



Before It Fades

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Printmaking

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University of Alberta

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Before It Fades

Artist Statement

Our bodies are in a constant state of flux. Skin cells get recycled every few weeks, blood cells every few months, liver cells every two years. Over the course of a decade or so, every atom is replaced, and our bodies are made entirely new.¹ Despite this, most of us feel that we are essentially the same people we were as children. We *remember* being children. We remember extinguishing all five candles on our birthday cake. We remember running in fast circles on the front lawn midsummer. We remember picking wild raspberries—braving tall hills and thorny branches to enjoy their sweet taste.

Our bodies change, but the pattern of information we carry in our heads—the stories we tell about ourselves—remain. In this way, we are what we remember. This could be why so many of us work to establish a personal archive of photographs, films and mementos to commemorate the small, joyful moments in our lives and those of our loved ones. While these documents are generally limited to audiences with a personal connection to the material, they still fall within the parameters of the archive established by Michel Foucault in his seminal text *The Archeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language*. Foucault defined the archive as:

“First, the law of what can be said...but the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass ... they are grouped together in distinct figures... maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities...” (145).

In my art practice, I draw from a personal family archive to both question and reconstruct memories of childhood. Paying special attention to the small moments captured on Super 8 film in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I carefully select stills from the original film, produce a series of photopolymer prints, and then scan the prints to create new animated works that act as an echo of the original footage. In doing this, I recast the stories these archives tell through successive iterations of the same image—the details of which are maintained or blurred in accordance with my own specific regularities. The source material for each piece goes through several filters and the end result is dramatically different: a new narrative emerges. In *Homegoing* I take a different approach—I return to the site where the Super 8 films were discovered to document, with a video camera, the process of emptying a home. Mementos featured in the resulting video work (some of which also make an appearance in the original Super 8 footage) are displayed alongside—another kind of archival document.

My decision to focus on the home, and home movies in particular—films that may be deemed of little aesthetic or historical value—is deliberate. Whatever its aesthetic value, when a portion of this body of work was shown to one of its now adult subjects, his response was “I wish I were that happy again”—a sentiment that many others have expressed. While it is important to look forward there also is value in acknowledging these moments of joy in our personal and collective past. As Clay Routledge, author of *Nostalgia, A Psychological Resource* observes, “There is a big element of nostalgia that isn’t about us retreating to the past—it’s about pulling the past forward to the present and using it to mobilize us, to energize us and take on new challenges and opportunities.”

¹ Østby, Hilde and Ylva Østby, *Adventures in Memory: The Science and Secrets of Remembering and Forgetting*, Greystone Books, 2018.

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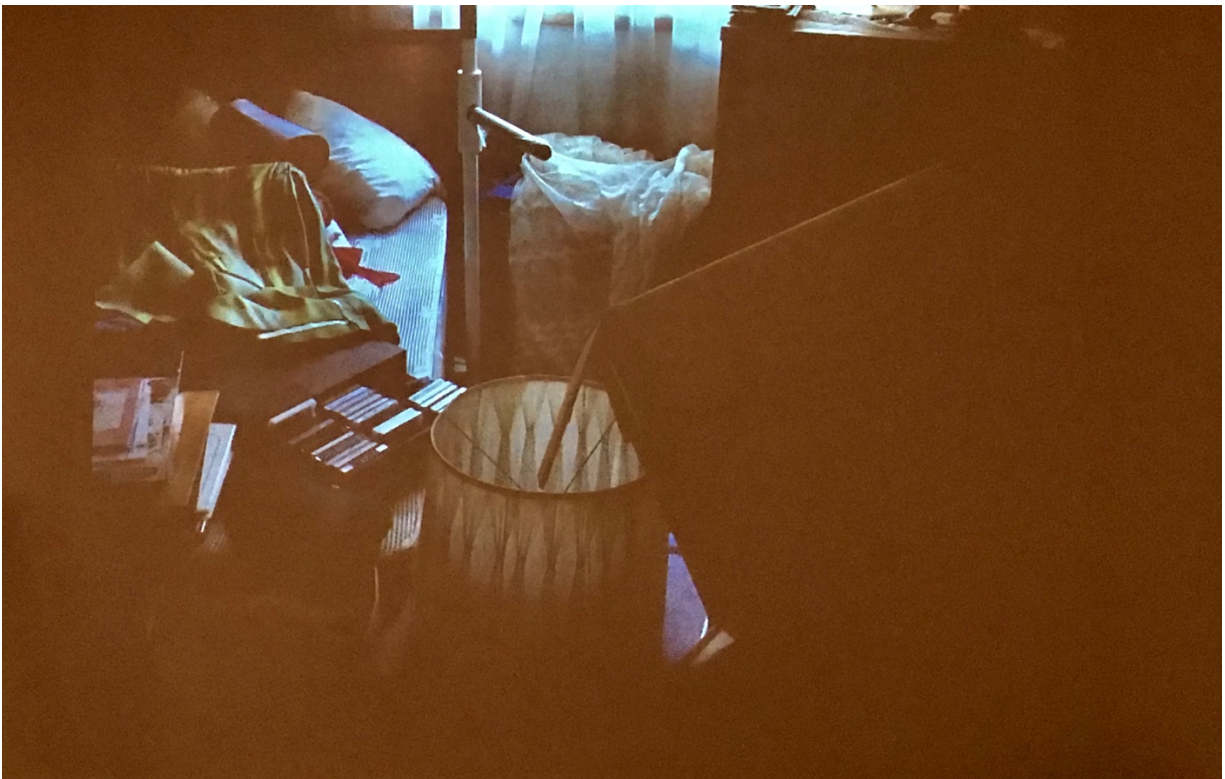
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McDowell_001, **Homegoing**, 2019, video installation with household objects, dimensions variable



McDowell_002, **Homegoing**, 2019, video still, 7 minutes, 19 second duration



McDowell_003, **Go Play Outside! I**, 2018, photopolymer print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5"



McDowell_004, **Shark V**, 2017, photopolymer & relief print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5''



McDowell_005, **Blind**, 2017, photopolymer print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5''



McDowell_006, **Go Play Outside! III**, 2018, photopolymer print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5''



McDowell_007, **Berry Picking III**, 2018, photopolymer & digital print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5''



McDowell_008, *Basket of Joy*, 2016, photopolymer print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5"



McDowell_009, **Five Candles V**, 2017, photopolymer & relief print, chine-collé, 19 x 29.25''



McDowell_010, **Song Book**, 2018, photopolymer print, chine-collé, 21.25 x 32.5''



McDowell_011, **Views**, 2018, photopolymer print, chine-collé, 6' x 2', 8''



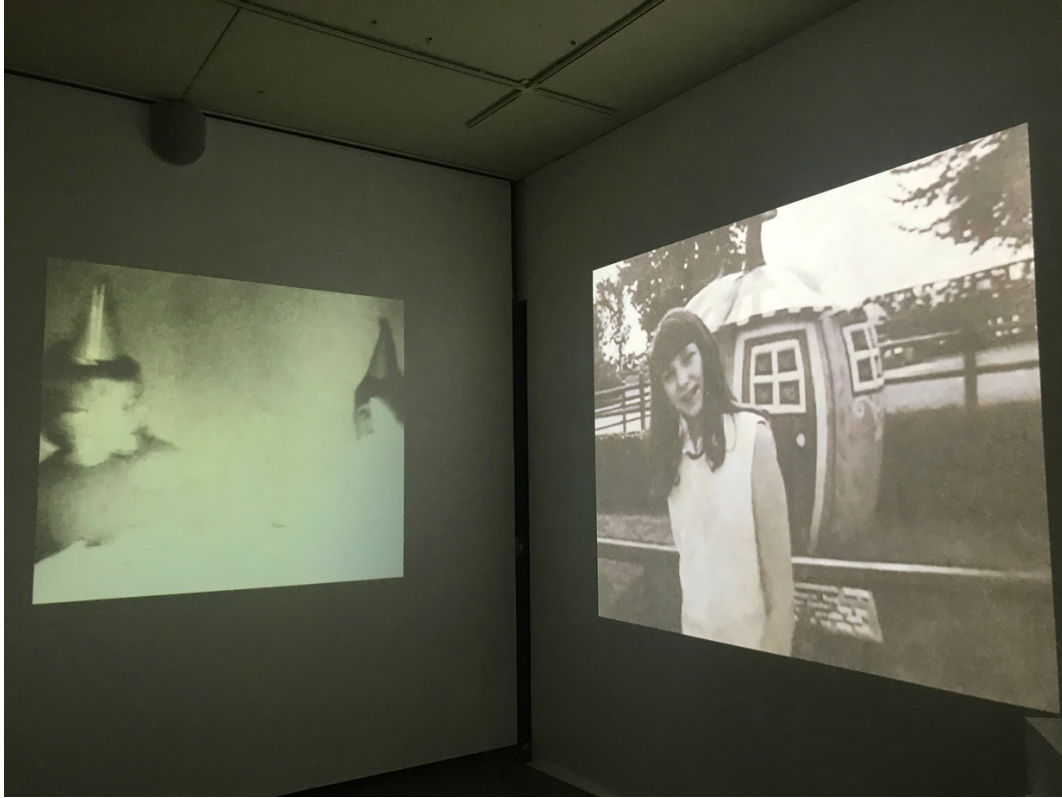
McDowell_012, **Views II**, 2018, photopolymer & relief print, chine-collé, 6' x 2', 8''



McDowell_013 Installation View (top floor, FAB Gallery)



McDowell_014 Homecoming Video Installation Projection Room (top floor, FAB Gallery)



McDowell_015 **Homecoming** 2016-2019, video installation with three projections, dimensions variable



McDowell_016 **Homecoming** 2016-2019, video installation with three projections, dimensions variable

Acknowledgements

Marilène Oliver, I cannot thank you enough for your supervision and mentorship. Your curiosity and unwavering commitment to creative research is inspiring. That, and your challenging, intelligent, and always compassionate feedback has had a profound impact on my art. I will carry it with me always.

Sean Caulfield, I am equally grateful to you. Thank you for being my supervisor. Thank you for the good conversations, insightful questions, and A+ book, music video, and film recommendations that have shaped my approach to art making. The thoughtful and sensitive mentorship you provide is valuable beyond measure.

Thank you to our printmaking technicians Steven Dixon and Mark Signer for being so generous with their time and expertise, and for guiding me through the technical intricacies of printmaking. I appreciate it so much.

Thank you, Lydia Hunter, for looking out for me, and Lianne McTavish for going above and beyond. Thank you, Steven Harris, for being a very important teacher and thesis committee member. Thank you, Liz Czach, for being on my thesis committee and providing such valuable insight and expertise.

Thank you to everyone on the FAB install crew: Julie-Ann Mercer, Joshua Wade, Xi Jin, Jingyu Zhang, and Luke Johnson. I am so glad each of you were on my team. Special thanks to Sue Colberg for your careful attention to detail and the beautiful design work you provided for my exhibition.

Thank you, Blair Brennan, for showing me how it's done. For being so kind to me from the very beginning, for making me feel welcome, and teaching me how to install art that is not my own.

Mitch Mitchell, I am fortunate to have had you as an instructor. There is no way I would be in Edmonton, making the sort of work that I am making, if I had not taken your photo-printmaking class as an undergraduate student at Concordia. Thank you for pushing me to think outside the box and take risks in the studio.

Marnie Blair, in my short time at Red Deer College you inspired me so much. Thank you for agreeing to have coffee with me all those years later and encouraging me to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking. Otherwise, I wouldn't have done it.

I am thankful for the generous financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the University of Alberta, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

I am especially grateful to the friends I have made in Edmonton. I have learned so much from all of you, and you inspire me on a regular basis. Probably more than you know.

Finally, thank you to my family, who is at the heart of everything. Thank you for the consistent love and support you provide. I am so lucky to have you.