

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES:
(A DISCUSSION ON HOW TIME AND MEMORY WITH THE
ASSISTANCE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH AFFECTS MAKING)

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By

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A Burden of Darkness

by Vicki Salise Hayes

*My first memory
Is that of me
Lying in a crib
With the gates up
In the middle of
The dining room
In the dark
Shadows of images that had
Not yielded to the darkness
Started to trouble a
2-year-old soul
Then the fear of what was
Known in the light but
Somehow quickly forgotten
In the darkness, began...
In the middle of
The dining room
Where meals were served
And people talked about
Their day and how it went
And other notable events
I found myself in the
Middle of it.
Like a meal, offered up
With no supplication*

*Lying in a crib
With the gates up
In the dark...
Did I mention
The darkness?
I can imagine
Questioning why I had
To be placed in the
Dining room
Of all places
And alone
I wanted answers
And so, I started
To ask the questions
But not in the form
Of a question
But in the form of
A very loud scream
Releasing tears of
Frustration mixed with
The fear of being alone
I screamed again
And again, and again, and again
(Long pause) and again
Someone came
Not the familiar figure
But one closer in stature
To mine*

Shh, shh, baby it's okay
A comforting hand reached
Through the high walls
Of the crib and
I was back to sleep
In no time
Only to be awakened again
By another figure
Still unfamiliar
Yet, it too was standing
Too close to my crib
Instead of shh, shh, shh
It sniggered...wtf
Instead of it's okay
It rattled the sides
And I screamed again
Out into the darkness
And after some time
The figure
Disappeared into the shadows

Epilogue:

In the morning
I'm sure I took inventory
How else can I explain?
My hatred of all things
Menagerie and doily.
They were all over

*The dining room
Collecting dust
And being distasteful
Awfully colored,
Mirrored images, doubled
And abnormally twisted
Masked clowns, horses,
Even frogs.
And they
In posture and gesture
Introduced the beginning
Of every nightmare I ever had
As a child
Carrying me down into
A darkness of fear
And despair
And that night
I began to carry
The burden of
The fear of darkness
With me for many years
That came after
But more important than
A fear of the dark
Was born a fear
Of speaking aloud
For fear of not being
Heard.*

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ABSTRACT

Much has been studied about how memory effects our everyday brain functioning from the physiology of memory up to the discovery of and early research stages of neurology and cognitive psychology. In this thesis I would propose to address the following: How our brain utilizes our memories (whether traumatic or otherwise) to affect our creation of and viewing experiences with art. Is memory and reaction to memory only a psychological state or does it manifest in physical states as well—as with dreaming and/or making?

Our bodies age, and things like our muscular ability and brain function deteriorate. Brain trauma and other physical diseases such as Alzheimer's and Dementia contribute to the dissolution of brain function as well. As a result of brain dysfunction what remains of our humanity is the spirit which clings to the thoughts that were once regulated by the brain. In this instance, the brain goes off grid and it becomes less functional because of disease: and with aging, inevitably causes decay and erosion. The brain becomes no longer able to regulate or sustain rational thought. Our thoughts and our memories become ethereal and scattered, melding, and melting into each other. However, if our memory is attached to our spirit as Henri Bergson (1859-1941) suggests and if rational thought is perceived as through the lens of our in-tact brain then as the brain becomes less and less operative it gives way to the images of the spirit which are its (our) memories.

“This problem is no less than that of the union of soul and body. It comes before us clearly and with urgency because we make a profound distinction between matter and spirit. And we cannot regard it as insoluble, since we define spirit and matter by positive characters, and not by negations. It is in very truth within matter that pure perception places us, and it is really into spirit that we penetrate by means of memory. But on the other hand, whilst introspection reveals to us the distinction between matter and spirit, it also bears witness to their union. Either then, our analyses are vitiated *ab origine*, or they

must help us to issue from the difficulties that they raise. (Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, e-Artnow, 2018)

Time does alter our perceptions and memories. As we age and experience things the way we view and judge the world comes from a more informed intellectualized via remembering viewpoint. We no longer see things as a personal affront to our well-being. Our understanding of human nature changes how we look at another person's experiences and how these things have caused them to become the person that they are. Human interaction and human suffering give us empathy and sympathy. We become or become like the persons with which we are the closest, with whom we share the deepest empathy and sympathy.

INTRODUCTION

Honoring through Remembering

There are two cultures that I am familiar with where the deceased are honored in a celebration of remembrance. In oral traditions, during Black History Month in America, there are celebrations in Afrocentric communities where people gather and call out the names of loved ones who have died and left impressions on those still alive. We honor them in remembrance and speak their names in spirit. In Hispanic culture the honoring of deceased loved ones is enacted through a celebration known as The Day of the Dead. In some Hispanic communities, neighborhood festivals take place where families come together to remember with stories, music, and food.

As artists who remember loved ones, we canonize, memorialize, etc. in all manner of materials and artistic genres. Sometimes as artists and as those who appreciate the arts, we celebrate artistic giftedness while that person is still alive. Giving them iconic status and appreciation while they are still among us. However, sometimes in celebrating the life of a person who is deceased we are reminded of the untimely reasons of their cause of death. Also, sometimes in celebrating the life of a person who is still alive it will bring us to the realization that a person may be ill with an incurable disease, such as HIV/Aids, Alzheimer's, or Cancer, and that they will be taken from us very soon. Hopefully, in the near future all diseases will be curable, and humanity's only cause of death will be natural. Unfortunately, presently this is not the case.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

The artist Felix Gonzalez Torres (1957-1996) had the foresight to propose a memorial of sorts to himself and others who were affected by the HIV/Aids epidemic for which there is still no known cure. In 1989 an installation was procured in the Modern wing of the Art Institute of

Chicago. *Untitled*, 1989 by Torres was acquired as a permanent installation of a conceptualized self-portrait consisting of information via text that was personal to him as well as information via text relevant to society during that time. Contingent on the sale and display of *Untitled*, the artist insisted that upon its initial installation and re-installations the owner(s) be selective in adding to, keeping, and/or removing content to insure relevancy and its impact on society into the future. When I first encountered the work I was and still am deeply moved by the piece and its purposefulness; my mind immediately went to my mother and grandmother. Who knew that a viewing of Torres' "frieze" would affect me so profoundly and deeply as to explore the roots and mindset of women who lived before me? They set such a strong example before my siblings and myself that to "forget" them would be a travesty. To honor a loved one with the action of "remembering" through visual and/or oral representation is a task I chose and still choose to take on in my making of art at this time. Maybe because the memory impression left by Torres was so deeply embedded in my spirit.

WWTD 2019-2022

The Torres "catalyst" combined with grieving and remembering the influential women in my life was cognitively heightened because of the occurrence of other important events; 1) the Black Lives Matter protests and ensuing riots, and 2) COVID-19 pandemic lock downs and shelter in place mandates. Both of these 2019-2020 cataclysmic events were traumatizing but also stimulating and impressed upon my memory a better acceptance and understanding of how my mom may have lived including the decisions she and my father made on how to raise their children.

Through a deep focus on world history and research (LRMFA participation), I found similarities in my mom's early life experiences that she shared with me and others during the last

years of her life. These shared experiences helped me to also understand my relationship better, to and with her.

My early childhood through adolescent upbringing and ensuing adult relationship was mostly non-verbal dialogue consisting of commands to do chores and marathon prayer sessions that showed a very emotional side that was absent in her everyday interactions with me and my other siblings. The safety and care of her children were not in question here. It's just that the responsibility of life and educational instruction were given to those people she felt were better equipped to provide those types of guidance and learning. Growing up I felt a sort of emotional detachment from my mother because of this, but I was also aware of her sense of family structure and value and the commitment she made to us to be in her care.

Even though timely and relevant dialogue was non-existent in our early relationship she still left an indelible impression on my life. It is in my dealing with my grief at her dying that the imagery and feelings began to surface in a sort of language about which I imagined and literally dreamed. What I am remembering about her, and our relationship is not verbal conversation or meaningful interactions but the imagined imagery of what those implied conversations appeared to be. I don't remember anything deeply impactful or meaningful that she shared with me during my childhood. I just remember the intent and how I was directed elsewhere to find answers to questions I may have had. I only had the opportunity to engage my mother in meaningful conversation intermittently and within the last 15 or 20 years of her life. Everything before that presents itself as a blur. When she started to develop symptoms of Dementia the conversations between us became blurred and emotionally charged yet again. Just like when I was younger and questioning her decisions and inviting discussion, she would prefer to speak to God about it, deferring to Him, the outcome of the discourse.

MEMORY

What is memory?

The critical thinker Bergson describes memory and its relationship to the physicality of things as such:

“The primary function of memory is to evoke all those past perceptions which are analogous to the present perception, to recall to us what preceded and followed them, and so to suggest to us that decision which is the most useful. But this is not all. By allowing us to grasp in a single intuition multiple moments of duration, it frees us from the movement of the flow of things, that is to say, from the rhythm of necessity. The more of these moments that memory can contract into one, the firmer is the hold which it gives to us on matter: so, the memory of a living being appears indeed to measure, above all, its powers of action upon things and to be only the intellectual reverberations of this power.”
(Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, e-artnow, 2018)

Even though our memories present themselves as thought and perceptions to our present self a constant flow of “experiencing and remembering” gives us a firmer grasp on reality. Our memories cause us to act and react strongly shaping our interactions with ourselves and onto others. Bergson designates memory as life and is the intersection of the mind (spirit) and matter (reality, tangible, brain).

With age and decay our experiences become more attached and reliant upon our spirit which suggests to our body that certain things are possible even if they never really happened; experience is no longer filtered through the lens of the brain and what ensues are thoughts, speech, and actions that are abnormal and in error. Also, the more time that passes from an experience the less detail we remember about it. In making art recently, I recaptured a beautiful moment with my mom. The 55th Street Beach in Chicago is a place we used to frequent as a



Figure 1

family. In the 1960's, there were not a lot of outdoor spaces that an African American family could comfortably visit in Chicago. But because of this particular beach's proximity to old established neighborhoods like Hyde Park, Kenwood, Jackson Heights, and Bronzeville, we could eat and frolic without worries of racial profiling and discrimination. In making these three drawings I

was reminded of a latent memory as well as this later one. While making the three drawings that represent this later memory, I confidently applied a pattern to the dress that I remembered my mom wearing. Later, after finding a photograph of the event I noticed that the dress pattern was wrong. The emotional content remained intact, but the details were a little askew. "The remembering self is sometimes wrong, but it is the one that keeps score and governs what we



Figure 2

learn from living, and it is the one that makes decisions. What we learn from the past is to maximize the qualities of our future memories, not necessarily of our future experience. This is the tyranny of the remembering self." (Kahneman,

Thinking Fast and Slow, E-book ed., 2011)

My mom said that one of her first memories was that of loss. She said "mama" (her mother but "big mama" to me) kept a job even during the Great Depression era, through which my mom was raised. Cleaning houses and doing other folks' laundry. Making quilts and patching up old ones that people could not afford to get rid of. She said big mama stayed elbow deep in some vat of soapy water which consisted of lavender oil and lye soap flakes. She said the routine consisted of; washing the linens, rinsing them with clear water, then rinsing them again with a mixture of dissolved cornstarch chunks in the water to make the linens nice and crisp when she

ironed them. What she pleasantly remembered about big mama was that she always smelled like peppermint and had soft silky skin that she liked to rub on. Similarly, like my mother's memory of her mama, my first memory of my mom was hiding behind her apron as visitors invaded our apartment's doorway introducing themselves as the new neighbors from across the hall. I remember it vividly, hiding behind that pale blue linen apron and peeking through the eyelet border at the women in the doorway of our kitchen. Both instances were of women in the process of doing work just one was outside of the home while the other was not. My mom's scent was always whatever meal she was cooking but on Sundays she only smelled of Jergen's lotion. What my mom detested the most was people who smoked tobacco because of the smell of burnt ashes and how tobacco lingered in folks' hair and in their clothes. We only saw ashtrays on holidays at other people's houses, when we would have large family gatherings, but if someone were smoking my mom was nowhere to be seen. My mom owned this trait and often spoke of the cause of it. She was traumatized by the event of a tragic fire that occurred in their home when she and a younger sibling were left alone without adult supervision. Not only did she almost lose her life but the home that she, her mama, and her older siblings (who were at school at the time) shared, was gone in a matter of minutes. What became known after was probably more traumatic than if not just as traumatic as the fire itself. There were three events. 1) The extraction and relocation of her older siblings from the care of her mama to their biological father's family, 2) the missing baby who allegedly burned in the fire, and 3) her own placement in a state facility which she was eventually "rescued" from by her mama. Our childhood and adult relationships with my mom were dictated by these tragedies—life altering events.

TIME, TRAUMA, AND MEMORY

Are memory and reaction to memory only psychological states or do they manifest in physical states as well—as with dreaming and/or making? According to Daniel Kahneman (Nobel Prize recipient, Economics 2018) our memory guides the decisions we make in our physical functioning state. There is a constant shift from what he describes as System 1 and System 2 that fluctuates between (S1) gut reaction and (S2) deep analytical thought. S1 represents the working memory that we utilize in everyday activities i.e., making sure to not touch the stove because it may burn you; or how to balance ourselves when we are first learning how to walk. A working memory of how hot heat may get, is instrumental in our understanding of its application to other activities such as baking or ironing. S2 represents our cognitive development and how our learning is scaffolded according to lessons previously learned. In other words, one may not be able to do algebra without the memory and understanding of simple arithmetic. The importance and duration of events and experiences are processed through either system according to the impression left of the experience. (Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, E-book ed., 2011)

Time Assists and Hinders Memory

Time is multi-faceted and can be described as a non-deterrent to memory and an asset depending on the importance and severity of the experience that is remembered. Based on the peak-end rule pain trials conducted by Don Redelmeier and Daniel Kahneman at the University of Toronto (2008), the intensity of an experience can now be measured which supports the memory in its functional ability to help make rational decisions based on that experience. Basically, if an experience is important and lasts longer then it will be remembered and remembered well, it will also affect future thought processes and actions that are related to it. We evaluate an experience or event but forget about how long the event lasted. We focus on the moment that gave us the

most pleasure or pain (the peak) and how we felt when it was over (the end). We don't base our evaluation of the event on the moment-by-moment experiences throughout.

“The peak-end theory is a psychological rule in which an experience is evaluated and remembered based on the peak (most intense) point of the experience and/or the ending of the experience. It seems our recollection of events is impacted greatly by this interpretation of events experienced rather than the experience as a whole.” (Doll, K., Psy.D., L.P., 2020)

Speaking from the mindset of an older individual, I propose that time and memory are also the anti-thesis to my purpose as an artist as I am constantly working against time in retaining the memory of a skill and also retaining the knowledge of the application of certain media. I also rely on the memory of definite aspects of a feeling which may alter as a result of time passing,



Figure 3

sometimes causing disinterest and even disdain if the memory is painful.

The surface materiality that I have chosen to work with is photo paper. The inclination here is that a photo assists memory and also that feeling which is being remembered. To draw or paint a memory on a resistant surface iterates the

effect of time. Time in this instance is represented as pushing back or working against the intentional processes and applications. The affectual look of erosion as the media adheres and resists, and also the absence of color in the artwork relate to how time has affected my processes and the result of my making.

Over time technology has advanced to assist humanity, making our lives easier and giving us comfort with the most menial of tasks. Even so, with the new advances of technology in the visual arts, time working in conjunction with the dissolution of memory is the monster that

threatens all these new innovations as well. The field of Computer Science assists artists in many genres. In order for these applications to work well a specific amount of “memory” is required to keep software working smoothly, without glitches and such. And, as time ushers in new technological advancements, time also pushes outdated concepts and software into the past taking with it the memory that was stored there. Even though some aspects of computer science and technology exist to aid us in our “remembering” by providing data bases and metaverses, without memory and protection from viruses they (what was stored) too are susceptible to decay and dissolution. Because of time everything is susceptible to decay and erosion, its own ending.

Trauma and Memory

Memory of trauma manifests in diverse ways. Behaviors resulting from traumatic events can present as mild occurrences, manifesting in unpleasantities where opinions from which behaviors such as likes, or dislikes are formed. Behaviors resulting from traumatic events can also present as chaotic occurrences, manifesting in all manner of abnormal and psychotic episodes ranging from night terrors to anti-social behaviors. Trauma whether physical or mental directly affects the development of our physical brain causing disconnects that cripple our ability to act and function normally.

“Without early intervention and help, traumatized children grow up to be traumatized adults, often having abnormal reactions to stress, chronic physical ailments, relationship problems, learning difficulties, and tendencies to engage in risky behaviors like drug abuse and lawbreaking.” (Walden University, 2022)

Trauma and Dreaming

Sometimes the memory of a traumatic event will subconsciously make an appearance while dreaming. Depending on the severity of the trauma and the victims’ desire to remember it in

detail, symbolic meaning and healing can be found in the dream itself. The trauma one experienced as a child or as an adult is sometimes found in the symbolic representations and imagery of their dreams and nightmares. Some artists, like myself, will use this imagery compositionally and expressively to work through experiences purposefully or inadvertently. Being drawn to revisit an image and work with it repeatedly in making art is a justifiable sign that it represents some symbolical occurrence. This same applies to tendencies towards certain subject matter, certain colors, color combinations, as well as materials and fabrications.

“Trauma memories are often implicit, because trauma floods our brain with cortisol, the stress hormone, which shuts down the part of our brain that encodes memories and makes them explicit. Our implicit memories can be like invisible forces in our lives, impacting us in powerful ways. The more we can learn about implicit memory, the better we can understand ourselves and not let our experiences and reactions in the present get hijacked by our past.

Because of the nature of implicit memories, they’re often triggered subconsciously and cause reactions we don’t always understand. For example, seeing certain wallpaper can remind a person of a room in which they were abused as a child, leaving them feeling frightened without knowing why.” (Firestone, L., 2020)

Making sense of trauma affected imagery is no easy task. If the trauma is not remembered, it will be difficult to recognize it when it surfaces and when we refer to it in our art making. It may take a lifetime to understand why we dream about impactful things and dream about them repeatedly. However, I am certain that my childhood fear of the dark and the fact that I wished for light in my scariest moments of despair completely impacts my choice to make works in black and white. I am searching for clarity; the ability to see separations and motives. Just as well, I am certain that my childhood trauma of being chased and knocked down by a dog has affected my dreaming and waking relationships with dogs. While I do not have a fear of dogs *per se*, I do fear

the intent by which a dog was trained. Sometimes because of misunderstandings or ill-intent I am reminded subconsciously in my dreams to pay attention to my human relationships and the actions of individuals. Because of these similar stress related traumas, my adversaries are symbolically represented as dogs in my dreams. During the dreams the dogs take on the characteristics and traits of people including the scenarios and problem-solving steps needed to make problematic issues disappear including running away from them. At the onset and duration of COVID-19 my dreaming experiences have been full of canine imagery including bicycle riding were-wolves. This experience has given me insight into how much misinterpretation, human error, and interference came with the handling of consensual remedies; how a cure or even simple relief has been delayed and deterred throughout our battle with this incessant plague.

Understanding and recognizing the trauma related imagery of my art makes explaining it easier during critique and viewing of it. The resulting imagery may be harsh at times and sometimes not easy to look at but the meaning behind the imagery is honest and purposeful. The appearance of textualized mark making in my work can be directly attributed to the non-verbal interactions I had with my mom during my language building years. Displaced communication and affection directed towards the church which I believed she hoped would trickle down and provide me and my siblings with everything she felt she was lacking as a parent in that area.

Glossolalia

The images come to me as I am awakening. Mostly as non-intelligible nonsense, written on sheets of paper hung haphazardly on the walls surrounding my sleeping self. They are not middle-age floaters, but very visible and authentic. Sometimes they come with an indescribable sound. Sometimes I understand the sounds completely, at other times I do not. At times the wall is filled with the images of these words or visions or interpretations of dreams. At times they

appear as singular detached graffiti that move and dance about, following my line of sight as I move my head and adjust my eyes to the dawn light that is entering through my bedroom window. What are these? Blessings or curses? They look like cut up strands of DNA sequences, or better yet movie film edits that end up being discarded after being rejected from lengthier completed stories. That would explain a lot. The noises and the movement, the symbolism found throughout the unfinished phrases. Sinister are the ones that I remember, nightmarish and fear inducing. Like those “no way out” Stephen King novels that I hate. Back masked discarded film edits.



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

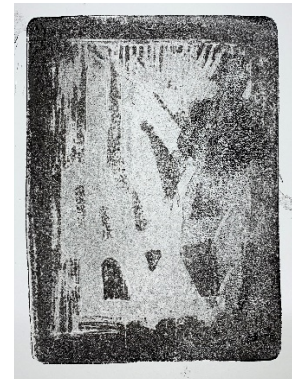


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

II. PHOTOGRAPHY AS MEMORY

One of the first visual technologies invented to preserve our memories (and give us access to suspended time) was photography. “William Henry Fox Talbot, called his invention skiagraphy or ‘*words of light*.’ In 1837 he made a photographic image with an inscription of the alphabet, the name of the place, and the date, as if he wanted to show that the entire alphabet could be taken into the image and that photography was going to be the first optical medium to enter the domain of writing and to bring writing into the very essence of the image.” (Derrida, 2010).

What Mr. Talbot inadvertently or purposefully created was the precursor to data processing. Because of the overlapping capabilities of “light writing” photography has come to develop into so much more. Because of its ability to capture light and suspend a moment in time photography not only records but also recollects. Recollection here is meant to direct attention to the process or action of recovering over and over. To bring a referent to the photographer’s attention repeatedly and thusly reminding them of an event or experience and also reminding them of the feelings that were embedded in their thoughts at the time of the original making of the image. Photography is able to reinforce memory because that image acts as evidence that something real existed in the time and space of its making. “Photography transfers reality from the object depicted to its reproduction.” (Bazin et al, 2005)

The interesting thing I acknowledge about the photographic process is that light cannot be reproduced or altered without the interaction or presence of light itself. Light in an image (photograph) not only draws attention to itself but also makes known or sheds light on the other objects present in the composition of the photograph. Light also participates in the entire image making process, from the capturing of an image in a camera to the reproduction of the image onto a surface. Skiagraphy or light writing was aptly named so.

“Photography embalms time, placing it beyond the reach of its own decay.” (Bazin, et al. 2005)

Photography, whether seen as an art form or as enduring documentations of events, has developed and advanced over time into not just an art genre but a field of endless visual possibilities. Photography in its many forms, not only aids us by recording data and documenting events it also serves as entertainment and also assists us with resolving mysteries and making art by stabilizing information that we can revisit over and over in case we missed something or overlooked some important nuance.

However, photographic images can decompose with the advent of time and non-care. Preservation techniques and safe keeping can prolong the life of a photographic image but if left untreated photographs can decompose taking on the personified characteristics of our aging or disease-ridden physical bodies. In the essay entry *Cancerous Image* by Herve Guibert of his memoir *Ghost Image* (transl. 2014) the author presents an imagined relationship with, not necessarily the subject of, but *the photograph* itself. Not willing to alter or encase the photograph in anyway, he allows it to be “itself” while being subjected to unfiltered light and harsh air. His reaction to the image overtime, perceiving it to be capable of reciprocity proves to be the cause of its demise. The photograph and thusly its subject referent begins to develop a kind of cancer that begins to deteriorate until as a sort of last-ditch effort Guibert saves the image by taping it to his body until the chemicals/ink from the image reverse prints onto his own skin.

"Photographs are not innocent. They influence and... betray what is hidden beneath the skin. They weave not only lines and grids, but plots, and they cast spells.... They are an impressionable material that welcomes spirits." (Guibert, 1996)

Although this seems like a lot of power for a photograph to wield one would not deny the sentimental value of recollecting memories through viewing images of past experiences and deceased loved ones, though it seems consistent with the magical qualities attributed to photography and which Bazin makes mention of. Even though Guibert never met the subject of the photograph he stole from the wall of an acquaintance the similarities between himself, and the referent caused him to be drawn in at first. As he allowed the image to affect him personally it began to take on traits that he found irresistible to not react to. “Like a lover” as he once described it, becoming so enamored of it as if he were in a relationship with it. He confessed his love and took on the dying photograph’s ailments as his own, compressing it onto his own skin as if embedding the disease, the photo was experiencing into his own DNA. To my knowledge, (because of HIPPA) the trauma of contracting HIV Aids is not familiar to me, nor do I have intimate references from which to draw empathy or sympathy. I, however, did get emotionally distraught when I read some of Guibert works and especially this piece. *Cancerous Image* where Guibert immaculately describes two lovers in an ill-fated relationship.

*A stolen glance, resulting in a relationship that started out
as one-sided but over time
developed into a deep full meaningful one,
involving freedom and trust,
only ending in Shakespearean-like
tragedy and despair.*

Addressing Photography, Memory, and Time in Art Making

Photography has become a useful tool for me as an artist because it does assist my memory. A photograph or a film/video of someone or an event will spark a memory, evoke a feeling, or simply bring pleasure. The main reason I will address a project is from a feeling. The project results as an extension of how I may have felt about an issue or a conversation or a memory; this brings me to the concept of time and how it drives my thought processes and procedures to do my art making. How much time has passed since this particular event occurred and how much of what I remember can be accurate because so much time has passed? Can I bring to memory (or can I recreate those images) the purest form of that feeling or images in order to do it well? How does time alter those memories and what does that look like on paper or in a multimedia project? Time would be the filter and the lens that the communication occurs--between myself and the viewer at any given point in time from which I am sharing.

Catalyst

Whether I use the photo as a catalyst to evoke a feeling or use the image and reproduce it via a drawing or painting, like the artist Josephine Halvorson, I will directly address time and memory in the process of making. Josephine Halvorson presents both literal and process driven interpretations through her pieces. Specifically, *The Clock*, 2013. I interpret this artwork to be a literal interpretation of how time deals with decay in both physical and mental senses. She purposefully set up residency in the town of Thomastown, Connecticut where Seth Thomas' brand of clock construction and development originated. Halvorson challenged her residency's process driven commitment to completing works of art within 24 hours. Halvorson gave herself a set amount of time to complete her interaction with the subject matter she chose (a mural of a clock). The painting which she named *The Clock*, exemplified the presence of time generally,

metaphorically, and symbolically. The feelings and interpretive process would only exist if her attention to time was prevalent in her methodology and processes. That clock is representational of her social commentary about how time alters everything even itself or at least the representational imagery of time.

“Choosing as her image the mural of a clock, Halvorson’s obsession with time is both literal and metaphoric, reflected in the subject matter, the hours passing by, and the additive process of her brushstrokes...interested in her relationship to the subjects of her paintings, Halvorson resists the term painter; she prefers to think of painting as recording time spent with an object in its environment.” (Art21: New York Close Up, 2013)

Halvorson describes her art making process as not painting but more so as time being spent with an object. “My paintings are records of the time spent with this thing in its environment.” (Art21: Close Encounters with Josephine Halvorson, 2012) During the time spent she begins to know the objects intimately to the point where she feels the act of mixing colors, applying paint, smelling paint, and feeling how the paint adheres to the canvas are all conversations and interactions that create a close relationship with these objects. Not only in the places where they are accidentally found but even intuitively revealed to her. In this sense like a photographer, she recreates and interacts, making a memory that becomes frozen in time. The memories are a result of her forced relationships between herself and the inanimate, unnatural objects that she paints. In the Art21 video session, *Close Encounters with Josephine Halvorson* (at the 1:47 to 2:40 mark), she describes how taking her art practice out of the studio environment gives her something else in common with photography and videography, referring to the portability of it and being able to find interesting subject matter not found indoors. Like a photographer and similar to the essayist Guibert, she chooses the *referent inanimate* with which to bond and develop unnatural intimacies. She admits to leaving behind the chaotic relationships of family and friends for

months at a time only to end up missing them. But still, she makes a conscious effort to choose instead the quiet nature of painting inanimate objects. Perhaps it is the quietness that she is drawn to allowing space for the objects to really commune with her through their process of becoming art and also her personal memories.

To Halvorson the painting itself is the photograph while to me the painting is of the photograph. For Halvorson the process of making the piece becomes the memory frozen in time whereas to me, the remembering of the imagery and feelings from the past becomes a part of the making process as well. Halvorson operates solely in the present making use of time and materiality to start and finish a conversation within the allotted time.

Given our allotted time spent on earth (without it being cut short) we are all allowed occasion to work through our varied experiences. Time allows everyone to process as well as heal, whether the memories are traumatic or joyful. Spending time with a memory can prolong joy or facilitate a deeper understanding of tragedy to promote healing.

SUMMARY

Personal, intimate, self-expression; I have been drawing, reproducing these images, and then adding elements to the reproductions with wet media applications such as ink wash, watercolor, and markers. Because of the subject matter and its personal meaning to me I want to add more depth to the work by adding overlays of intricate mark-making, introducing the concept of physical time and how that distinctly affects physicality and emotions such as loss and grief that may or may not be depicted in the compositions. Using other elements and examples of time passage such as comparing images to past and present; or by repeating a character or process; or adding to it some other medium of application to suggest growth; or stripping away some of its elements as I have been to suggest decay; I am developing a series of work that will compliment and contradict, giving way to a discussion about temporality and how integral it is to my current processes and life in general.

Because time affects each of us differently, we all have distinct experiences to share. One thing that time does for sure is age things (human capability and interaction, ecology, and etc.). Sometimes the process of aging makes things better (as in taste) and sometimes it makes things worse (as in the decay of the human condition).

I can see the end result of my work, giving or making way for acceptance of older individuals as they transition or continue to live; some having more need of assistance than others or some being more participatory in life and society. But valuable either way. Being able to continue to earn wages and contribute in ways that a wealth of wisdom that was gathered with age and how that can only positively impact young people. There is a personal element to what I want to achieve in terms of a distinct message or thought or feeling but I also hope to gain

insight myself as I am developing as an artist who shares these images and how I can affect or influence on a positive and uplifting platform.

The discussions surrounding erasure of the enslaved person's history is a topic I wish to address in my composition and story development as well. Rediscovering a displaced culture's history; how to effectively retell the story from my personal viewpoint with as much passion and truth that I can gather through my family's geographical locations throughout time. And for most of the dialogue and image making I will have to rely on my own and others' memories.

NOTES

- Pages 7-8,* Bergson, H., *Matter and Memory*, E-book ed. Pg. 93
- Page 12,* Bergson, H., *Matter and Memory*, E-book ed. Pg. 115
- Page 13,* Kahneman, D., *Thinking Fast and Slow*, E-book ed. Pg. 381
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- Page 18,* Firestone, L., (2022, April). These Invisible Memories Shape Our Lives, <https://www.psychalive.org/making-sense-of-implicit-memories/>
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- Page 21,* Bazin, A., et al. *What is cinema? Ontology of A Photographic Image*, 2005 - University of California Press – Berkeley. Pg. 00
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- Page 22,* Guibert, H., *Ghost Image: Cancerous Image*, 1996 (Translation Bononno, R.), University of Chicago Press-Chicago. Pg. 187
- Page 25,* Art21: New York Close Up, 2013; Josephine Halvorson Is on the Clock; <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/josephine-halvorson-is-on-the-clock/>

FIGURES

- Page 13,* Figure 1: Untitled, digitally enhanced photo, computerized image; 2020
- Page 13,* Figure 2: Untitled, 3 pencil drawings on paper; 8 ½ X 14” each; 2010
- Page 16,* Figure 3: Untitled, cutaway of ink painting; 36 X 180”; 2022
- Page 20,* Figure 4: Untitled, charcoal drawing on top of photograph; photo paper and vellum; 8 X 10”; 2022
- Page 20,* Figure 5: Untitled, linoleum print; printmaking paper; 5 X 7”; 2021
- Page 20,* Figure 6: Untitled, linoleum print; printmaking paper; 7 X 5”; 2021
- Page 20,* Figure 7: Untitled, linoleum print; printmaking paper; 5 X 7”; 2021
- Page 20,* Figure 8: Untitled, linoleum print; printmaking paper; 5 X 7”; 2021
- Page 20,* Figure 9: Untitled, linoleum print; printmaking paper; 5 X 7”; 2021
- Page 20,* Figure 10: Untitled, linoleum print; printmaking paper; 5 X 7”; 2021

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