



meghan pohlod | on being without

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*on being without*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Printmaking

Department of Art and Design  
University of Alberta

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*On Being Without* is an examination of trauma related to abandonment. I explore representations of the body by investigating interior and exterior space, questioning what happens when distressing memories are triggered by image, place and time. Normalization of trauma continues to be a major risk due in part to the stigma associated with mental illness. This visual research contributes a first-person perspective to theories of memory and contemporary discourses of trauma, family, and the body with the aim of de-normalization.

In his book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, Psychiatrist Bessel Van der Kolk explains recollection and confrontation as a constant state of living for people who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I describe recollection through photographs - imposing myself upon, and reliving experiences through an emotional response to the image. I employ auto-ethnographic methodologies to visually explore the trauma of abandonment by using both personal and found archives of family photographs. Cropping the images into new compositions allows me to focus on what is missing or lost, forcing recollection of *being without*. I invest time with found family photographic archives in order to imagine myself as part of them, but I find that in order to believe the familial image I need to cut most of it away. What is left in these images positions the viewer as looking down at feet or observing an embrace of hands and bodies, not unlike the viewpoint of a child.

I define confrontation through the body and understand it as theorist Casey Edwards describes intimate phenomenological events. In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Edwards explains the body physically reacts, and involuntary, habitual body patterns literally force the memory within us to respond in some way. Images (such as family photographs) trigger these trace memories and induce bodily reactions that are stored at a cellular level. I remember and confront through the body, which is phenomenological occurrence outside the brain. Integrating particular body movements through meditation and yoga, I scan my body and transfer these specific rhythms and organic movements as resolutions practices to traumatic triggers. I record these movements using monoprinting to create imprints onto paper and plastic, the traces visually suggesting cellular structures. Pairing these monotype confrontations and family photographs I am presenting an imprint in the psyche.

This physical transference of unconscious memory allowed me to begin resolving the recollection and confrontation of abandonment trauma. Pairing text from theories of memories, discourses about trauma and benefits of yoga practice on clear plexiglas, I am relaying my vulnerable past with methods of resolution. Utilizing this visual and tactile act of vulnerability places the answer of *being without* physically in a space of *being present*. Illuminating with strips of light allows the work to glow from both sides referencing the body's interior and exterior imprints. Highlighting the changes of working through trauma of abandonment and resolution towards *being* have become the positive recollections and confrontations.

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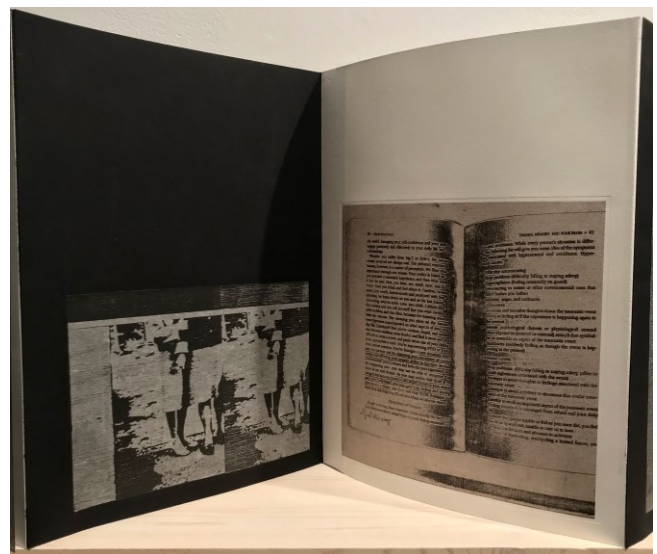
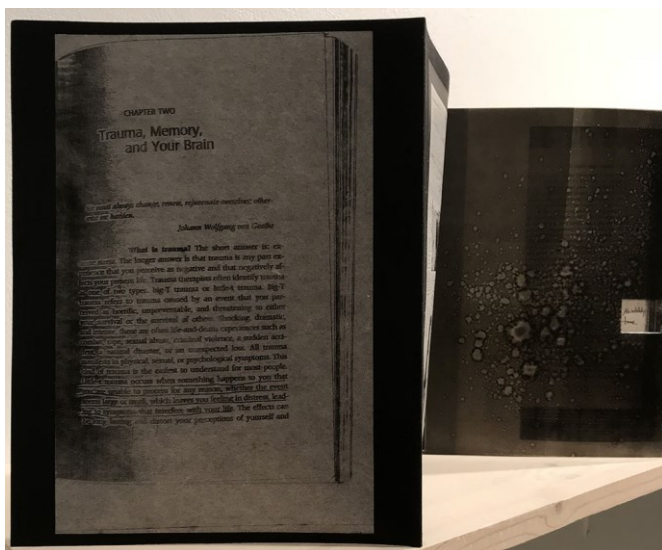
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Pohlod\_001 **Letter Home**, 2017, Laser Engraved Woodblock, Laser Engraved Aluminum Plate  
Monotype, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 11" x 127.5"



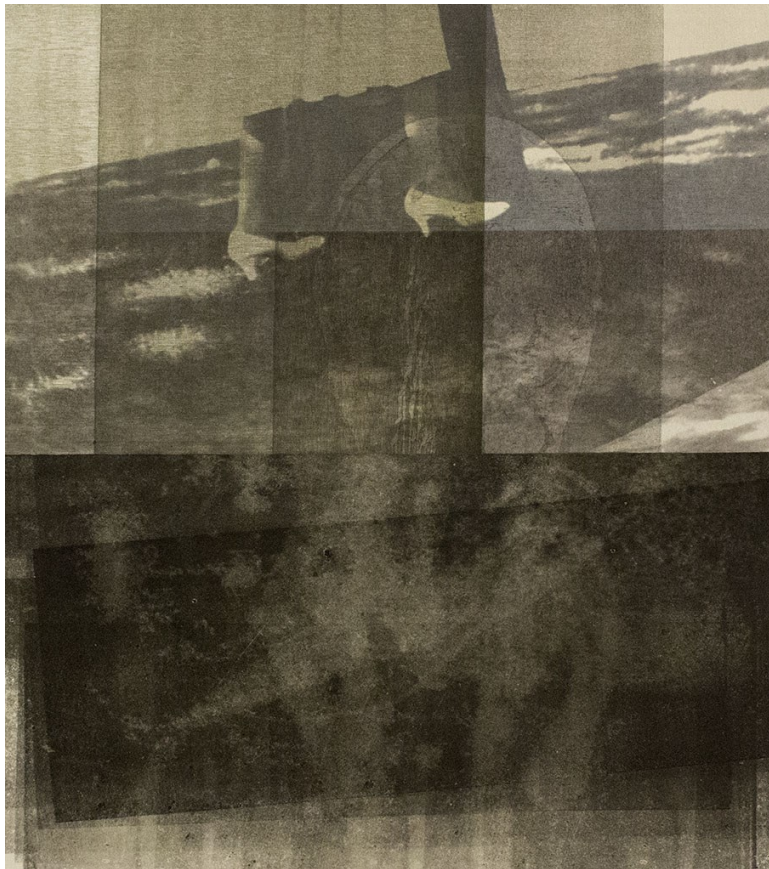
(Left ) Pohlod\_002 **Letter Home Cover**, 2017, Laser Engraved Woodblock, Laser Engraved Aluminum Plate, Monotype, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 11" x 127.5"

(Right) Pohlod\_003 **Letter Home Detail**, 2017, Laser Engraved Woodblock, Laser Engraved Aluminum Plate, Monotype, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 11" x 127.5"





Pohlod\_004 **Confrontation 1**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Chine Collé,  
Image size 30.75" x 16.25"



Pohlod\_005 **Confrontation 2**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Chine Collé,  
Image Size 22.5" x 25"



Pohlod\_006 **Confrontation 3**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Chine Collé,  
Image Size 19" x 27.75"



Pohlod\_007 **Resolution 1**, 2017, Monotype, Photolithography, Chine Collé,  
Image Size 24" x 19"





Pohlod\_008 **Confrontation 4**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Chine Collé,  
Image Size 25.75" x 14.75"



Pohlod\_009 **Confrontation 5**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Chine Collé,  
Image Size 26.25" x 12.25"





Pohlod\_010 **Recollection Installation**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 9' x 30' x 1-5"



Pohlod\_011 **Recollection Installation**, 2017, Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 9' x 30' x 1-5"



Pohlod\_012 **Recollection Installation Detail**, 2017 Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media,  
9' x 30' x 1-5"





(Left) Pohlod\_013 **Recollection Installation Detail**, 2017 Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 9' x 30' x 1-5"



(Right) Pohlod\_014 **Recollection Installation Detail**, 2017 Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 9' x 30' x 1-5"



(Left) Pohlod\_015 **Recollection Installation Detail**, 2017 Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 9' x 30' x 1-5"



(Right) Pohlod\_016 **Recollection Installation Detail**, 2017 Toner Transfer, Woodblock, Monotype, Inkjet, Chine Collé, Mixed Media, 9' x 30' x 1



Pohlod\_017 **Resolution: Unbound**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light

Pohlod\_018 **Resolution:** Unbound Detail, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light

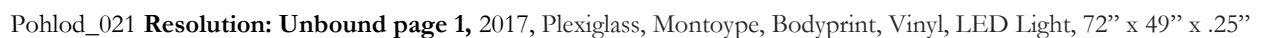




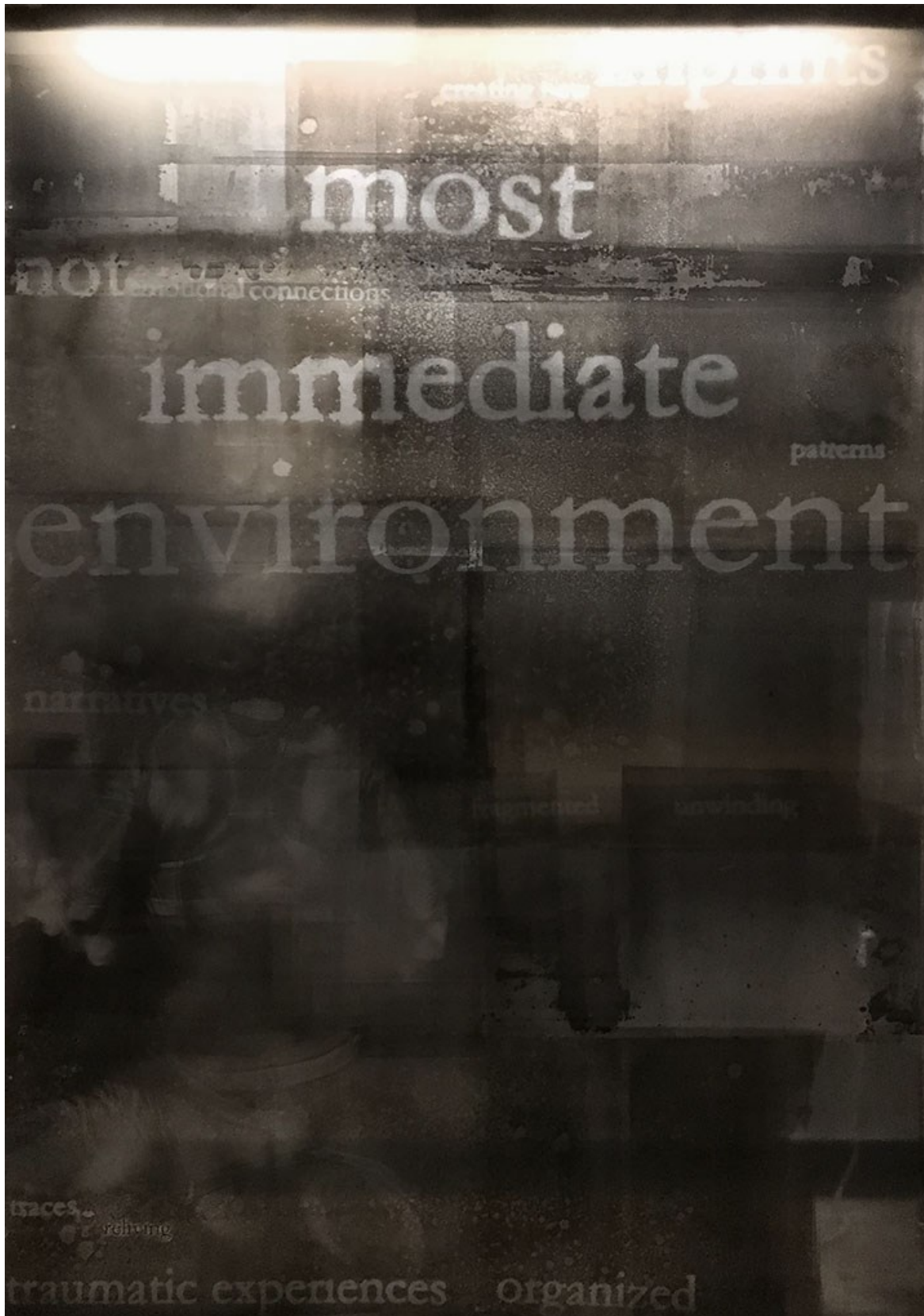
Pohlod\_019 **Resolution: Unbound Detail**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light



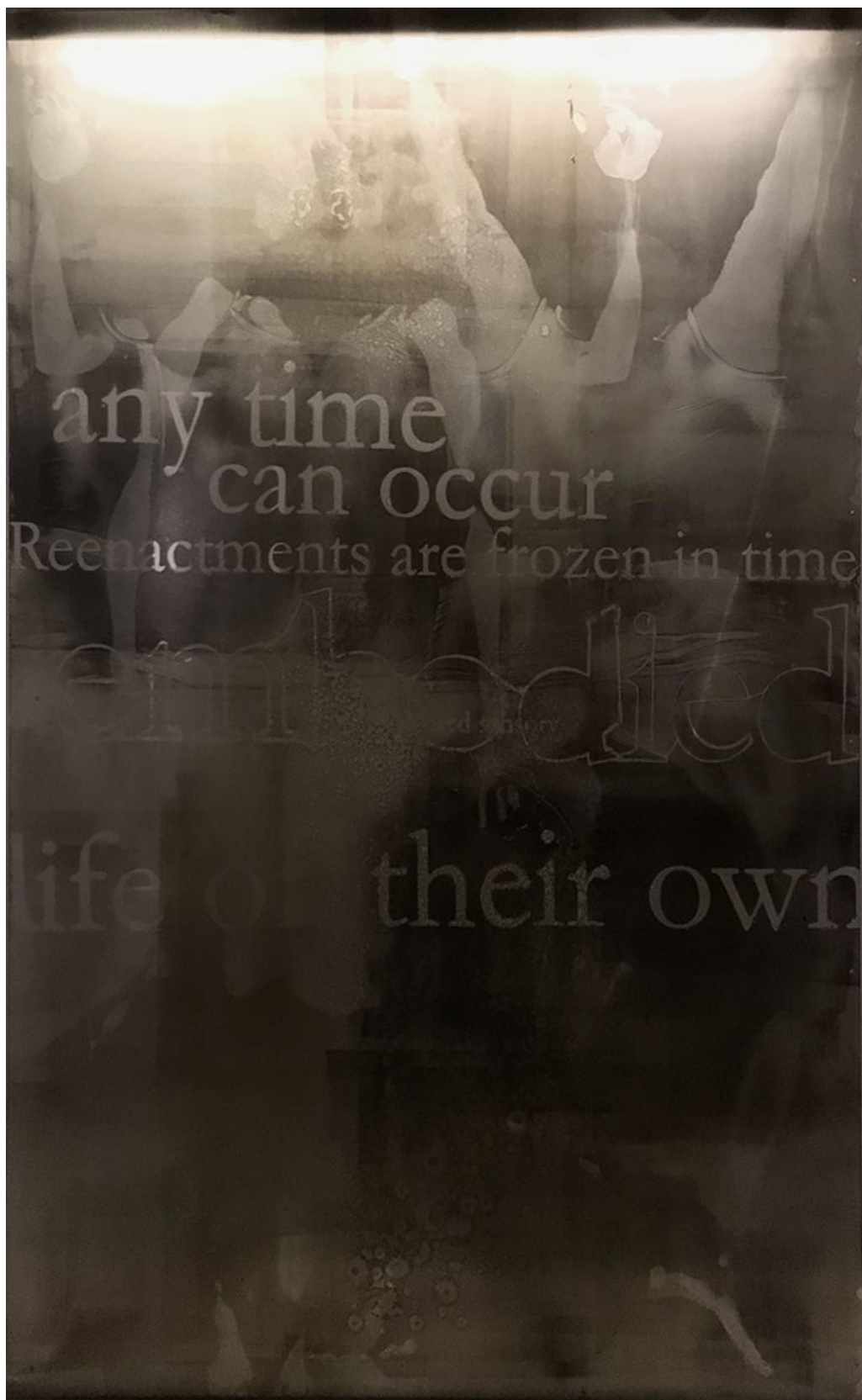
Pohlod\_020 **Resolution: Unbound Detail**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light





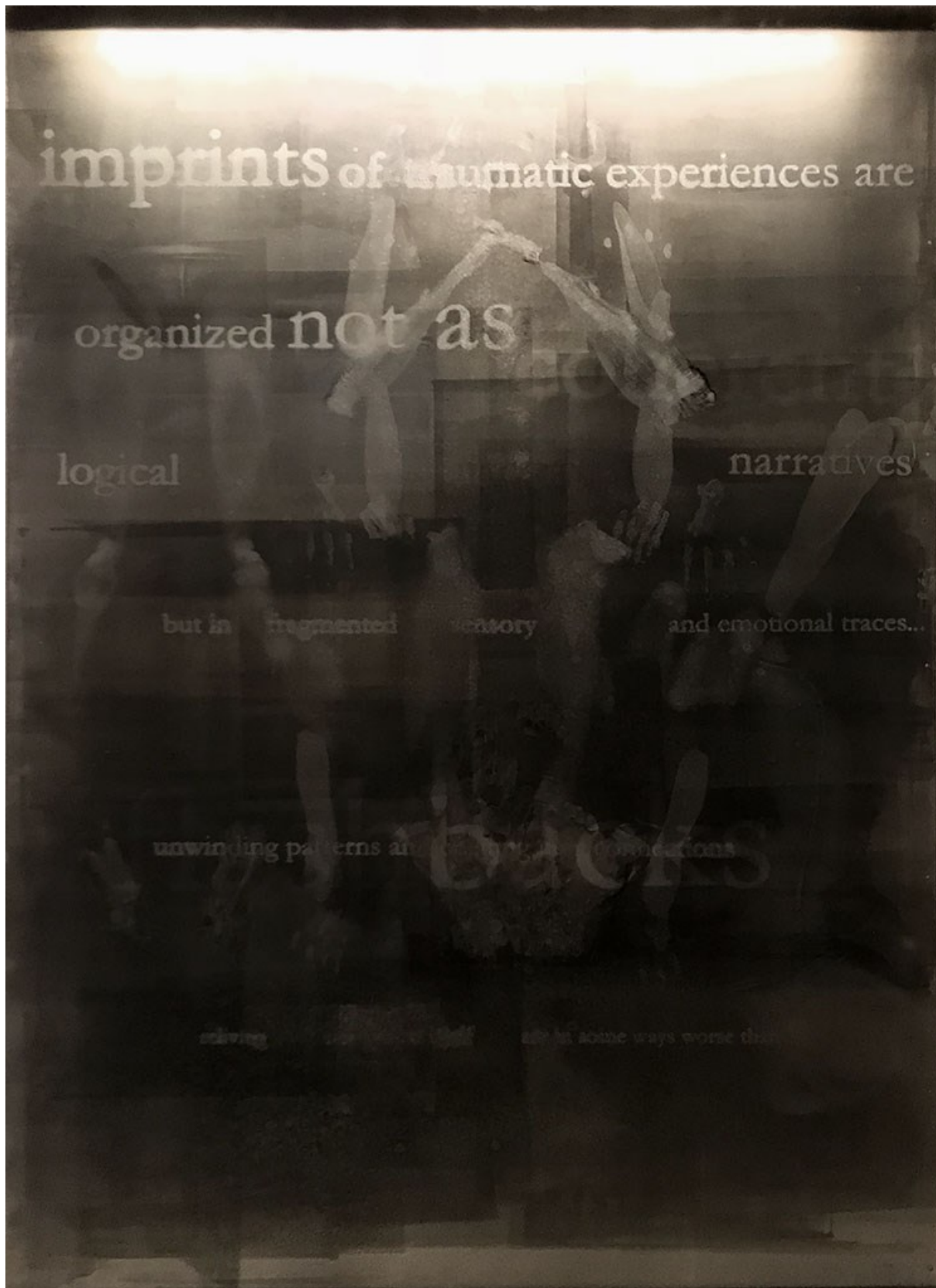


Pohlod\_022 **Resolution: Unbound page 2**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light, 72" x 49" x .25"

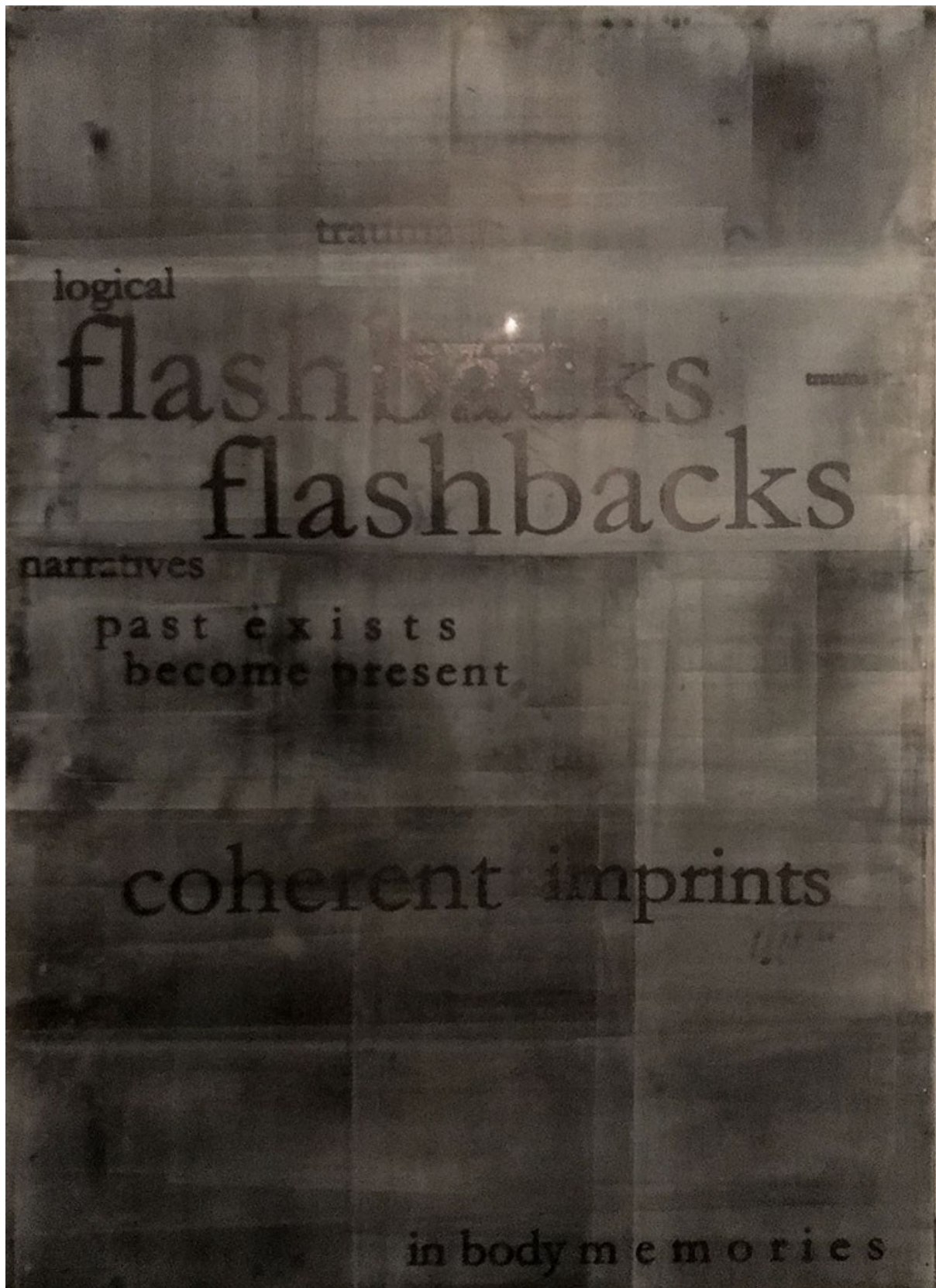


Pohlod\_023 **Resolution: Unbound page 3**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light, 72" x 48" x .25"

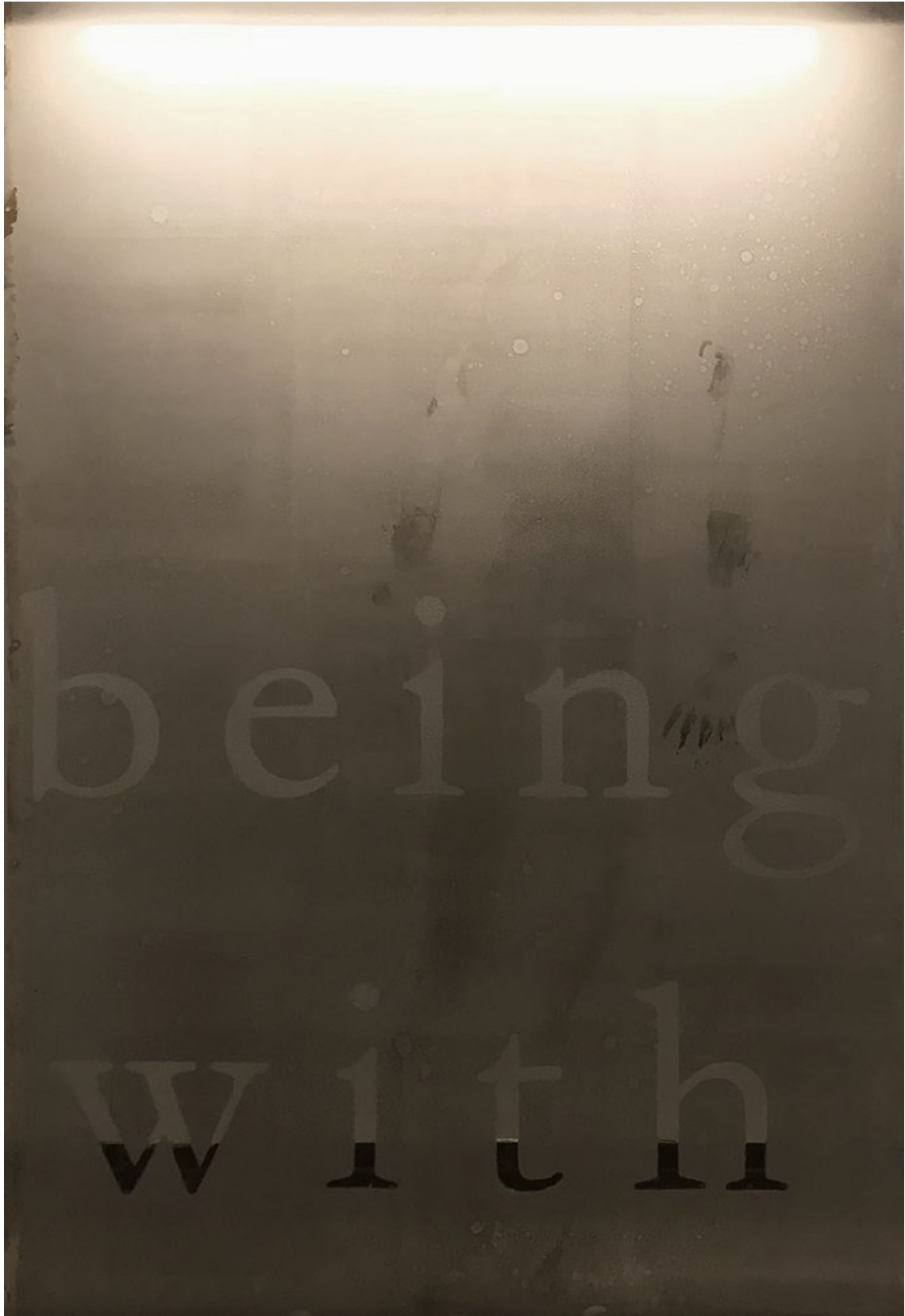




Pohlod\_024 Resolution: Unbound page 4, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light, 72" x 49" x .25"

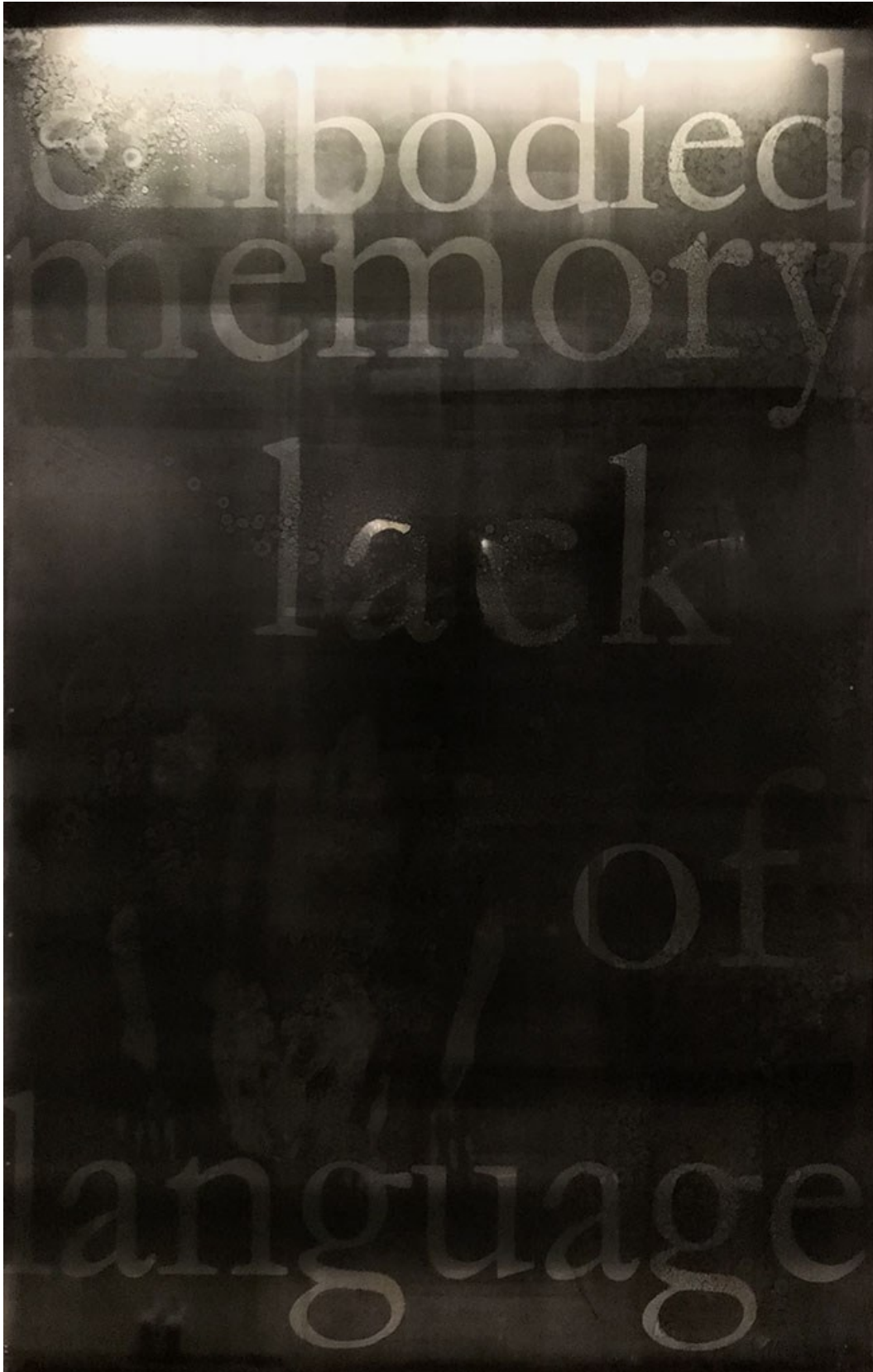


Pohlod\_025 Resolution: Unbound page 5, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, 72" x 49" x .25"



Pohlod\_026 **Resolution: Unbound page 6**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light, 72" x 49" x .25"





Pohlod\_027 **Resolution: Unbound page 7**, 2017, Plexiglass, Montotype, Bodyprint, Vinyl, LED Light, 72" x 49" x .25"



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