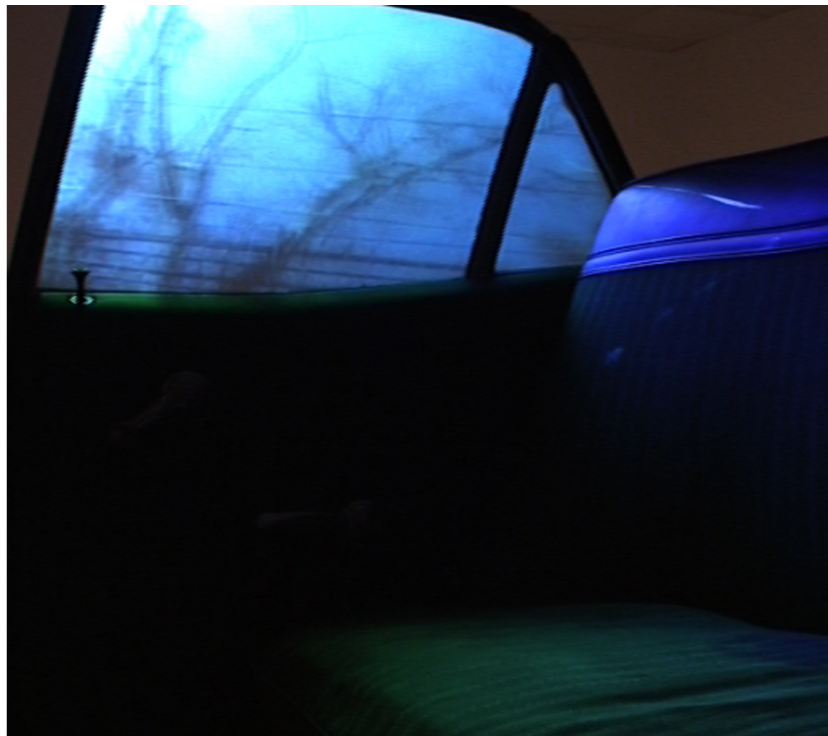


Figure 2, *wires* (interior), 2008.

“Organ Grinder”

“Organ Grinder” was a pivotal piece for me; it was shot digitally with a PD-150 video camera. It was with this piece I discovered my undying devotion to light; within this piece were scenes that were “paintings with light”. This video was inspired by the visceral response I had to a book I read during my second semester. The course was “Sociology of Masculinity”, and was the first course that I took towards my Women’s Studies Certificate. A woman, Norah Vincent wrote the book *Self-Made Man-One Woman’s Year Disguised as a Man*, and I found her perspective to be extremely misogynistic. I felt such a sense of betrayal from her views and writings regarding the exploration of gender identity. My video piece came to me as I was reading a certain chapter in the book and my stomach felt as though it was being torn out. I kept thinking of my grandmother and what a strong woman she was and what she had been through and how tirelessly she had worked throughout her life and here was this woman betraying other women by writing this work and printing it. An image came immediately to my mind of my grandmother’s meat grinder. My grandmother would attach this grinder to the kitchen table and grind meat for the meals she would prepare. I knew my mother had the grinder and so I asked her to send it to me. I went to China Town and bought pig organs; pig organs are the closest representation of human organs. I set the scene: My kitchen, kitchen table, bowls, apron, window and the organs. The grinder represents the events or people that are responsible for our continual struggle to exist. I proceed to grind the organs one by

one: this is a difficult task but a task that must be complete if one is to survive. The sound component for the piece is organ grinder music, it plays when the handle of the meat grinder is turned. The dichotomy of sound and image reiterates the struggle of the internal and external existence of being. After I completed this piece there was no denying my deep internal connection to light, image and film.



Figure 3, *Organ Grinder* (video clip), 2008.



Figure 4, *Organ Grinder* (video clip), 2008.

IV. Second Year

“echo”

The film “echo”, (2008) is where I address the sense of mirroring and finding my location within the system in which I live, where I was brought up in, and where and who I come from. When I was very young, my family would visit a rustic one-room cabin on a small inland lake surrounded by forest. I grew up hearing the tales of a small boy who lived across the lake and grew up in the woods by himself. My father called him “echo boy” he would first ask me “ Do you think he’s there?” and I would answer, very mesmerized “Yes, I think he is”. At dusk my father would call out across the lake, and to my amazement every time my father yelled out, echo boy would respond. I would daydream about who this boy was and how he got there. I created a relationship between this small boy and myself; I believed when I grew older I would find him and we would be together. As an adult investigating the character of echo boy, I found the main and most important character that is in this personal mythology: Self. Echo is an imperfect return of sound: I am investigating the process of establishing identity through the theory of echoes. The process of replaying sounds or words that create ones own identity: what we decide to hear and use to describe our own essence our own identity of self. I believe that in understanding echo and its magic I also understand echo identification and the power that echoing or mirroring one’s own or someone else’s words can create identification. But the beauty of the echo is that it is never exactly the same as what

was originally spoken; it is what we create. It is through this layering we discover our own identification.

The sound component to this piece is the following dialogue:

Her father would ask her, “Do you think he is there?” And she would answer mesmerized, “Yes I think he is” and to her amazement every time he would answer.

“Echo Boy” (echo response) “Echo Boy” (echo response) “Echo Boy” (echo response)

It is the layering of this dialogue that represents the layering of identification and the process of realization through the repetitive pattern of sound and image.

I believe this touches on Anne Marie Mol’s “The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice”, her discussions of object/practice constellations in which practices and objects enacted belong together in harmony and in tension with one another.” (AM 159) Mol’s desire to understand the relationship between knowledge and the practices of knowing layer with my own artistic process in understanding the sensorial and it’s relationship to memory and personal histories. Through the creation of my work, questions are addressed and answers are found. This act of creation brings objects into being and allows them to speak, but objects also influence ways of enacting: echo/mirror.



Figure 5, *echo* (film still), 2009.

“place between sleep and dreams”

In an interview about the way he works, the artist Robert Gober stated, “It’s more a nursing of an image that haunts me and letting it sit and breed in my mind, and then, if it’s resonant, I’ll try to figure out formally, could this be an interesting sculpture to look at?” (PS 58) This is very close to my own creative process. It is this haunting that knocks and knocks until the piece comes together in my head. I do not use drawing or storyboards to help this process. I rely on dreams and images that flicker in my mind. My short film, “the place between sleep and dreams” (2009) I think can be compared to the encyclopedias that I enjoyed as a child. The piece was inspired by my recurring childhood dream. It is layered with images from my life; just as the encyclopedia pages could be lifted to reveal another layer of the human form. The foundation of the film is regarding the relationship with my biological father. The woods represent the space that I have created to embrace the relationship with my father. The interior space is a place of entrapment or confinement. This confinement is dissolved by the presence of the woods. The phone represents the recurring event, the cuckoo clock a gift from my maternal grandmother. Finally, the deer head is my father. There is a small wooden chair, a telephone table, telephone and a cuckoo clock during the day. At night the cuckoo clock is replaced with a mounted deer head. The mystery of the unconscious is what created this piece. Within this piece I explore the love I have for my father and the love he feels for me. I feel that there is a strong connection in my desire to create objects and create paintings with light; my use of the exaggerated flicker mimics the mind’s eye as if it is a memory or dream. To make this film, I created the corner of a life size room and moved it to the woods. My

creation of this room was meticulous. It is not simple nostalgia that drives my work; it is the desire to create from the absence of the “Other”. Maybe this definition of nostalgia is closer to Tarkovsky’s Russian definition of nostalgia “The Russian term is difficult to translate: it could be compassion, but it is even stronger than that. It’s identifying oneself with the suffering of another man, in a passionate way. In principal, it’s a question of any man, of the relationship between men in general, but naturally this feeling of compassion becomes extremely strong when it’s a question of a man you are close to.” (AT 80-81)



Figure 6, *place between sleep and dreams* (film still), 2009.



Figure 7, *place between sleep and dreams*, (film still), 2009.



Figure 8, *place between sleep and dreams* (film still), 2009.



Figure 9, *place between sleep and dreams* (film still), 2009.



Figure 10, *place between sleep and dreams* (film still), 2009.



Figure 11, *place between sleep and dreams* (film still), 2009.

“jouissance”

“jouissance” is a super 8 film that runs in a continual loop. For me the choice of color and gesture speak of the “ecstatic” in this film. My preference is to have the piece loop on a film projector, it is to be viewed small, approximately projected 6x6 inches visually encouraging an intimate interaction with the work. The reading of Marcel Proust and my interactions with Julia Kristeva directly inspired the film “jouissance”. Julia Kristeva writes regarding Proust, “Proust can give us in a glimpse of the way a psychic life can possess and expose its own unprecedented complexity: a life is at once painful and ecstatic, sensual and spiritual, erotic and pensive.” (JK 198) The ability to find the ecstatic for me is directly related to understanding oneself and ones connection to all. The expression of this in the written form is difficult for me that is why the piece “jouissance” is so important, I found the ecstatic.

I painted the wall of my studio a beautiful robin’s egg blue, for me this color represents the divine. It is the color of the robe the statuettes of Madonna are swathed in from my childhood. I filmed “jouissance” against this color. The film is of my two hands palms facing one another. The movement of my hands starts out slowly moving up and down with a small amount of space between them. The pace increases of the up and down movement and as the pace increases the space between the hands disappear and become one; the pace begins to slow down and the hands begin to move slightly away from one another and the piece repeats itself. At first it is the tension or the existence of the space that is illuminated and once the hands touch it is the ecstatic that is illuminated.

It was after showing this piece it was suggested the correlation the piece had with

other philosophical writings. It was during this research that I found the following quotes, which resonate in such an uncanny way.

Husserl:

" 'Touch'-sensations belong to every appearing objective spatial position on the touched hand, when it is touched precisely at those places. The hand that is touching, which for its part again appears as a thing, likewise has its touch-sensations at the place on its corporeal surface where it touches (or is touched by the other). Similarly, if the hand is pinched, pressed, pushed, stung, etc., touched by external bodies or touching them, then it has its sensations of contact, of being stung, of pain, etc. And if this happens by means of some other part of one's body, then the sensation is doubled in the two parts of the Body, since each is then precisely for the other an external thing that is touching and acting upon it, and each is at the same time body...Hence the Body is originally constituted in a double way: first, it is a physical thing, matter, it has its extension, in which are included its real properties, its color, smoothness, hardness, warmth, and whatever other material qualities of that kind there are. Secondly, I find on it, and I sense "on" it and "in" it: warmth on the back of the hand, coldness in the feet, sensations in the fingertips....Touching refers here to a physical event. Even two lifeless things can touch one another, but the touching of the Body provides sensations on it or in it.
...But in the case of Object constituted purely visually we have nothing

comparable. To be sure, sometimes it is said that the eye is, as it were, in touch with the Object by casting its glance over it. But we immediately sense the difference...we do not have a kind of extended ocularity such that by moving, one eye could rub past the other and produce the phenomenon of double sensation.” (MH 176)

According to Husserl, this self-othering dynamic is a crucial precondition for empathy, in the broad sense of being able to recognize others as subjects like oneself on the basis of their bodily presence. “It is precisely the body's double status of being a "subject-object," a subjectively lived body and a physical living body, as well as dynamic interplay between ipseity (I-ness) and alterity (otherness) inherent in this ambiguity, that grounds one's ability to recognize other bodies as bodily subjects like oneself". (MH 176)

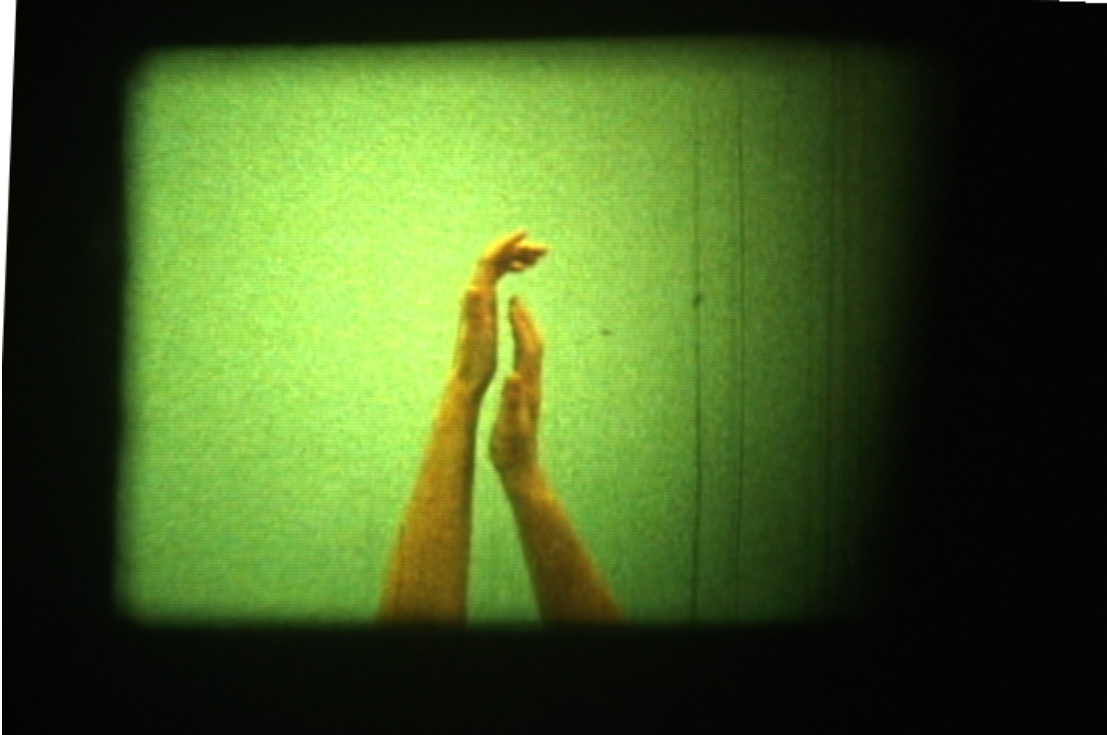


Figure 12, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.



Figure 13, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.

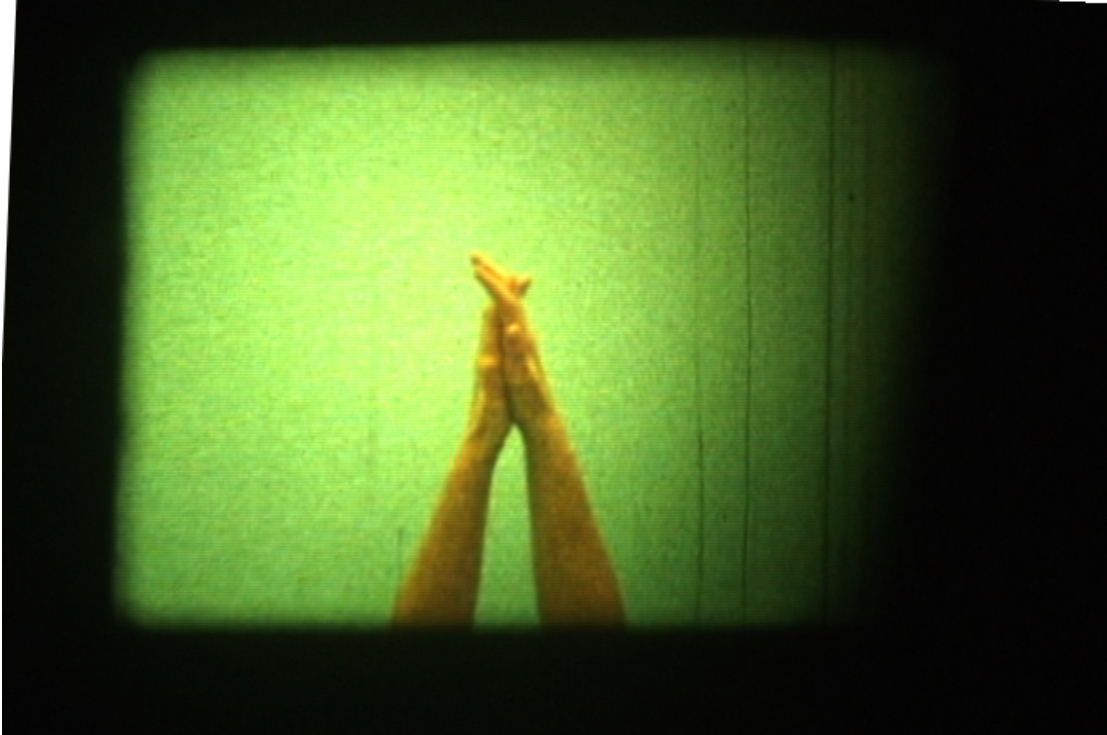


Figure 14, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.



Figure 15, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.



Figure 16, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.



Figure 17, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.

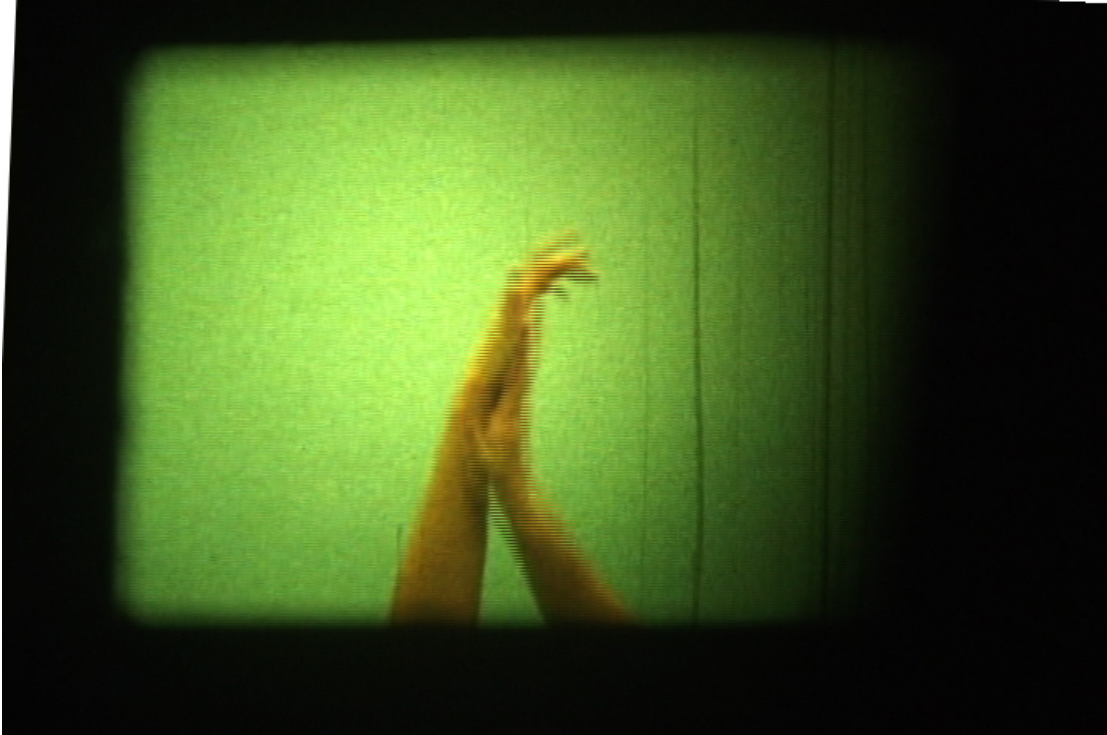


Figure 18, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.



Figure 19, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.

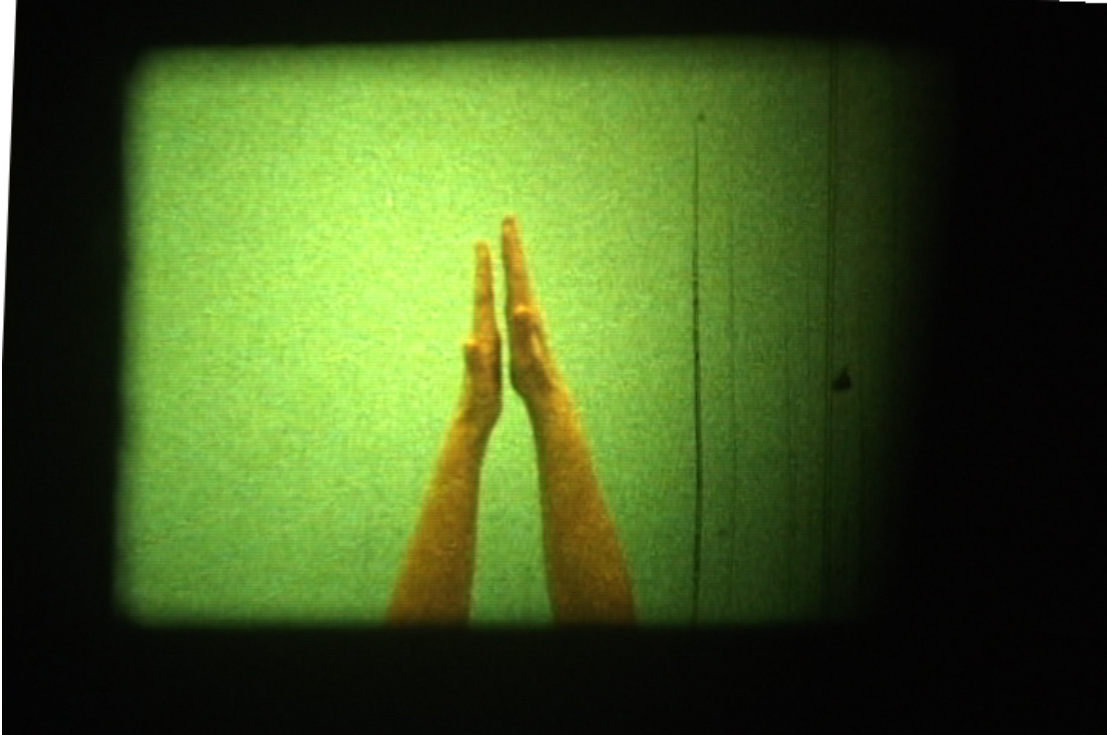


Figure 20, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.



Figure 21, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.

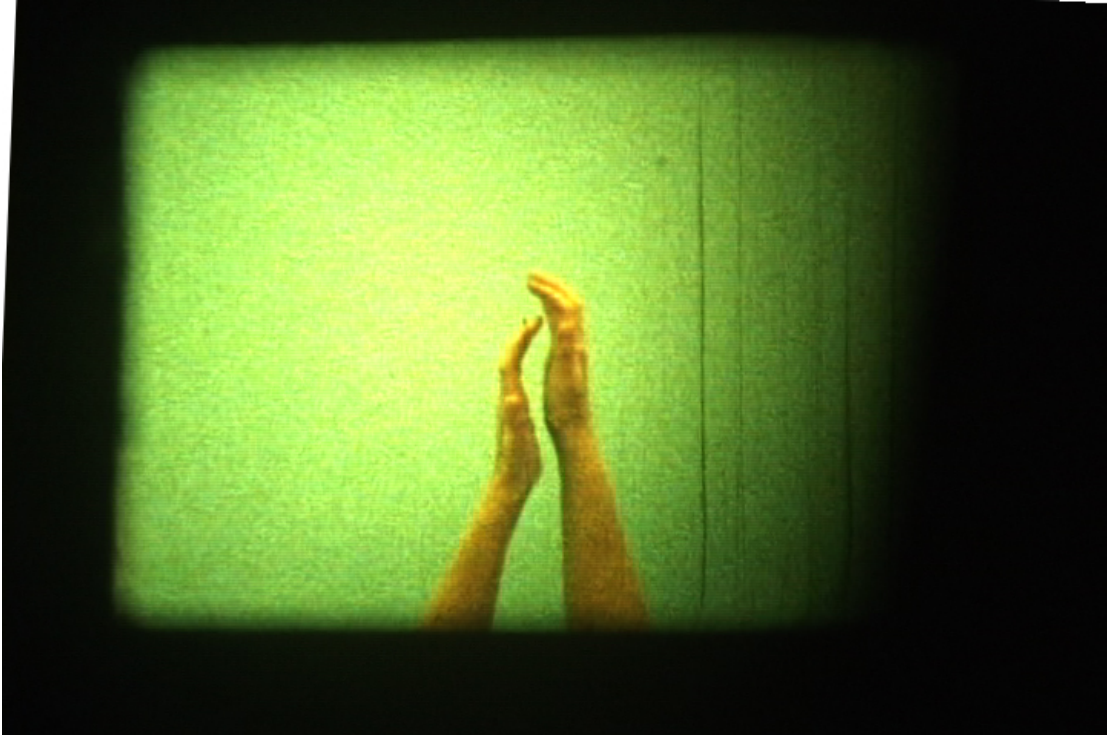


Figure 22, *jouissance* (film still), 2009.

V. Third Year

“Haunting”, Solo Show

With my body of work “Haunting” I explore the structure of an affective social experience and the consciousness, but also the relations of exchange between the defined and the inarticulate, the seen and the invisible, the known and the unknown. There have been two interpretations of this installation with in this last year of graduate school. The first interpretation was from my solo show at Lawrence Alloway Gallery and the second was our group MFA Thesis Exhibit at Staller Art Gallery. I will start with the first installation interpretation: The installation is “black and white”, I have taken two self-portraits (twenty years apart) and printed them larger than life size. They are printed to mirror one another and hang from the ceiling. In the center of the room is a 12’ diameter zoetrope. From the opposite side of the zoetrope the viewer is able to look through to the other side and catch glimpses of the two portraits, never fully see the full face but glimpsing the two. The interior of the zoetrope holds twelve lithographic prints. These prints are body impressions created from litho plates. The body is greased with tallow and then the body parts are pressed onto the plate, allowing the tallow to create the resist. The tallow is then removed through the etching process and the plate appears blank. It is with the addition of the lithotone that the impression/mark can be seen again. In lithography the marks are visible, then disappear, and reappear when printed. This process represents the haunting, the handprint, imprint or shadow that we are left with through the experience of living. The zoetrope represents the mechanism that illuminates the interior, the layers of living. The photographs represent the exterior and the litho

prints are the interior. This is the body multiple. The focus of this work is the area between subject/object and the blur of the existence: interior-exterior relation. With the viewer's participation the interior becomes enacted.

Merleau-Ponty writes,

"When my right hand touches my left, I am aware of it as a "physical thing." But at the same moment, if I wish, an extraordinary event takes place: here is my left hand as well starting to perceive my right, es wird Leib, es empfindet [it becomes body, it senses]. The physical thing becomes animate. Or, more precisely, it remains what it was (the event does not enrich it), but an explanatory power comes to rest upon or dwell in it. Thus I touch myself touching: my body accomplishes "a sort of reflection." In it, through it, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch here is diffused into the body - that the body is a perceiving thing," a "subject-object." (MMP 48) The viewer spins the zoetrope and the impressions/marks become animated, they start in a curled/fetal position and struggles to stand. This enactment is continued in the counterclockwise motion.



Figure 23, *Haunting* (installation view), 2009.



Figure 24, *Haunting* (installation view), 2009.



Figure 25, *Haunting* (lithographs), 2009.



Figure 26, *Haunting* (lithographs), 2009.

“Haunting”, MFA Group Thesis Show

The second installation of “Haunting” was in the MFA Group Thesis Exhibit at the Staller Art Gallery. This installation included the zoetrope but the interior of the zoetrope walls were replaced with thirteen digital solarized photographic self-portraits. The self-portraits are against a black background, and the figure is nude. The figure is curled in a fetal position. The next images move from curled position to standing position back to a curled position. The figure appears to have a wet metallic sheen almost compared to a “mercury feel”. There is a white electric-like halo that surrounds the figure (typical to the treatment of solarization in photography) Opposite of one another outside of the zoetrope was one of the photographs from the interior enlarged to 44x72 and a video projection, entitled “sink”. I found that using the photographs in the interior was an easier visual cue to reference the struggle of existence. It was very important for me that the use of the zoetrope acts as a catalyst for the illumination of the interior of our being. The history of this device intrigued me: the original use of the zoetrope was to take still images and when the device spins it animates them. My intention in using the zoetrope was to show that once it is put into motion, the life-size interior existence of self is illuminated, including the events or moments of struggle that stay with us through our lives. The events that shape us are brought to the foreground and explain the layers that are necessary for the creation of who we are or become. It is only until the viewer chooses to no longer engage that the zoetrope stops. Marcel Proust writes, “The distance in time and space

leads to a perception and an image similar to what is currently being experienced, without which the present experience would have fallen apart, also creates a metaphor.” Two spaces two moments “vast structure of recollection” (MP 53)



Figure 27, *Haunting* (installation view), 2010.



Figure 28, *Haunting* (installation view), 2010.



Figure 29, *Haunting* (installation video clip), 2010.

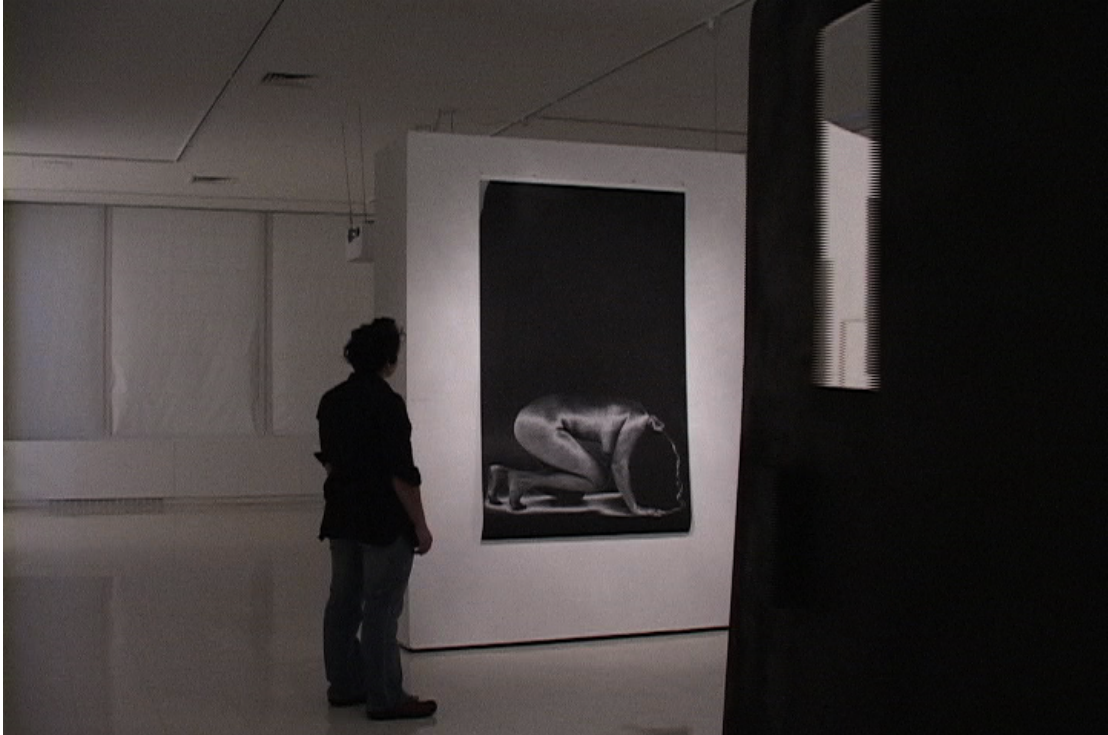


Figure 30, *Haunting* (installation view), 2010.



Figure 31, *Haunting* (installation view), 2010.

“Goodnight Analog”

The piece “Goodnight Analog” was inspired by my desire to create from absence. Looking back, I find that during graduate school I have created works that represent relationships. This piece was inspired by the memory of my grandfather. Last year, in February 2009, all television broadcasts switched from analog to digital. It was during this changeover that I started to think of the absence of my grandfather and the memory of him sitting in his chair watching a baseball game with the transistor radio at his side. There was a time in our recent history that at the end of the evening of television viewing, the national anthem would play while images of our national monuments would cross the TV screen. After the national anthem had finished a still image of the broadcast station would appear with a steady beep sound, broadcasting would be complete for the evening, and white noise and image would fill the room with its eerie light.

I have created a corner installation that relates to both my memory and collective memory. The installation includes an analog television, television table, winged back chair, scanned Polaroid images of my grandfather and myself, Madonna figurine and small lamp. I have also researched the wall color that my grandparents had in their living room.

Memories may be constructed in culture, museums, or within other public forms, but the memories of the individual form the basis for remembering. There are objects that function as cues for recollection. All of my works are situated in relationships and entail personal cues for memory. Collective memory and its connection to the sensorial experience bring out forms of individual memory into the formation of a

collective history. The artwork work then becomes the sensory cue in the creation of memories.

This fundamental difference in memory structures is demonstrated by the philosophy of Henri Bergson. He believed that there were two types of memory, intentional and spontaneous. Intentional memory consists of encoding and retrieval; it is an intentional, deliberate discontinuous, quantitative act, such as memorizing a poem or a history lesson.

Quantitative information. This information can be acquired by anyone.

Spontaneous memory is impromptu; it is formed as a byproduct, it is qualitative. You may remember a sound or a feeling from the day, or something someone said. This would be in the back of your mind behind a veil of intentional memory. The spontaneous memories remain in the background waiting for a trigger for the rest of your life. The spontaneous memories make up part of our collective memory and are something only we can possess.

Bergson's work with memory is very similar to the work of Marcel Proust. Proust's semi-autobiographical, In Search of Lost Time, is a spontaneous memory that has influenced both early and contemporary scholarship on the topic. Proust depicts numerous spontaneous memory events during the course of the novel; one involves memories of the corner stone at St. Marks Cathedral. Despite its emphasis on individual memory, Proust's work has aroused the interest of studies due to its treatment of objects as items capable of drawing complex and sometimes profoundly

meaningful individual responses. Individual memory exists within a certain social context, and thus overlaps in many ways with the memory of others. The past permeates the present in forms that transcends individual nostalgia and speak more to the shaping of identity. This then transmits through generations through the commemorative ritual. Objects serve as agents/signifiers supplying a multiplicity of meanings, objects mean different things to different people and can change dramatically over one's lifetime. "In Proust's novel, lost time is immediately "searched for" with spatial imaginary and within the discontinuity of language, so that the spatio-temporal continuity and its fragmentation are not an antithesis to pure time but as a servant, the preferred means for attaining time regained." (JK 194) It is haunting, memory and the sensorial that connects the artwork, artist and viewer.



Figure 30, *Goodnight Analog* (installation view), 2010.



Figure 31, *Goodnight Analog* (installation view), 2010.

VI. Closing and Future Directions

In closing, I acknowledge and embrace the importance of sensuous knowledge as a different kind of materialism—we can call this haunting. Personally, this is how I view my own experience and existence. It confirms the importance of “haunting” that is within our social structure. This knowledge is a reverberation of my childhood experience with the encyclopedia. My desire to show layers, not only in the process of the creation of my artwork, but in my philosophical beliefs also validates the existence of haunting and its relation to memory. I believe that progress can be made only through acceptance and validation of the layers of *truth* in the sensorial experience.

My future artistic endeavors include but are not limited to the further exploration of film and video. I now feel that I know the necessary technical skills needed to shoot a film or video. I have only created short films and video pieces, and would now like to make a longer film. I would like to investigate the inclusion of my writings within my film works.

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