

BELONGINGS

by

Sammi McLean

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The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Florida Atlantic University

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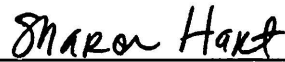
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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Professor Sharon Hart, Department of Visual Arts and Art History, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

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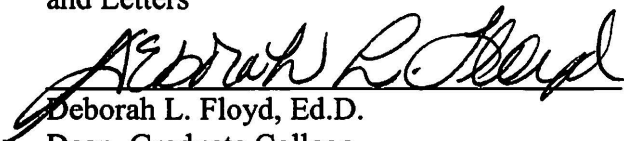
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ABSTRACT

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Belongings hybridizes photography, sculpture, and printmaking through new laser technology. The exhibited work communicates a lingering sense of homesickness and maps a path through the objects discovered in my father's wallet shortly after his passing.

BELONGINGS

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INTRODUCTION

“It is the distance between us and the object of desire that fills the space between with the
blue of longing”

- Rebecca Solnit

Through my work, I connect with and process my experiences of loss. Starting from a location of nostalgia, I seek out a particular sense of longing that feels impossible to satiate, bringing that which feels absent to the surface through the act of making. In some ways, my work functions as the only physical tie I have to significant people, places, or things that have gone. While the subject matter has transformed over time, the need to expose that yearning and resurrect what’s been lost remains.

It is through my father’s passing and the resulting work *Belongings* that my loss manifests itself at it’s most vulnerable, attempting to salvage our relationship through preserving the ephemeral objects we both carried in our wallets at the time of his death. This body of work is an experimental approach to printmaking, exploring laser cutting technology, and treating an etched plate as a reproducible, sculptural object. Through highlighting digital technology, *Belongings* exemplifies the interdisciplinary shift in contemporary printmaking.

This work explores my own grief as I attempt to process, organize and make connections with my father through the artifacts we each handled daily. I treat receipts, returned letters and saved business cards like vessels, bearing the weight of the lived

experiences of my father in his final months. In choosing to include similar objects from my own wallet, I allow myself to unearth some common ground, creating a space for us to continue to talk in the face of physical absence.

EXPLORATION

“To spend my life in spitting distance of the love I have known, I must stay here in an
endless even tide”

-Joanna Newsom

In the beginning of my exploration on longing, my work was largely motivated by the intense homesickness I experienced after moving away from home for the first time. Though I could freely go back to my hometown, much of what felt familiar and comforting seemed to have passed in the night. Whether my home had truly changed or I had, I felt blindsided by the realization that my idea of home now existed more in a particular time than place.

In the wake of feeling I had lost my sense of place, I began investigating the possibilities of creating my own, new home through my artwork. This idea culminates in the piece, *Small World*, in which I built a miniature, strange, and beautiful landscape inside of a shoebox. [Fig 1] With this work, I wasn't concerned with recreating a place I considered home, but attempting to invent a brand new landscape in which I would ideally like to live. The landscape was meant to be ambiguous enough that it might feel familiar, yet strange enough that it could easily not exist at all. However, the landscape could only be viewed through a small opening, or peephole. This peephole is an important motif used continuously in my work as a way of visually addressing longing through its physical barrier. Though the peephole reveals a small world to the viewer, it

does not allow them full visual access, suspending them in a space, which imitates a kind of homesickness.



Figure 1. Sammi McLean, *Small World*, 2014

My work became steeped in a feeling best described as, *hiraeth*, a Welsh word meaning, *distance pain*. *Hiraeth* refers to “a near-umbilical attachment to a place, not just free-floating nostalgia or a droopy hound like wistfulness or the longing we associate with romantic love. No, this is a word about the pain of loving *a place*”¹. Including peepholes in my work is a way of visually symbolizing *hiraeth* and the pain of distance.

As I researched artists working within the subject of homesickness, contemporary sculptor, Doh Ho Suh’s *Seoul Home/L.A. Home* installation resonated with me. In

¹ Mann, Sally. *Hold Still: a memoir with photographs*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2016, 175.

reaction to the displacement he felt after moving from Korea to the United States, Suh created life size replicas of homes he had lived in sewn out of silk, suspending them in large rooms to hover like translucent ghosts. [Fig 2] Not only could Suh continue to spend time with a faraway home through making this work, but he could also create a home, which could be folded up and carried with him, much like a snail. I felt a pull towards this series not only because it grapples with homesickness, but also because this work seemed to provide a sense of solution to ‘distance pain’.



Figure 2. Do Ho Suh, *Seoul Home/Seoul Home/Kanazawa Home*, 2012

Through my research, I began to realize that what ties us to the things we long for is most often the memories we won't let go of. "Neuroscientists have identified memory as central to our experience of identity and the mechanism by which our bodies encode

trauma”². This investigation in memory begged me to revisit a film I have long loved, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, directed by Michel Gondry and written by Charlie Kaufman. The film is about a couple, Joel and Clementine, who decide to have the memories of each other erased in the wake of a painful break-up. The fictional agency, Lacuna Inc., asks their clients to bring in every item they own that feels tied to the memory of the person they wish to erase. The protagonist, Joel, brings in large garbage bags filled with seemingly random objects that make him think of Clementine. Through these objects, they are able to create a map of Joel’s mind in which the memories reside. In a strange and beautiful twist of fate, the two characters experience a curious yet unmistakable pull towards each other in the aftermath of the procedure and are reunited again, as if for the first time.³

What struck me about the film was that the motivations for erasing someone were sparked by the pain of loss, illustrating the beauty and burden of memory. In this way, the agency’s name, “Lacuna”, is perfect in addressing that particular kind of gap or emptiness one feels in the absence of a loved one. Most of my work can be situated within that emotionally heightened space, making connections in an attempt to either forge a path to a piece that is missing, or create some semblance of intimacy again through working with familial objects and imagery.

This concept surfaced in a significant way through a photo series I created entitled, *Souvenirs*, which focused on preserving memories through objects and personal items we choose to hold on to and cherish as keepsakes. “The souvenir speaks to a

² Popova, Maria. "Hold Still: Sally Mann on the Treachery of Memory, the Dark Side of Photography, and the Elusive Locus of the Self." Brain Pickings. December 05, 2016. Accessed April 21, 2017. <https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/11/29/hold-still-sally-mann-memory/>.

³ *Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind*. Directed by Michel Gondry. 2004.

context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia”⁴. I started the project by intuitively arranging and composing abstract environments out of leftover scraps found in my studio. [Fig 3.1 and 3.2] Like a souvenir, each item I used bore some relationship to a previous work I’d made. Working this way reminded me of a line from a David Berman poem in which he describes a woman “wearing a necklace strung with diary keys”⁵. Though seemingly ordinary objects, I felt that every scrap I was working with held the power to unlock a personal history, begging to be reunited with its place of origin. Through the act of lovingly and thoughtfully piling these things together despite their varied histories, I felt I was able to build an environment which felt suspended in a liminal space, engaging time and place as a braided narrative.

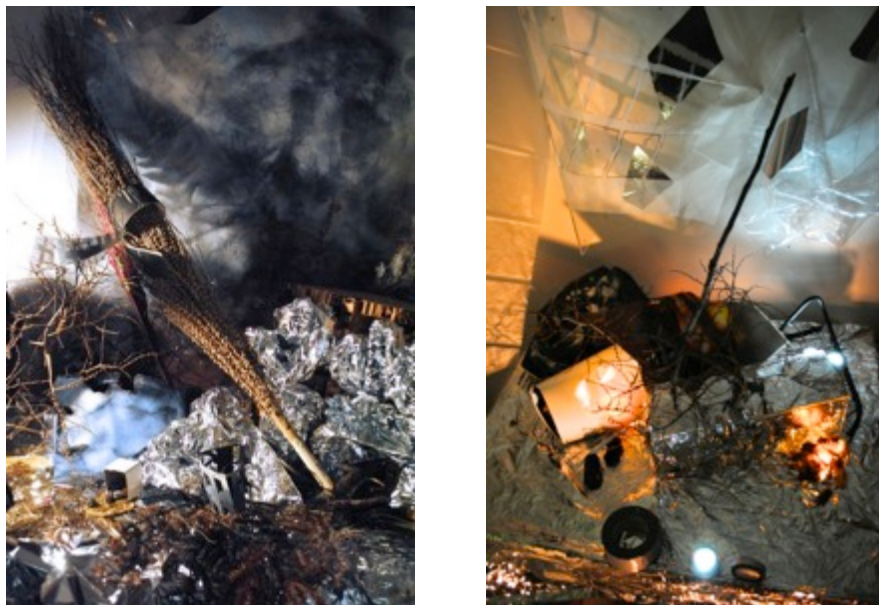


Figure 3.1 and 3.2 Sammi McLean, *Souvenirs*, 2016

⁴ Stewart, Susan. *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, 135.

⁵ Berman, David. *Actual air: poems*. New York: Open City Books, 1999, 43.

Though *Souvenirs* was important in terms of exploring ideas about memory and preservation in relation to longing, it fell short in being able to articulate what exactly I was longing for. I felt distinctly as though I was attempting to preserve something that had not yet happened, which was perplexing. This body of work became increasingly enigmatic and abstract as a result.

It is through my father's passing and the work *Belongings*, that I revisit my interest in memory and object hood, pouring through the items left behind in my father's wallet. As my father and I had a very complicated relationship and had not been close for most of my adult life, the simple act of exploring his personal belongings, allowed me invaluable insight into his life. As he lived in a Veteran's hospital for the last couple years, being treated for his long battle with Parkinson's disease and the lingering effects of heavy substance abuse, I found that most of the objects he carried with him were imprinted with residue that narrated his daily physical and mental struggles. For example, a recurring image in *Belongings* is a gridded sheet of paper I found folded up, which has the alphabet and numbers printed largely on it. I discovered he used this to communicate in times when his disease rendered him in a non-verbal, paralyzed state. [Fig 4.1]

I uncovered multiple sheets of notebook paper with his handwriting, most of which is completely illegible, reading more like manic scratching or drawing than text. [Fig 4.2 and 4.3] These papers were found folded up next to numerous pawnshop business cards, and returned letters with misremembered addresses. It appeared each letter had been carefully dictated to nurses willing to transcribe for him. Reading my father's thoughts, feelings and aspirations in the feminine script of a stranger's handwriting began to paint a painfully realistic portrait of his final years.

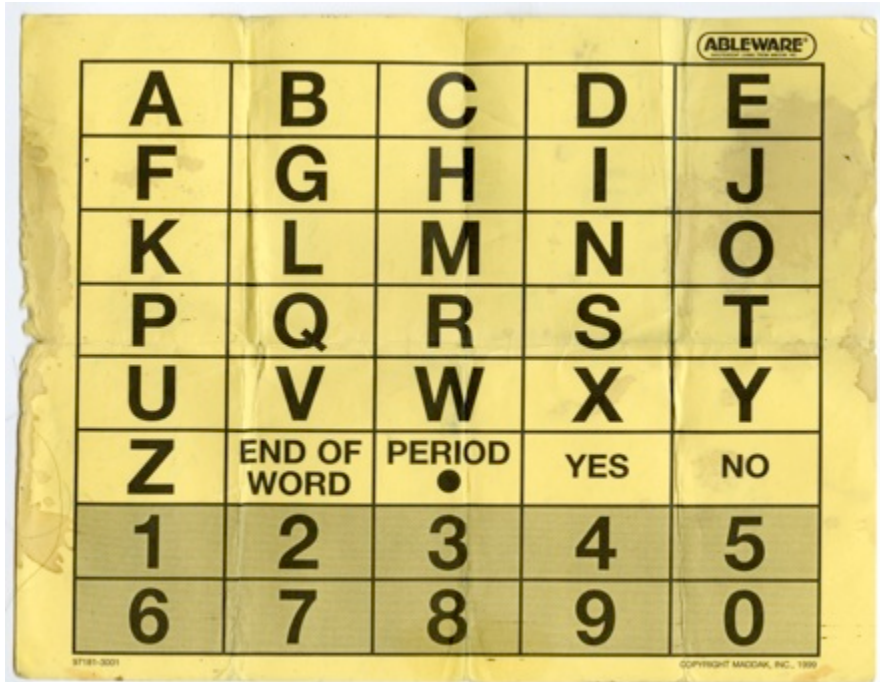


Figure 4.1. Scanned image of gridded sheet of paper found in wallet

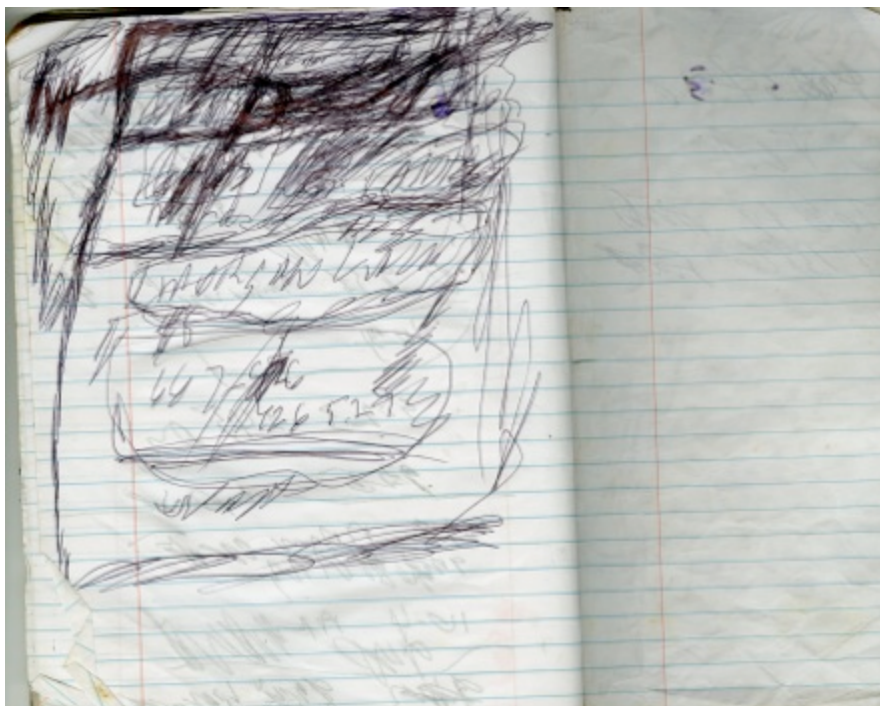


Figure 4.2. Scanned image of notebook papers with handwriting found in wallet

wallet, which echoed back to my father's, was powerful and symbolic. I was inventing my own unique system of communication between us, connecting enough dots here and there through our similarities and even distinct differences, that I could build a bridge between us. As if those returned letters had always been intended to find me, I felt strongly as though these objects were the clues I needed to communicate with my father again, thus becoming the inspiration for *Belongings*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

“Is there some design

In these deep random raindrops

Drying in the dust?”

- Richard Wright

While I identify strongly as a printmaker, my practice breaks down traditional printmaking processes. Whether working with photography, printmaking, or sculpture, my studio practice has always been recursive and cyclical in nature, using layer, reduction, and transformation as an integral part of my process. I am endlessly interested in transforming my image, witnessing it shift into something new every time it's reworked. Often times as I begin a new work, I use some loose thread from the last project to propel me.

The process of *Belongings* ultimately begins after my father's passing as I was required to spend a significant amount of time with his personal effects, making careful decisions about what to hold on to and what to let go of. I found that the objects that held the most residual energy were the ephemeral objects of his wallet that he interacted with on a daily basis.

I first recorded these objects through high resolution photographic scans to preserve all the nuances and detail, feeling that every rip and stain functions like a clue, leading me closer to understanding a larger narrative. As a result, I chose to work heavily with digital technology in order to photo-realistically preserve all these narrative details

and imperfections. “Photographs are [...] designated as indexical signs, images produced as a consequence of being directly affected by the objects to which they refer. It is as if those objects reached out and impressed themselves on the surface of the photograph, leaving their visual imprint, as faithful to the contour of the original object as a death mask is to the deceased”⁶.

Once scanned, the images were etched into acrylic Plexiglas with a laser cutter. The etched acrylic was then cut into various shapes, further distorting the imagery through its fragmentation in order to address the faulty nature of remembering. In terms of scale, I felt it was important to keep each individual piece the size of something that could be easily held in your hands. The pieces were then treated as intaglio plates, individually inked with cyan etching ink and wiped by hand. The pieces were welded together in an intuitive, collage-like manner using an acrylic welder, and displayed on a wall in clustering formations. [Plate 2.1, 2.2, and 4.1] The piece’s overall shape relays the feeling that these objects are gathering or congregating together, while simultaneously reading as a broken system. The choice to fragment the imagery into such sharp, shard-like pieces, visually echoes the pain of loss while suggesting that the individual parts have been ripped from a larger whole.

Within my process, I work with etching and photography as a way to engage with the nature of memory. Photography has always been synonymous with remembrance as it allows you to isolate a moment and preserve it. However, “photographs supplant and corrupt the past, all the while creating their own memories”⁷. In *Hold Still: A Memoir with Photographs*, Sally Mann generates a memoir out of a selection of photographs of

⁶ Batchen, Geoffrey. *Forget me not: photography & remembrance*. New York: Princeton Architectural, 2006, 31.

⁷ Mann, *Hold Still*, xiii.

her life. She describes her process, writing, “As I held my childhood pictures in my hands, in the tenderness of my ‘remembering,’ I also knew that with each photograph I was forgetting”⁸.

Etching also has a rich tradition in remembrance as it functioned as an early form of war reporting before the invention of photography. The most notable example being Francisco Goya’s series of 82 prints, *The Disasters of War*, depicting the horrors of the Peninsular War⁹. Likewise, Käthe Kollwitz used printmaking and the etching process to investigate the painful memories and suffering associated with loss. Kollwitz often illustrated images of women grieving dead children in the wake of WWI Germany, which feel particularly poignant in the scope of this project. [Fig. 5]



Figure 5. Käthe Kollwitz, *Woman with Dead Child*, 1903

I choose to explore my own grief through the same processes. The act of etching these objects into a material helps me to feel as if I have recorded them in a permanent

⁸ Mann, *Hold Still*, xiii.

⁹ Goya, Francisco. *The Disasters of War*. London: Phaidon, 1937.

way, transforming an ephemeral, degrading piece of paper into something built to last. Etching is also a process that directly relates to the act of scratching or mark making, which is how much of the content written on the objects found in the wallet were originally created. Meanwhile, the act of wiping each plate individually allows me to spend intimate time with every artifact, moving my hands over the same marks my father made with his own.

Through this process, I am able to multiply objects in order to further preserve them. For example, a losing monopoly lottery ticket I found in my wallet that was purchased on the day I last saw my father is multiplied several times throughout the work, showing its importance through the number of times it emerges. While I am not making an edition in the traditional sense of creating a series of identical prints from one plate, I am making an edition of varied multiples from an original source (i.e. the found object).

Within *Belongings*, the choice to work with a translucent acrylic material was made for its two equally important contributions to the work. First, the transparency of the material allows me to play with layering. A translucent material reveals what is layered underneath, but does not allow you access through it, engaging my viewer in a liminal, or “in between” state. Situating my viewer within a space, which feels transitional in some way, is important in order to engage with the concept of longing and loss. Second, the translucency of the material allows lights to project distorted shadows of the etched imagery onto the wall around it. In this way, light and shadow are used as a material within the work. The cast shadow of the imagery is distorted and blurred depending on the position of the lights and viewer. [Plate 7.1 and 7.2]

Another way that I am able to engage the viewer in a state of longing through this work is by using the peephole motif. The peephole creates a sense of wonderful discovery within the onlooker for which I was experiencing as I found these objects, but it also functions like an emotional barrier, serving as a harsh reminder that what we are looking at always remains just out of reach. Within the center of the wall, a peephole reveals a hidden space of moving cast shadows and audio recordings taken from final visits with my father. The need to include sound within *Belongings* is akin to the need to constantly re-play old voicemails left by a loved one after they've gone. The inclusion of sound also engages the viewer further, as it is only audible to the onlooker once you are standing directly in front of the peephole. Once looking into the wall, you can faintly hear the ambient sounds of scratching, lifted from audio taken while my father and I played scratch off together on his hospital bedside table.

When inking the acrylic pieces, I chose to work with a limited pallet, focusing on two slightly different shades of cyan blue ink. A cool cyan blue ink is used for objects referencing my father, and a warm cyan blue is used for objects referencing myself. Cyan blue is significant for its relationship to the photographic process, cyanotype. "This world was realized in the cyanotypes, or blue photographs, of the nineteenth century. Where darkness and light are blue and white, where bridges and people and apples are blue as lakes, as though everything were seen through the melancholy atmosphere that were cyanide"¹⁰. English botanist and photographer, Anna Atkins' is often considered the first person to publish a book with photographic images. In her self-published book, *Cyanotypes of British Algae*, she beautifully records different kinds of algae through the

¹⁰ Solnit, Rebecca. *Field Guide to Getting Lost*. S.l.: Canongate Canons, 2017, 34.

cyanotype process. Atkins' works relationship to cataloguing and imprinting ephemera directly relates to my own process. Similarities in color and composition emerge as we compare a cyanotype of Atkins' to an intaglio print I made of a folded up piece of construction paper found in my wallet. [Fig 6 and Fig 7]



Figure 6. Ana Atkins, *Cyanotypes of British Algae*, 1843 (left)

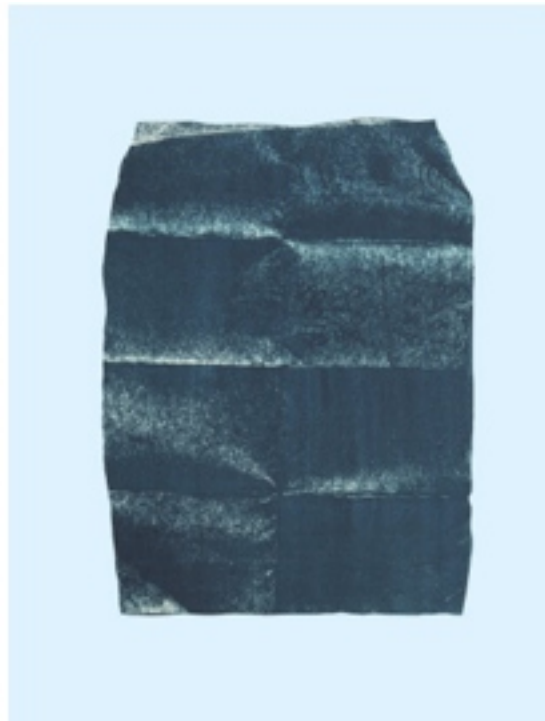


Figure 7. Sammi McLean, *Belongings: Blueprints (Detail)*, 2017, (right)

Through the writings of Rebecca Solnit, the color blue has often been equated with that which is just out of reach or in the distance. Solnit writes, “For many years, I have been moved by the blue at the far edge of what can be seen, that color of horizons, of remote mountain ranges, of anything far away. The color of that distance is [...] the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not. And the color of where you

can never go”¹¹. In this way, blue acts as a powerful signifier for yearning in the work, exploring the finality of death and insatiable desire for reunion.

The color blue was a prominent physical characteristic of my father. After my father’s death, Willie Nelson’s *Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain*, became a song I turned to in times of grief as I felt called to remember the characteristic blue eyes so many people kept reminiscing to me about. My father would always play Willie on long road trips growing up. In the midst of teenage angst I strongly resisted sharing any musical tastes with him, but as I began to get older my love of Nelson grew and listening made me feel closer to my father when we were separated by emotional and physical distance.

Additionally, this particular blue bears a strong resemblance to blueprints, which are technical drawings, made to navigate an architectural or engineered space. The act of making *Belongings* certainly felt as if I was piecing together a series of clues, mapping my way through these items by zooming in and out of information recorded on the wallet’s objects. In this way, I use blue as a symbol for navigation within the work.

Intuition has always been integral to my process. While my work constantly grapples with understanding my personal experience and place in the world, I often rely on my gut to guide me. Working intuitively feels akin to the lost art of navigating from the stars in lieu of a roadmap. “The brain, to its credit, will often bow to some instinctive aesthetic wisdom [...] that’s not present or not so obvious in the improbable, disheveled sloppiness of what we’ve actually been through”¹². In this way, I feel a real resonance with artists who bring intuition and mapping into their art making process such as installation artists Sarah Sze and Claudia Osteen. Osteen described her sculptures as

¹¹ Solnit, *Field Guide*, 29.

¹² Popova, *Hold Still*.

pointing “to a never-ending process, a series of attempts to measure an infinite line, to chart the color of the sky, to capture the single point where a shift occurs in a limitless expanse”¹³. In *The Map As Art*, Katherine Harmon describes the potential of mapping in art as maps “can act as a shorthand for ready metaphors: seeking location and experiencing dislocation, bringing order to chaos, exploring ratios of scale, charting new terrains. [...] (Maps) call out differences between collective knowledge and individual experience”¹⁴. I believe it is through a self-made system that understanding, even of that which is as limitless as death, is possible.

¹³ About Claudia O'Steen. Accessed April 21, 2017. <http://www.claudiaosteen.com/About-Claudia-O-Steen>.

¹⁴ Harmon, Katharine A. *The Map as Art: contemporary artists explore cartography*. New York, NY: Princeton architectural press, 2010, 10.

CONTEXT

“the echo of an echo”

- R. W. Perry

While *Belongings* does engage with photography and sculpture, I am choosing to frame this work within the context of Printmaking. The prominent use of laser cutting technology in *Belongings*, situates it firmly in the Post-Digital Printmaking moment. The book, *Post-digital printmaking: CNC, traditional and hybrid techniques*, defines post-digital printmaking in its utilization of CNC machine tools and related technologies.¹⁵ While much of the book discusses new technology’s role in hybridizing plate-building, it does not discuss the emerging potentiality of the plate as a reproducible sculptural object. Printmaking has always engaged in conversation about the image as a multiple. This narrative is not a new one to printmaking, which began as a means to create and improve reproducible images with the ancient Chinese invention of the woodcut. “This hardly seems like a pivotal technological advance to the post-digital mind, yet the simple possibility of a graphical imprint changed everything”.¹⁶ However, Post-Digital printmaking allows for the matrix itself to be multiplied. *Belongings* is unique in treating a print matrix as a multiple and its inclusion of the built plate in the final work.

¹⁵ Catanese, Paul, and Angela Geary. *Post-digital printmaking: CNC, traditional and hybrid techniques*. London: A. & C. Black, 2012.

¹⁶ Catanese, Paul, and Angela Geary. *Post-digital printmaking*, 9.

As a printmaker, my practice aligns with those who reveal their process as part of their work. Belkis Ayón is a printmaker specializing in collographs whose work and process I resonate with, as she was known to display her plates alongside her large-scale prints. Being able to witness the dimensional textures from which an image was pulled, like a sophisticated rubbing, is a truly exciting experience for me. Similarly, the sculptural work in *Belongings*, which would traditionally be viewed as the ‘plate’ is displayed alongside a series of prints. However, in this work, the plates have been multiplied while the prints were not created in editions. In this way, *Belongings* engages in a contemporary conversation about Printmaking and its post-digital potential.

BELONGINGS

“My broken heart belongs to you”

-Willie Nelson

Belongings is comprised of a wall-mounted sculptural piece and series of prints located in the Schmidt Center Gallery. The sculptural work is hung on a wall situated on a diagonal in the gallery, perpendicular to the wall with the displayed prints. This arrangement creates the feeling of a corner within the gallery. [Plate 1.2] The sculptural piece is 12 feet long, created by various welded together acrylic pieces. The left side of the work is a cool blue, indicating that all the imagery on the left is from my father’s wallet. The right side of the piece is a slightly warmer blue, indicating that all of the imagery on the right is taken from my own wallet. In the center of the work, we see our wallet’s objects collide and begin to come together. In this way, all the energy of the work lies in the center, where my father and I “meet”. [Plate 4.2]

During the making of this work, I truly felt I was engaging in this very rich, active and real conversation with my father. Though not communicating in a traditional sense, the connections I was making felt powerful. In this way, the middle of the sculptural piece where this “meeting” occurs, is where the kinetic energy of the piece lies. Within the opening of a peephole are moving acrylic pieces and cast shadows that shift inside a small interior space, illuminated by a rotating light source. The shadows are cast from hanging acrylic that has been etched with familial imagery. Gently blowing from an oscillating fan, the objects inside jerk and fly around the space, often entangling and

dancing with each other. As the projected shadows move around the space, they are continuously transforming through distortion and layer. [Plate 5.1 and 5.2]

On the perpendicular wall, an etched acrylic shelf holds intaglio prints, entitled *Blueprints*. [Plate 6.1 and 6.2] While the sculptural piece is a cacophony of fragmented shapes merging as one large piece, it's important to note that all those pieces were fragmented after the imagery was etched, and could in theory fit back together again like a puzzle.

The prints in this work serve as the key to navigate *Belongings* by. The prints allow for a quiet moment, calling attention to a selection of individual pieces. Each print was lifted from a plate, which is included within the sculptural work. The viewers can look for and potentially locate a plate within the sculptural piece that created one of the prints, like a reunion between parent and child. This idea of working with the prints as clues to navigate the sculpture by references the intuitive mapping process that went into the work's making, allowing the prints to function like a manual for the viewer. Even the prints themselves include my own writing on the surface, as I attempt to de-code and interpret the origins of each object and their relationship to my father. "The addition of text to photographs was a common strategy used by those who wished to enhance the memorial power of the image. The inscription of signatures, for example, was a potent way to make a photograph more than a record of appearance"¹⁷. The prints are displayed on a shelf as a way of further signifying the relationship of object hood to the imagery. It's as if all the broken up parts of *Belongings*, the fragmented pieces and prints, are like "a series of photographs taken on separate occasions [...] brought together to form a

¹⁷ Batchen, *Forget me not*, 41.

single coherent object” or collective perspective¹⁸. Even the title, *Belongings*, symbolizes both a collection of moveable possessions while the root ‘belong’, means ‘to be a member or part of’, referencing family.

In *Belongings*, I want to include the fallacy of preserving memory, showing the distortion of information over time. “Where time slowly reduces the stairs into ramps”¹⁹. As with the nature of remembering, a memory degrades slightly every time it is taken off the shelf, becoming less and less reliable as a source. For example, in one of the exhibited prints, I layer an etching of a zoomed in portion of a wrinkled receipt from the V.A. general store cataloguing the long list of candy bars by father bought on September 27, 2016, paid for with his bingo winnings. However, the layering of imagery, positioning, and cropping also allow the imagery to be interpreted as a tiny mountain range, referencing the poetry of Solnit’s distant horizons. [Plate 13]

This exemplifies how the objects in *Belongings* can be witnessed evolving throughout the work, often shifting into something else entirely. Whether it is abstract or recognizable as something as familiar as a landscape, I’m given the sense that I am breathing new life into the residual energy of these objects that first attracted me to them, conjuring up a resurrection of sorts. Like using “an erasure which allows what it obliterates to be read”²⁰.

As I find myself in the aftermath of making *Belongings*, I am still rich in loss. I ask myself, “where does the self actually go? All the accumulation of memory [...] all the arcane formulas, the passwords, the poultice recipes, the Latin names of trees, the location of the safe deposit key, the complex skills to repair and build and grow and

¹⁸ Batchen, *Forget me not*, 25.

¹⁹ Berman, *Actual Air*, 35.

²⁰ Batchen, *Forget me not*, 20.

harvest — when someone dies, where does it all go?”²¹. Spending time with the objects my dad left behind was my response to these questions. Though he no longer carries a physical presence, these objects do. It’s as if he sent me a collection of photographs and souvenirs to share the memories we weren’t able to experience together, but are now able to through this work.

²¹ Popova, *Hold Still*.

CONCLUSION

“We all have to go someday. Like a big line.”

-Michael C. McLean

Belongings is the gut-driven system I have created in order to process and understand not only the loss of my father, but all things final. In many ways, my work has always been about processing loss. Even when I was motivated by homesickness and yearning for a familiar place, I’ve always been situated within a space of missing. *Belongings* is different in that I am exploring the loss of a loved one. Specifically, a parent. Despite the nature of the relationship, a parent serves as a type of home, or point of origin for the child, forever tethering them together.

Through the act of making, I have been able to bring that which I long for to the surface for the first time instead of simply creating art which marinates in the feeling of loss. This is a significant stride in my work, made possible by my willingness to expose my loss and be truly vulnerable in my art for the first time. Creating *Belongings* allowed me a space to continue to work on my relationship with my father and the result feels truly regenerative, providing solution to painful distance.

Though I can’t be positive, I feel almost certain that my father’s last words to me must have been “See you later alligator”. Mainly because it’s how he ended almost every interaction he had with anyone. He even programmed it into a small talking computer he used to communicate. A nurse would enter the room to see if he wanted water and

through he often struggled to get out a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’, he almost always made the added effort to include that salutation. Like a goodbye that isn’t really a goodbye.

PLATES



Plate 1.1. *Belongings* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 1.2. *Belongings* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 1.3. *Belongings* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 2.1. *Belongings (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 2.2. *Belongings (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 2.3. *Belongings (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 3. *Belongings* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 4.1. *Belongings (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 4.2. *Belongings (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 5.1. *Belongings* Peephole (*Detail*) Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 5.2. *Belongings* Peephole Interior (*Detail*) Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 6.1. *Belongings: Blueprints* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 6.2. *Belongings: Blueprints* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 7.1. *Belongings: Blueprints (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017



Plate 7.2. *Belongings: Blueprints (Detail)* Installation Image, Schmidt Center Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, 2017

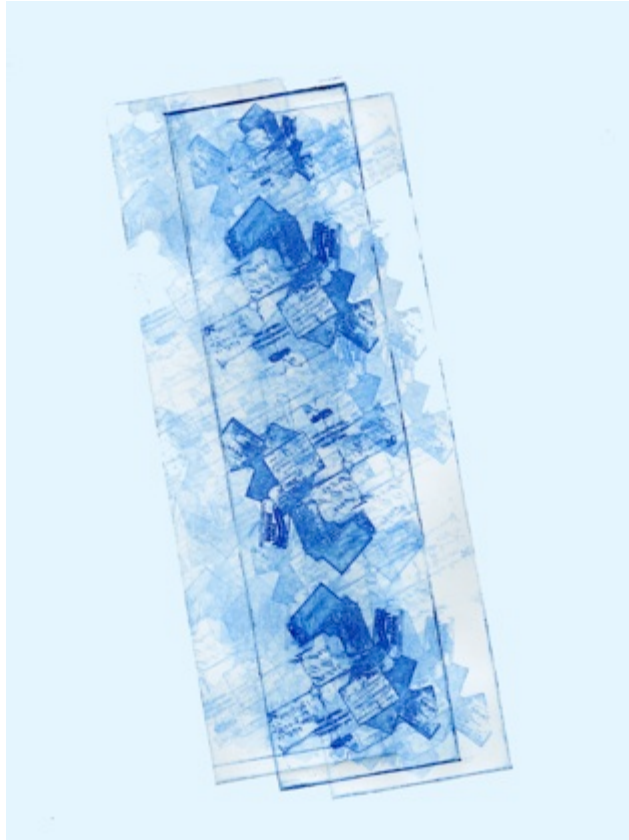


Plate 8. *Belongings: Blueprints (Ghost)*, 9 x 14" Laser Intaglio, 2017



Plate 9. *Belongings: Blueprints (What is Going On)*, 9 x 12" Laser Intaglio, 2017



Plate 10. *Belongings: Blueprints (2 Beds)*, 6 x 8" Laser Intaglio with chine colle, 2017

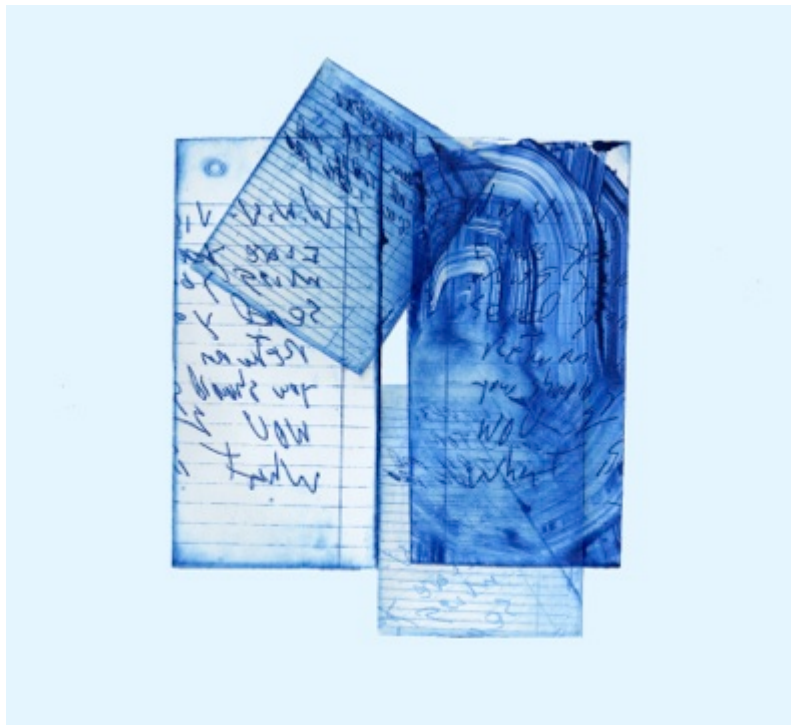


Plate 11. *Belongings: Blueprints (Missing)*, 12 x 12" Laser Intaglio, 2017

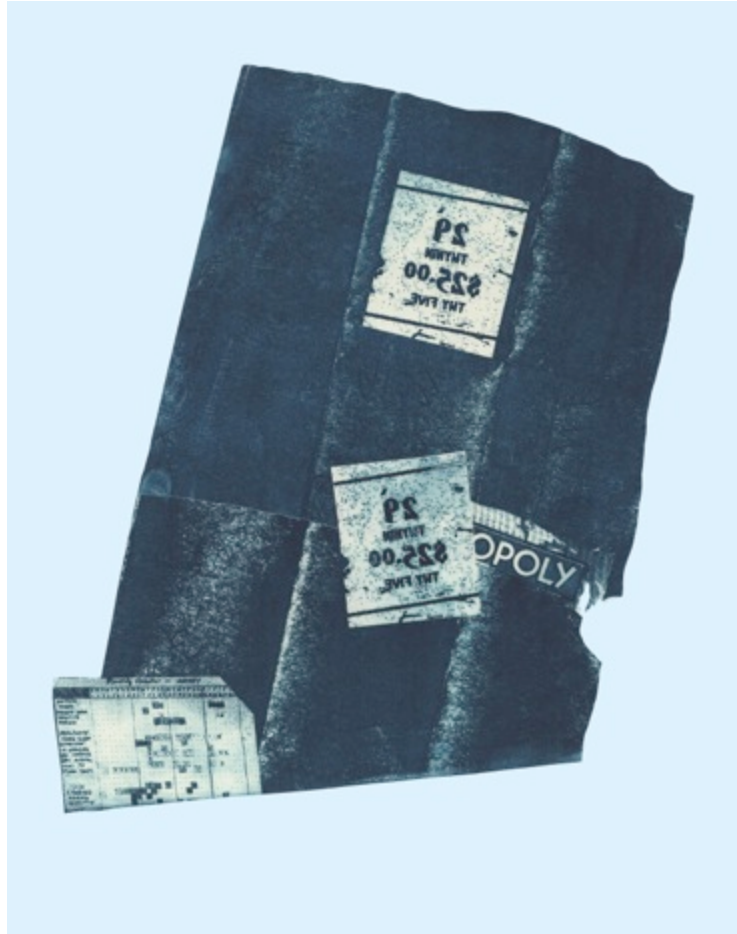


Plate 12. *Belongings: Blueprints (Scratch offs)*, 9 x 12" Laser Intaglio with chine colle, 2017



Plate 13. *Belongings: Blueprints (A Wrinkled Receipt / A Tiny Mountain Range)*, 6" x 12" Laser Intaglio, 2017

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