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Loss Count

Sonya Corin Russomanno

A thesis submitted to the College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Printmaking

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Morgantown, West Virginia
2003

Keywords: Pattern, Repetition, Loss, Feeling, Memory, Printmaking
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ABSTRACT

Loss Count

Sonya Corin Russomanno

My prints encompass themes of loss of past experiences, poetics, repetition, and feeling. By remembering facts from past experiences, one can recall how a particular moment felt. My intention when producing a piece of work is to generalize themes of loss, time, and memory by using visual features of pattern, space, and repetition of forms to exemplify feelings in relation to loss, time, and memory. This thesis statement will first address themes of loss, time, memory, and the visual devices that are employed with one intention, that they exemplify features crucial in my work. In addition, I will address the influences of artists and writers that support themes of loss, time, and memory.

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Loss Count

My prints encompass themes of loss, of past experiences, poetics, repetition, and feeling. By remembering facts from past experiences, one can recall how a particular moment felt. This memory forms a constructive process of imagination. Susan K. Langer states, “As soon as the natural forms of subjective experience are abstracted to the point of symbolic presentation, we can use those forms to imagine feeling and understand its nature.”¹ My intention when producing a piece of work is to generalize themes of loss, time, and memory by using visual features of pattern, space, and repetition of forms to exemplify feelings in relation to loss, time, and memory.

This thesis statement will first address themes of loss, time, memory, and the visual devices that are employed with the intention that they exemplify features crucial in my work. In addition, I will address the influences of artists and writers that support themes of loss, time, and memory.

¹ Susan K. Langer, *The Problems of Art*: (Charles Scribner’s Sons, NY: 1957), 58-60, 71.

Pattern, Repetition, and Space

Pattern, repetition, and space are manipulated in my work to allude to memory and time. In this section I will speak about five bodies of work and how they exhibit this manipulation of pattern, repetition, and space.

The first body of work consists of a selection of 50 prints from a series of color Xerox transfers. Each of the prints includes a figure or doll which exists in a distressed patterned background. These prints are created by photographing patterns and textures which can be found both in nature and in the interior and exterior spaces within my past living environment. Referencing memories of past experiences, these photographs are then enlarged and transformed into color Xeroxes. Photos are a reflection on past environments in which I am imposing my own memory onto them. By producing Xerox transfers, they act as a transferring of memory. These images are cut out in the shape of a square and transferred onto 22x30 papers using the solvent Ancolite.

The position that the print is placed on the paper creates a border of negative space. The psychologically alienated space that I try to construct creates an environment for my figures. Serving as a device to surround the figures, the space is intended to exhibit a quality or feeling of loss and isolation in that the figures can appear to drift and float in and out of the space. The space is more generalized in that it is fragmented; this can suggest or correlate with the themes of loss and isolation. When displayed in close proximity, the negative white space around the squares acts as a stopping point for the viewer to look at the image and then

allows the eye to travel back and forth to other prints located to the right and left. This is an indication as to how one might actually revisit a past experience and can correlate to the viewers own experience. This negative space also serves as a reference to the borders of old photographs which I use to refer back to past experiences, thus generating ideas from “Long Term Memory” to create these prints. The negative white space is often distressed in that the border may become torn, smudged, or off center just as a memory might exist. This aesthetic exists throughout the pieces found within the exhibition to have a worn quality and make the imagery appear more accessible.

Repetition can be found throughout this series due to the matrix of the square; if missing, it is implied through the positioning of the figure on the surface in relation to others as they are placed in exhibition. In this series of prints, a figure or doll exists within this repeated space. The particular type of doll used is important to me because my mother has collected them for me since I was a child. These dolls were not meant to be touched or played with; rather they were put away in a glass cabinet as collectibles. When I look at the actual dolls at home, they engender diverse past experiences. When looking into the glass cabinet, as an artist, I become a voyeur of these dolls which omit shadows of past experiences.

Feelings of lost experiences and memories have continued to play an important part of my work. I include these feelings and lost experiences in y work through the use of dolls as a stand in for a person in a particular memory of a past experience. The figure, in some cases, is obscured through objects or accessories drawn or placed in front or behind it to

suggest depth or to give a further indication as to where the figure exists in a memory. For example, a clear image of a drawing vs. a foggy image of a figure (doll) or background.

Methods of printing that produce these feelings of lost experiences include color Xerox transfers and additional layers of information through drawings, monoprint, stencils, paper lithography, embossing, collagraph, and pronto plate images. Each technique is used in a variety of combinations to add an additional layer to the prints, further concealing a memory. The addition of a drawing of an object or accessory is printed and placed with some of the

dolls to further allude to the time or place from which the image is derived. In addition to repetition, pattern is used as a device to make up the background for the doll and is part of a

layering system of images that are printed with a variety of techniques.

Materials are injected onto the prints or sewn, poked, poured or embossed into/onto the paper to deal with the physical texture of paper referencing objects found in my home. Wax is poured over some of the prints to seal

parts of the underlying image of the doll, building up or concealing memories. Wax also serves to cloud and isolate parts of the doll and background in which a memory block may occur as a result. This translucency of materials such as wax is important because it acts as another layering system in which to discover past experiences.

Shadows that are cast by figures (dolls) are intended to create anonymity within the print. They act as a remnant of a memory, often cloudy or transparent as one might find in a deteriorating photograph or Super 8 film in which the focus and image seem to disappear for a second and return sharp the next. Qualities of opacity and translucency of images are built up through this encaustic process. These qualities are important because they refer to a breaking apart of imagery much like in an old home video where parts are concealed by deteriorating film or in the case of an old photograph exposed to sunlight or harsh weather conditions for an extended period of time.

These prints that incorporate pattern, repetition, and spatial elements are arranged in such a way as to move the viewer throughout the space in a linear progression. Figures appear to speak to each other when installed from across from each other in the gallery. Encountering a print located on one wall may contain qualities of loss of past experiences which are inherent in surrounding prints. This is due to an exploration of loss that alludes to a fraction of a second. A fraction of a second is accomplished in my prints that contain an image found in multiple prints in the exhibition. Images that are found in these prints are drawn from a past experience or photograph, appropriated from the original memory and the space which it occurred in time. By repeating the image through printing ghosts of pattern or the same line drawing in another space in the gallery, the viewer can begin to recall the image from a previously viewed print within the gallery.

Qualities of loss, repetition, pattern, and time in relation to memory have been present in my earlier works. I focused on past experiences, combining nostalgic and intimate objects, meant to be touched. These objects are nostalgic in the sense that they are bittersweet memories, not all of which are good or bad. For example, when a person says that they are homesick, they are speaking about a place where they have experienced both good and bad memories. I am now making the information found in my prints to appear to be on more of a broader or generalized level. One might find a way into the work because everyone has experienced loss in his or her life whether it is a family member, a game, or a precious object. By using cropped pattern and repetition found in photographs taken from my home, I have found that while it generalizes a past experience or memory for myself, it allows one to bring

their own past experiences into their perception of a piece. I have been able to include a part

of my past experiences in the pieces found in the gallery while allowing image and text to remain broad enough to appeal to a viewer because of the qualities of the work such as pattern and repetition of image in contrast with information the pieces contain.

Pronto plates are a versatile medium that I have been experimenting with as an accessible way to print images of dolls as well as drawings of accessories for the figures. Using a marker on the surface of the plate, I am creating fine line drawings taken directly from photographs or memories of past experiences.

Line drawings are implied on top of the photographs to unify the piece. They are drawn from with an adult voice and perspective with a child-like quality which adds to the piece another view or layer of memory. When drawing these images, they are already twice removed from the original memory. The first being the place it existed in time, the second being the photograph. These drawings resurface

The second body of work is a wallpaper pattern piece inspired by the actual wallpaper found in the laundry room of my parent's home. This wallpaper pattern dates to the early 1970's and is loud, busy, and overwhelming. I choose to replicate this wallpaper pattern onto paper which covers 7ft x 11ft 8 in of wall space because it is an important part of my personal history; however, I believe others can bring their own experiences to it. I decided to enlarge the idea of the wallpaper pattern and repeatedly print it to cover the entrance way to the exhibition of my work. Upon entering the gallery space, the viewer is instantly confronted with the repetitive pattern. A two color silkscreen, this pattern seems to reiterate the themes of pattern and repetition, as well as dealing with past experiences within a space.

The wallpaper has a distressed quality. Wallpaper is bright in two prominent red squares of pattern; the remainder is silk screened and begins to fade as if it were exposed to sunlight.

Through repeating the same format of the

square, the scale that the work begins to take begins to influence how important the memory can become. I am creating and building history through these memories of pattern. I have recreated this space as a way to enter and to reflect upon the idea of memory. By having the wallpaper fade in and out, ideas of both the present and a revisiting of past experience can be questioned depending on how clear or faded the print is.

I also printed this wallpaper pattern onto fabric in order to create a dress which I made and was worn as a performance piece during the gallery exhibition opening reception. The dress is impressed upon me because it is made from an abstraction of wallpaper found in the space where a dress would be sewn in my parents' house. The dress emerges from the wall further resonates the past experience of a memory.

When passing through the entrance way in front of the silkscreened wallpaper, I will interact with the space when wearing the dress. It is intended to reinforce the idea of the doll as a figure and change the scale at which a viewer might perceive the 22x30 prints located inside the gallery. When I am not present in the gallery, the dress is hung next to the wallpapered piece alongside the title for the show to create a presence of the artist to the viewers. When I am not in the gallery it will act as a surrogate for me, allowing the viewer to believe that they are inside someone's personal space and history. It is my intention to have the viewer become immersed in the pattern as they are confronted with it; to surround them with the overwhelming patterned wallpaper.

A phrase that I continue to recall is, "I repeated the thoughts and syllables in my head." This phrase which was repeated by myself numerous times created the emotions one might have when recalling incidences that have occurred in their past. The phrase seems to be persistent in my way of thinking which consists of the constant replaying of a situation, checking and rechecking to try to find any inaccuracies relating to memories of past experiences. I would like the viewer to experience the sentiment and feeling as opposed to the specifics or facts of my personal history that documents a feeling; rather they might relate the prints to a time or place in which they find

familiar through the patterned backgrounds and object or to the qualities and feelings of drifting or floating related to the themes of loss of past experiences, repetition, and feeling.

I am interested in the process of discovering what happens not only in one particular memory but that of the second before and after that memory occurs in time. Therefore, some prints have as little information as possible to allude to the fading of memories and past experiences within a space and the way in which one recalls symbols from memory, while others rely heavily on pattern as a way to show sequences of time and refer to loss of a memory.

Objects

I continue to use the repetition of images as a device which alludes to a passage of time as emphasized in the third body of work entitled *365 Pill Bottles with Hand Stamped Text*.

The 50 prints previously mentioned are further investigated through this piece. Using the form of a plastic pill bottle, text is hand stamped on scrolls of paper attached to ribbons using metal typeset. I started using text when I began to research my personal history regarding my adoption as a baby. Because I had only a stack of paper in front of me containing words and no images, these words began to be the images of my biological family. Incidences that have occurred to me in the past are used in my work now because I feel that your experiences when you're a child are slightly changed when you revisit them but it is difficult to explain in what aspect they have changed from their original occurrence in time.

These glimpses into past experiences relate text and images found throughout the gallery. This is process oriented work in which I repeatedly count and lose count of the number I have

produced. While I am producing text for the bottles, the repetitive process of inking one letter at a time allows me to conjure up a feeling related to a past experience and contain that second of a memory inside the form of a bottle. The viewer is invited to take one off the shelf and open it as a way to interact with the bottle. Because these bottles are intended to correlate with images found in the gallery, one might begin to make connections between both printed and sculptural objects. These bottles inspired me to create an additional body of work which is equal in quantity to the pill bottle piece but larger in scale in relation to the bottles.

Much of my work is experienced through touch, as well as creating visual sensations through lighting and materials. The viewer is asked to go through the motion of pushing down and turning the cap of the bottle to experience the interior thoughts of past experiences found within the bottles through a personal dialogue between the viewer and the artist.

There is an obsession but sense of order in controlling the repetitive notion of opening the bottle. The phrases are small statements to be treasured. Varying lengths of text are emphasized within the form of a scroll. The obsessive act of counting is a way for me to build memories. The number 365 suggests a routine of memories found daily. The bottles act as an aesthetically beautiful journal. Phrases found in these bottles are those which a person might not normally realize or seem to be ordinary. Although somewhat disturbing when singled out, the phrases when opened are a monologue. There is a need to investigate each bottle to perhaps discover the special one. There is a sense of healing vs. being healed and how comforting truth and history can be to the artist.

A reiteration of the pill bottles, placed on rows of shelves on the wall, these somewhat irregular shaped paraffin wax cast from silicone molds reference the shape of a pill. These contain printed images of dolls, text, thread, natural objects, tea bags, and pieces of wallpaper floating inside them. A part of me still exists in the piece, which is the driving force behind why I make the work to begin with. I am “in” the materials used to dye the paper, for instance, makeup from my mother or water from the lake at my parent’s house are examples of such materials. I prefer to look at the qualitative side of things and to personalize my work. For instance, when I use these small pieces or elements like makeup or lake water, I am making the piece carry more of a sentiment which can be generalized due to the fact that is dealing the feelings associated with loss, time, or memory of a person, place, or thing via qualities of repetition.

These objects from home are transferred and embedded into the 365 wax pill pieces. The processes of embedding images and objects into wax acts as a device to incase, preserve, or enclose a past experience. The surface of the pills is smooth, allowing some prints to break through the surface of the wax showing a reoccurring memory or emerging past experience. I have continued to investigate these qualities of space in which the character has generalized features such as drifting or floating thorough translucent and opaque materials. With the addition of light, these pieces begin to become transparent, fading imagery of past experiences. The wax pills have been placed on shelves on the wall to refer to the *365 Pill Bottles with Hand Stamped Text* piece.

Pills are beautiful, frozen histories preserved as a fossil, perhaps as a way to aid in the excavation of memories. The viewer is asked to handle the object as in the case of the 365 pill bottles. Touching both the pill bottle and wax pills will begin, over time, to further deteriorate the memory of that particular past experience due to the touch of a viewer. The wax pills play with the viewers' perception of two and three dimensional space when viewed from near and far in the gallery space. Through these sculptural objects I intend to use repetition of forms that may be associated with feelings connected to the themes of loss, poetics, feeling, and memories of past experiences.

The fifth body of work consists of six squares of board which are meant to suggest a concrete sidewalk and entertain the idea of play. The concrete on the floor echoes the repetition of

the printed squares in the prints on the wall. The scale of the concrete on the floor is such that a viewer might want to interact with the piece. This might be a familiar setting to some visitors to the exhibit and invite those to play with the work. Viewers are invited to play with the jax

through a sign posted on the wall, explaining the rules of the game however those rules can be made up by those who choose to play along the sidewalk. These jax acts as stimuli from “Long

Term Memory” (LTM), a way in which to connect ideas about creating a space which references past experiences and in turn increases childhood memories. “Long term memory is that, through elaborate rehearsal, new information is encoded to existing knowledge. The encoding involves reorganizing and abstracting as necessary as well as elaborating meaning. Encoding must be influenced by what the learner already knows.”²

This piece is derived from the long term memory of many of my childhood experiences. Two sets of jaxs are set upon the cement to play in this constructed

space. This is a way for the general public to perhaps recall an experience from their long term memories when playing with these jax in the space. It is used to set the tone for the rest of the pieces in the gallery itself.

Throughout the gallery the fifth piece travels with the viewer through the space. It consists of line drawings of jaxs printed directly onto the walls above the baseboard on the floor of the gallery. Starting at the entrance to the gallery space, these will act as a repetitive border which can be seen both in the literal object of the jax on the sidewalk and in the printed form throughout the gallery.

² Richard T. Walls, Psychological Foundations of Learning: (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University.1999), 333-339.

I am interested in how much information the viewer needs to connect the literal object of a jax to the drawing of a jax and how these images both mean the same thing when recalling the symbol in your

memory. Sound is quite apparent in this piece when the viewer begins to use the jaxs and participate in playing on the concrete. The way in which the jaxs hit the concrete, jingle and skip across the surface creates a way in which to enter a memory. The jax piece also invites the viewer to handle other objects in the space such as the 365 pill bottles and wax pieces which are located across from them in the space. It allows the viewer to be comfortable with handling other materials such as the pills or bottles which one might find hard to touch, or hesitant to open because of their content and place in a gallery.

Influential Artists and Readings

Artists and particularly writers in the fields of psychology and philosophy have been influences on the development of my work. In the following section I will speak to artists with regards to their use of pattern, repetition, and space as well to the theories connected with “Long Term Memory” and feeling as my reasoning for choosing the title Loss Count for my show. When making my work I constantly count the parts which make up the whole from the preconceived number I have in mind; checking and then double checking the amount of prints that I have, or pile the wax pills into stacks of five and then rows of a hundred because I cannot remember and maybe don’t count correctly or accept that I have counted correctly and must do it again to make sure there has not been any inaccuracy. “The term *long-term memory* (LTM) is somewhat of a catch-all phrase because it can refer to facts learned a few minutes ago, personal memories many decades old, or skills learned with practice. Generally, however, long-term memory describes a system in the brain that can store vast amounts of information on a relatively enduring basis. When you play soccer, remember what you had for lunch yesterday, recall your first birthday party, play a trivia game, or sing along to a favorite song, you draw on information and skills stored in long-term memory.”³ “In Long Term Memory, information is lost because of retrieval failure rather than decay or limited capacity. Although there is undoubtedly some decay of information in LTM that

³ “Memory (psychology),” Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2003
<http://encarta.msn.com> © 1997-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

is never used, much information that appears to be gone is really still there.”⁴ In my work, loss comes into play in two separate ways, loss of a memory and loss of counting. The memory of past experiences is an idea which I have been interested in since my discovery of minimal facts regarding my adoption as a child. I have been trying to resurface memories found within photographs which I have used as a means to produce linear drawings in my prints to recapture parts of the past. I have thought this to be interesting when digging through boxes of old photographs and the carefully numbered photo albums within my family. I enjoy drawing certain parts of these Polaroid photographs into my prints because of my inherent need to rediscover past experiences relating to my history.

In “*Mike Kelley’s Educational Complex*,” the concept of how one perceives a memory is discussed throughout the essay in relation to his architectural work. I have an interest in these theories on memory concerning the space for which a memory exists and how one can begin to recall these past experiences. Vidler states, “The art of memory, then, is the ability to pass through a series of rooms, or through a specifically defined space, in imagination, each room or position in space providing a place or topos for the thing to be remembered. Here, architecture acts as a frame for the object or name, and space acts as a positioning device for locating the desired recollection. In both cases, architectural space is a precondition, an invented and remembered fiction for something else, for something potentially forgotten.”⁵ The significance of this statement to my

⁴ Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* “Deep Space/Repressed Memory Mike Kelley’s Educational Complex”: (MIT Press, MA. 2000), 162-165.

work is that when I look at old photographs or movies, it begins to jog my memory and allows me to revisit these past experiences. I can begin, through my imagination, to remember objects of special importance and other parts of the space through these fragments in architectural spaces found in photographs. When I look at an old photograph, I can remember other parts of the room, windows, doors, and furniture. The insignificant details which make up the interior spaces of these rooms helps me to remember other aspects of my past experiences.

Further on in Vidler's remarks he states, "Where Freud was countering the generally accepted view that a child is more prone to remember "occasions of fear, shame, physical pain, etc., and on the other hand important events such as illnesses, deaths, fires, births of brothers and sisters, etc.," (Kelley) focuses on the mundane, everyday experiences that seem more likely to be partial, or more precisely screen memories for something else-substitutions of reframings in order to compensate for the blocked, unwanted and repressed memory."⁶ I think that this theory is particularly interesting because my work shows fragments of seconds within everyday experiences relating to loss, feeling, and memory. Freud's understanding that "our childhood memories show us our early years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when memories were

⁵ Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* "Deep Space/Repressed Memory, Mike Kelley's Educational Complex": (MIT Press, MA. 2000), 162-165.

⁶Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* "Deep Space/Repressed Memory, Mike Kelley's Educational Complex": (MIT Press, MA. 2000), 162-165.

revived”⁷ can begin to explain how when revisiting the past, there is a loss and deterioration of details about those experiences.

An artist who exemplifies the process of revisiting past experiences and containing parts of his personal history or memories within his work is Joseph Cornell.

⁷ Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* “Deep Space/Repressed Memory, Mike Kelley’s Educational Complex”: (MIT Press, MA. 2000), 162-165.

I have been studying the work of Joseph Cornell and how he contained his objects in hand built boxes or containers and his use of repetition of imagery within his work. I like Cornell's work because of the way he generalized the qualities of past experiences and nostalgia. Cornell included bits of information which he had collected and were of some importance to himself, a time, place, or person, but because they were on such a broad or generalized level, one could bring their own imagination to the piece as a result of his generalization.⁸ Joseph Cornell's work has influenced the collection of pill bottles that I have used to contain the 365 hand-stamped text scrolls I have written. Cornell's work is said to function as "light from a dead star". When you see light that is in the present, one can perceive it as being here but on one level it exists in the past. This is analogous to my thoughts concerning memory.

My ideas about memory supported by feeling are articulated very well by Jacques Rousseau's comments on the education of children and the importance of the imagination and feeling in relation to your experiences. This issue was investigated further by Susan K. Langer in her book The Problems of Art and continues to have an impact on how my work is being produced. Langer says, "Most people are so imbued with the idea that feeling is a formless total organic excitement in human beings as in animals, that the idea of educating feeling, developing its scope and quality, seems odd to them. It is really, I think, at the heart of personal education."⁹ In

⁸ Joseph Cornell. <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/cornell/> March 3, 2003.

⁹ Susan K. Langer, *The Problems of Art*: (Charles Scribner's Sons, NY: 1957), 58-60, 71.

relation to feeling, this statement suggests getting back in touch with the subjectivity one may experience as a child and which is usually lost when one becomes an adult.

One can begin to revisit these experiences of loss and feeling as Vidler analyzes Freud's understanding of the way in which an adult can begin to recall past experiences. Vidler states, "Freud, in his classic "Screen Memories," made much of the fact that, while a number of fragmentary recollection from the earliest years of childhood might be in different ways recalled, and with differing significations, it was only with the onset of maturity, in "many cases only after the tenth year," that memory began to function so as to reproduce the child's life "in memory as a connected chain of events."¹⁰ When producing my work I feel that when revisiting past experiences through photographs or old films, it begins to stimulate a previous memory and helps me to generate new work which allows me to address feeling which can be conjured up by the recollection of these memories.

An artist that I have been researching is Eva Hesse. She "rejected easy answers and pre-conceptions in order to find and build what was authentically her own, and she did it unit by unit, both within a single work and between distinct works in series."¹¹ I find her work intriguing because of her use of repetition of forms and ideas throughout her short life as an artist. "Repetition was her key dynamic, melding and molding both form and content. Even when Hesse's units are

¹⁰ Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* "Deep Space/Repressed Memory": (MIT Press, MA. 2000), 162-165.

¹¹ Sue Taylor. "Vessels and Vacancies." *Art in America*. No.11 (November 2002):131-139.

different from each other, iteration can almost be found in their relationships or placements. As a way of making, repetition at once recognizes and overcomes disorder. Repetition was her [Hesse's] way of constructing from loss and fear, consciously and unconsciously, and it occurred first in her drawings."¹² Another important aspect I find appealing in Hesse's work is the translucency of common materials in her sculptures, fiberglass and polyester resin, in pieces such as *Repetition Nineteen III* (1968) and the connection they have with the floor. Art on Paper writer Naomi Spector states, "The never-strictly-regular arrangements she prescribed for the units of such later sculptures as *Repetition Nineteen* (1968) and *Tori* (1969) [were] meant to be placed "freely" on the floor, not in a line, not in a grid, not too far or too close. Their installation requires an understanding of her visual concepts and spatial sensitivity."¹³

For example, "Repetition 19 III" consists of nineteen off-kilter latex cylinders that are placed directly on the floor. They are organic-looking with odd shapes, uneven coloring, and protruding bubbles of latex. Many of

¹² Sue Taylor. "Vessels and Vacancies." *Art in America*. No.11 (November 2002):131-139.

¹³ Naomi Spector. "Drawing Into Herself: Eva Hesse's Work on Paper." *Art on Paper*. Vol.7, No.1. (September-October 2002): 56-61.

them are dented and misshapen. Each piece stands on its own with no external support, but looks as if it is being overtaken by the forces of gravity. When viewed together in the arrangement, they appear to be unevenly spaced. However, the dents and spacing are not entirely arbitrary. In one corner sits an almost perfectly shaped cylinder and, as they spread out farther away from that corner, the shapes become less and less perfect. The order is created by the interaction of the individual pieces.”¹⁴ I have tried to use Hesse’s “spatial sensitivity” when producing my 365 wax pieces. As Hesse’s vessels were placed in close proximity on the floor, my wax pieces are placed in close proximity on shelves. This is so that the wax pieces share the same spatial relationship as Hesse’s vessels when I place them side by side on shelves.

Another artist that I feel connected to since her exhibit at West Virginia University is Delanie Jenkins because of her investment in memory, family, narratives and psychology of past experiences, and materials used to create her installations. Writing in the *New Art Examiner* Bill Stamets states, “Paralleling a contemporary cultural trend, many women making films, videos, and installations in the ‘90s have focused on recovering their early family lives, with memory serving as both medium and theme for a feminist recuperation of the past.”¹⁵ The tactile yet subtle surfaces and the use of repetition and pattern in connection with materials in Delanie Jenkins’ work and

¹⁴ Bill Barrette, *Eva Hesse: Catalogue Raisonne*: (New York, New York: Timken Publishers, 1989), 12,146.

¹⁵ Bill Stamets. “Delanie Jenkins and Margaret Wagner.” *The New Art Examiner* V22 (Oct 1994): 35

installations are something that prompted me to begin to make process orientated work such the pill bottles and wax pieces. In Jenkins piece entitled *Tether* she includes actual memories/heirlooms, photographs, and narratives of her life. I am as much drawn to her narratives which are “glued halfway up each wall is a pine-strip molding painted red. Jenkins has typed a message on the slender strips, letters capital and askew” as I am to the materials she has used like the tethers and poetic text on the molding. Jenkins sentimentality of the piece is shown through her use of text and materials as she states:

This story is about reconciliation and attempting to fit the circle of life into this rectangle of a room," the text begins. The images come to life. Jenkins, back home visiting family in East Texas, contemplates the smell of reunions and the fertile "red dirt" soil and the "sticky hot sweetness of molasses on fried bread in hundred degree temperatures with 90 percent humidity while bombarded by bugs as big as baseballs." You begin to follow her down the street as she chases the "sharecropper perspiration snuff smell of great grandfather" through a crowd. You hear the red-winged blackbirds fluttering near the railroad tracks—"the tracks I laid across on the day after my wedding," she writes. You follow her on what she calls a "train of thinking you often get on that embarks on one platform and arrives in a foreign country"¹⁶

I can identify with this quote because of my interest in revisiting past experiences in childhood.

An aspect, which may invite the viewer into my work, is that, theoretically, the information that they perceive is familiar. When creating installation pieces, this familiarity invites the viewer into my work. When writing about Delanie Jenkins installations, David R. Eltz states:

In the gallery, you are with her as she spins through the rooms of her memory, the shrines of her past. And you are grateful, as she is, for the "bounty of remembering and tasting and smelling

¹⁶ David R. Eltz. http://www.univ-relations.pitt.edu/pittmag/mar2001/c_room.html, "The Familiar Country of Memory." University of Pitt Magazine (March 2001).

and touching." Because you just might have recognized, as she probably hoped, that everyone's story is similar in this one way: Our memories are in many respects who we are."¹⁷

Although one has not had the same experiences as I, the visual features found in the pattern, repetition, and space is universal despite the factual grounding in my past real experiences. It is my intention to give the viewer the themes of loss, poetics, feeling, memories, and repetition and that through these, they might "imagine feeling" in an abstract way. Through an interaction with the objects found in this exhibition such as the wax pieces, pill bottles, and jax on concrete the viewer is exposed to these themes in a generalized way so that they might bring their own ideas into the work. By examining the objects within the space, they might find a pattern or part of text as an element in the work which alludes to a similar experience they have encountered.

¹⁷ David R. Eltz. http://www.univ-relations.pitt.edu/pittmag/mar2001/c_room.html, "The Familiar Country of Memory." University of Pitt Magazine (March 2001).

Finally the artist Ellen Phelan has used images of dolls and references to childhood in their artwork and past experiences. Phelan's work is said to "evoke half-forgotten memories."¹⁸

These qualities I find interesting in Phelan's work because one can revisit memories and realize that there has been a passage of time and that an image can conjure up old feelings, thoughts, or experiences, some of which have been defined while others fade away into the space. I have tried to incorporate what I have learned from these artists work into my color Xeroxes, Collagraph, monoprints, and pronto prints while addressing the themes of loss of past experiences, poetics, repetition, and feeling.

¹⁸ Ellen Phelan. <http://www.umass.edu/fac/universitygallery/past/ellenphelan.html>

Conclusion

It has been my goal as an artist to investigate themes of loss, time, and memory and to generalize these themes to appeal to a viewer. The visual devices of pattern, repetition, and space have been key elements used to convey feeling and sentimentality found within this thesis exhibition. I had to invent a way in which to include specific past experiences on a generalized level to express feeling through the themes of loss, time, and memory.

The distressed quality of the work, fading, crooked, overexposed, wrinkled or smudged, shows a lack of perfection that one might experience when recalling a memory. The fact is that when constructing memories, they are not always perfect and some details may shift to the background or foreground depending how relevant the information is to convey.

I was heavily influenced by pattern and color which remind me of everyday incidences such as walking in the backyard, curtains in the window, a special table cloth, or an apron my mom wore on a particular day. To me these elements are quite meaningful and intriguing because others could find a way into the work being that it is somewhat familiar to their everyday experiences. I began to use pattern as a way to generalize specific thoughts and memories. For myself, patterns were considered a foundation; part of a layering system

of images which when combined for me would still be meaningful in that it held a memory yet was generalized to hold the interest of the viewer. The organization of the prints in the show was carefully calculated so that one might experience the sentiment and feeling in the work. The use of past experiences, largely from childhood, allowed the viewer to bring their own feelings to the pieces and interpretations of the work.

It was quite overwhelming to see pieces such as the paraffin wax and bottles displayed in a gallery setting. When working on these and stacking them in rows and piles, they do not have the same feeling as when they are exhibited. The wax pieces reach higher than the average person could take one off the shelf. It reminded me of when I was a child and not being able to reach the top of the cabinet without a chair. These shelves are significant in size and quantity and really speak to the bottles when placed in the same room. One could consider the bottles being a vessel which holds information enclosed in an interior space due to the hand-stamped text. In contrast with the bottles, the wax pieces, objects which are much too large to fit inside the interior of the bottles, use the thoughts mentioned in the bottles to explore exterior space when placed on the shelves. This play between the hand-stamped phrases and the literal objects found embedded in the wax can allow people to understand feeling through visual representation of personal objects.

The act of people experiencing the work through touch as well as visual sensation allows the viewer to participate actively throughout the exhibition. For me the work is successful because the work feels like it has a sense of history to it which is not exclusive to my own experiences. There is a sense of time and loss throughout the show, largely due to

the fading, disappearing, and distressed quality of the work. I think one can experience the show on a number of levels connecting to the inter-subjectivity of the work. When watching people interacting with the work, they felt as if they could handle it because of signs which invited them to “Please take one off the shelf and push down and turn” or “Please take one off the shelf and examine it”. I noticed a range of reactions from both academic and non-academic people. They were drawn to the wax, bottle, and jar pieces because it incorporated everyday material and objects that they had a prior connection to. Many remarked that the show gave them a feeling of the past and caused them to remember collections from their childhood. Even though the objects were made by myself containing bits of my personal history, other people were able to pick up on how images were relating to each other from across the gallery due to similar objects or settings in the Xerox transfer photographs and prints.

I think the most interesting thing for me to see as the artist was people standing in front of the shelves finding a special one or their favorite object inside the wax. The aesthetic of the exhibition was pleasing to the eye. Although the images had less information than the original experience, it gave me enough to build on. There is a sense of past experiences and documentation, built up by repetition of pattern and qualities of loss and fading of imagery.

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- Susan K. Langer, The Problems of Art: (Charles Scribner's Sons, NY: 1957), 58-60, 71.

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EXHIBITIONS

- 2003 "Making Histories, Revolution and Representation," Southern Graphics Portfolio Exchange, Boston, MA
"Loss Count," MFA Thesis Exhibition, Laura Mesaros Gallery, College of Creative Arts, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
"29th Bradley National Print and Drawing Exhibition," Bradley University, Heuser Art Center, Peoria, IL
"Appalachian Corridors Juried Exhibition," Sunrise Museum, Charleston, WV
- 2002 "Spread The Word," Museum In The Community, Hurricane, WV
"Print Gumbo," Southern Graphics Portfolio Exchange, New Orleans, LA
- 2001 "Line Up," MFA Continuing Thesis Exhibition, Mesaros Galleries, College of Creative Arts, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
"Borders and Boundaries," Southern Graphics Portfolio Exchange, University of Austin, TX
- 2000 "In No Particular Order," BFA Thesis Exhibition, Mason Gross School of the Arts, New Brunswick, NJ
- 1998/99 "Art Open" Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2003 College of Creative Arts Student Travel Grant, West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. for Southern Graphics Conference, Boston, MA
- 2002 College of Creative Arts Student Travel Grant, West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. for Southern Graphics Conference, New Orleans, LA
- 2001 College of Creative Arts Student Travel Grant, West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. for Southern Graphics Conference, Austin, TX
College of Creative Arts Student Travel Grant, West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. for traveling abroad to Caversham Press, Balgowan, South Africa
- 2000 – Graduate Assistantship, College of Creative Arts, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- 2000 Swigert Fellowship, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
John P. Kirkwood Award, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
- 1998 Renaissance Graphic Arts Award, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

- 2002 Frogmans Print & Paper Workshop, Vermillion, SD
- 2001 Collagraph Workshop, Caversham Press, Balgowan, South Africa

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

- 2003 “Making Histories Revolution and Representation,” 31st Annual Southern Graphics Conference, Boston, MA
- 2002 “Print Gumbo Conference,” 30th Annual Southern Graphics Council Conference, New Orleans, LA
- 2001 “Borders and Boundaries,” 29th Annual Southern Graphics Council Conference, University of Austin, Texas, TX
- “New Millennium, New Ideas, New Teachers, Art For the 21st Century” West Virginia Art Education Association Annual Conference, Shepherd College, Shepherdstown, WV

JURY EXPERIENCE

- 2003 Youth Art Month, West Virginia University Art Education Association
- 2001 Visual Art Competition and Traveling Exhibition, West Virginia University Art Education Association

COLLECTIONS

RCIPP Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper
Caversham Press, Balgowan, South Africa
Peter Jones, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin, Ireland
Southern Graphics Council Archives at the University of Austin, TX
Southern Graphics Council Archives at the University of Mississippi
Amity Foundation
Boston Conference Committee
New Orleans Museum of Art

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- 2002 American Print Alliance
- 2001- NAEA National Arts Education Association
- present SGC Southern Graphics Council

EDUCATION

- 2003 MFA expected Spring 2003 in Printmaking at College of Creative Arts, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- 2002 K-12 certification in Art Education at College of Creative Arts, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- 2000 BFA in Photography and Printmaking Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

SKILLS

Intaglio	Microsoft Word
Lithography	Netscape/Internet Explorer
Papermaking	Adobe Photo Shop
Silkscreen	Adobe Illustrator
Relief Printmaking	PC/Mac experience
Black and White Photography	Quark
Life Drawing	Color Photography

CERTIFICATIONS

2002-Present	K-12 Art Education Certification CPR Certified Professional Rescuer
2000-Present	TAM Techniques of Alcohol Management
1999/00	Lifeguard Certification

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

2002	Student Teaching for K-12 Art Education Certification: St. Francis Central Catholic School, Morgantown, WV Grades K-8 Cooperating Teacher -Nora Sheets University Supervisor - Dr. William Thomas Morgantown High School, Morgantown, WV Grades 9-12 Cooperating Teacher – BJ Campione University Supervisor - Dr. William Thomas
2000 - present	Young Peoples' Saturday Art Studio, Morgantown, West Virginia Graduate Teaching Experience - Assisted Dr. William Thomas when planning and teaching lessons and activities for ages 5-8 and 9-12 in the Visual Arts Organized enrollment
1999	Rutgers Center For Innovative Print and Paper, New Brunswick, NJ Assisted in the Production of Prints from renowned artists such as Juan Sanchez Assisted Master Printer and Papermaker, Curated Prints
1997/98	Visual Arts Practice, Mason Gross School of the Arts, New Brunswick, NJ Monitor photography lab, Set up chemicals

OTHER EXPERIENCES

1999	Perry Temps, Inc., Marlton, NJ Data Entry, Filing
1999/00	Joe Pop's Shore Bar and Restaurant, Shipbottom, NJ Waitress, Cocktail Waitress, Hostess, Cashier
1998	The Dutchman's Brauhaus, Cedar Bonnet Island, NJ Hostess, Busperson Worked on computer, Designed menus, Receptionist
1997/00	Cook Douglass Recreation Center, New Brunswick, NJ

Fitness Center Manager
Front Desk Manager/ Receptionist
Lifeguard/CPR certification

1993/97 Ron Jon Surf Shop, Shipbottom, NJ
Designed Window Displays, Stock Merchandise, Customer Service, Cashier

STUDENT & VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

2002 Very Special Arts Day, Morgantown, WV
2001- West Virginia Graduate Arts Association
present
2000 - WVAEA West Virginia Art Education Association
present Alumni Contact Officer Position held 2002
1998/00 Cook College Leadership
Housing Committee - Work to improve and develop better on campus
housing
DEVCO Committee - Contributed to the re-urbanization of downtown New
Brunswick, NJ
Social Life Committee - Cosponsored outdoor dance, Bookfair
Leadership Retreat to Long Beach Island - Met with Faculty and Deans to
develop problem solving techniques and stress and time management
skills
1997/00 Student Orientation Ambassadors
Volunteered in Freshmen Orientation Activities consisting of designing
decorations, move-in, Senior Panel, Residence Hall Rumble, and raised
funds for the Class of 2000
1996/00 Recreation Advisory Council
Volunteered in student run events including:
Juvenile Diabetes Walk* Holiday Party
Let's Make a Deal Spinello Golf Open
The Price Is Right Ski Trip*
Trivia Bowl Dancing Through the Decades
Turkey Trot Special Friend's Day*
Ag Field Day Devils v. Flyers Hockey Game*
Newell Outdoor Restoration Project
* Chaired Events

SPECIAL INTERESTS

Collecting Pennies, Dolls, PEZ Dispensers etc., Quilting,
Soccer, Running, Skiing, Snowboarding, Surfing, Art Museum/Gallery