

hauntings

by

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Abstract

hauntings draws on personal archives to explore incidents of haunting in relation to print media, memory, and time. Through looping gestures of collage, printing, fragmenting, and reassembling, these works consider how the past and remembered experiences affect the present. Through these works, I propose that the hauntings found in the printed image—print variations and traces of process—parallel the hauntings of memory. While presenting a provisional record of memory, I ask, when do loops of re-printing, re-contextualizing, re-collaging slip into nostalgia? When do built worlds begin to resemble ruins?

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Introduction

This thesis project explores memory and print media as hauntings. The hauntings found in the exhibition (figure 1) include excised photographic information, fragmented photographs, repeating imagery, and the visual artifacts of photography, print media, and collage. Within this body of work, I use loops of processing to arrange my hauntings into provisional, nostalgic, and hopeful personal archives.



Figure 1. Installation view of the thesis exhibition titled *hauntings* at the School of Art Gallery.

I begin, in the first section of my thesis, titled *Personal Archives*, by situating my body of work within its foundation—the personal archives from which I draw my photographic sources. I explain the excision and fragmenting necessary to making the collaged images accurate to my

experiences of memory. Next, in *The Domestic Photograph*, I explore collage and print media as strategies to subvert the authority of photographs and family albums. As photographs and family albums are an incomplete and fallible record, I propose building photographic images into provisional archives which include the effects of memory. In *Print Media: The Presence of Absence*, the third section of my thesis, I explore the traces of process introduced when translating digital collage into print media using screen printing and photo intaglio. In *Notions of Haunting*, I establish the beginning of my interest in the philosophy of haunting. Further, I relate the hauntings of print media process to my everyday hauntings of memory. In the fifth section, titled *Processing an Image: How do loops of remembering affect fidelity*, I define image processing as the loop of collage, photography, and print media—as the intentional introduction of visual artifacts to the printed image. I draw further parallels between my experiences of memory and the loss of visual information caused by looping image processing. I begin the sixth section, *Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia*, by defining nostalgia as my personal preference for collaged images which depict idealized arrangements of the past. Next, I explore the relations between collage and nostalgia through the printed diorama. In the seventh and final section of my thesis document, titled *Conclusion: Collage as a Gesture of Hope*, I propose that each work in the exhibition represents collage as a hopeful gesture. Each print is both a provisional archive—built using fragments of the past—and a maquette open to new possibilities through future rearrangement.

Personal Archives

In this first section of my thesis document, I define personal archives as the collections of photographs I use to build digital collages. Next, I introduce using digital collage to subvert both

the indexicality of the photograph and the authority of the archive. These subversions represent the fallibility of photographs and archives. Further, I explore how the fragmenting and re-assembling of personal photographs speaks to my experiences of memory. The collaged remnants of removed figures, objects, spaces—representing forgotten and suppressed memories—are the first manifestations of haunting found throughout my digitally collaged images.

I begin with personal archives as I am interested in re-arranging, re-printing, and re-building my photographs (figure 2). First, my personal photographs—organized in albums and found in shoeboxes—are combined with my photographs saved in cloud storage. Through digital collage, I fragment, excise, and reassemble personal photographs. Throughout this project, I am interested in investigating, subverting, and breaking apart the presumed authority of photographs organized and labeled within an archive. My digitally collaged, printed, re-collaged personal archives disregard the chronological organization of photographs within a family album or digital file. By intervening into personal photographs, I acknowledge and embrace my interest in that which is left out of an individual photograph—my interest in the incomplete story told within a family album—with its leftover photographs in a nearby envelope. That is to say, I work to build alternative personal records which use removal and repetition to acknowledge the fallibility of photographic archives. I am drawn to archives for the reasons art historian Sara Callahan (2022) outlines in *Art + Archive*: “Archive artists...approach photography as a strangely paradoxical document: simultaneously stressing the material indexical link to the past while also breaking apart the belief in the evidentiary potential of photography in general” (129). I begin my thesis project with the following questions: How can memory be captured through a

collaged image? How can I build, through collage and print media, a record of the experiences and memories which echo throughout my present?



Figure 2. A scanned photograph from the artist's personal archives

Each print in my thesis exhibition begins as a digital collage of photographs pulled from my personal archives. In addition to an interest in exploring the possibilities for intervening into personal photographs and archives, I draw from my photographs for their emotional resonance—for the conceptual possibilities of fragmenting, excising, and re-assembling my memories. Within each image, my past and present are fragmented and combined until they are almost indistinguishable within the image. Photographs which represent memory operate with the same visual logic as photographs of the present. This reflects the ways my memories echo throughout my present experiences.

The fragmentation of my source photographs leads to collages of interior spaces which echo with an unseen presence. Within each collage, only the remnants figures remain: plants, lights, a hand holding a precious belonging (figure 3). Like my memories, the digital collages are

full of gaps, blurring, evasions, and repetition. These incidents are the first of the titular hauntings found throughout my collaged images. The negative space within the collaged image speaks to forgetting—to my personal forgotten and blurred memories—while opening a door for the viewer to fill in their own experiences. Though the interior spaces and their objects hold personal association—emotionally charged to me—the negative space allows viewers to connect with each image through their own experiences and memories. As Kristofer Kelly (2013) writes in the exhibition text for Heather Huston’s *The Imagined Past*, “Objects and their owners cast a shadow, they trigger memories and suggest conversations. The weight of meaning in that minutia is imperfectly legible.” Within my body of work, recurring images—indecipherable post-it notes, an unreadable street sign, walls facing toward the interior of a space (figure 4)—confirm the imperfect legibility of each of my collages. The specifics are decipherable only to me, while the viewer has the opportunity to fill each interior space with their own experiences, memories, loss, and grief; their own personal ruins.



Figure 3. *Personal Archives (I am holding my jpegs as tightly as I can)*, digital collage, 2023



Figure 4. *Personal Archives (I am holding my jpegs as tightly as I can)* - detail, digital collage, 2023

The Domestic Photograph

In this second section, I introduce Susan Sontag's (1977) conceptualization of photography as an impression which overlays reality (154). Next, I link Sontag's argument that a photograph is an interpretation of the real to Marianne Hirsch's (1997) writing on the ideological goals of domestic photographs and family albums. Last, I relate Susan Stewart's (1992) writing on family albums as objects produced by narrative (xii) to my goal of subverting the photograph and family album as complete records. Instead, I propose collage and print media as strategies which allow photographic images to become provisional archives—records which include the continuing effects of past experience and memory. Last, I introduce my collaged and printed provisional archives as reflections of the ephemeral qualities of memory.

In this exhibition, I use photographic print media to engage with the history of photography in relation to my current image-laden circumstances. In *On Photography*, Susan

Sontag (1977) writes of photography's implications of pointing to something real, being impressed from the real, while simultaneously draping over top of the real (154). Throughout my research, I have found this last point to be true—the proliferation of the photographic image leads to a smothering of reality. Photographs offer a false representation which sits over top of my present. Repeatedly digitally collaging and printing my photographs leads to nostalgia, which I define as the circumstance in which my fragmented and re-assembled photographic images—constructed collages of the past—become more alluring than my present. I explore nostalgia further in section six of my thesis.

Photographs—though they are “something directly stenciled off the real” (Sontag 1977, 154)—are interpretations of the real framed by a photographer. As Marianne Hirsch (1997) writes in *Family frames: photography, narrative, and postmemory*, photo albums are an ideological project—the domestic photograph “became the family’s primary instrument of self-knowledge and representation—the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated” (6). The narratives found in family photo albums are further explored by literary theorist Susan Stewart (1992) in the book *On Longing*. Stewart categorizes albums of photographs as a souvenir writing, “the souvenir and the collection are objects generated by means of narrative” (xii). Stewart explains that the past depicted in the souvenir is constructed from fragments of the present (145), the childhood found in a family album is not, “a childhood lived; it is a childhood voluntarily remembered, a childhood manufactured from its material survivals” (145). In my body of work, I propose, like Stewart, that the photographs I find in my family albums are depictions of the past filtered through my present. For this reason, my photographs must be fragmented, reprinted, and reassembled into revised personal archives.

Similarly to a photograph or family album, my memories are imperfect and incomplete. Through first digital collage and subsequently print media, I fragment and reassemble photographs from my personal archives to build revised provisional archives. In building revised personal archives, I acknowledge, reckon with, and embrace memories which are incomplete or lost. My archives are provisional as they are ongoing records to be rearranged as my memories shift. The ephemeral qualities of memory are reflected within my body of work through both blurred photographic images and the objects and spaces I choose to include within each collage. My provisional archives reinforce that the details within my memories are as fleeting as sunlight on my kitchen wall or the curl of a houseplant leaf in the morning light.

My most direct reference to the family album is visible in the first two of the screen printed and photo intaglio works in the exhibition. In figure 5 a handwritten label reads, ‘Birthday 1998’. This first print and its companion piece are titled *Belonging* (figure 5) and *Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* (figure 6). These titles reference Stewart’s (1992) definition of longing—as a sort of ache (ix) and more directly quote Elizabeth Freeman’s (2010) writing on longing in the book *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. In *Time Binds*, Freeman explores depictions of time in the work of queer artists. Freeman writes, “Longing produces bridges of both belonging and ‘being long’, or persisting over time” (13). For me, Freeman’s longing speaks of the ache of loss and is a direct link to the titular hauntings found throughout my body of work. The ache of longing found in the gaps and remnants of what is lost is a haunting. I will define haunting further in section four. In the next section, I will discuss the hauntings caused by processes of print media and the ways in which these hauntings relate to my experiences of memory.



Figure 5. *Belonging* (Freeman 2010, 13), screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 13.5 x 13 inches, 2024



Figure 6. *Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* (Freeman, 2010, 13), screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 13.5 x 11 inches, 2024



Figure 7. *Belonging and Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* (Freeman, 2010, 13 - installation view, 2024

Print Media: The Presence of Absence

All they can do is point at what they have lost and say Someone used to live here. Something used to happen here. You have to understand, it seemed terribly important at the time (Lavery, 2023).

In this third section, I introduce art historian Jennifer L. Roberts' (2021) six-part lecture series on, "the physical and conceptual consequences" (2021b, 3:32) of print media processes. Roberts proposes in "Contact: Art and the Pull of Print" that a print is a "record of a contact event" (2021a, 13:12) which links print media to themes of "touch, presence, and intimacy, but also loss, separation, and memory" (2021a, 11:37). I describe the

mechanics of print, introducing screen printing, photo intaglio printing, and CMYK four-colour separation. I propose that traces and errors introduced by mechanical processes of print media speak to processes of memory, longing, and loss.

I initially returned to print media for the opportunity to engage with the printed photographic image. Photographic print processes bear some of the heavy weight of the history of photography while including the content inherent to the printed multiple and interference of print process. In print media, the printed multiple is an impression of a matrix transferred to another surface using ink and pressure (Roberts 2021a, 10:56). The matrix may be a plate or a stencil—the resulting print is a trace of this now absent source (Roberts 2021a, 11:37). In my work, print media infuses prints with echoes of process. As a consequence of this process-driven approach, the printed multiple side steps questions of originality and authenticity. Instead, as Clare Humphries (2018) writes in “Benjamin’s Blindspot”, print produces original multiples with “endless and exquisite variations” (157). The subtle variations between each of my photographic silkscreen prints of an interior space speak to the way light shifts from daytime to evening—infusing a printed image with the atmosphere and memory of each depicted interior.

In “Contact: Art and the Pull of Print”, Jennifer L. Roberts’ (2021) lecture series, Roberts speaks of the conceptual consequences of print media processes—of their impact on the content of a print. In “Strain”, the fourth lecture in the series, Roberts proposes, “Screen printing brings images into being in a field of forces. Forces that actively shape them rather than neutrally transmitting them. Screen printing leaves its mark and puts images under strain” (2021b, 3:35). Whether a print is made by putting pressure onto a squeegee to push ink through a photo emulsion stencil or by putting an inked plate under pressure—the resulting impression is a declaration of an absence (Roberts 2021a, 11:37). Hand printed images in particular, are traces of

both the absent matrix and traces of another person. In my work, unevenly deposited silkscreen ink in the seams of a tiled image emphasizes the physicality of a squeegee making contact with paper as I strain ink through silkscreen mesh (Roberts, 2021b, 2:38). A photo intaglio plate must have ink pushed into its crevices, wiped off, and subsequently run through a press. Though my body has been excised from my printed images, I am present in the impressions which result from print media. For this reason, I characterize looking at a print as coming to terms with an absence, as bearing witness to what is left behind. As Jennifer L. Roberts says in lecture six, titled “Alienation”, “Printmaking is an embodied art of pressing, touching, and rolling but at the same time and in the same motion it is an art of letting go” (2021c, 2:17).

Print variations, the “physical consequence” (Roberts 2021b, 3:32) of the mechanics of screen printing, are most apparent in my photographic images printed using four-colour separation. A four-colour separation, or CMYK print, separates a photograph into cyan, magenta, yellow and black layers. These four layers, when printed, use optical mixing to reproduce the colours of a photograph. Uneven squeegee pressure, ink drying in the screen, slight changes in ink opacity—these technical errors result in prints which veer from reproducing the colours of a photograph or digital collage to prints resulting from collaboration with process (figure 8 and 9). In a CMYK print, colours shift, edges soften, and visual information blurs. Like a memory, certain lines and passages of colour are lost.

Much like, as Roberts proposes, a print is, “a record of a contact event” (Roberts 2021a, 13:12), photographs and memory—both fallible and incomplete—are a record of contact. In my body of work, I propose that print—alongside photography and collage—can build a record of ways in which our lives touch one another (LaSalle 2023). A printed image of a plant pot, gifted from a dear friend, appears throughout the body of work again and again—like a precious, often

revisited, memory. The image of the plant, ruptured by a seam and misregistered (figure 10)—technical imperfections caused by print process—reflects the mundane yet precious ways we touch, come apart, and move on.



Figure 8. *The Presence of Absence*, digital collage, 2023



Figure 9. *The Presence of Absence*, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, binder clip, 27.5 x 39.5 inches, 2024

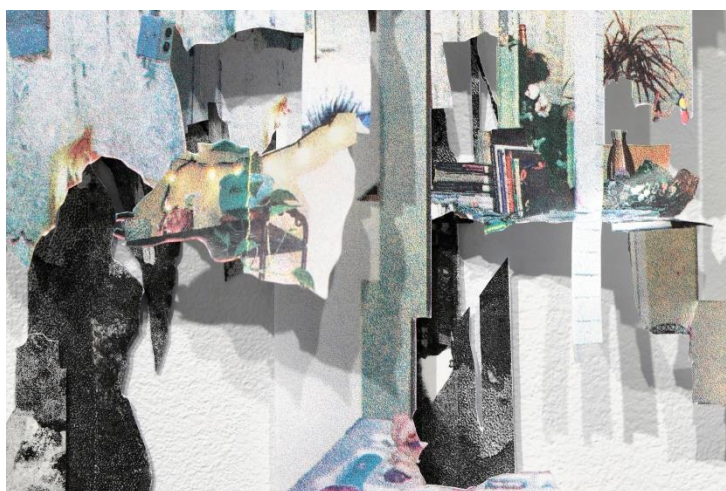


Figure 10. *Belonging* (Freeman 2010, 13) – detail 1, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 13.5 x 13 inches, 2024

Notions of Haunting

“...traditionally, hauntings are the result of an inability to forget, due to an incomplete process of memorialization” (Blanco and Pereen 2013, 232).

In this fourth section, I introduce and explain the hauntings which echo throughout my collaged and printed images. I begin by introducing *A Glossary of Haunting* by Eve Tuck and C. Ree (2013) which introduced me to philosophical explorations of haunting. Next, I explain the parallels between the hauntings of process and the ways in which the hauntings of memory occur in my everyday life. Last, I relate haunting to longing in the writing of Elizabeth Freeman (2010).

I came to philosophical ideas of haunting through the text titled *A Glossary of Haunting* by Eve Tuck and C. Ree (2013). Within this glossary without reference text Tuck and Ree write of haunting, its relations to “righting (and sometimes wronging) wrongs” (640) and the ways in which hauntings manifest in seemingly mundane moments, like stained ceiling tiles. I came away from *A Glossary of Haunting* with an interest in the ways incidents of haunting manifest in everyday images and spaces. Throughout my thesis document, I use the term ‘haunting’ to address how the past, and remembered experiences, affect the present (Tuck and Ree 2013, 639 - 658).

For me, hauntings manifest in the sources and construction of each of my printed collages. First, as mentioned in the first section of this thesis, removal of figures and their belongings using digital collage builds the first incidents of haunting. Second, personal photographs from family albums combine with photographs of the present to propose memory as a haunting. Further, print media causes incidents of haunting. The printed image is haunted by the absence of the plate. The variables of printmaking—plate, ink, pressure—combine during contact to print

images haunted by process. Throughout this body of work, I explore how the hauntings resulting from contact between matrix and paper parallel the hauntings of memory—of our contact with one another.

I believe we are all haunted, in some way, by past experience and memory. Through my body of work, I share my haunting—both my precious remembered fragments and the echoes of unbearable truths. I began this project with an understanding of my hauntings as the result of grief, loss, and regret. However, through my thesis project I discovered generative hauntings. For me, hauntings are generative when longing resulting from loss encourages production. In my case, I produced collaged and printed provisional archives which form a record of the ways in which memories, or hauntings, “[persist] over time” (Freeman 2010, 13).

Processing an Image: How do loops of remembering affect fidelity?

In this fifth section, I define image processing as the intentional introduction of visual artifacts using photography, print media, or collage. I draw parallels between my experiences of memory and the loss of visual information when translating images from photograph to print to collage. Throughout this project, I define fidelity as the false promise of being able to render an image of reality accurately and without visual artifacts or loss of information. In this section, I share moments within my printed works which, through my loop of image processing, capture the ephemeral, lossy, and sometimes unreliable qualities of memory.

Through my digital collage practice, I have become familiar with visual artifacts—what Rosa Menkman (2009) refers to in *The Glitch Studies Manifesto* as, “fingerprints of

imperfection” (2). Each step in my process introduces artifacts. The digital camera leads to lens distortion and chromatic aberration. Resampling and resizing digital images causes noise—a close up image of an oversize inkjet print resembles the dot structure of a CMYK screen print. Moving forward, I refer to the purposeful introduction of visual artifacts as processing an image. For me, to process an image is to translate it from photography, to print, to collage (figure 11). This leads to both the loss of visual information and introduces visual artifacts—or hauntings—into the image. For me, processing and reprocessing an image parallels the ways my memories degrade due to repeated re-remembering—or dwelling. I refer to rephotographing, reprinting, and recollaging as looping gestures to emphasize that this project is ongoing. The ever shifting and ephemeral nature of my memories leads to provisional archives which are constantly subject to change. As new memories and experiences accumulate, context shifts—select images representing memory must be processed once more.

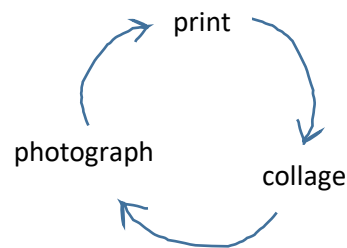


Figure 11. A diagram of the artist’s looping process

My first foray into rephotographing and reprinting an image is visible in figure 12, an inkjet print on fabric titled *Personal Archives (I am holding my jpegs as tightly as I can)*. The outer panels of the inkjet print were subject to additional processing—initially printed on paper, subsequently recollaged, rephotographed, and reprinted. The translation from print, to collage, to photograph, and back to print, leads to a final image with pixelated outer edges. Reflecting my

experiences of memory, the centre of the print—which represents the present—is in the highest resolution while the outer edges—the past—are blurred.

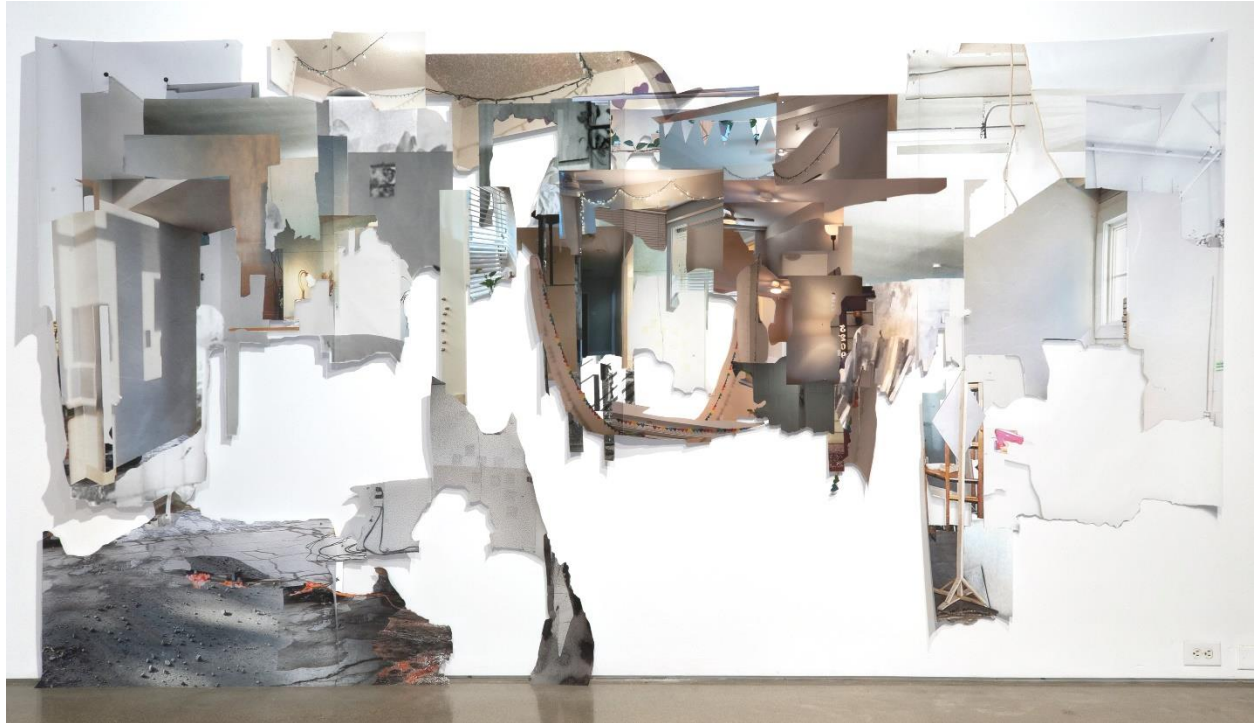


Figure 12. *Personal Archives (I am holding my jpegs as tightly as I can)*, inkjet print on fabric, 13.6 x 7.5 feet, 2024.

In addition to using photography and inkjet printing to process images, screen printing introduces visual artifacts. Unexpected shifts in colour, misprints, and leftover registration marks are a few of the many hauntings of print media. As previously established in section three, CMYK screen printing requires a digital collage be separated into four layers. Next, the continuous tone of each photographic image must be translated into an algorithmically generated dot structure (Roberts 2021b, 10:11). As Kathryn Reeves (2018) writes in her essay “The Revision of Printmaking”, print media is a binary medium. In silkscreen the only options are ‘open’ and ‘closed’ or ‘ink’ and ‘no ink’ (79). In the translation from photo-based digital collage to bitmap positive, visual information—in the form of dots per inch—is lost (figure 13 and 14). To

produce a CMYK screen print, four bitmapped positives must be reassembled one layer at a time. Calling to mind Jennifer L. Roberts' proposition that silkscreen puts images under strain (2021b, 3:35), pulling apart and reconstituting a photograph applies processes of filtering (Roberts 2021b, 3:52) and strain to both the image and my depicted memories.



Figure 13. Detail from a digital collage before it is bitmapped to form the yellow layer of a CMYK screen print.



Figure 14. Detail of a bitmapped positive for silkscreen.

However, even with the abovementioned hauntings caused by the mechanics of print, screen printing planned digital collages begins to feel stagnant. As a result of this felt stagnancy, I introduce additional steps of processing to further strain my printed photographic images. I choose select screen printed fragments—memories I revisit often—to photograph, digitally recollage, and reprint. For this reason, details move in and out of focus throughout the suite of six silkscreen and photo intaglio prints in the exhibition. Fragments of the second print in the series, *Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* (figure 15) are photographed, digitally recollaged, rebitmapped, and reprinted in *The Presence of Absence* (figure 16). The introduction of visual noise from figure 15 to figure 16 suggests that the same visual information may be legible or illegible depending on context. Memories blur, are overwritten, and occasionally become clearer

in retrospect. I further explore notions of incomplete, skewed memories in the final print in the series, *A Hopeful Gesture I* (figure 17). Produced by cannibalising positives from each of the previous prints, *A Hopeful Gesture I* features a single CMYK silkscreen positive from each previous print—photographic information separated from its supporting layers. By providing incomplete visual information, *A Hopeful Gesture I* draws parallels between unreliable memory and incomplete photographic archives.



Figure 15. *Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* – detail, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 2024. See full image in figure 6.



Figure 16. *The Presence of Absence* – detail, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 2024. See full image in figure 9.



Figure 17. *A Hopeful Gesture I* – detail, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 2024. See full image in figure 27.

The prevalence of photo intaglio fragments throughout all six silkscreen and photo intaglio prints builds a narrative of my hauntings. Black and white photo intaglio fragments, representing memories of the past, increase and recede—sometimes looming and occasionally hiding—throughout the body of work. These fragments feature imagery generated from silkscreen positives which have been selectively covered with ink, bitmapped, and printed once

more (figure 18). By obscuring visual information, sections of the black and white fragments are illegible—a memory suppressed or dwelled on to the point of being overwritten (figures 15, 19, 20). The photo intaglio fragments first appear in *Belonging* (figure 5) and *Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* (figure 6), as a compositional foundation which is underexposed and difficult to decipher. The same photographic fragments repeat throughout the body of work, as the focal point of *Threshold* (figure 21 and 22) and tucked into the centre of *The Presence of Absence* (figure 23). They reach clarity in *Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia* (figure 24), becoming most legible once I acknowledge my nostalgic impulse, represented by the printed diorama.

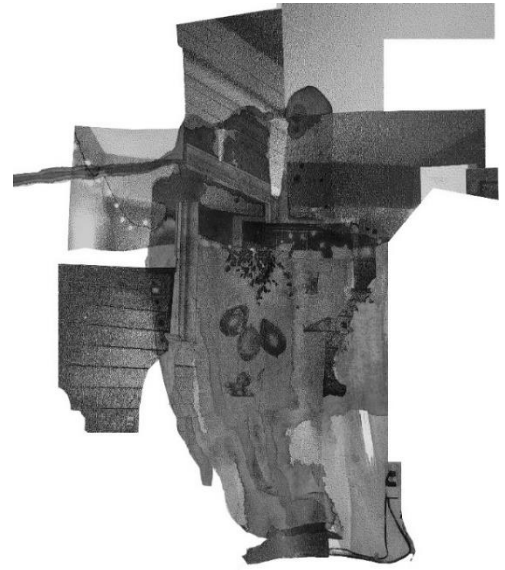


Figure 18. A silkscreen positive covered in ink and bitmapped once more.



Figure 15. *Being Long (Persisting Over Time)* – detail, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 2024. See full image in figure 5.



Figure 19: Digital collage based on bitmap positive in figure 15, 2023

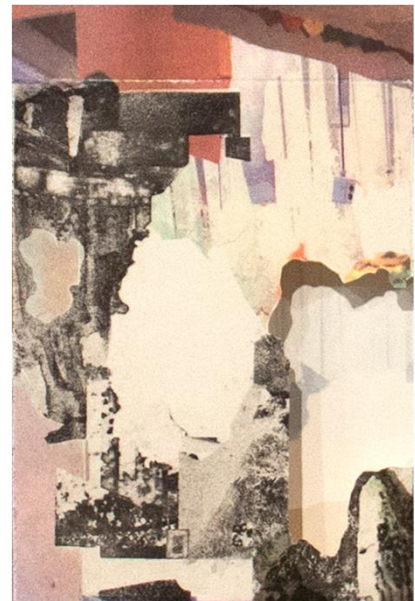


Figure 20. *Threshold* – detail 1, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 2024. See full image in figure 22.



Figure 21. *Threshold*, screen print on paper, photo intaglio on gampi silk tissue, chine collé, 40 x 30 inches, 2024

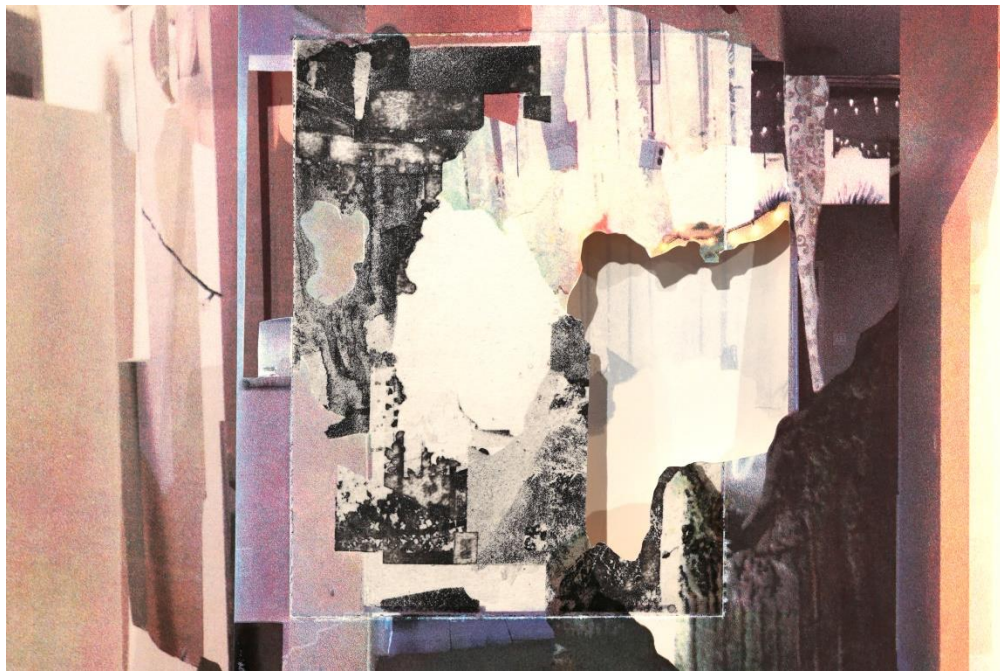


Figure 22. *Threshold* – detail 2, screen print on paper, photo intaglio on gampi silk tissue, chine collé, 40 x 30 inches, 2024

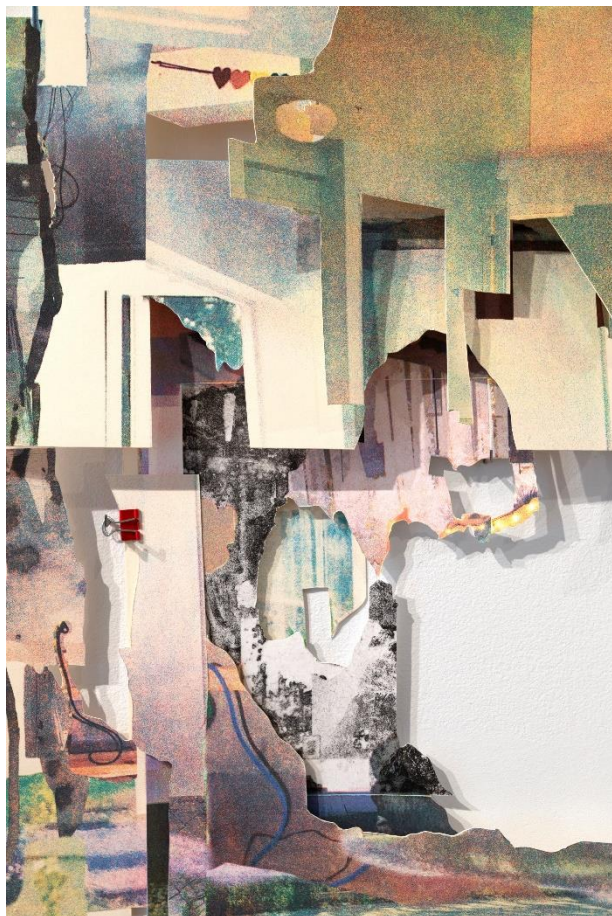


Figure 23. *The Presence of Absence* – detail, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, binder clip, 27.5 x 39.5 inches, 2024. See full image in figure 9.



Figure 24. *Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia* - detail, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 22 x 28 inches, 2024. See full image in figure 27.

Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia

In this sixth section, I begin by defining nostalgia as the circumstances in which my idealized depictions of the past become more appealing than my lived experiences of the present. First, I introduce the diorama, which is a direct depiction of my nostalgic impulse. I relate my understanding of nostalgia to David Banash's (2013) writing on collage and Susan Stewart's (1997) writing on nostalgia.

Throughout my MFA, I have dissected, arranged, and rearranged personal photographs into collaged print media in an investigation of the hauntings of print media and memory. After two years of revisiting the same body of images again and again, I realize that my reluctance to introduce new photographs into my work, combined with my repeated cannibalization of previously printed images, is evidence of a nostalgic impulse. I define nostalgia as the circumstance in which photographs and collages depicting the past become more appealing than lived experience of the present. As Susan Stewart (1997) writes in *On Longing*, “By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past takes on an authenticity of being” (23).

To address my nostalgic impulse, I introduce a printed image of a diorama into my printed work. The diorama, or model, is constructed by adhering digitally collaged inkjet prints to foamcore and arranging them into enclosed spaces (figure 25). The models are photographed, collaged, and screen printed. The resulting prints depict—through printed images of unusually lit and unnavigable spaces—the futility of nostalgia.

In this body of work, nostalgia arises in the distance between the imagined past and reality—similar to the distance which occurs between reality and memories, photographs, and archives. The model represents the futility of nostalgia as it is impossible to truly inhabit a diorama.



Figure 25. A photograph of the diorama built to address my nostalgic impulse, 2024

The printed diorama, or model, first appears at the outer edges of *Threshold* (figure 21). Initially transparent and at the margins of the image, the printed diorama completely overtakes the next print titled, *Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia* (figure 26). This fully nostalgic image depicts only the diorama. Celebratory banners, a previously personally comforting motif, loom flatly



Figure 26. *Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia*, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 22 x 28 inches, 2024

over the entire depicted space. With its immovable printed fragments—held in place with magnets and enclosed within a border—*Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia* represents my impulse to inhabit a hermetically sealed idealized past (Stewart 1997, 69)—my denial of the present in favor of a constructed image.

My suspicion that I am engaging in an exercise of nostalgia is supported by Banash (2013) in *Collage Culture*. Banash writes that even the most prolific and critical collage artist is, “secretly a nostalgic collector” (177). According to Banash, collage is characterized by the tension between the drive to gather and the drive to cut apart. This tension manifests in the simultaneous impulses to collect—“driven by desire to recapture and understand the past”—and to cut—driven by a desire to analyze and overcome the past through the critical intervention of collage (178). My interrogation of nostalgia in my work—through the introduction of the printed diorama—came about from a growing conviction that my nostalgic impulse to collect must be accompanied by an analysis of my drive to recontextualize and reprint past memories and experiences. I question whether I have built ruins which, in the words of Andreas Huyssen (2006), depict “an imagined present of a past that can now be grasped only in decay” (20). I propose that although my built provisional archives are ruins, as they consist of incomplete fragments of a past understood only through my present, their decay—the recombination of their composite parts—allows for new growth, for new unplanned images.

The print which follows *Inside the Ruin of Nostalgia*, titled *A Hopeful Gesture I* (figure 27), originates in nostalgia as it is built from fragments of three previous prints. Though *A Hopeful Gesture I* is built of isolated CMYK positives—incomplete records and memories—repurposing and recombining fragments of the past leads to a new image. A revised provisional archive built one repurposed and recoloured photographic fragment at a time.

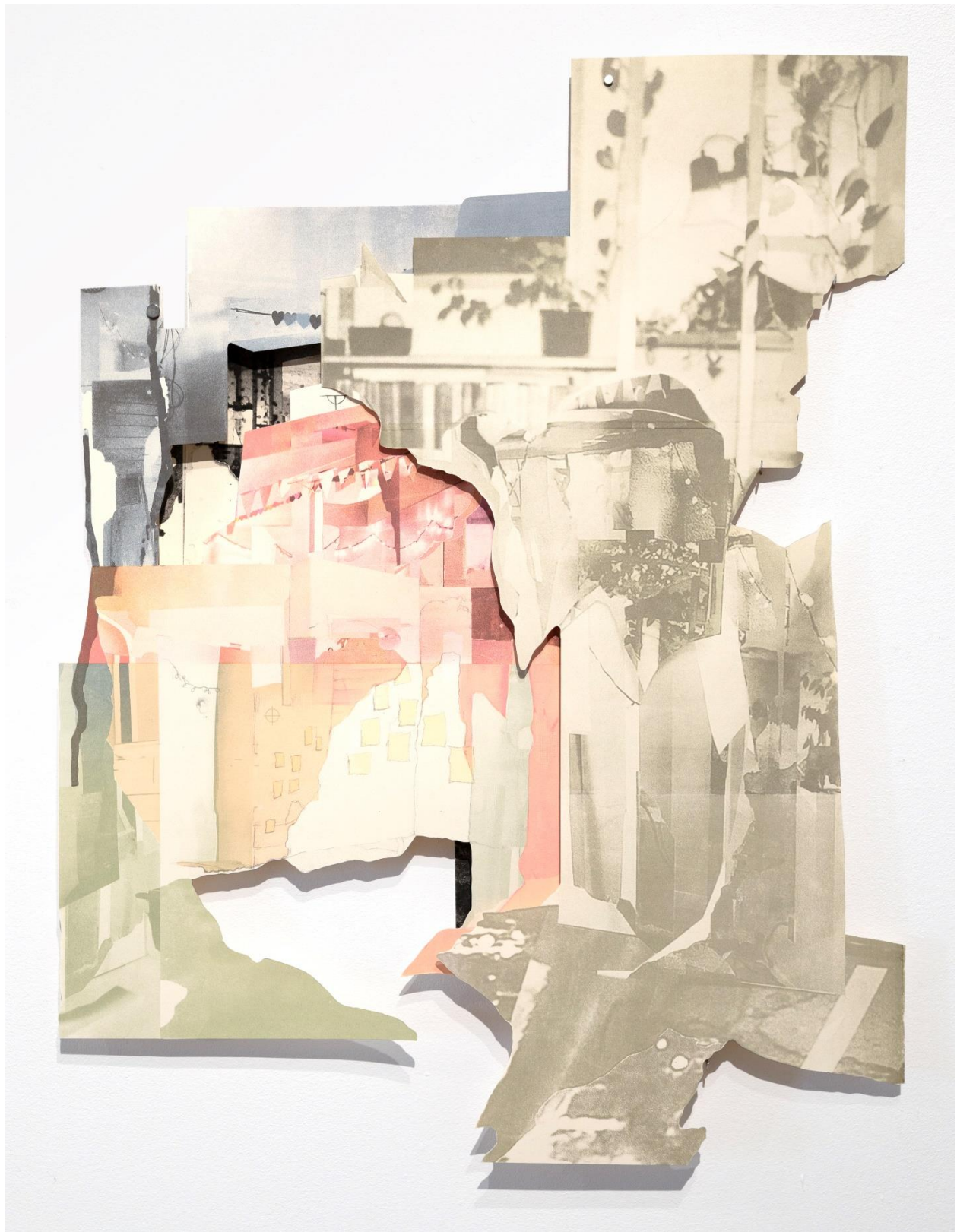


Figure 27. *A Hopeful Gesture I*, screen print and photo intaglio on paper, 25 x 30 inches, 2024

Conclusion: Collage as a Gesture of Hope

In the seventh and final section of my thesis document, I propose that collaging photographs which represent the same set of memories, over and over, can become a hopeful—generative—gesture. Collage offers the possibility to both collect images and generate new meaning by recontextualizing fragments. This allows for provisional archives to act as not only a record but a hopeful gesture which offers new possibilities for the future.

Throughout my MFA, I have been challenged by theoretical writing on collage. I long suspected that there is a marked difference between collage of the twentieth century—which used images and objects of mass production—and my practice. Instead of using mass produced materials, each of my collaged images draws on photographs sourced from personal archives. For me, my collaged and recollaged prints speak to Yuval Etgar’s (2017) proposition, in an exhibition text titled *In The Ends of Collage*, that to continue collage’s legacy of disruption, begun in the twentieth century, artists must appropriate and recontextualize images, generating new meaning which was previously “latent, concealed or non-existent” (11-13).

For this reason, I continue my loop of processing. I cut apart and rearrange my body of work until they became the provisional arrangements currently in the thesis exhibition. My recollaged prints continue in collage’s legacy of “emphasiz[ing] the seams of collage and celebrat[ing] the fragments” (Banash 2013, 173). This last step in my process leads to more dynamic and—overtly provisional—personal archives. Hung on flooring cleats, each arrangement of printed fragments moves as the air shifts through a room. For me, the possibility for rearrangement reflects collage as a hopeful gesture—building on the nostalgic impulse—generating new meaning from rearrangement as memories accumulate and shift.

A Hopeful Gesture II (figures 28 - 31), an installation, is the final, and newest collaged work, in the exhibition. Celebratory banners built from previously collaged images revel in the hauntings within the printed image and the possibility for growth built upon nostalgia. Inkjet prints on bond paper hang from the framing of an interior space. *A Hopeful Gesture II* expands the printed diorama of *A Hopeful Gesture I* (figure 27) into a human-scale maquette—a frame for future plans. A printed plant offers new growth from decay (figure 31) representing new possibilities and new futures. By including the hauntings of memory and print media, I acknowledge the past. By including the diorama, I acknowledge my nostalgic impulse. By building upon both—taking fragments of the past and arranging them into motifs of celebration and growth, I establish the generative qualities of both haunting and nostalgia.



Figure 28. *A Hopeful Gesture II* – detail 1, screen print on paper and acrylic, photo intaglio on paper, inkjet on fabric, inkjet on paper, binder clip, 2024



Figure 29. *A Hopeful Gesture II*, screen print on paper and acrylic, photo intaglio on paper, inkjet on fabric, inkjet on paper, binder clip, 2024

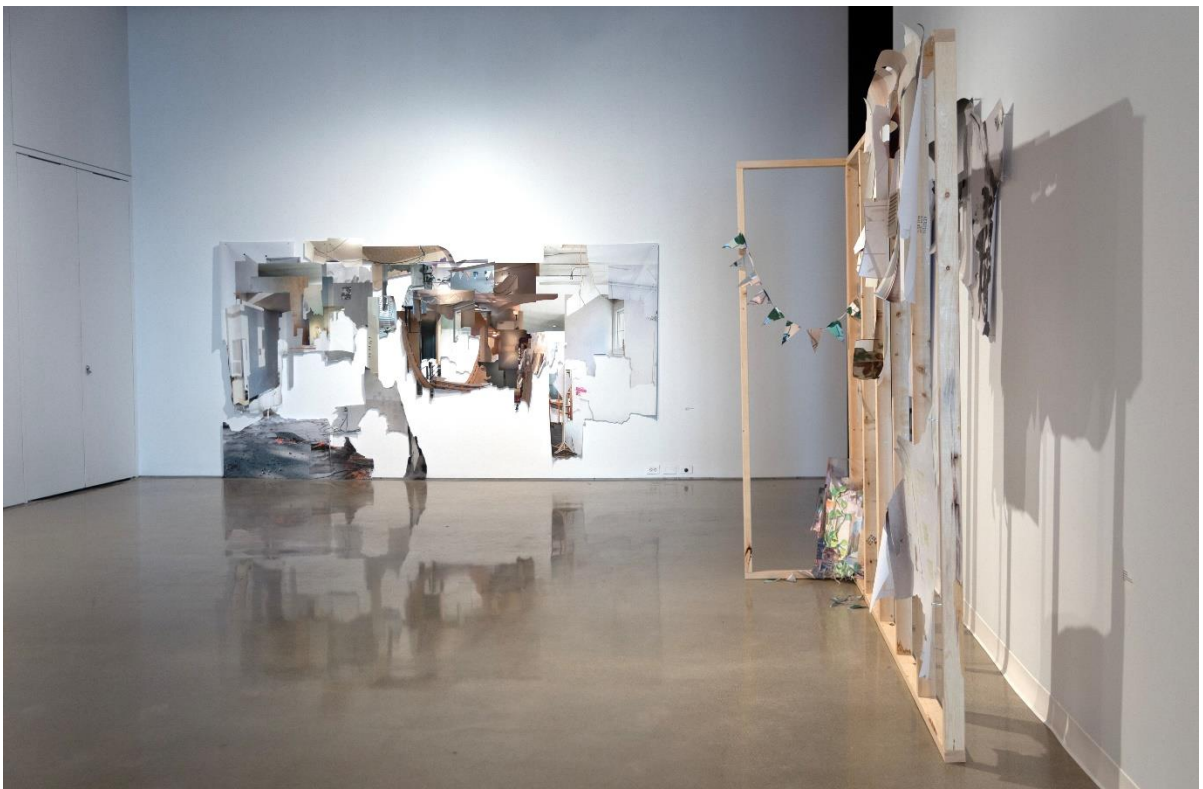


Figure 30. Installation view of *A Hopeful Gesture II* (right) and *Personal Archives (I am holding my jpegs as tightly as I can)* (left), 2024



Figure 31. *A Hopeful Gesture II – detail 2*, screen print on paper and acrylic, photo intaglio on paper, inkjet on fabric, inkjet on paper, binder clip, 2024

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