

In any way I can

An Exhibition of photography, sculpture, and relics

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

In any way I can explores memory, longing, and impermanence through photographic and sculptural installations. This body of works embody the paradox of presence and absence within the realms of experience, death, and loss. Key themes include an investigation of the precarity of identity and familial histories, emphasizing how the static, photographic and fugitive image can deteriorate, fade, and transform over time. Within the installation, the concept of home is presented and serves as both physical and metaphysical framework, to process memory and self-formation. Using the gallery as a nonlinear spatial diary, I reimagine personal and collective histories through materialized recollections of objects and places, some of which predate my existence. In this diaristic space, photographs—both personal and discarded—interact with organic, second-hand, and inherited materials, mapping an emotional geography that questions the fallibility of memory. *In any way I can* acknowledges the fluid boundaries between tangible environments and the internal landscapes they become, reflecting the universal experience of becoming and unbecoming.

Acknowledgments

Land Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the lands I have lived on and continue to occupy. I currently reside in St. Catharines, Ontario, on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples. This land is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is meant to be protected under the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement—a covenant of shared care and responsibility.

I was primarily raised in the County of Haliburton, on Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory, the traditional lands of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations, known today as the Williams Treaties First Nations. Now, as I pursue my Master of Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo, I acknowledge that the university is located on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Attawandaron (Neutral) peoples, as well as within the Haldimand Tract—land that was promised to the Six Nations.

My understanding of these lands and my responsibilities as a guest on them is ever-evolving. Recently, through my Sacred Storytelling course with Dr. Bimadoshka Pucan, I have been reflecting more deeply on the histories, stories, and knowledge carried by these territories. Learning from elders and knowledge keepers has reinforced the importance of listening with care and engaging with the land and its histories with respect.

I also recognize the deep appreciation for the land and natural world that was instilled in me by my parents. I carry this forward with a commitment to acknowledging the spaces I inhabit and engaging with them with care and gratitude. My journey toward understanding is ongoing, and I remain dedicated to learning, honoring, and upholding the responsibilities of being on this land.

Formal Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank all members who were a part of my committee, Lois Andison, Tara Cooper, and Logan MacDonald for their kindness and unwavering support through the completion of this work. I have grown a great deal through this process and have expanded my capacity to process ideas because of your criticality, considerations, and wisdoms. You have each individually added something not only to my art practice, but on a personal level as well. The comfort that you brought to me, the laughs that were shared, and the sometimes very silly moments that were possible at times when I felt the most uncertain was only possible because of each of you. In my first semester, when I was the most unsure of my direction, adjusting to balancing my home life while pursuing my MFA, I can't imagine how I would have been able to settle in without the kindness and comfort that was brought to me by Lois Andison. I learned so much in Lois' sculpture class, both technically, and pedagogically.

I don't think I have ever laughed as hard and learned so much in a classroom setting as I was able to in both Logan and Tara's seminar classes. The dichotomy of critical thought and dance parties (which subsequently occurred in both) never occurred to me until I experienced it first-hand. It would be hard to list off all the special moments, from Mexico to New York, but I just have a big thank you for everything. I would have stayed stuck much longer during the times when I found it hard to move forward, had you not pulled me out. Additionally, each of you have shared theoretical resources with me which have greatly transformed the way I'm able to understand my practice, and myself. The thoughtfulness and kindness that exudes from both of you is truly special, and I have to say thank you again, so thank you. Even though my seminar experience is over, I will still be listening to *Starting all Over Again* by Hall and Oates if I need to feel like Tara is rooting for me and thinking of Logan when I hear *Crazy Frog*.

A huge thank you to Rick, Tim, Adam, and Bruce for helping to facilitate some of the technical aspects of my work through this time, it has been greatly appreciated. Thank you to Lois (again) and Cora for their guidance as graduate chairs and another very big thank you to Sharon Dahmer who undoubtedly nothing would have happened without.

Dedication

For my late Grandmother, Linda Hazel Tylee,
whose resilience and artistry showed me how to make meaning in any way I can
and

for my late father, Scott A. Tylee
who is always in my thoughts and a constant source of inspiration for me

To my mother Tammy,
Thank you for everything

To my sister Chelsea,
for sharing memories with me

And to Josh and Sam,
for all the love and support

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Introduction

Keeper of Walls

Over the last 10 years, I have spent a lot of time archiving my family photographs¹, collecting, uncovering, and documenting them. It seems like a funny thing to have to uncover one's family photographs when they seem like something that should be easily accessible. However, in my case, due to factors such as death, economic instability, frequent relocation, and the complexity of mental illness that effected my immediate family, most of these photographs never made it into frames and were not hung on walls. In looking through the things I have collected, remnants from my childhood homes, my paternal grandmother's belongings, family photos—all things that have survived despite hostile conditions—I often recover images never seen before. This *reveal* of an image that contains an unknown moment, yet a familiar face, incites feelings of loss and longing, a reminder of time and death. The smell of old dust and mold often accompanies these things, that have been boxed, bagged, and stored in spaces hidden from the everyday, like the basement, the back of the shed, or a storage unit. When I document the photographs, I am especially drawn to their imperfections from the inhospitable way they have been stored, because to me, these characteristics represent life and death simultaneously. These qualities and the grime attached to them combine with the dust on the glass of my scanner bed, bringing me closer to them, and them, closer to me now. The pieces of time and place that are expressed in these imperfections inherently alter the images. Recently, I found a single 35mm colour negative at the bottom of a bag when I was looking for my grandmother's old fair ribbons. I could hardly tell what it was when held to the light because it had been severely folded and bent almost in half. When I scanned the photograph, I saw my dad as a young teenager. I didn't recognize the location but later learned from my uncle that it was probably taken at a

¹ My use of the word 'photograph' refers to physical photographs as objects, including film negatives, whereas my use of the word 'image' refers to the subject depicted or content of a photograph.

relative's house somewhere out east. This image will never be fully resolved for me, not only because I don't know whose home that was, my dad's exact age, or why he's holding a taxidermized lynx, but also because there's no one else to ask. My father died at the age of 43, when I was 21. However, despite never knowing the full context of this image, I become closer to my dad, just by witnessing this version of him from the past.



Figure 1: Cree Tylee. *A yellow house like my yellow house*, 35mm coloured film scan. 2025

I can read my non-existence

bell hooks explains in *In our Glory: Photography and Black Life* how she encountered a photograph of her father (now deceased) that like me she also had never seen before. In this image, she tries to interpret the person her father was as a young man, before he had children, and through this process she unpacks aspects of what he means to her now. She says in viewing this version of him she can come “closer to the cold, distant, dark man who was my father, closer than I can ever come in real life” and she names this photograph ‘in his glory’. This sentiment is not dissimilar from Roland Barthes’ observations in *Camera Lucida* that portals are sometimes opened in the viewing of a single photographic image. In Barthes’ case the encountered photograph was of his mother, also after her death. In the section where he unpacks his experience of looking through these photographs, Barthes discusses how it is history which separates him from the photographs, suggesting that ‘history’ simply indicates to us the time before we were born (Barthes, 64). He goes on to say that he can read his non-existence on his mother’s clothes, ‘There is a kind of stupefaction in seeing a familiar being dressed *differently*’. (Barthes, 64)

Reflecting on the connectivity of these three distinct experiences (my own, hooks’ and Barthes’) derived from interactions with the collected family archive, there is a shared desire to understand aspects of one’s identity within the condition after death, a kind of coming to terms with both the image and the person, in relation to the family bond and loss.² The concept of reading relational aspects in a photograph is explained further by Graham Clarke in his book *The Photograph* (1997) when he says, “To read a photograph, then, is to enter into a series of relationships which are ‘hidden’, so to speak, by the illusory

² I believe objects that are a part of the family archive also produce a similar affect/desire/agency toward these concepts, which I will expand on in the coming chapters, particularly in the section *What objects bring to us*.

power of the image before our eyes. We need not only to see the image, but also to read it as the active play of a visual language.” (Clarke, 29)

Additionally, I’d like to highlight a key term, and two specific inferences hooks makes towards the collection and function of a family archive that help to inform the framework of my interactions with familial objects. hooks offers the phrase ‘keeper of walls’ to describe her “mother’s mother” who collected photographs over many years, framing the images, and then curating them as a prominent display within her home. She notes the distinction of their being displayed openly, rather than stored away in a photo album. Two other characteristics that hooks ascribes to these domestic assemblages of photographic objects are how these images function as an altar that maintains one’s relationship with the dead. (hooks, 62) And the second characteristic is how the visual narrative, when studied and arranged, allows the viewer to “enter history without words” (hooks, 63). hooks goes on to reflect on a comparable experience of arranging snapshots with a friend, who in looking at images from childhood “aims to find a way back to the self he once was”. hooks says “we are awed by what our snapshots reveal and what they enable us to remember. The word remember (re-member) evokes the coming together of severed parts, fragments becoming whole.” (64)

Stored in milk bags

In *finding* my family photographs, I am compelled to make them unhidden, to provide opportunities for these images and objects to be both seen and displayed with intention. Likewise, I am interested in the carefully packed items like baby teeth and hair, stored in perfectly cleaned and repurposed milk bags which my mom saved in contrast to the unceremonious nature in which these pieces of my life have been otherwise stored. Most of these things have been found at the bottom of haphazardly packed and water-damaged boxes which I'm beginning to unpack, both literally and figuratively. I display



Figure 2: Installation view of *In any way I can*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

an example of these materials within this body of work. I have curated a small amount of these things—some of which are the reference materials for the reimaged photographs—and display them in the milk bags previously used for storage (see fig.2). As I read the photographs I *find*, and interact with them, I



Figure 3: Cree Tylee. *I can read my non-existence*, Monochrome gum bichromate print, 2024

question what my family archive communicates. I consider the stories I know and the ones I either can't say out loud or the ones that prompt more questions than answers, all of which are dispersed throughout these images, objects, and the relics that surround them. Using alternative process photography, along with strategies related to installation which reference my concept of 'home', the exhibition reveals discreet narratives of my family's life to reflect on how identity is understood alongside longing, memory, and death.

Included in the exhibition are two gum bichromate prints, one each of my paternal grandparents. The image of my grandmother depicts her as a young girl, indicating not only a time before I was born, but also before my dad was born (fig.3). I printed this monochrome image using crimson watercolour. I found this process reminiscent of painting, a reminder of my grandmother (a novice painter herself) and my introduction to painting and drawing from her when I was a young girl. Christina Z. Anderson describes gum prints as "photographically controlled watercolours" and explains that "even though the image may resemble a colour photograph, it is only a fabrication of layers and pigment and hardened gum

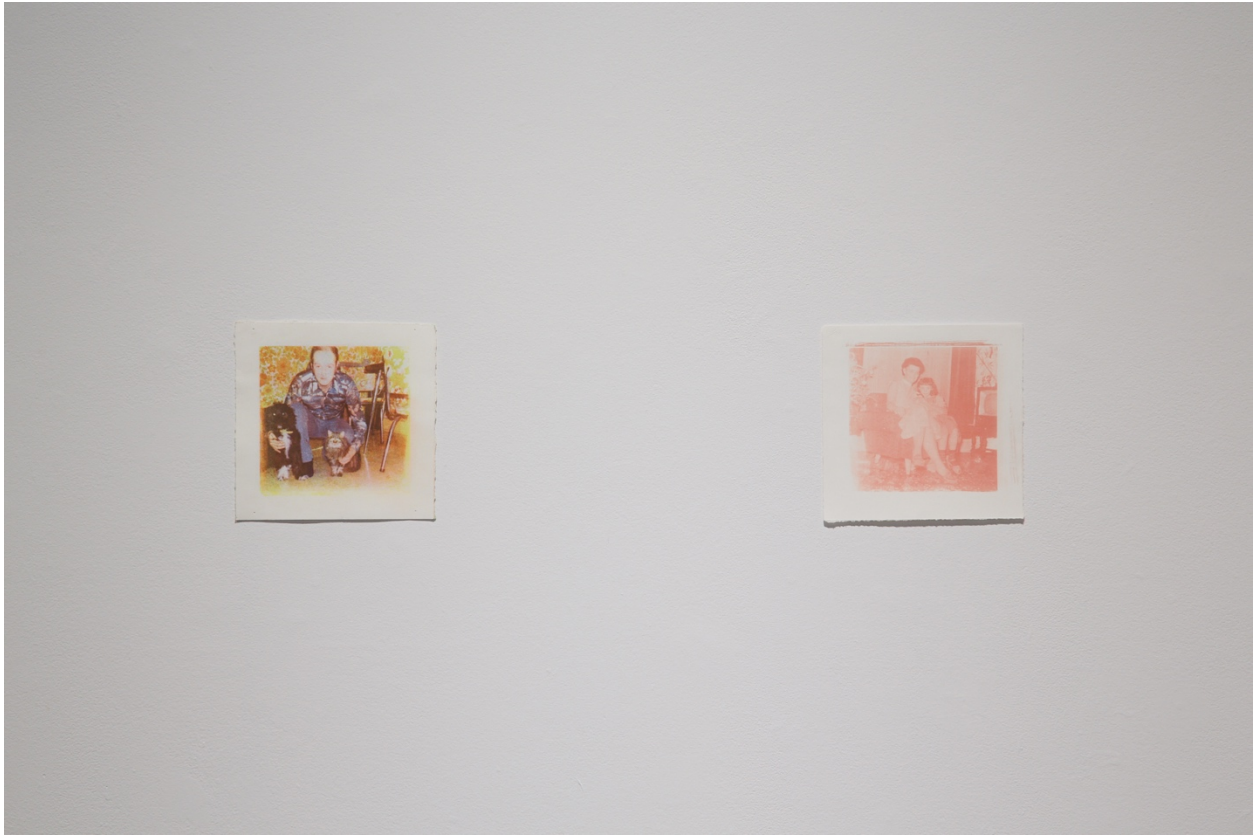


Figure 4: Installation view of *To keep the cold out, I can read my non-existence, Hot dog and Dust mop.*

University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

Arabic. It is in some ways closer to painting than photography”. (Anderson) Recreating my grandmother’s image through materials which both remind me of her and indicate her influence on my life allows me to reflect on how I maintain a connection with her in the present. The second gum bichromate print, which is of my grandfather, shows him kneeling in the kitchen of my father’s childhood home in the 1970’s. In addition to my grandfather, there is a dog and cat depicted in the photograph. My dad had spoken of his dog and cat many times, and I although I knew their names, I had no idea what they looked like until I uncovered this photograph of my grandfather. This image was reprinted as a tricolour gum print, communicating the various layers of meaning I was able to pull from the image and maintain the vibrancy of the original photograph.

I pair these images of my grandparents together, connected by process and their connectedness in my memory. After my grandmother's death, her ashes were combined with my grandfathers and released in the natural waterfall in the woods behind our house, mapping them into the landscape of how I remember my former family home.

Memories mobilise, a landscape within me comes alive, reforms, yet into something fresh. I change.

(Jones, 205)

An ecology of memory

À la recherche du temps perdu

Although a photograph may act as a portal to incite memories, it can only recollect a fragmented impression of memory, one which has been mapped into the body. In *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Proust reimagines his aunt Léonie offering him “a little crumb of madeleine... dipping it first in her own



Figure 5: Installation view of *Drawing with Charcoal*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025.

Photo: Cree Tylee

cup of real or of lime-flower tea.” (Finney, Proust) The taste of the madeleine dissolves temporal boundaries, transporting him back to childhood. Proust’s description of this experience exemplifies how memory becomes intertwined with material and objects, embedding emotions and past experiences into

the physical world. Similarly, my work explores how memory becomes attached to material objects—how interactions with both everyday objects and my family archive evoke recollection and shape my understanding of both past and present. In the works I present here, the images and objects connected to my father and grandmother hold a presence beyond their physical form, acting as conduits for memory. These associations are tied to three key locations: my first childhood home, the last home I shared with my family, and my current home. These places bookend my childhood and anchor my present, allowing me to navigate aspects of my identity and create a dialogue between ‘then’ and ‘now’. I explore the connection between material and memory throughout this collection of works, such as in *Drawing with charcoal*, where the charcoal made from the pear trees of my current home elicit my memory of my grandmother. I display these pieces of charcoal on an easel which was passed down from her to my dad, and then to me—an object which I often used to practice painting and drawing in my childhood bedroom (see fig.5).

Emotional geographies

Within the exhibition, I use emotional geographies along with strategies related to mapping, as a framework for the installation. For example, how I remember the layout of the living room and where the woodstove was in my last family home, along with the location of my bedroom window which informs the placement of the works *Where the woodstove was*, *To keep the cold out* and *My Bedroom Window*. Writings by Owain Jones in *An Ecology of Emotion, Memory, Self and Landscape* provide a way to interpret the compounded complexity of emotion, memory, and the environments we inhabit through our lives. (205) Jones explains that the study of these intertwined subjects can only present a ‘moment/process/locality in the vast universe of the self.’ He indicates how the past transactions of our bodies, also tied to our minds in relation to spaces and feelings dictate our lives in the present—and how these factors inform how we exist and understand the world around us. Jones asks,

Can we recollect past emotional-spatial experiences for the purpose of some kind of attempt at representation? Can we go back to past terrains and past encounters which are mapped inside us

and which colour our present in ways we cannot easily feel or say?...One way of trying to do this is to turn to ‘other’ forms of writing, to devote our effort to description and narrative rather than the treadmill of theory, evidence and analysis. (206)

In his writing, Jones’ breaks into candid extracts identified by italics as a way “to write more fully an account of memories of a childhood landscape.” (206) I enact a similar methodology in the form of candid short stories in relation to my works to convey the narrative and emotion attached to them.

Memory of Place (*My bedroom window*)

Regarding my ecology of memory, I consider concepts from Dylan Trigg’s book *Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*. Trigg argues that our existence in various places is what defines and structures our sense of self, also suggesting that “it is the ‘home’ that has been cited as the locus for our place memories” and how memories embed themselves in the objects and places that surround us. Trigg says,

Above all, consider how it is possible to develop a relation with the places you inhabit, such that the materiality of the environment—the peeling wallpaper, reflection in the window, rustle in the branches, groan of the house creaking in the wind—becomes constitutive of who you are. (8, 9).

The works that comprise *In any way I can* explore materiality connected to place, specifically those associated with my current and former home(s). As I look to materially locate these places within the gallery space, the result is a fragmented approach of remembering—a constellation of sculptural and photographic works, archive materials and infrastructural elements which are intentionally organized to draw connections between object, place, people, and moments from the past.

One of the works which refers to the uncanniness of memory is *My bedroom window* which is suspended near the centre of the gallery. (fig.6) The window situated in this location represents my bedroom window in my last family home, and in the gallery is spatially positioned in relation to the work *To keep the cold out* (fig.7). However, this window is from my current bedroom, removed when it was replaced it with a door in order improve access to our backyard. I note this renovation made to my current

home in consideration of how places which hold significance in our lives (specifically the ‘home’) become altered over time, not only through the fallacy of memory, but when these places which we have classified as ‘home’ become inhabited by others and no longer belong to us, nor do we feel we belong



Figure 6: Installation view of *My bedroom window*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

there. This idea is discussed by Trigg who explains how when we *return* somewhere after a significant absence “we are often shocked by both the small and vast changes, effectively alerting us to the radical indifference places have to the sentiment we apply to them”. I consider how we have altered our current home and take notice of the things which had clearly been altered by the family who occupied this home for 75 years before we lived there. No longer having access to my past homes, I wonder what remains of the alterations that my family made to them, and how those things left a trace of our existence, in my dad’s stonework or the raspberry bushes from my paternal great-grandfather’s garden.



Figure 7: Installation view of *My bedroom window, To keep the cold out.* University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

The parallel condition of *My bedroom window* conflates my past self and myself now. Additionally, this work also explores themes of the deterioration, as well as interior versus exterior, along with upkeep within the domestic space. For instance, as a child, when our water-well ran dry, I had to bathe in the cold lake before school or wash my face in a bowl in the backyard. These experiences, along with the exposed infrastructure of my home and elements of the absent woodstove seen in the piping and tiles, are now part of the ecology of my memory. This longing for my past homes is a result of loss and speaks to their transition from once accessible spaces which had a part in the formation of my sense of self, into inner-landscapes, only accessible through memory. Though I attempt to create signifiers of these

places, the failure of my memory, and my inability to access their referent further illustrates their impermanence.



Figure 8: Kat Quay. *Memory Palace*, Server racks, LED Lights, Mirrors, Plexi, Hardware, Screen Mesh. 2022

The complex modalities of memory, often attached to place, and the convergence between material and identity can be seen in Kat Quay's *Memory Palace*.³ *Memory Palace* is a large structure

³ “A Memory Palace is an imaginary location in your mind where you can store mnemonic images. The most common type of memory palace involves making a journey through a place you know well, like a building or town. Along that journey there are specific locations that you always visit in the same order. The location are called loci, which is Latin for locations. (singular: *locus*, plural: *loci*)” Source: Art of Memory, *How to Build a Memory Palace*, April 2023.

formed from server racks (fig.8). Quay employs additional materials, such as plexiglass shelving and gridded mesh to create an illusion of scrolling code while simultaneously forming architectural plans of her past dwellings. Her building materials are informed by her extensive background in technology. Quay says in the work's statement that 'environments are the cornerstone of memory' and uses the floor plans of her childhood homes, apartments, and current home to explore concepts of depersonalization of intimate spaces and societal expectations to codify our existence (Quay).

Like Quay I use the spatial remembering of my past homes and present residence, mapping my locational history into gallery space. Where Quay interprets her past homes in materials which are familiar to her from her background in tech, I explore the distinct materials which indicate my memories attached to my former and current home(s).

I remember how dirty my feet were. I ate the raspberries that grew from the bushes, always stepping off the stone path to get closer to them. Feeling little scratches on my hands and arms trying to find the ripest ones. To me it was endless. The trailer park tasted like raspberries.

The trailer on Mary Lane



Figure 9: Cree Tylee. *The trailer on Mary Lane*, anthotype print made with raspberries, 2024.

The trailer on Mary Lane was my first childhood home. I don't have many objects from this time and there are only a few photos, but there is one image that has always been present throughout my life, and it is one that I love—taken by my father in the backyard there. It is an image of my mom, pregnant with me, and my sister on the grass in front of her. The photograph depicted is an anthotype produced from raspberries that took 14 days of direct sun exposure to reveal the image (see fig. 9). The image consists of a raspberry wash with shades of pink, resulting in a monochromatic image, slightly blurred, and softened from the original. By reimaging this photograph with raspberry juice, I reference my memory of picking raspberries as a child, infusing the subject of the photograph with the materials used to

make the homemade emulsion.⁴ The nature of using an organic material, like raspberries, means that the image begins to deteriorate as soon as it has been developed. This is due to the fugitive quality of the raspberry pigment, which will fade, not only from exposure to light, but also with the passing of time. The function of time as both the mechanism by which it was made and will be unmade speaks to the paradox of absence and presence inherent in every photographic image.

On ‘fugitive’ images and ‘reimaging’

Photography’s function is tied to reproducibility: the ability to make many copies from a negative (as is the case with analog photography), or today through digital applications. This function allows for

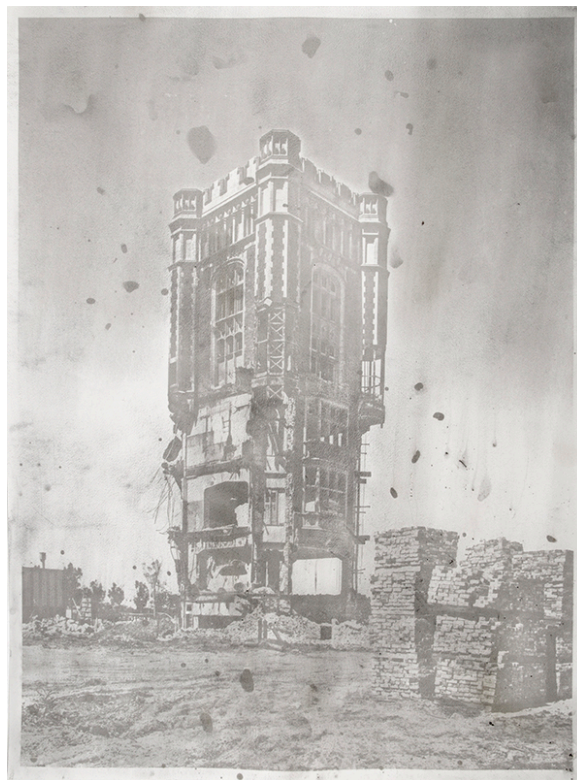


Figure 10: Matthew Brandt. *‘Demolition of an LA Highschool’*, gum bichromate print on paper with dust swept from corridor hall east of entrance, 2013.

⁴ “Reimaging” is a term that I have adopted for the process of creating a new image made from a previously existing photograph or negative.

narrative signifiers within the process of reproduction. For example, in Matthew Brandt's *Dust* series, he uses archival photographs of buildings that no longer exist to create gum bichromate prints using dust collected from the locations where these structures once stood (see fig. 10). Using dust as the pigment for these images connects the subject to the photograph's material, where the material of dust has its own agency, determined by the mechanisms in which it is produced.⁵

Paired as a diptych, *Of pokeweed berry* is likewise made with organic materials that also speak to place and loss. As the title implies, these anthotypes are made with pokeweed berries (which were



Figure 11: Cree Tylee. *Of pokeweed berry*, anthotype prints made with pokeweed berries, 2024.

⁵ Material agency refers to the idea that material objects and entities, beyond just being passive tools, can actively influence or shape human actions and understanding, contributing to a broader understanding of the world. (Russo)

harvested from my backyard last summer). I printed this image of my grandmother using the berries to connect her to the home where I live now. Our house has two pear trees in the backyard, with a bush of pokeweed which often pops up behind one of them. Pokeweed is a persistent plant, and though I've tried to remove it over the years, it always seems to come back. This persistence is similar to the memories of my grandmother which are often evoked by my interaction with everyday objects and materials.

I chose to pair this image with one of my daughter picking the pears in the same location where the berries were harvested from. The pairing of these images underscores how new narratives are created through relational and material aspects in the process of reimagining photographs. Even though I was not able to witness a relationship between my daughter and my grandmother, making these images from the same material creates a relationship between them, one which I would not be able to observe otherwise.

Of the water

Materiality that informs further meaning within an image can also be achieved through image transference onto alternative substrates. *Of the water* is a collection of shells that have been resurfaced with a photographic emulsion. The underside of the shell, ivory-like and smoothed with time is used as the substrate for discarded family photographs (see fig.13). The shells, collected from the shoreline of a small coastal area near the Atlantic Ocean are displaced, having been carried from their origin by tides, hands, and time. Similarly, the black and white images, curated from a bundle of displaced second-hand photographs found in a thrift store, along with three images from my personal family archive, are both



Figure 12: Installation view of *Of the water*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

renewed by being reimaged on the shells. As a collection, the shells (now also photographic objects) become part of a larger continuum which recycles material through time and decomposition. These actions are often expressed by the natural world. The idea that ‘nature recycles all materials’ is expressed through biological acts that use decomposition as a catalyst for nourishment where then reconstituted

bioavailable material may positively contribute to the surrounding ecosystem (Clarke, 298-300).

Photographs exist similarly, in their ability to renew themselves with new meanings, due to their inherent reproducibility. This merging of organic materials with photography explores a narrative of interconnectivity with the photograph's subject and their environmental surroundings.



Figure 13: Installation view of *Of the water*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

Getting burned, cooking oatmeal. Building fires, collecting ashes to spread in the driveway. Looking out the window across the street into the woods wondering the next time I can sneak away to Athabasca trail to smoke a cigarette. Until my dad says, “smoke inside like the rest of us”. The already ochre walls are yellowed, the ceiling sweats and leaves streams down them. I sleep on the couch because I don’t want to be away from the warmth.

Where the woodstove was



Figure 14: Installation view of *Where the woodstove was*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025.

Photo: Scott Lee

Where the wood stove was is made up of handmade ceramic tiles installed to look like the brickwork that flanked the woodstove in the living room from my last family home. I spent a lot of time looking at that woodstove, because for most of the time I lived in that home, I slept on the couch which faced it. The tiles in the exhibition were made by hand and each placed individually on the wall at the approximate height they would have been set at from the ceiling. Rather than referencing the colour of reddish-brown brick, I left these tiles as the colour of bisque-fired white porcelain, which to me conveys a sense of preciousness: the fragility of the porcelain parallels the precarity of my ability to remember this place. The void of pigment and the sparse placement of the tiles also elicits a sense of vacancy, like the woodstove which once sat in front of this rematerialized location. The domestic infrastructure of this

home, exposed and unfinished, references my memory of that place and the memories of the lost objects which were also held there, speaking to an inherent sense of loss associated with remembering.



Figure 15: Installation view of *Where the woodstove was, To keep the cold out, My bedroom window*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

I woke up with some kind of force pulling me out from light sleep. I could faintly see something glowing bright orange. I opened my eyes fully and realized it was the pipe. I go to my room to throw as many of my possessions as I can out the window and into the snow. I watch my mom throwing every towel and cloth she can find into the bathtub and filling it with water and covering the burning pipe and filling the stove up with them before the wall could catch more.

To keep the cold out



Figure 16: Installation view of *To keep the cold out*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025.

Photo: Scott Lee

To keep the cold out consists of a segment of stove piping protruding from the wall, which has been darkened by black velvet flocking. This work represents my remembering of the of the chimney/pipe fire which resulted in the removal of the woodstove that once heated our home and was never replaced. The pipe was stuffed with towels to both stop the initial fire, and subsequently after to keep the cold out from the opening which was left behind after the stove's removal. Emerging from the pipe is a string of connected towels which extend down from the pipe, accumulating in a pile on the floor. The repetition of individual towels rather than identical multiples conveys the reiterative remembering of events and acknowledges how those memories may change over time. The elongation of memory is illustrated in the extension of the towels, connected corner to corner. Additionally, the connection between this work and the other components of spatial remembering of this home, converging with elements which reference my

first childhood home and my current one speaks to the multiplicity of materials and places which make up our memories and how all these things seem to bleed into one another over time.

My sister knocked over a pile of stacked paving stones that was in the corner of our backyard, leftover from the patio my dad built. I remember how he carried her. I remember how those stones looked in my backyard. The day he died I took my shoes off and walked barefoot on rocks that he had laid down one by one, each by hand. I looked for one that might be upside down

I am my family's cairn

I have used paving stones to elevate a small wooden table in the gallery. The paving stones incorporated in this work were laid by my dad in my maternal grandparents' driveway. After having been removed for a functional home repair, the stones were sitting in a pile behind a shed in my grandparent's backyard for many years. One of the stones is enclosed in crocheted squares. For me, this illustrates a connection between the interior domestic space and the exterior domestic space, but also these specific materials (stone and yarn), reference both my mom and dad. My dad's work in stone masonry and my mom's crocheting instilled within me an ethics of care that appreciates things made by hand. I consider how the stone is partially revealed through the crocheted squares which surrounds it but remains contained in a soft protective layer, not allowing itself to be fully seen. This process parallels the tension between the stories I share, and the one's that remain hidden/protected.

The phrase *I am my family's cairn* connects to the notion of one's capacity to embody memories of the dead. This idea is adapted from Kate Mitchell's analysis of Helen Humphrey's novel *Afterimage*. In '*The alluring patina of loss*': *Photography, Memory and Memory Texts in Sixty Lights and Afterimage* Mitchell explores the Victorian era's relationships to death and longing that developed at the invention of the memorial medium of photography. (143) The text explores these concepts in relation to memory through a case study of two novels: *Sixty Lights* and *Afterimage*, Mitchell states how,

...memory, history and fiction come together in the trope of the photograph. Employing a lexicon of haunting and spectrality to represent the photographic medium...the persistence of the past in a present cut off from linear models of inheritance and memory, symbolised by the dead mother. Ghostliness becomes a metaphor for a past both lost and paradoxically, perpetuated, endlessly returned or repeated in the present. The mediums for this haunting are photographs, maps, bodies, and importantly, novels and stories (144)

Mitchell further explains how corporeal history is explored in the character of Annie in *Afterimage*, as she wonders if her body remembers her voyage across the sea. (160) She takes note of her memories and

dreams, which are held by her body, and considers how the actions of her mother in her dreams are repetitions of actions she herself has performed. Mitchell posits that these descriptions explain Annie's body as a memory object. In *Afterimage* Humphrey's writes "Annie is the record of her family. She is the cairn they left, what remained for the world to see after they had gone." (149)



Figure 17: Installation view of *In any way I can*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Cree Tylee

The notion of being my family's cairn has a dual meaning. In addition to carrying embodied memories of my loved ones, my dad's work as a stone mason also informs my view of stones as conduits for messages, particular as memorial sites, informing my present interactions with my dad's stonework to communicate something of his (and therefore my) existence—in viewing these stones as cairns (see fig.17). In *Cairns: Messengers in Stone* David Williams explains how a cairn can provide an “enduring message from one person to another”. (1) Like the persistence of my grandmother's memory, which

surfaces like the pokeweed berries, my memory of my father endures and is recalled often through interactions with the stones and other natural building materials he used, creating a bridge between myself now and my memories of him in the past.

MY HOUSE



Figure 18: Scanned image of the back of a coloured photograph taken by my dad in 1993.

Recently, while searching through my family's boxes, I uncovered a similar photograph to the one depicted in *The trailer on Mary Lane*. It is clearly from the same day, as my mom is wearing the same clothes, pregnant with me, my sister at her feet. The back of the photograph says "my house" in my dad's writing. I know this is his writing, because over the years I have found many examples of it. In the love letters he wrote my mom, and in the poetry on loose sheets of paper, both of which she *saved*, allowing me to eventually uncover them. This discovery is different than those samples of writing because it provides evidence that he interacted with this photograph at some point after taking it, something which I had not detected in any other photographs I have found. I have always been drawn to its companion photograph, the only one I knew that existed, until I found this one. I asked my mom to confirm if it was my dad who had written this on the back of the photograph. The following page is a

transcript of that conversation over text message. Reflecting on my love for the photograph used to make the image in *The Trailer on Mary Lane*, and my dad's interactions with this similar one, a connection through time is formed between us in my viewing of this image now. I display this photograph on the glass of *My bedroom window* with both sides visible, using photo corners from my daughter's scrapbook supplies. As this window represents the window of my last shared family home, yet is from my current one, it now also becomes connected to my first childhood home with the integration of this photograph (see fig.19)



Figure 19: Installation view of *My bedroom window*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025.

Photo: Cree Tylee

Hi I have a question

This looks like dad's writing

Just checking if you think its yours

MY-HOUSE-.JPG

Back of this photo

Sorry sweetie, I was at work when you sent this and it got lost in messages

It must be dads

Yeah I thought so

His letter "O" looks like a heart

What objects bring to us

In responding to the emotional and spatial environment, dictated by family photographs, there are many narratives and relationships that reveal themselves. For me, one of those relationships is the



Figure 20: Maria Hupfield, *The One Who Keeps On Giving*. Installation view: The Power Plant, 2017. Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid

complex narrative of my grandmother's life and myself in present day. It is impossible to recall the walls of my childhood homes without imagining my grandmother's paintings on them. The intimacy contained in our interactions with what to an outsider may seem banal relies on the emotional connection to this personal association. Beyond their materiality, objects contain meaning, that which we bring to them, or receive from them (Köchling). This idea is discussed by Carolin Köchling in relation to Maria Hupfield's work *The One who keeps on Giving* (Powerplant, 2017). Köchling writes this description of the work,

The One Who Keeps On Giving, gathers around an object: an oil painting of a seascape by the artist's late mother who painted it as a young woman and signed it as *Peggy Miller*. It is this

personal narrative that informs a performance, which took place in Parry Sound, Ontario on Georgian Bay—the setting that is also depicted on the canvas. Hupfield invited her siblings to contribute to this performance, which surrounds the memory evoked by the painting.

Like Hupfield, I bring my grandmother's painting into the gallery. Where Hupfield's relationship with the painting and the memory of her mother provoked by it are explored through performance, the narrative I pull from my grandmother's painting also relates to her memory but considers the history of the painting as an object, investigated through its relationship to photographs from my family archive. The years of its existence are perceptible when examining this painting—the nicotine, grime and grit of its many lives plainly visible. The subject is of a cabin in the snow, and it is signed Linda H. Tylee. This painting until recently had been hanging on the wall in my living room. In my home-studio, I was revisiting the photographs that came into my possession after my grandmother's death, I found an image I



Figure 21: Installation view of *In any way I can*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025. Photo: Scott Lee

liked of my grandfather sleeping in a chair (see fig.22). I thought that the painting in the background was nice, and wondered where it was, and if I might be able to find it or if it was gone like most of the others. Then I found another photograph, one that was black and white of the same painting. I was pleased about the two photographs I had found, questioning the connection between them, and thinking that this painting must have been important to my grandmother for her to have intentionally documented it. When I walked into my living room I turned and saw the same painting was on my wall. I was surprised that I didn't recognize it in the photographs. It seemed to blend so seamlessly into of the walls of my current home that it hadn't stuck out to me until I noticed the connection between the two photographs. Now in having viewed this painting in the past through a photographic portal, I'm better able to understand how



Figure 22: 35mm coloured photograph of my grandfather.

the physical object holds the history of the different walls where it has been hung, including the walls of my current home.

The One Who Keeps On Giving demonstrates the emotive qualities that can exist within objects, and how one can illuminate the narrative by interacting with those objects, whether physically or through reference. The nuance of this idea, and the exploration of how meaning is constructed and carried in objects is also explored in Alice Walker's short story *Everyday Use*. The story centres around a quilt which Dee (Wangero) views as an object worthy of artistic display, one which conveys labour, hidden stories, and history within it—and should not be used functionally. This differs from her mother and her sister Maggie views, who both see the quilt as a household object, an object that carries sentimental value, but also performs a function of everyday use (Walker). My intention isn't toward making a consideration of which perspective is correct, but rather acknowledging the multiplicity of meanings which can be elicited from everyday objects. In bringing elements of my family archive like my grandmother's paintings into the gallery, I am allowing her art to be viewed, while also acknowledging her painting as an object which contains history, memory, and stories.

I was given charcoal to draw with when I was around eight. I remember how it felt in my hands. It was so different from what I had known and it felt very special. I remember the way the dust piled up on the paper, and how it stained my fingers when I rubbed it in to make shadows. I remember how I needed it. I would practice the drawings from the books over and over again on loose printer paper.

Drawing with charcoal



Figure 23: Installation view of *Drawing with charcoal*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025.

Photo: Scott Lee

My grandmother gave me instructional *how to paint and draw* books as a child, which I have incorporated into this body of work – as they act as another instigator that provokes memory and narratives in relation to personal identity. Last summer, I learned how to make my own charcoal from the pear trees in our backyard. As a way to intergenerationally extend this relationality to drawing, I asked my daughter to draw a picture of one of the pears with me and I gave her the book *Drawing with Charcoal* to help her practise her drawing. As an installation, I compiled all these elements together (the drawing we made, the pear tree charcoal and the book my grandmother gave me); I pair these things alongside a note left behind from the previous owners of our house that mentions the pear trees. In this

work, along with the other parts of the exhibition, I am developing a connection that extends from myself to my grandmother, my father, my family, and the family that used to live in my current home. The drawing my daughter and I made that day is displayed on a metal stringer. I use this as a method of display because of the deep emotional connection I have with this object. Though it is not the exact same,



Figure 24: Installation view of *Drawing with charcoal*. University of Waterloo Art Gallery, 2025.

Photo: Scott Lee

it looks just like the ones held up by my father in many of the pictures I took of him when I was a teenager, when I began documenting my life regularly through photographs.



Figure 25: Digital image of my dad taken by me in 2009.

Conclusion

In any way I can

In any way I can expresses longing and loss. It aims to find a way to remember, in any way possible. When I thought of how I would title my thesis, I considered how much my late paternal grandmother had become involved in this collection of works. So much of my life path feels like it has been dictated by hers. She endured a traumatic upbringing and throughout her life she was a prolific maker of things. She must have entered every category in her local county fair because many years after her death, I found a collection of probably a hundred ribbons with cards for categories like potpourri, still-life painting, charcoal drawing, portrait painting, still-life photography, etching, ceramic figures, flower arrangements and others I'm sure I'm forgetting. At some point I misplaced those ribbons, putting them somewhere I can't find them anymore. The act of trying to remember them, trying to mentally access a physical object that is no longer findable, speaks inherently to the works I present here. I am not only trying to remember these things and the places which they were held, but the *people* that I see in them. Longing is translated into a desire for the past to exist presently. Reflecting on the relationship that one can maintain with the dead through photographs and objects, creating a kind of altar, as hook suggests, is expanded into this space. My approach to these works, much like my grandmother's making, includes a wide variety of techniques, ways of trying to get into these images, and into the memories they evoke.

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