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ABSTRACT

The act of remembering is a process which involves the evolution of time and the transformation of clarity. Through this process of remembering, the information obtained from lived moments and events is re-visited in an attempt to re-experience or re-live. I am interested in recreating the experience of memory in my work. The collection of works is therefore a translation from abstract concepts to physically concrete and visual elements. The need to keep a record of moments experienced and transformed through time into history is satisfied through the creation of these visual and physical elements. Intangible spaces in the mind are explored and recreated through the use of repetition, distortion, and layering. The combination of printmaking and papermaking processes is also essential to the work.

Narratives of the Past: Visual Representations on the Process of
Remembering

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My work is a visual expression of the experience of memory. For me memory, or the act of remembering, is an abstract process that involves time, history, and space. During this process the present becomes distorted and transformed into the past. This past is known as history. I think of memory as the direct result of history and also the direct result of time. Because the process of remembering is abstract, the space that it inhabits is vast and undefined. These abstract and intangible qualities capture my attention and produce an intense need to physicalize them.

I am consumed by efforts to physically and visually mimic the process of remembering. Time and nostalgia are incorporated into each piece to create a subtle narrative on the past and personal lived moments. Through these narratives I retell and revisit specific time periods and the feelings I experienced. I invoke repetition, layering, and distortion as means for recreating memory and its eventual loss of clarity. In addition to these techniques, the medium of Japanese-style handmade paper, along with printmaking have become essential to my work. This combination contributes to the themes that the work explores by creating similarities between the concepts and the process of making.

The transformative process of experiencing and remembering is physically manifested through printmaking and papermaking. These processes satisfy my need for recording instances from the past and the connections formed with people and places. In the work I use images from photographs of places that I feel closely connected to and print them

on handmade Japanese paper. These prints become marks of physical information and the paper contains and records these marks.

By continually invoking these tedious and time consuming efforts, I have been able to associate printmaking and papermaking with the processes of time and memory. Despite their demands on time and energy, the combination of these two art forms became necessary for my explorations of concepts. I apply various printmaking techniques in order to manipulate a surface and create repeatable markings. Relief printing requires cutting into linoleum, rubber, or wood in order to expose areas and deepen others. These exposed and deepened surfaces combine to create value. In a similar but inverted way, copper-engraving and etching depend on the incision of lines or images into a metal surface. Value results when the incised areas are filled with ink and the image is transferred onto the paper. Screenprinting uses a woven mesh onto which stencil forms are applied that allow ink to transfer through the open areas. Etching and relief printing exposure layers that have been cut into various surfaces and prints become physical manifestations of the artist's thoughts and ideas. These physical actions serve as marks that are recorded both on the material's surface and the resulting print. The manipulation and mark-making inherent in printmaking therefore become a process of remembering.

The process of making Japanese-style paper by hand is a significant aspect of my piece titled *Memory's Death (Mortuary*

Wallpaper). In order to recreate the close connection formed with the place remembered I needed to form a physical connection with the medium. As I invested more time learning to make paper I developed a deep obsession with the papermaking process, its history, and its implications of time and memory. This obsession led to a sense of connection between the paper and myself. Creating the handmade paper for *Memory's Death* involved extensive time, commitment, and energy. The papermaking process was heavily dependent on an understanding of the plant fiber's physical transformations which were best understood through touch and sight. (Without these physical elements there were greater possibilities of making mistakes.)

While learning to make paper, which involved a series of trials and errors I became familiar with kozo fiber. This type of fiber is made from mulberry plants grown in Thailand and is used for its tougher qualities. As time progresses, the kozo fiber undergoes a series of changes. Elements of presence, absence, and future are implied through these transformations and each step requires careful attention. The inner bark of the tree, kozo is sold as a dry stalk. It is then soaked, cooked, and beaten. Together, these processes take about two days to complete and they transform the plant into a pulp. The pulp's consistency changes when it is mixed into a vat of water. A series of repetitive movements produces a thin fiber surface. This fiber surface is then pressed overnight and the end product is a uniform sheet of paper. The crisp uniformity of the sheet is a product of

time and a reference to the paper's earlier stages. Although not explicit, the handmade paper is a combination of past, present, and future. It exists as a physical entity because of its transformation from dry stalk, to pulp, to paper and implies the future because it is ready for use and manipulation.

Memory's Death (Mortuary Wallpaper) is a wall installation that combines the printmaking and papermaking art forms to create a visual narrative about the relationship between time and memory and the experience of remembering. This piece is based on an early childhood experience. During this time my family lived in an apartment building that was behind an olive green mortuary. I remember being in awe of this building. Each glimpse of it made me feel overwhelmed and curious about its color and association with death. Death, like the mortuary, was mysterious and unknown. The "wallpaper" is my interpretation of the feelings of curiosity and overwhelming awe I remember experiencing. The size and amount of space that the piece occupies is intended to become overwhelming. A uniformly empty wall space is covered and overtaken by the repetition of a vaguely unknown image. The only information on the building is its color, structure, and subtle text. This limited information implies a subtle narrative. By repeating the image of the mortuary numerous times and in some areas overlapping and invading each other, the imagined space that the process of remembering creates in our minds becomes physical. Through the act of remembering, people can mentally return to places from their past. These remembered places are

not concrete, and although they form a part of the present and imply the future, they are not palpable. By printing on handmade paper I hope to physicalize my remembered and imagined space from childhood. The space not only becomes physical for me but it also feels contained within the boundaries of the paper. This contained boundary helps to manage my memories of this place by transferring them onto a surface that can be read visually. The need to contain and record information from past experiences is a response to an intricate process in my mind.

Memory in itself is complex and intangible. It is imperfect and evolves in the mind where the details and information we obtain from moments and events are stored. In our minds details such as feelings experienced, people encountered, and actions taken, inhabit an expansive space. Such a space is not concrete or tactile. Despite its lack of physicality, it functions as a container with unmarked boundaries. I am interested in this undefined space and its inherent contradictions as a place to hold memories. How does an abstraction (the mind and the space created through the process of remembering) function as a recording of concrete lived experiences? When do experiences stop being a part of the present and when do they become a part of the past? How do these past lived moments shape our present and our future? These questions have been the focus of my work and have guided my thoughts and ideas on the close and necessary relationship between time and the process of remembering.

Time serves as reinforcement for the undefined space of memory. It is a factor that deeply impacts our ability to recall details and information from the moments we experience. Each lived moment is quickly consumed by time. What is experienced in the present inevitably becomes a part of the past and turns into history. Once in the past, each individual moment is lost and can no longer be experienced in exactly the same manner. Despite this inability to repeat, relive, and re-experience, each instance is influenced by what has already happened and what will come.

In *Time Book* I attempt to recreate the cyclical process of time. This piece is also based on an early childhood experience and incorporates an image of stairs. The image comes from the church I grew up going to. The stairs, which I climbed almost every Sunday for ten years, lead to a row of Sunday school classes. For me, the act of going up and down these steps became a routine. However, this routine was also a symbolic process of movement. In this routine action I walked up and down in order to get to a certain place. These destined places existed in what was then the present. Although unaware of it at the time, such a process of movement was composed of the past, present, and future. The structure of *Time Book* is an accordion flag book. This structure, in which the physical space of the book can be expanded and condensed, is used to represent the evolution of time. Each page varies in the number of times the image was printed and therefore it varies in clarity. The less clear pages function as

the past and the clearer, single image pages are representative of a present and immediate present. Movement and progression of time are implicated through the three accordion rows, the varying amounts of distortion, and the book's horizontal space. In addition, each page contributes to a sense of quantity. Quantity is an essential element in this piece because it represents different moments and experiences in one's life. The pages invoke the history and events in a life and speak about the porous relationship between a lived moment and the moments that are in the past and will come in the future.

Donald Palmer writes about the porosity of past and present and states that every moment is made up of a past and at the same time contains a future. Each moment we experience is therefore a combination of both a presence and an absence. Through the progression of time present moments become absent. However, what is experienced now will exist in the future as an integral part of the future present. The act of remembering is an effort to go back and relive our experiences; it is also a cyclical process of transformation. A concrete and palpable present becomes an immediate past. In this immediate stage what was experienced is coherent and contributes to the shaping of an individual. With time's progression the coherence and clarity is morphed into an abstract past.

The intentional repetition within my collection of works serves to imply narratives built on the relationships between time, history, and

space. *Memory Narrative* is a series of relief prints from rubber on found book pages. The pages themselves are fragile, old, and yellowed and they contain a sense of elapsed time. I carved an image of a Vietnamese Buddhist temple onto a rubber block. This temple is another location from my past that I formed a connection with. Similar to the building in the *Mortuary Wallpaper* piece, the color and structure of this building has always stood out in my mind. The exterior's yellowish paint and curved roof produces intrigue and curiosity. This sense of curiosity is fueled by the fact that I have never been inside this particular temple. My only contact with this building has been through visual observation of its exterior. I repeatedly printed a simplified version of the exterior structure in layers directly onto pages of text that I removed from the old book I had found. Each page incorporates repetition through the constant combination of image and text, and serves to create a visual narrative. By placing my prints onto the excised pages from the book, each page becomes a physical solution to my lack of visual information about the inside of the building. It is also a way to recreate the experience of visual observation. In this piece the meaning of the words is obscured by a lack of context and many layers of ink. An unfamiliarity with language (in this case Spanish) may also deprive the words of their meaning. Instead of functioning as letters that come together to form words that are read, the text becomes an entirely visual element that serves as a background for the printed images. The repetition of both images and background create a

pictorial space that is not dependant on the function of text to create a narrative. A lack of information on the meaning of the words forces one to have to depend on observation or reading of the image as opposed to reading the text. I see this process, in which normal and regularized functions lose their significance, as being closely similar to the way in which memory functions.

The repetition used in my work functions as a method for reproducing the space that is created through my attempts to go back and relive instances from my past. Although memories are faulty and are subjected to distortion, we attempt to hold onto a certain degree of clarity by continuously going back to remembered moments. The space created in the work is consistently similar and reflects the interest I have developed with space and the ways in which it is represented. Through his use of line work Leopoldo Mendez, a Mexican printmaker whose relief prints depict scenes that are pertinent to the Mexican revolution, creates distinct and vast spaces. In *The Torches*, Mendez's use of thin and condensed lines within the background produces a space that is immense and undefined. Other than the value produced by the intensity of the lines and a group of figures, there is no clear information. In another print titled *Pequeña maestra, que grande es tu voluntad (The rural school teacher)* a lone figure of a woman is set against an empty space that is composed solely of lines and value. The immense space surrounding the small figure is overpowering in a way that begins to imply a narrative about the

challenges that the subject in the print will face. The sense of space in Leopoldo Mendez's prints helped me think about how to create space in my own work. The way in which I think about and produce space is also heavily influenced by a physical need to constantly repeat. This need is instinctive and has guided me in the creation of my artworks.

My work is a result of an obsessive interest with the function of memory and the role that time plays in the process of remembering. It is also a direct result of my interest in two techniques, printmaking and papermaking, whose processes of making are similar to those of time and memory. In my work, the physical actions taken to produce each piece are a reflection and a mimicry of ideas developed on these main concepts. Since my ideas focus on intangible and abstract processes, such as the transformation of time and the evolution of clarity, I actively seek to create physical representations of these processes. I engage in a constant effort to translate the complex, the abstract, and the undefined into something concrete and visually readable. These translations are composed of physical actions and the incorporation of images which begin to create subtle narratives.

The narratives within my work deal with the imaginary spaces that we go back to in our minds. These vast and expansive spaces contain no boundaries and are inhabited by moments from the past. In order to physicalize these imagined spaces, opposing and contradictory actions needed to take place. I attempt to contain the vast landscape of memory

within the boundaries of sheets of paper, some very small and some very large. In a contained and physical state, time and the process of remembering are exposed and presented as objects to be observed. In observing these objects, for me the unknown implications of past, present, and future become familiar. My work attempts to create an awareness on the dualities of each lived moment. Despite the fact that all lived experiences become a part of history, I want them to continue to exist as remnants of our experiences.

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CD-ROM Information

1. *Memory's Death (Mortuary Wallpaper)*
2010 screenprints on Japanese handmade paper 92"x120"
2. *Time Book*
2010 flagbook 5"x15"
screenprints on Murillo paper
3. *Memory Narrative*
2010 block prints on found book pages 12"x54"