



In exploration of Memory.

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St. Mary's Project
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Introduction

On every trip I went on with my family, it was guaranteed my mother would be found with at least one, if not more, cameras hanging from her neck. When I began taking an interest in art classes in high school, photography became an easy path to a deeper connection with my mother. Her camera became my own, letting me use it to photograph our family and the things around me that caught my attention. As I continued through the years, art became a way to connect with my mother, taking me to gallery shows and introducing me to the photographic eye.

When I came to college, art was never my first instinct for a major. After the passing of my mother, I began to explore different topics and aspects of learning, trying to find what felt right for me and what my family would feel proud of. After trying several paths, it began to seem more obvious to me that maybe my creative pastime was more than just a hobby. After spending much of my free time searching different creative paths, I came to the desire to follow the family footsteps and become an art major.

When beginning my SMP, I explored a variety of different topics, yet kept feeling drawn to one consistent idea: exploring the death of my mother, her experience, what she has left behind, and how I deal with her loss every day. Originally coming to our first SMP meeting with ideas of nature photography and some integration of my family, it was a group consensus that my mother, whether I knew it or not, continuously became the focus of my work. Nervous of what others would think, but hoping to find a sense of closure and comfort from working with the topic, I decided to continue my St. Mary's Project by exploring the memories of my mother and her presence in my life today.

This semester I have been exploring a variety of ways to convey the emotions surrounding the passing of my mother. When I first began, I approached the topic wanting to show what it was like to find her in our home, creating images that replicated that experience, and expressing my own sadness more than other emotions. I continued by making 11 x 13 inch prints of the objects that were on her dressers and different shots of my home, eventually adding text to prints, offering more information on the images. After taking a step back and looking at my work, I came to see that it all was a little too intense; I realized that I wanted my audience to relate and find emotion connections in the pictures, not be overwhelmed and depressed by images too focused on myself.

This realization has brought me to the work I am creating today. Half way through the semester I went back into my home to take time to see the space in a different way I began to connect the way light entered and illuminated the spaces of my home with a feeling of revived presence. I realized that the light could be the image, giving me the chance to explore every wall and doorway, natural light bringing me each image with each memory. After printing these new images, I realized that the light and dark told the story on its own and I no longer felt the need to add text.

I have spent much of my time this year in my studio space with the items that used to be on the dressers of my mother. I went home and found folders in the closets and frames in boxes of old family photos, many of which I had not seen. Having time alone with these worn pictures and the boxes filled with my mother's most important possessions gave me time to explore my family history. Through the exploration of their material possessions, I discovered more about my family than I had known while my mother was still living. The second body of work represents some of the images I created during this process. As the year continues, I hope to find new ways to work with each object and the relationship I have developed with it.

My Definitions

The intent of this section is to provide viewers and readers with a list of vocabulary that I keep in my thoughts while photographing and describing my images. These words are some of my more important working vocabulary and, although they seem elementary for the adult mind, re-reading the definitions in the context of my project may add some additional information for the viewers. The aspects of the definition that are most important to the project are italicized in the lists below.

****Note:** The following definitions have been taken from website *dictionary.com*, have been edited down for personal use, and have been added to, highlighting what I see as the most important aspects of each definition. I have chosen not to write my own, but to research from currently existing definitions because it forces the reader to reconsider something they assumed they already knew. This experience relates to me beyond the definition, but is similar to the process I've been going through with my mother's possessions. It is important to rediscover what has already been there.**

Absence:

1. State of being away or not being present
2. *Period of being away*
3. Failure to attend or appear when expected.
4. *Lack; deficiency: the absence of proof.*

Image:

2. *An optical counterpart or appearance of an object, as is produced by reflection from a mirror, refraction by a lens, or the passage of luminous rays through a small aperture and their reception on a surface.*
3. *A mental representation; idea; conception.*
4. Psychology. A mental representation of something previously perceived, in the absence of the original stimulus.
5. *Counterpart; copy: That child is the image of his mother.*

Memory:

1. the mental capacity or faculty of retaining and *reviving facts*, events, *impressions*, etc., or of recalling or *recognizing previous experiences*.
2. this faculty as possessed by a particular individual: to have a good memory.
3. the *act* or fact of *retaining* and *recalling impressions, facts*, etc.; remembrance; recollection: to draw from memory.
4. the *length of time over which recollection extends*: a time within the memory of living persons.
5. a mental impression retained; a recollection: *one's earliest memories*.
6. the *reputation* of a person or thing, esp. *after death*; fame: a ruler of beloved memory.

Persistence:

1. the act or fact of persisting.
2. the quality of being persistent: You have persistence, I'll say that for you.
3. continued existence or occurrence: the persistence of smallpox.
4. *the continuance of an effect after its cause is removed*.

Repeat (Repetition):

1. to say or utter again (something already said): to repeat a word for emphasis.
2. to say or utter in reproducing the words, inflections, etc., of another: to repeat a sentence after the teacher.
3. to reproduce (utterances, sounds, etc.) *in the manner of an echo*, a phonograph, or the like.
4. to tell (something heard) to another or others.
5. *to do, make, or perform again*: to repeat an action.
6. *to go through or undergo again: to repeat an experience*

Souvenir: noun

2. *a memory*.

Origin:

1765–75; < French, n. use of (se) souvenir *to remember* < L subvenīre *to come to mind*, equiv. to sub- [sub-](#) + venīre *to come*

Synonyms

1. *reminder, keepsake, token*.

“The Importance Of...”

This section contains additional information on aspects of photography that are important to me. The medium of photography has been made important to me for a variety of reasons, many of which connect to the subject I am currently working on, concerning my mother. Here I am offering the reader a more in depth understanding of why I choose to work the way I do.

The Camera

As mentioned in my introduction, the first person to put the camera in my hands was my mother, and it was that creative direction that allowed us to bond in her last two years of her life. The camera, and lens, that I use today, were the personal purchases my mother made when raising my sister and I. Where ever we traveled, the same camera and lens came with us, regardless how strange or tacky it made my mother look, they were not just toys to my mother, but became apart of the way my sister and I described her to our friends. It was also with this camera that I took my first picture of her, about two years before she passed away. This was my first experience having fun and creating an image idea, beyond the scope of high school classes. Because I have had such a close relationship to this camera, and because it had a close relationship with my mother, it will be used most, if not all, of the time when working on my SMP for this year. Although I may try a larger format and have considered taking digital-color images, my mothers Nikon remains an important part of my photographic process.

***Note: In the summer of 2010, my camera's lens suffered minor damage to the lens that has resulted in two scratches, occasionally appearing in the final print. Although this may frustrate, I would like to continue using her original lens for its personal value and potential incorporation or deliberate use of the scratch. ***

The Darkroom

First entering a darkroom at the age of 14, I found the smells and low lighting frustrating at times. The smell often lingered on my clothes and hands for hours and the lighting often-caused classroom frustration and student tension (bumping into someone, ruining prints, etc). After three years in the high school darkroom and several in my most recent space, I have grown to find it a place of both tranquil thought and exhilarating discoveries. When in the darkroom, I take my time, setting the lights exactly how I prefer, with favorite music providing a type of focus designed specifically for me and that room. With the rock of the tray, I find a minute to rest, reflect on the day, on the work I am creating, and what may come next, time hard to find in the rush of college life. That same rocking provides the exhilaration I need to stay confident and motivated in and out of the darkroom. As the print appears on the paper, it suddenly feels less like work and more like I am accomplishing something; I often lack that sensation when in the digital lab. With its Zen like qualities and self-motivating experience, the darkroom gives me the hands-on experience that I need from photography. I save every test strip and print for future work, looking at their tones less like scraps and more like puzzle pieces for a upcoming projects. Each stage becomes about the process in relation to the work, submerging each final print into the wash with no fear of wet hands, taking the time to think about the significance of each image and reviewing its place in my story and the work as a whole. Printing traditionally provides a private and personal experience, encouraging thought away from daily distractions and improving the image quality I produce.

***Note: I have been considering making movements towards the digital darkroom for the winter months. The subject matter I have been working on is a personal one and in*

*the winter months it can help to be in a lit environment to encourage a positive attitude. Some of the materials and the ways I have wanted to work with the photo require the digital lab to further their development as “project ideas”. The darkroom remains priority, however, I plan on expanding the way I work in my subject.***

First Intention Statement and Action Plan

Intention Statement:

I have always been *too* emotional. My mother said it, my sister says it, and my friends quickly pick up on my intense ways, with all sorts of triggers and reminders that send me back to suppressed thoughts or happy memories. I am a social butterfly. My mother said it, my sister says it, and my friends quickly accumulate when thrown into new situations. I just love saying hello. As I began delving into the various mediums of the art world, I found my thoughts quickly escaping and creating through the camera, placed in my hand by my mother, questioned and compelled by my sister, and ever learning that the camera is a way to study the subjects that I have always loved: people, their emotions, and the world that effects the way I interact with both.

Since the beginning of my photographic journey I have directed the attention of my lens towards the ones I love, “wasting” rolls of film for school assignments on stolen moments when a friend wasn’t looking. On another path of subject love, I often ran into trouble for taking a roll that was given for a “motion” assignment and using it on the weekend’s largest weather storm or moments in my house. Since college, and this summer, I have worked on these two topics the most, photographing the moments I find most closely tied to my relationship with intimacy and emotion. This summer I shot images of nature, musicians, friends, and my personal experiences, hoping to direct my attention for this upcoming semester, and I am still finding it difficult to choose a path. For the next few weeks I want to experiment with styles of shooting, types of cameras, and expand on the information I know in order to refine my interests and decide how much of the emotions I have and the relations I love that I want to expose.

Nature will be a major focus, as I work to understand the connection I feel to the awe inspiring events around me and their importance in not just my daily existence but the importance to those around me as well. I will also work to capture the emotions of the self (self portrait), those around me, and those I may not know in both spontaneous moments and focused moments, with interviews and scheduled sessions. I want to look at the approach I take to both of these topics, furthering my understanding on how a subject should be captured and the importance that that approach can have on the subject. I want to see the juxtaposition of my interests, human emotion and the moments of nature, placing them side-by-side, looking further into their importance to me as an artist and to those thoughts and experiences that brought me to take the picture. This semester will be about understanding my direction.

6-Week Plan:**Week TWO:**

9/6/10

- Finish 35 mm roll and Holga roll
- Post 6-week starter plan

9/7/10

- Darkroom time (3-5pm): develop two rolls
- Contact sheets

9/8/10

- TWO print minimum
- Pick prints for tomorrow

9/9/10

- Take photos during sunset: in the car, etc.
- Review digital material that applies to themes

9/10/10

- Assemble digital contact sheets (portraits and nature)
- Research lenses that I have, look for possible new orders
- FOR THE WEEKEND: Begin research for artist, Bib assembly

9/11/10

- Shoot second roll of film in morning: friends' hangovers? (the states of being)
- Develop rolls

9/12/10

- Contact sheets (11-? With Courtney)
- Choose negatives for focus

Week THREE:

9/13/10

- Print (10am-11:50)

9/14/10

- Try digital shooting: work on framing, DOF, etc.
- Develop prints?
- Finish first bibliography (submit to BB)

9/15/10

- Dark room: 12-5 ~or~ if no neg that I like: shooting

9/16/10

- Practice lighting for portraits (aka shoot 1-2 rolls)

9/17/10

- Digital night pics: work on capturing the event (pos or neg) as it happens, acquaint my friends with the camera me
- Long exposures of SC 5?

9/18/10

- Play with natural lighting for film and dig (sunset)
- Review images from this week, file digital images for contact sheets

9/19/10

- Play with natural lighting for film and dig (morning?)
- Darkroom

Week FOUR:

9/20/10

- Library morning?: research art events for area, find 2 books relevant to topic direction.

For the continuing weeks...

I plan to develop my ideas and focus the attention of my art. I want to be able to express the ideas that I have been working on this summer and that I will be working on for the next few weeks in a more clear and relatable way.

****Reflective Notes**:**

I've been finding it difficult to follow my action plan. As my ideas continue to change and I receive feedback from friends and professors, my activities are changing. Things may have been done, but not necessarily in that order, nor exactly how I had planned.

Interview Number One:

For our first interview, we as a class were asked to come up with questions one would use, or want to be asked, during an interview that might better explain our work. With those questions in mind, the SMP students met with our partners and began the process of the artist interview.

Courtney Teed and Kathleen Overman

Courtney Teed: What inspires you? What are some of the sources, both within art and outside of art that you turn to?

Kathleen Overman: What inspires me tends to go between the people around me, the scenery I see, and daily life. Really its those “ah-ha” moments you have in daily life, like when you are walking down the street and you see a kid really excited about something I remember liking that much when I was their age. Those moments are harder to take pictures of because I just feel a little voyeuristic (and parents stare). But the same applies for when I see the light hit the trees, sidewalk, skyline, or my friends in a certain way. I also feel inspired by my family. My mother was the one who put the camera in my hands and continues to affect my choices. In terms of inside the art world, I am very inspired by community art or art that makes a point of involving another mind to create it. Bright colors and beautiful lines really draw in my attention.

In terms of artists, I find Sally Mann entrancing, Edward Weston interesting for his nudes, shapes, and lighting choices, Nan Goldin for her ability to capture the raw nature of a moment, and several others that I have learned about and am continuing to study in my classes. (National Geographic too)

Courtney Teed: How important is self-expression to your art making? In what way does ‘self’ enter your artwork?

Kathleen Overman: Honestly, I am pretty afraid to express the self in my art, which is why when I first started making art it was heavily focused in color and how it affects my mood. Now that I have focused in photography, I am starting to see the benefits of expressing the self. Whether I like it or not, my “biography” shows up in the images I make. If I look through my contact sheets, everything has a meaning in my mind, subconscious or otherwise. The “self” appears through the images of my friends and their particular, identifiable expressions, images of my mother or similar to her style, and everything else I take relates to my subconscious or secret interests.

CT: How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?

KO: Actually, choosing photography is, in its self, a total expression of the “self” and my history, as it was put in my hands by my mother and made interesting by her constant involvement in it. When I was growing up I used to feel embarrassed by the camera permanently attached to her neck. When we’d go anywhere for vacation, she would be the classic tourist: the shorts, hat, shoes, money belt, and, the cake topper, the double camera action. When I started taking classes in high school, she let me use her camera, really making a strong connection in our relationship that had been missing. Conveniently, this was the same time she was going through chemotherapy and she became my first photo essay. People are still that interesting and photogenic to me. I love learning stories and making them up through photos.

Those vacations, with the embarrassing camera action, were another inspiration for my choice of medium and subject. I associate my favorite topics for photography, people and nature, with my mother. I used to watch her take pictures of the mountainsides, the mesas in New Mexico, and the beaches of Assateague and her face would light up. It was almost like her escape from single-motherhood. Nature has the same importance for me in my images, it is an escape. I go to it when I feel overwhelmed, the same way my medium-inspirer did.

CT: Is your work ultimately more about your process or about the final product? Why do you feel that way?

KO: Since I started SMP, I have been, unfortunately, very focused on the “final product”, knowing that I am nervous to have to present my work to the campus. If I am to think about it, though, it’s more about the process. I love taking my time when shooting, framing the image and thinking about the lighting, trying out more dramatic angles and considering if that was just a good shot. Then, after shooting and in the darkroom, the very process of developing prints is like meditation, music on and alone in the low lights. I find the process just as important, if not more important, than my final product.

CT: Does the context in which your artwork is displayed affect your artistic choices? How might you address this in the upcoming fall exhibition?

KO: If I had the choice of changing the setting of the gallery to be more like that of the Barnes, designed to fit my photos the way I want them, then I would love to sit and think about how the display affects my work and how I would rather it look with my images. Because, typically, the artist does not have full control of that, unless they have too much

money, I do not think that far into the future.

In the fall, I plan on controlling the way I arrange my images, in the context of the other artists and of each image. I plan on finding the similarities and planning accordingly, placing things on the wall and moving them until I find what feels right to me.

CT: What is your first memory connecting you to art? Do you think it is important to what you are doing today and how?

KO: Although I have vivid memories of my mother taking pictures from day one, I did not consider that art until later. Regardless of my classes and my sister's interest, I still did not find a deep connection to art until my junior year of high school (maybe) when my mother took me to the National Gallery of Art. It was our first alone time together in a very long time, and was the first time she had noticed that I had a real interest in art. She showed me the Toulouse Lautrec exhibit and we watched the videos of his life and why he chose his subjects and I was hooked. It was less about the medium and more about the process of expressing the surroundings we are given.

This had a huge affect on my art and what I am doing today. I had always loved art but was too shy to talk about it, mostly because my sister loved it too and the family heard that more than they heard that I loved it. Once I had this experience, it was like a light went on, not just in me but also in my family. Taking pictures became more fun and my mother became more interested. It was a huge motivator and building process in my life and the subjects I love.

CT: How do you measure the success of your artwork?

KO: When I make a print I show it to all of my friends. Usually I get the average answer of "Oh this is awesome" but never really any critique or help. This is frustrating but, still, asking the opinions of friends makes me feel as if I have succeeded in a way. I have a friend or two who are willing to give the real critique, they definitely make me feel like I'm working towards success. The best measure of success for me is probably when I get the random "Wow, these are good!" I love when I surprise someone, a professor, parent, adult, or friend, it just makes me feel as if I have succeeded at making art, or making something that someone can understand. It will probably change, how I measure it, to move towards the opinions of the audience. I just want to be able to make some sort of curiosity or connection to the viewer.

CT: What about making art intimidates you?

KO: Showing it to others. I hate the idea of putting something I have grown attached to or something that is really significant to me to others and having them turn it down. I compare myself to others all of the time too, which makes it worse. I always find the fear of "what if the next person is better?" In the end, its controllable, once I realize that everyone is shooting different subjects, putting them into different categories. Overall, I just want to make sure that I'm understood the way it is intended, not necessarily feeling the same way I do about my images, but at least feeling connected to them, whether it be personal or universal.

CT: If you could have your portrait done by anyone who would it be and why?

KO: Honestly, I don't know yet, and I would feel uncomfortable saying otherwise. I am highly connected to color and the way it affects an image, whether my own work shows that or not, so it creates a divide between the choice of painter or photographer. I know that I probably haven't found the right one yet, the right person to express me, not only the way I want it but the way they see me. If I had to choose now, strictly speaking in photography, with the limited amount of information I have, I would choose Sally Mann. I just watched a documentary on her and I am stunned by the way she captures the human form and the face of her models. She pays attention to the frame, the surroundings, the lighting, and those are all things that I really appreciate.

Intention Statement Number Two:
Post Quarter Critique thoughts and reflections

It seems obvious to many, and now finally myself, that my family history, specifically involving the death of my mother and the absence of the rest of my family, may be the best focus for my artwork at this point in my life. Every image I make can be tied back to the medium in which I create. Each subject seems to relate, in some way, to my family. Originally feeling anxious about the subject, I was having issues fully committing to the project. After trying to develop my ideas further and taking more time to plan ahead, I have started to feel less anxious and more aware, viewing the act more like documenting and less like emotional productions.

After working with the professors for the past few weeks, asking for advice, reviewing my work, and discussing my theories, I feel that I have gained more direction for my St. Mary's Project. I have spent time talking to other photographers, former art majors, and other faculty members in order to have them challenge me further in the ideas I have been mulling over.

My current intention is now to explore the pathways of representation in photography. The thoughts of my mother are not just a memories, but stories, moments frozen in time. I have been trying to practice expressing these memories in various ways to further understand the real feelings that I have behind those moments. I would like to try photographing in a documentary style, in a narrative style, and to make the images more of seeing than being. I would like to return to my house and re-photograph things with which I have already been working.

To continue the reliving of old memories, I plan to photograph the old relics of my mother, father, aunt, and potentially my former "best friend" and sister figure. I want to work with the way light could hit a figure and pull forth further emotions. I will try and pair images in various ways to further convey the narrative.

Finally, I will be working on portraits, both mine and others, trying to both find an escape from focusing on the negatives and working on incorporating the intimacy I feel with

these memories with others and the old possessions of my mother. I have been considering trying to replicate the old mottos that she used to say to me, and ask others in my life to try her advice. This is one of the reasons I want to photograph nudes, my mother used to say to me, “Kathleen, at least once in your life, when you’re young and love the way you look, have a nude TASTEFUL photo taken of you. Trust me, you’ll want it when you’re older.”

Overall, I plan on continuing my research and exploring different pathways to recreate memories, express past experiences, and further my understanding of both the past and present. This semester will be useful in exploring old emotions, transferring them into new ones, and finding my scope of interest.

After the critique, I would like to work on how to present text in my images. Each image I have has some sort of relationship to a memory or story. By using text I will be able to highlight the meaning of the image for the viewer.

I also plan on working with the different effects of the literal verses metaphorical verses abstract images of my past and present. During the critique, it was mentioned that some of my images seemed too literal, too obvious of my story. I would like to try making images that both move away from this and play into it, as I am supposed to be apart of the work. Removing myself in some ways will allow me to subtly insert myself into the scene. Another note was that the two images on the end, the window and the door’s dirt, were great because they were less like viewing and more like looking into the story. This made me feel that it would be worth trying more often.

The last part of my critique discussed the presentation of my work. Many suggested a book of some sort. I have been hesitant of that idea but, after some thought, I had the notion of trying out the accordion stylebook. Wondering how they would see it from either side, I thought of hanging it, allowing viewers to walk around either side of it, one of the “negative” stories, one of the positive elements today.

Surprisingly, I enjoyed the critique. Next time I plan on limiting my vocal response and allowing more feedback. It wasn’t until after the critique that I felt that I had not gotten enough response involving the images themselves. Even if I am still nervous to be in front of the professors, I look forward to the next critique period.

The missing action plan:

By this point and time, I had realized that the action plan was a good guide for working, however, it could not be used as a direct representation of the work I would be doing. From this point and time, I would continue to enlarge the images I had been working with and attempted adding text to see how it would affect the works impact. I also shot several rolls for still life of my mother, father, and grand parents’ possessions.

Studio Visit Number One: Karley Klopfenstein

Information on visiting artist:

As you will read in the artist event section of this document, Karley Klopfenstein is the artist in residence staying at St. Mary's this year. She has been working with sculpture for most of her career and is currently working on a series involving military images and objects made from ornate carpet patterns. To learn more about her work, please see the section labeled as "Artist Events"

The Visit:

Karley's visit to my studio was both informative and perspective providing. Prior to our meeting, I had heard, during the midterm critique, that I should look further into a few ideas: creating a book, adding text to each image (both minimal and extensive), and altering the size of the image. The visiting artist agreed with some suggestions, while disagreeing with others. Meeting in the hallway, I had 2 large color images, 2 large black and whites, and about 8 smaller images. Liking both of the large black and whites and choosing not to discuss the color images, we focused mainly on the smaller prints. Without any reference, she found the similar theme to be imagery of the home, including pictures of the inside and outside of the house, inside my mothers' room, and inside my own room. I had a few images of the gravesite, which Karley found to be unrelated. She recommended that I remove those images. Another theme she saw was found through the window images, all of which Karley liked. In terms of text, we discussed a variety of ways that I have been considering adding the information and how it will affect the image. Karley pushed the idea that the images needed to be strong enough to be by themselves, with no text, and then to have the text added. She also suggested that I do not use an extensive amount of text for any image, as this further enforced her idea that the image should not need the text. After explaining a few of the images, she said that I needed to find away to express that tale in just a few words. When approaching the idea of putting my images into a book, Karley asked if it was necessary that the photos be placed in a specific way in order to understand the story as a whole. Telling her that they didn't, she informed me that she hated the idea of a book in a gallery and that it would truly inhibit the message of each picture. Putting them in an order would suggest a fluid story, rather than the reoccurring memory. Discussing the size and placement of each image, we both agreed that the 11x14 inch prints seemed both personal and accessible, while the placement needed to be tried in several different ways. We thought about either placing images with common features close together, yet separated from other pairs by great distance, and placing each image on its own, with ample space separating. The separation will allow the viewer to further explore the story in each image. Overall, I found the visit with Karley both informative and contradictory to others thoughts and my own. I will continue to take her advice into consideration, trying to amplify my images through minimal and extensive texts.

Post Critique Reflection Number Two:

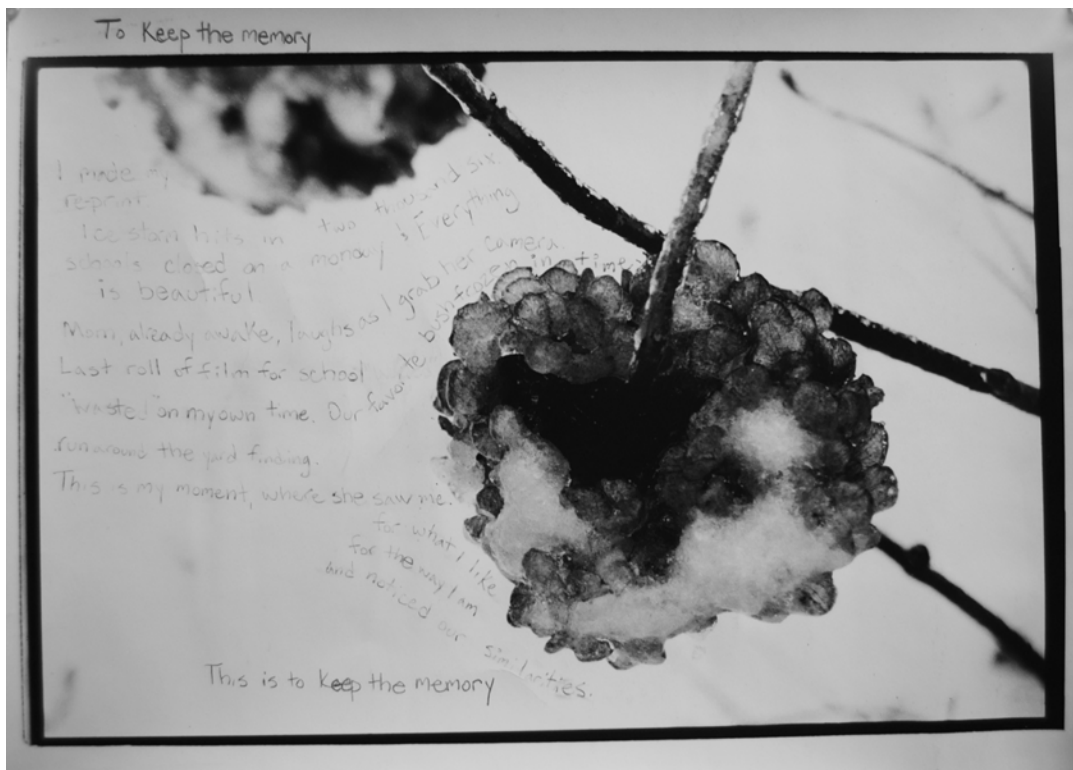
Listed below are a few of the images that I posted for the mid-term critique. The first displays a good use of text within the image, the second I a way to collapse time, yet was felt to be too obvious. The final is the first image on which I tried text and was shot prior to my mothers passing.



The Things I learned
Fiber based silver gelatin print, 11x14



To Deal
Fiber based silver gelatin print, 11x14



To keep the Memory
Fiber based silver gelatin print, 11x14

Critique Response:

After listening to the comments made at the critique a second time, I realize that they were not so much negative as they were very constructive and helpful. One of the questions that I had for them was inquiring about my text incorporation, is it working or is it not enough? The feedback I received, through my partner's notes and my notes from the recording, is that it works the best when incorporated into the background. Some of my images had perfectly formed surfaces for text, making them seem integrated and hiding it without it being too much. These images worked the best. The problem images were those that were too impossible to read, professors stating that it made them lose patience rather than want to spend time reading. I would like to make more images with neutral spaces to use it to mask text, as well as others, which give to incorporation. Another important point made was the idea of collapsing time in the image, bridging the gap between my mother and I. I plan to work with this through ghost imaging and playing with possessions of past family members in order to display our relationship as it was and as it is. I need to think more about ordering of my images, how they relate to each other in the context of the work as a whole. This can be done through pairing and lack thereof. This could also be a place to see if the text is required to be in every image or if there is only need for it in a few. Finally, it was mentioned that all seemed to be at the same level of intensity, each giving a lot and not giving the audience a time to relax. They suggested changing the image formality, the color, the size, and working with even the way things are hung in order to change the feeling the audience receives while moving through the space of the gallery. Where I need to go from here is to think of various ways to affect the mood of the image. I plan on trying monochromatic portraiture of other family members and of the rooms in my home to highlight the presence and absence of my family. I have also gotten warm tone paper to see if that changes the image enough to affect its tone. Overall, I was very pleased with my critique, specifically after I was removed from the situation enough to consider comments made as advice. I look forward to the next crit in order to develop past where I may end up by the in-progress show.

Intention Statement:

After the critique, I find that my focus needs to be on new ways to work with text in my image and branching out through time to reach my family and have them find me in the present. I want to find away to place myself in the time and space that was when my family was still living in my childhood home, taking pictures of their rooms, both including myself and photographing the barren room. It is also important for me to try to bring my mother and father forward in time, through their possessions and potentially through ghost images. I want to see what it might be like to use my own body, and its similarities to that of my mother, in order to create the impression that I, as a figure in the frame, am moving through time as both the daughter and the mother. I would also like to shoot more monochromatic images of my family members, including my sister, aunt, and uncle. This may help to bring forward the living characters of my story, while giving the viewers a moment to adjust the tone of their mind. I want to explore other "familial" places from my past, including places we vacationed to and spaces we in which we spent our time. This could also allow for the presentation of parallel images, those taken by my

mother in our past and a remake of the space today. It could also be interesting to frame images identically and shoot in both black and white and color. Looking beyond the image itself, I want to spend the next few weeks trying other ways to incorporate text, in the image, on top of it, and out side of it. I also want to put images together as a whole and try ordering them, pairing them, and spacing them, in different styles. This will also help to determine which images need text and which are strong without them. It is possible that I will have images with similar themes, and putting them all on the wall will help to see which one would work stronger with text. I need to find a way to change the tone or intensity of my work, as a whole. In preparation, I have ordered small format paper and warm tone paper to try experimenting. Overall, I look forward to trying more experimenting in the upcoming weeks, applying the notes and advice given from the critique to each new project.

Interview Number Two: Courtney Teed and Kathleen Overman

Courtney Teed: What is one suggestion or comment you received at the mid-term critique that you have kept in the forefront of your mind since then, and how are you responding to this issue in your work now?

Kathleen Overman: The one thing I've really been thinking about is the idea that I need to figure out how to reduce the intensity of my images. There were a lot of comments about how going through all of the images may wear out the audience and, although a part of the images is about confronting issues, I don't want to make it too much or seem too negative. I've been trying different contrast levels, sizes of prints, and even using warm tone paper to try and fix that. I'm also trying to use images that are not directly about my mom, but about my home and how it feels today.

Courtney Teed: What do you intend for viewers to take away from your images?

Kathleen Overman: I'm still working out this idea. I do kind of feel like these images are sort of a release for me, so this will probably have its own effect on the audience. I do want to express the heavy feeling I can get from these memories, but I want to work with making the familial connection with the viewer. Death is something everyone experiences, something everyone can eventually relate over. It's the family experience and the sense of memory that I want the viewers to feel from the image.

CT: Considering that you are working on a substantial amount of images in trying to create a cohesive body of work that conveys aspects of your experiences in dealing with the death of your mother, what factors will you take into consideration (as far as the presentation of your work at the exhibition) while you are editing down your selection, thinking about size and sequence, levels of intensity and audience reaction, etc.?

KO: I look at the overall strength of the image as a visual, considering formal qualities and aesthetic appeal. I also want to make sure I include images that are both heavy and loving, to make sure that there is a balance between the things that might be intense and others that might be more sentimental. I need to spend the next few weeks thinking about size and possible colored images integrated in with my usual prints. A lot of the editing will come into play as I put images on the wall. Now that I have moved away from images in a straight line in a gallery, I want to see what they look like when they are hung in a more organized chaos manner.

CT: Your work is very personal to you and your family story. It seems that delving into this project has allowed you to not only begin to deal with your mother's death and your experiences since, but has also provided an opportunity you to think about the issue through a new outlook (artistically). What are your thoughts on how your work might change as you deal more extensively and consciously with your experience?

KO: I can already see my images changing. Each roll of film becomes clearer with better quality, showing that I've been more relaxed as the semester has continued. I also have started taking images that are more observant of the memory than too focused on the individual situation. I think as I continue I might be able to connect more with others, rather than just telling my personal story, or maybe even try to figure out a graceful way to do both. I guess we'll see.

CT: Do you see text as being necessary in your work as a way of giving viewers more of a sense of your specific personal experiences (your narrative), or do you see it as something that creates a unique interaction with the viewer and the image that could allow folks to connect to your experiences on a more universal level (relating to death and the process of mourning)?

KO: I feel like the text is still something I am figuring out. At first I saw it as necessary to tell my story; now I see it as something to be used to enhance the story and the images of mourning. I think incorporating the text into the images that call for it will help to have a background for my work without increasing the intensity, something I was warned was happening in the midterm critique. At the same time, I want to make sure that the narrative of my memories and experiences with my mother is not lost by vague images or poor uses of text, so I need to work on finding a balance between strong images and appropriate text.

Studio Visit Number Two: Joe Lucchesi

Listed below are a few of the images that were reviewed with Joe Lucchesi during our studio visit. The first is his preferred section of my working arrangement for the final show. The second image is of in progress still life photos for the fall gallery show. The final image is of my most recent still life and favorite of the grouping.



Working arrangement for *Grouping #1*



Working images and arrangement for *Grouping #2*



Untitled (from Grouping #2 series)
Fiber based silver gelatin print, 11x14

The Studio Visit

Today I had a studio visit with the head of the department, Joe Lucchesi. I have had two different studio visits today, one with an art professor and one with an art history

professor, as to gain the prospective of both aspects of the art community. Professor Lucchesi has been my art history instructor in many situations and I have been looking forward to the feedback from his point of view.

Beginning with my first module of images, those shot in the home, Joe stated that the images he felt were working the best were those which eluded to a space in a home, but did not directly state the space in which we stood. We also identified a specific flow that the images would need to have in the “clustered” look I have been working with in order to enhance each image. Four particular images were working particularly well together, creating something to be observed for future organizations. Although Joe did point this out, he warned against trying too hard to find pairings or creating a flow, stating that I need to keep the balance between letting the viewers discover the connections and the ones that I have laid out for them. As for those not working, he warned against creating shots that are too cinematic, things we have seen in movies time and time again.

Moving into the studio, we began to discuss my lack of text. I explained that I felt it would be too overwhelming and that I want to know that the images can stand on their own. I have also been considering smaller images displayed on a table with re-printed images of family. These images could have text on the back, either a brief few words or more. We concluded that this could work, and that it is worth trying out, but I need to be careful not to pull focus away from the wall images or to make the wall images seem too glorified. Pulling the table away from the groupings may help.

Reviewing the still life images, he agreed with our SMP advisor that the snow globe image was great to use, as it was very well made with a different tone than the others, seemingly staged but without giving it all up. He also warned against creating images that are staged and giving it all up, i.e. trying too hard to tell the story. Joe mentioned that the best images were those that were ambiguous, yet he felt that he “got it”, as in understood the image’s intent. Looking at the idea of layered photograph images, Joe stated that he was really enjoying how the still life I have created with the photos of my mother and grandmother. With cropping and image choice, it creates a wonder over who it is in my grandmother’s photo and provides comedy in my mother’s photos. It is giving the sense of family, without giving it all away.

What I have really taken away from this visit is that I need to keep in mind how my viewers will be relating to and moving through my images. Creating a balance between what is given and what is suggested will open up windows for viewers to relate and identify with each photo, while also producing a more cohesive body of work. I want viewers to be in the space, with me, experiencing emotions with me; I do not want to force them to see my emotions and pull them into a place of negative emotions.

Post Critique Reflection Number Three:

Shown below is the image grouping presented for the three-quarter critique.



Critique Response:

For this critique, I displayed a “randomly” organized grouping of photos taken inside my home. Wanting to see the affect of the warm tone paper, I also included two images on warm tone within the cool tone grouping. The first comments made were about the lack of text, stating that it was a good instinct to try and remove it. I agree, however, I am still struggling on what to do with the images that have text and work well with it. The arrangement of my photos was responded to positively. I feel that this grouping style creates a more intimate space than an extreme space. Placing them close to one another gives them their own family to rest in; when they were alone and spaced out, I felt like they were too formal and meant to be static. It was suggested that I do not combine the warm and cool tone papers within the same grouping, as it may throw the viewers off to see different tones in the same bunch. At first, I was very frustrated with the idea of removing pictures that I loved the tones in, finding the warm tones something I prefer. After some time staring at the grouping, I agree with the sentiment that, next to the others, something seems slightly off. It is not bad enough that you can point it out right away, but it is bad enough to distract the viewer.

We then moved onto the idea of the table with small prints of my images. Displayed as they were, they did not seem complete or working yet. I noted that I wanted to include old family photos and the idea came to mind to use them but, in order to keep the work looking unified, I should try re-photographing family images. I agree with this notion, however, I must work on what images need to be re-photographed or which would be the strongest to use. I also need to decide how much text I want each photo to have on the back of it. It was also discussed that they would work best if away from the larger prints. If one is next to the other, they could have a power struggle effect, rather than amplifying one another. Tara has offered to take me to the drama department to find a table of the correct height and coloring.

Overall, I am very happy with this critique. I have been nervous about the images I am creating and this particular batch was described as “clearer and more refined” than past work. I feel like I am moving in the right direction in SMP and I look forward to next semester, perfecting things I may work on now, yet with more grace and attention to detail.

Intention Statement for Now into next semester:

I have been thinking of a lot of different directions in which to head for the upcoming semester. I want to explore different ways of capturing a moment, how to portray the positives with the negatives and parts of the present with the past. I want to look at old pictures of my family and attempt reshooting their locations. This would be interesting to help compare the ideas of absence or loss that I have been working with. I would also like to look through old films (family videos) of my family, from when my father was alive and in the later years with my mother. I plan on looking for the perfect frame within the recording of the old memory in order to create a preserved, possibly idealized, moment. The readings I have been doing, specifically concerning Barthes, has greatly affected my perspective on the photo as the constructed image; it allows us to both capture a moment for what it is and construct a moment into what we want it to be. This could be an interesting concept to play with in the next semester with different formats of “image”.

This winter break will be a good time to take photos in my home, exploring how it changes in the new holiday season and how it varies from how it was then. It will also give me a chance to go to other locations I went to with my mother, as I have little time for this during the school year. The time I have over break will also be used to look over the old films I have in order to see if the idea of the “perfect image” can be captured. I will continue researching other articles that may influence how I see old photos and how I create new works, possibly looking beyond the realm of photography into other ways people use photos when working with loss.

Art Event Write-Ups:

Karley Klopfenstein

Karley’s talk was both interesting and surprising. Often, when working towards becoming an artist, I feel faced with much insecurity and worry that it might not be possible. It was nice to see someone also working with a degree from a liberal arts degree not only succeed, but have overcome the idea of failure along the way.

When she was working through grad school, she was put on probation until she could prove successful. After they took her off of probation and asked her to leave, she did not

give up, but went somewhere for a fresh start. I really enjoyed the motivation she had and learning about Sculpture Key West. My favorite of her works from this period of her life was the Red Tree, a fallen tree fully covered in red satin.

Concerning her most recent works, involving “Carpet Bomb”, “Freedom Rug”, her “Camouflage Tank”, etc., I found one that she spoke of the least to be the most interesting to me. Although I do like her concepts of using rugs from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, I was frustrated that she did not have more detail involving the specific patterns and the process she had in researching them. Her piñata bomb was very interesting to me because of its use of the carpet patterns and its play with the idea of turning a harsh object into a child-like toy. By making the bomb more like a toy it plays with the idea of the harm that would really be caused if a child were to hit it and it was not made of chicken wire and tissue paper. This was the reason that I asked Karley if she had made the tank stable enough to climb on; something such as that would add to the play on the idea of the war tool as an accessible object. Overall, I am very interested in working with the artist and learning more about the craft behind her works.

Heather Harvey

Heather Harvey, a professor at St. Mary’s College of Maryland, is a model artist for a liberal arts major. Starting with drawing and painting, Harvey moved into sculpture, as the canvas was too flat for her to express what she was thinking. The sculptures we had the pleasure of reviewing were installations directly made on the walls of the gallery. Working with the ideas of visual poetics in her natural form pieces, the artist researches poets, philosophers, and biology, stating that the sculptures are “fed by the zones of mystery and unknown ability”. Often she is expressing emotion in her installations, quietly expressing her own and asking the viewer to look deeper into their own interpretations of what is in front of them. My favorite of her works were those titled “Wall Interventions”, Harvey using old geometric configurations, specifically the Smith Chart, from physics books to graph the markings she makes into the surface of the gallery wall. By screwing directly into the wall, the artist revives not only the space itself, but the space’s former lives, with other art works shining through and other experiences entering her own piece. As stated in her lecture, Harvey enjoys this process’s ability to show the power of the “quiet hidden things”, revealing a subtle metaphor in her work. Out of the questions posed at the end of our lecture, I found the most informative and interesting to be “Why not painting?”. This idea is something I often struggle with, questioning if the new abstract ideas that I may formulate are not enough like art to be credited. Harvey answered that moving away from painting allows her to free herself from art’s history; without fear of replicating others, she has more room to try new things with her new process. As I continue in my own artistic ventures, I look forward to finding new ways of expressing old ideas. Harvey had the opportunity to bring life and beauty to a diagram, the Smith Chart, that is no longer in use. Not only did she move away from its scientific meaning, but she also gave it a new appeal for its sensuality and worthwhile beauty. It may be interesting to see how photography may lend itself to this process, and if I may move away from photography all together in order to start looking at old art forms with new twists, as we have seen Heather Harvey do in both her sculptural installations and her drawing installations.

Karley Klopenstein and Anja Marais

In the beginning minutes of the Boyden Gallery opening, viewers were given time to walk around the space, curated by an artist in the show, to see how the pieces related to one another and spend a few minutes getting close to each work. Karley Klopenstein displayed different types of her work with crafting and carpet making in the forms of war icons, paired with traditional patterns. Her tank had not been completed but she did show two of her “carpet bombs”, one macramé gun, and a “Freedom rug”. Once the lecture began, Karley explained that she began making carpet forms out of the comedy she saw behind the phrase “carpet bomb”. She then started researching different symbolic patterns seen in carpet making in the Middle East and incorporating them into other structures. The tank on which she is working, standing half the size of the one being used in Iraq today, had what the artist noted to be “several different symbolic patterns relevant to the cultures in which these tanks can be found fighting”, listing the tree of life and the Islamic prayer rug patterns as two.

There was also work from Anja Marais, a South African immigrant who works with multi material sculptures. She explained that the reason for her work was that she felt lost in her identity, unable to claim citizenship in Europe, unable to claim rights to the land in South Africa, and feeling disconnected to the US culture. She created hand-sown sculptures out of cloth and paper with a backdrop of natural surroundings, such as oceans or the night sky. She then outlines the shapes onto the backdrops, focusing on their shapes. She worked off the form of her friend, molding the pieces to the body, letting them dry, and preparing them to be reconstructed. Two of the sculptures had long cloth forms coming out of the bottom of the body or the mouth. It all related heavily to the natural process as a way of connecting to more of a natural meaning than a personal meaning.

Although I found both artists very interesting, I would love to know more about the choices they make. I would like to know how Karley went about finding the symbols she found significant to the meaning of the tank. I do not know exactly where this tank can be found in use and I would like to know where some specific symbols may have been from and what significance they have to add to the tank. I am also interested in hearing how the artist became so connected to the issues in the Middle East and if she researches first hand accounts of the war in Iraq. In terms of Anja, I am interested in hearing why she chooses the models she does and the imagery she does. We did have explanation of why she ties nature into her story but I would enjoy more to better understand her personal association with the scenes she creates.

Andrea Giunta

Once Andrea Giunta’s lecture on Latin American art in response to political unrest began, I was quick to realize that I, along with some professors and the other Argentine study abroad students, had the upper hand in understanding each work’s contextual meaning. All of the works she described, *La Identidad*, *the Wall of Memory*, etc., are pieces done in response to something called *Los Desaparecidos*, or the Disappeared. During the

1960s-70s, the military and its officials were given full power to use the force and methods they saw as necessary to keep Argentina safe, a decision made by manipulating the understanding of the new female president. By enlisting the help of the principles and teachers of city schools, and undercover informants, the military collected students, pastors, nuns, and other adults they saw as “dangerous”. As has been discovered, most were tortured, interrogated, drugged, and then dropped into the river that separates Uruguay and Argentina. Many of the girls taken were pregnant, in which case officials would wait until the baby was born, give it to a socialite or military family, and then kill the mother. They would be taken while on the streets or from their homes in the middle of the night. Often, their phonebooks would be taken as well, acting as tools to collect the next batch of youth. No matter the age, family members and friends were never informed of where their loved one went, if they would be coming back, and the government denied all participation in the abductions. To this day, the government does not like to acknowledge any part in the events surrounding Los Desaparecidos.

The work Giunta discussed that was of most interest to me was “Identidad” (Identity). This piece was all arranged at eye level and contained the photos used when people went looking for their loved ones. Interspersed between the portraits were mirrors. The portraits chosen for this piece were of those missing that had small children or were pregnant when they were taken, and this made all of the difference to the significance of the work. Currently, the children of the Disappeared are reaching the age many of their parents were when they were taken. By walking through this gallery, seeing these people paired with mirrors, it gives others who may wonder if they were one of their children a chance to look for the similar features adulthood has brought. Many adopted adults in their 30s wonder if they were adopted legally or if their family had something to do with this country’s dark side, this gives them the chance to safely look for answers. Thus far, this project has reconnect three students with their birth families.

Another work I enjoyed was that by Gustavo Germano, titled Ausenc`as. The artist took the phonebook and placed the names of the Disappeared back into it, just without their numbers. Each page was plastered, orderly and at eye level, around the walls of the gallery. The missing number made it easy to see who was missing, and how many were really gone.

To touch on the park set up for Los Desaparecidos and their families, what the artist did not mention was that most of the art there was made by someone from another country, including the United States. This needed to be mentioned, as she said in the lecture that it was mostly just a Latin American art thing. The government has stopped funding the park, so it currently grows unkempt and ignored by the city, the only ones left to take care of it being paid by small, allotted funds and private organizations.

Annotated Bibliography:

Albert Chong

Chong, A. (1994). *Ancestral dialogues: the photographs of Albert Chong*. San Francisco: The Friends of Photography.

The book *Ancestral dialogues: the photographs of Albert Chong* is a book of the artist's images involving stories of his past, his family's past, and both of their relation to the present self. Chong uses a variety of different still life set ups, developing processes, and physical involvement in each image, producing an array of potential inspirations for a project such as mine. The artist tries several set ups, including pictures with arranged objects, chairs as alters, self-portraits, and found objects to express his memories and preserve the family's history. Beginning with the photographed images of family members, each set up seems to be like a ritual for the artist, an alter made to be specifically paired with the subjects in the picture. Skulls, lost feathers, dead flowers, and classic shells often found in the artists home country of Jamaica are strewn around several images, along with dread locks of Chong's and other personal objects. He pairs dead items with items, assumingly, related to the past of the person inside the photo. His chairs are arranged in similar fashions, using items found in the home paired with those reminiscent of certain religions. The artist involves himself in these chair still lives, transitioning into self-portraits, in a way that illuminates the objects around them, creating stories around himself. Each image also contains a title that allows the image just the right amount of support they need, either simply with "The Sisters", "Seated Presence", and "Blessing the Throne for Gorilla Spirits with Cigar Smoke". Some titles create elaborate stories, while others create a sensitive feel to images that might be shocking. I believe this book will be of great help, inspiring new styles of still lifes in my upcoming work on my senior project. I have been struggling with how to convey the self in relation to the memories of my family. As I have always been interested in portraiture, not being able to incorporate people made it very frustrating to work in the studio, in a controlled environment. This book helps me to think in new ways about my involvement both in and out of the frame.

Duane Michals

Kozloff, M. (1990). *Duane Michals: Now becoming then*. Altadena: Twin Palms Publishers.

Now becoming then documents the experiences of Duane Michals, the loved ones around him, and, most predominantly, the stories of his mind, all expressed through the elegant combination of text and image. Seeing his images of portraits are inspiring for their use of light and contact with the subject, yet I see his stronger text and image photographs and series as more important to the direction I hope to travel. Stories range from those of real life, with relation to his own experiences, to those of a more romantic sense, portraying star-crossed lovers, to portraying the ideas of fantasy. Each image works with a great deal of text, each word specifically chosen to enhance the picture and begin telling its story. The artist has carefully chosen what to include and what to omit from each

sequence of words and each sequence of images. As I myself am hoping to work with text in my images, this book provides great examples of what to do and what to avoid when applying words to my own images. The style in which he tells a story, along with the type of story, have also encouraged me to open my mind to new ways of conveying thoughts, memories, and experiences. His first few images are self-narrative, looking at past experiences and emotionally moving scenes and adding text to amplify beyond the ideas of his own story and into the minds and connective appeal with others. *The hills of Pittsburgh* convey a sense of his own emotional realizations upon looking at the landscape while reaching out to the viewer of his works, and asking them to think of all others who may have seen it first hand, and who have yet to come. Michals uses text in this situation to create a sense of time and its endless nature. Doing a similar action with the image *The Casino*, Duane Michals tells, this time, a more personal account of his childhood and the toll time takes on life. These sorts of messages, as conveyed through both the image and its text, inspire my own thoughts and perspectives on the stories I wish to tell, pushing Michals, and this book, forward in my zone of research and direction.

Francesca Woodman

Foundation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Initials. *Francesca woodman*. New York: Scalo.

The book *Francesca Woodman* contains a city by city sectioned viewing of her works, created from age 13, at the beginning of her photographic process, to age 21, just before she committed suicide. Although we are asked to stray from talking about the life of the photographer, Woodman's personal struggles and escaping thoughts, viewing images both moving and elusive, "transitory and fragile" (7). The collection follows her travels as a photographer, ranging in images from nudes to self-portraits to lofting and flowing set ups of the flow of her own form. Most of the book being self-portraits, it provides several different perspectives on the idea of photographing one's own body. As we progress through each section, it becomes clear that they are not necessarily portraits but still life images, all the while moving past the "still" life. Particularly in the images of the movement of her body, we see the artist's sense of fleeting time and the emotions she may feel as a young girl trapped in her own space. Seemingly filled with emotion, the camera acts, in many of her images, as an outlet to express her thoughts, that life is passing and delicate. She allows the viewers to study the elusiveness that is the moment, portraying "the urgency of representation" of a soon to be lost frame (7). Studying Woodman's work has started to be very influential to my thought process, as in every image she seems overwhelmed with emotion or contemplation of another place. Her photos of movement capture the elusiveness that is memories, love, and connections after loss. As I continue to review her work, I see new ideas for the production of self-portraits and the construction of ghost images, possibly attempting to redirect the emotions of my own viewers through my movements through the spaces where my loved ones used to rest. Also working with fabric and other material possessions, this research may benefit in my understanding of how to work with old and familiar (familial) objects that I have collected, allowing me to photograph the human form, as I have always loved,

while still inciting memory and value to the objects surrounding me. Woodman's works will enable me to expand my own thoughts on mourning, living, and the importance of the self to images of emotional connection.

Family Photos

Spencer-Wood, S., Peretz, H, & Walters, M. (2005). *Family: photographers photograph their families*. New York, NY: Phaidon Press Limited.

This book, *Family: photographers photograph their families*, is a compilation of a variety of different photographers, all of which focus on family members as their subjects. It is an overlook of the stylistic choices made by photographers since the act of photographing became more accessible to the public, with more ease to the artist, after the creation of the roll film. Looking through the imagery, we are given the chance to review a number of approaches to the family photo, from still, studio shots to snapshots in the backyard, comparing and contrasting the affect of each as you flip from artist to artist. With over 50 different photographers, each with their own unique style, this book will offer many sources for inspiration and for future research as I continue through my project. Once I received this book from Professor Caldwell, I was excited to see how many ways these photographers could incorporate various perspectives, techniques, and styles into images of similar subjects. From this book, I have been compiling a list of a variety of different artists with a variety of different approaches to the idea of family photography. Starting at the beginning of the 20th century to current date, the list includes Jacques-Henri Lartigue, Lee Friedlander, Bernard Plossu, Colin Gray, Nicholas Nixon, Raymond Depardon, Elinor Carucci, and continues to develop as I look further into each image. This book is beneficial to my St. Mary's Project topic, as it offers many different stylistic choices in not only how to shoot family, but what to shoot in order to represent past the idea of the straight portrait. Elinor Carucci, the most recent photographer of those listed above, offers the ideas of relation between the mother and the daughter. Two images are provided, one of her and her mother side by side, her mother in her bra, and another of just her mother's lips. These two pictures secured my decision to use this book, as work towards moving beyond the literal image and into the connective aspects between my mother and I. Colin Gray offers the two aspects of family, in terms of loss, displaying comical images that interact with loved ones, *Heaven and Hull* (1990), along side those of depression, loss, and mourning, including *Life Support* (2000) and *Duvet Day* (2002). With that as a just a brief overview of only two artists, I look forward to studying the works of the several others located in the text.

Family Frames

Hirsch, M. (1997). *Family frames: Photography, narrative, and post memory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Family frames, written by Marianne Hirsch, is a compellation of perspectives and insight into the family photograph and perseverance of a memory. The book contains several different chapters, including topics such as dealing with mourning, the disappearance of

the past, subtle imagery, and several others. Each of those chapters contains several different interpretations or aspects of their respective topics. From reflecting on past imagery to discussing new projects of various artists, the book allows the reader to see examples of how others work with the past and how it may continue to be developed. After reviewing the contents of each chapter, I finally became more interested in further research of the text through the preface, in which the author depicts a conversation with her cousin. She describes the joy in hearing the excitement in her cousin's voice over realizing that a picture she has had forever is her grandmother, and the sheer depression that this laughter comes from a lack of understanding and awareness of her past. This is something I have been struggling with when looking at my images of relatives I will never know. In each chapter I have been finding something interesting to my work, including dialog about the mother/daughter dynamic in a photograph, the direct eye contact verses indirect, and how the family connects in the image. I found that I was most interested in how others work with the narrative in image and text, along with how one may see artwork as art therapy. This book will be helpful to my senior project in further explaining how my art may work as a therapeutic tool. I have never worked on my past issues, nor have I explored the roots of my family and their troubles, this may help me understand how to create images that are both art and a personal therapeutic tool. The book may also help me understand the concept of the absence of life in my everyday living, the reappearing memories of my family long after they have passed away. I look forward to further exploring the information in this book, as it may open me to new ideas on how to capture the memories I have and which thoughts are worth capturing.

Snapshots

Greenough, S., Waggoner, D. (2007). *The Art of the American snapshot, 1888-1978*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The Art of the American snapshot: 1888-1978 is a book following the progression of the snapshot photo used in the everyday life. Beginning with the first images produced when the camera became highly accessible and continuing into the beginning ages of the Polaroid, the images in the book show that, with the new accessibility of the photo, even the simple images of family and friends can become extremely moving and beautiful. Some plain and some with intricate scenes, the viewer experiences a sense of the value of the simple camera and developed technology, finding great examples of beautiful lighting, framing, and context choices while still having the haunting feeling of the images' familial nature. From this book, I pull a lot of inspiration to move out from just images of the place of where a memory occurred to putting myself further into these memories. This allows me to recreate the feeling of the snapshot and its eerie past life nature, while including my personal story and sense of loss. This path also increases the opportunity a space has to be both morose and warm, tense and relieving. The contents of the images are not only expressive but intimate, allowing an outside look at pictures that seem to be meant for private or family eyes only. Nudes, birthdays, and couples photos revealing secrets of the individual in the frame and the person behind the camera. Many seem like the photographer spent time with each frame, carefully planning how the image should look. This is a great source of contrast to our current date digital camera

abuse, often photographers coming back to their studios with 300 frames/roll vs. 36 frames/roll or less. Seeing these intimate moments will help me to open my mind on how I should portray intimate moments of my own life while retaining the balance between the extreme emotion and a flat image, the overly personal and universal commonalities. A book containing many intimate moments of various anonymous strangers may be just what I need to gain perspective on the level of intimacy and privacy shown and the level needed to bring forth what I need.

Josef Sudek

Farova, A. (1990). *Josef Sudek, poet of Prague: a photographer's life*. New York, NY: Aperture Foundation, Inc.

Josef Sudek, a one-armed photographer who spent his time searching strange spaces for interesting images, has been named the “Poet of Prague”. His photos consist of interestingly lit objects and sceneries, gardens and cathedrals, familial spaces and new discoveries. The consistent characteristic is that he spends his time really observing his surrounds, taking the ordinary and turning it into extraordinary. What I found myself particularly attracted to was the way the light seemed to make the photo. Often in my own photography, I prefer to use natural lighting as it makes the scene or object really glow. Every photo of Sudek’s contains elements of this observation in it. As noted in his bibliographic introduction, Josef Sudek’s family was always aware of death, mentioning its potential to occur to anyone at any moment. The relationship Sudek felt to death and its familial connection shine through in his images, each one containing the dark undertones of loss, while still holding onto the delicacy of the image and the subject within it. Examining specific images, we can look at “Inside a Loggia of Waldstein Palace” (pg.48) as an example of working with light to create a mood. The shadows create vignettes around the light, highlighting the delicate and romantic feelings of the buildings tiles, pillars, and surroundings. These same shadows give “Waldstein Palace” an ominous feeling, concealing many of the characteristics of the space and pushing the viewer into the light and out of the building. Sudek also works some with “ghost” images and double exposures, things that I have been working with or will continue to work with this year. Working in spaces that he is familiar with, such as his studio, Sudek plays with the focus of his camera to direct the attention of the viewer. He makes the background, and potential subject, less important or with less detail, pushing it out of focus, than the foreground, the beading water on his studio window. Many of his images also involve dismembered sculpture, further suggesting loss and death in the soft settings and lighting of the photo. This book proves useful to my research for its creative and well balanced approach to the portrayal of the light and dark, comforting and confusing. I have been working on how to create balance in the intensity of my images. Sudek’s book may do well to direct me to paths that allow for the emotions I hope to create.

Thomas Merton

Merton, T., & Griffin, J.H. (1970). *A hidden wholeness: the visual world of Thomas Merton*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

The book, *A hidden wholeness: the visual world of Thomas Merton*, is an interesting source for research due to the organization of the chapters within it. It is not just about the photos of Merton, but about how and why he takes the photos he does. To begin, the authors take us into Merton's environment, his home and its grounds. We get to see how he shoots his environment and how he chooses to emulate what is important to him. The photographer and author spend time together, allowing the author to shoot photos himself. This provides additional insight into his habits and where/how he chose to shoot. With the upcoming weeks, I want to work on how I photograph a space, what I include and what I exclude. The book provides not only what the photographer does include, but what he does not (from the authors images). He also does a lot of work with the way lighting affects the space and the importance it creates. Many of Merton's images are of very simple places or objects, yet he still makes them seem significant. This is something with which I am struggling: conveying the significance of the small objects from my mother's past. Next semester, I want to work on making my images more significant on their own, specifically in the still life form. Reviewing his interpretation will help to expand my range of trial ideas.

Robert Frank

Frank, R. (1997). *Flamingo*. Goteborg, Sweden: Hasselblad Center.

Robert Frank works with traditional black and white photography, putting his own abstractions and unique subjects into each picture. With a large array of these subjects and perspectives, Frank's photographs contain images such as people, potential family photos, strange angles of sky, ground, and home spaces, and often text. The artist also often incorporates text into his images, through scratching of the negative, drawing onto the print (pre and post developing), painting on windows, and incorporating printed text within the image (i.e., news papers, calendars). The artist's work interests me because of its interesting abstractions, use of text, familial still life arrangements, and the dark, yet not overwhelming, tones of his images. The pictures he creates are dynamic, often using strange lighting and the quality of the out of focus lens to encourage and establish importance for "non important" images and places such as family photos, paintings, desktops, or backyards. The photo created titled *Mabou, Nova Scotia, 1995* is of a simple desk, slightly blurred, studio lights reflecting in the walls paint, and objects from the middle of the desk repeated due to image pairing. Although the desk is a simple space, just mirrors, frames, and a painting or two, it seems more intriguing due to the attention he gave to how it should look, the abstractions create a sort of illusiveness. In *Henry Frank, Zurich, 1976*, a photo of Frank's father, the artist incorporates text directly into the wall of the image. Although I have been moving away from text, it is something that I would like to explore with more daring measures to prints I have where I want to imbed a message. Finally, the image *Mabou, 1974* is of a woman holding a board covered in old photos, pictures from yearbooks and in the ocean, and postcards. The image is interesting to me because it has the presence of life, the woman's form, and the feeling of absence, those in the pictures and from where the postcards came. Although we know nothing about the woman in the image, eyes cropped from the frame and most of her

body hidden, she seems to be offering these objects to the audience, asking to look and relate. In future work, I plan to re-photograph and arrange family photos in still lifes in order to present my family to the audience. Reviewing the images by Robert Frank provides additional ideas and interpretations for my own process.

History Begins at Home, Meir Wigoder

Wigoder, M. (2001). History begins at home: photography and memory in the writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Roland Barthes. *History & Memory*, 13(1), 19-59.

The author of this article has chosen to write about photography and its place in the process of death, dealing, etc. due to his experience of several family members dying, eventually leading to him finding his great Aunt's body after she had passed. His personal events lead him to read several articles surrounding the topic of the image and its power to conserve and create a memory of the person from a picture. As I have done, Wigoder looks at Barthes and his perspective on the subject, and begins to separate each aspect of the photo, including the accessories and expressions. This article has been very useful and will continue to be useful to me in my work with SMP. The author brings up topics and ideas that I had not thought of before. He examines religious use of the photo postmortem, referring to Jewish and Catholic practices and their perspectives on memory and photo. He discusses an article I have been using from Barthes, providing me with more of a discussion of the materials I have read and possibly providing things I have yet to think of. Identifying specific images that refer to memories, Wigoder mentions aspects of photography that I had not thought of, stating that the camera is capturing the space in that moment, and not the temporality of the space. The overall feeling of the reading is an exploration of a photo's place in history and memory, how it constructs both, and how it defeats both as a creative outlet. Because I am finding more inspiration and excitement while reading this article, I can determine that this will be a good source of new thought in the upcoming months of the Spring Semester.

Roland Barthes

Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera Lucida*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.

The Roland Barthes reading, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, is descriptive beyond the context of Barthes' personal life, extending into the idea of the family photo as a stolen moment of time, carefully placed and uniquely its own. I found the article especially significant to me, as Barthes' discussion involves the predominant figure in his favored picture and life, his mother. His descriptions and explanation of the "impossible science of the unique being" of this particular photograph touch a cord in the process I have been experiencing in preparing images of my family and memories of my past. Barthes describes his first reactions upon finding an old photo of his mother; she passed away and he began to search through her photos, each bringing further into the past, introducing him to another level of his mom. He explains the realization of, as mentioned before, the "impossible science of the unique being", accepting an old image as not just a sentimental image of ordinary life, but its own, personally meaningful, and carefully created image. The photo becomes his connection to photography, pulling him

towards what he values most, what most fascinates him, the relationship of “what we romantically call love and death” (56). The image, titled *The Winter Garden*, is never shown to the viewer, as he states that it would mean nothing to them like it does to him, so why would he? His research and contemplation on death is in close relation to the inspirations and the paths of thought I plan to take. He continues to address some of the concerns and questions I have been faced with by asking the viewer not to suffer with him, but to respect the originality of his own suffering. Continuing the insight, I have been struggling with recent student discussion that photography is not as emotionally involved or important as painting. Barthes states that a painting can alter its captured reality, or create its own interpretation of events, without ever seeing it. Photography however makes a moment undeniable, captured forever by the concrete nature that is its scientific origins. This supports the value of the photo, bringing back the past to the eyes of the present and capturing moments that would otherwise be seen as a vague memory, an experience “motionless in front of the eye” (59). Using this article will help to develop the concepts around which I have been building my work, introducing me to a new perspective on a similar situation.

Imagining Families

Willis, D. (1994). *Imagining families: images and voices*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Imagining families is a compilation of the photos from various current artists working with the subject of the family and the aspects of life which it surrounds. The artists included use a variety of elements to convey their themes, including old family photos, familial spaces, objects from the home, and text. Prior to the images themselves, each artist is given a short write-up about his or her life and how the individual photographs. Although told to avoid biographical information as resource, this section moves beyond the bio and describes the intention of the artist when shooting, their stylistic choices, and why they do the work they do. This provides a resource for technical advice and inspiration, along with a deeper understanding of the images I see. I want to better convey my thoughts on the death of my mother and that experience; this section of reading provides advice on how to do so. Moving towards the images, each artist is shown with one or two of their own. This section also provides a list of biographical sources, compilations, gallery shows (group and individual), grants received and college attended. By providing this additional information, the book gives the reader a chance to further investigate the artist. When continuing my research in the spring, it will provide a great resource for further investigation, additional image sources, and even provide additional artists similar to those in the book. It is important to know what has been made before you when creating new art, not just to avoid reproduction but to encourage building and inspiration. Next semester, I am aware that I may struggle for inspiration at times. This source will help to encourage new exploration and help me to think about the process of photographing with new direction and perspective.

Future Reading List

For the upcoming annotations and next semester, I am hoping to find more articles and books discussing the place of memory in photography. I have been working with a lot of imagery books and, although they all do hold some text, I would like to read more about topics associated with my SMP. Over break, I plan on reading texts suggested by professors from the photography and memory class. I also hope on finding more still life photographers who work in ways I may find interesting to practice.

List Thus Far:

Adams, R. (1994). *Why people photograph*. New York, NY: Aperture Foundation, Inc.

Guibert, H. (1998). *Ghost images*. Los Angeles, CA: Green Integer.