

SENTIMENT DEBRIS

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Sentiment Debris is an exploration of biographical objects and personal narrative. This research examines the ontology of sentimental value, what biographical and sentimental objects are and how an object can impact one's personal narrative. Through an audible-visual installation my intention was to separate the narrative from the object to further study object narratives and the ways in which one may or may not relate to sentimental objects. Furthermore, I have investigated how objects can become self-extensions, in turn contributing to a diversified and constructive understanding of narrative for artists, writers and the collective subjective. *Sentiment Debris* discusses the ways in which the past leaves an impression on the future and how sentimental or biographical objects acts as vessels through time and space; a preservation of nostalgia and an Ode to the value of narrative, thus, reinforcing a conjunctive concatenation, a story with no end.

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To
Peter John
Inkpen

My poet in
crime

In memory of all the wonderful people lost during these surreal times.

My heart goes out to all the families and friends who have had to say
goodbye to loved ones much too soon.

May their stories live on.

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Chapter 1: My Swarm is Narrative

The edges dull, and blur and mope into a cerebral shanty-town; it is not a break but more of a separation. A slow disconnect, a wake-up call that the two of us are not destiny but merely a lyric in a song that will go down in history, cover bands, tribute bands, books and merchandise made in China. We are on an island, a hive, a glacier bigger on the other side, there is no moat, no gate to draw up, there's a swarm, catching in my hair and tickling my ear, committed to my long worn history, bites my neck, pursuing me to not forget. Alcatraz was an attempt to banish the bad, only the subjects could swim. The past is in an alliance with the future, in the present there's a frantic obsession with the now, pay close attention, to the books being written, ideologies are a cookin', go clean out your collective closet, make a soup out of skeleton spoofs and sweep out whispers from under the rug, your sentiment is distracting you, your sentiment is devouring you, is your sentiment really you?

Personal narrative evolves through a series of attributes and connections accumulated in one's identity; a story composed of relationships, friends, family, career, travel, adventure; objects are collected as mementos or artifacts of existence (by artifacts of existence I mean objects which tell a story about a person and are then saved, collected, passed down to others). Morals, beliefs, opinions and interactions thus further impact and complicate over-riding themes, plots, expositions, conflicts and resolutions in one's life which constitutes the development of an individualized and unique narrative.

Objects can be classified as commodities or vehicles of sentiment. Sentiment in this context is referring to a feeling or emotion. Objects of sentiment are feelings or emotion transferred onto an inanimate object which has become a symbol of a past event. Objects of sentiment are what I am focusing on and referring to as "biographical objects" in this current research, *Sentiment Debris*. Anthropologist, Janet Hoskins writes on the subject of biographical objects suggesting that, "people and things can take on the attributes

of one another and objects can acquire an agency” (Hoskins 76). The agency of the object is what could provide the possessor with a feeling of responsibility to the object, a commitment to preserve its legacy. The sentimental object or biographical object is a representation of a person(s) and an experience which creates a connection. The term ‘self-extension’ is suggesting that one’s personal narrative also inhabits the individual’s possessions as an extension of one’s interiority and personal narrative. In the development of identity and personal narrative, stories from a person’s possessions cohere to narrative, in turn becoming expansions of one self. Ian Woodward writes, from his book, *Understanding Material Culture*, “In terms of personal identity, objects assist the credible, effective performance of an identity” (Woodward 137). As an artist I envision each object, each self-extension to become its own character in a sort of screenplay where specific objects signify a concept, almost to develop a new language within collective narratives. Each object assists in building an exposition of an individual and just as in fiction, over-riding themes, symbolism, metaphor and experience constructs the framework. It is as though sentimental objects become vessels, memory and emotion of the un-written story. Narrative structures provide awareness and possibility to integrally compose interior narratives and contribute to the collective concatenation of life stories and impressions. “As experience is increasingly mediated and abstracted”, poet and art critic Susan Stewart in her book, *On Longing*, writes that “the lived relation of the body to the phenomenological world which is replaced by a nostalgic myth of contact and presence” (Stewart 133). It could here be considered that the residual product of a nostalgic myth is physical evidence that contact and presence had occurred. The object or souvenir becomes the bi-product of experience, the custodian of memory. In the same sense that the art collector is the keeper of adored artworks, the object becomes keeper of the memory. The object signifies experiences, people and feelings. In this research I am asking, “What are biographical objects, and how might the object impact ones personal narrative?”

One function of the biography is to observe how the lives of others are constructed in comparison to one's own. By reading books or watching films about diversified narratives it inspires in me a curiosity as to how I have sculpted my own life and question how I might reconfigure my narrative looking into the future. Throughout this research what resonates the most for me is the concept of an impression and the various ways in which an impression can be left or made, which I will discuss further along in this paper. David Hume writes, "By the term *impression*, I mean a more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And impressions are distinguished from ideas, which are less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of those sensations or movements above mentioned"(Hume 21). *Sentiment Debris* is very much about impressions, impressions made on to people and things manifested through audio, sculpture and installation. The audio work is produced of recordings from ten participants who I had interviewed; I asked a series of questions about sentimental or biographical objects chosen by the participants, selected objects consisted of items which were meaningful to the participants, objects which symbolized aspects of my personal relationship with the participant, and objects which the participant felt a connection and commitment to. The questions I asked my participants were:

1. What is your object (s)
2. Where does your object come from?
3. What is your relationship to your object(s), what does it mean to you?
4. How has your object impacted your life, what influence has it had on your personal narrative?
5. Do you think you will pass down your object to someone to preserve its legacy after your lifetime?
6. If you did not have an object to project a personal memory onto, how else might you preserve your memory?

All recordings, with consent from my participants, were remixed into an abstract poetry sound piece constructed of each participant's anecdote. Audio recordings were intermixed and periodically overlaid, in a way which I would consider audible concrete poetry, but also in such a way that the glimpses of narrative felt more like hauntings intermingled amongst the objects. The final audio piece was a series of recordings which would be played on multiple speakers. Small speakers discretely installed

amongst various arrangements of plaster cast objects. The sound set low, like a faint murmur or like mumbled conversations vaguely understandable but somehow collectively harmonious. This would ideally draw the viewer closer to the object assemblages persuading the viewer to lean in, get low to the ground and try to piece together the fleeting gusts of audio narratives. The audio faintly swarming amongst the objects moving from speaker to speaker. Like fish curiously swimming amongst coral reef seemingly light weight laissez-faire but ultimately with purpose and meaning. The recordings represent and serve as spirits which got loose from their vessels. In making the sound piece I was responding to Donald Braid's quote from, *Personal Narrative and Experimental Meaning*, in which he said, "The listener's struggle to make sense of the narrative is crucial. Through this struggle they are led to tentatively accept or experience the coherence of the narrative, a pattern that I suggest embodies the ideology of the narrator" (Braid 9). I interpret this quote in regards to human navigation capabilities both physically and cerebrally. In order to process a narrative or information a person needs to first collect the data and then process its semiotic configuration; to understand meaning, tone, setting, plot, theme, character, and more complicated literary devices such as irony. The listener must process, interpret and visualize the greater whole of the narrative in order to grasp more in depth concepts. A listener might attempt to disassociate themselves with their own past experiences which may presumptuously misinform the integrity of the narrative being shared. The listener's struggle is the ability to listen as if an entirely new experience is occurring and surrender to the narrative; similar to the process of guided meditations. This quote is interesting to the context of my research and artwork because I am working with narrative on an interdisciplinary platform; audio, installation, poetry and theory. The task of the listener becomes more of an embodiment, incorporating a larger sensory field making the responsibility of the narrator more difficult as well as the listener or viewer as there are more sensory components to navigate. There are more possibilities of distraction which could misguide and disturb the intention of the interdisciplinary narrative; it could be said that I am working more similarly to the process of a theater

performance only in this case with still objects. The objective of the sound piece was to create a non linear narrative which represents a disorientated swarm. Speakers are installed amidst the sculpture, so the multi-track dialogues could move from speaker to speaker creating a dislocation. The intention of this sound piece in conjunction to the sculptural work is to animate a dislocation of narrative to object. By collaging the recordings and creating a non-linear narrative I am further advancing the concept of a struggle in order to experience the concept as a whole. I am suggesting that an object in its own right has no intrinsic meaning without being employed by a human and one's experience, if the narrative is not assigned to its legitimate object then the connection becomes absurd.



Figure No.1 Jessie Holmes, Staircase from Sentiment Debris, plaster, 3.5ftx 4ft. 2020



Figure No.2 Jessie Holmes, Staircase from Sentiment Debris, plaster, 3.5ftx 4ft. 2020

**Note: due to the cancellation of our graduate exhibition because of COVID-19, I have decided to not show informal documentation of Sentiment Debris. This work will be exhibited in its entirety in the Autumn of 2020*

I took this opportunity to put into practice the research I have been progressing with over the past two years at OCAD University, as well as experimenting in art making while considering the concept of sculpture as performance. Sarah Ahmed's writing on impressions has influenced my art work significantly as she unpacks various forms of impressions. Her concepts pushed my work further in ways that drew me to experiment with various forms of replicas and impressions; I began the sculptural process by making replicas of objects with silicone moulds cast in plaster. After reading Ahmed I realized that influence and impressions are made in so many ways, by touch, surfaces we walk on, energetic exchange, the gaze, just to name a few. While researching artists whom I found influential and relevant to my work, I was looking at Rachel Whitereads' plaster cast moulds. From the hot water bottle titled, *Pink Torso*, 1995, to the remarkable cast of an abandoned house titled, *House*, 1993, a temporary public sculpture in East London. I became conflicted as to why I was making plaster cast replicas of other peoples' biographical objects. What was the significance? Why was I investing into the laborious process of making silicone mould replicas? At that point I stopped and returned to theory and references to find a means of articulation.

I knew my intention was an attempt to convey a separating of narrative from the object. I felt that by dislocating the recorded narratives from the sculptures and by creating reproductions of original objects I was initiating a separation. After researching artists who work with similar materials and processes as myself I came across the catalogue for Rachel Whitereads', *House*. The introduction written by Richard Shone had successfully articulated my decision to make this work in plaster. Shone wrote of Whitereads' plaster cast moulds that, "A cast of an object traps it in time, eventually displaying two histories- its own past and the past of the object it replicates...it remains in the world to remind us of the dead, as both portrait and memorial, a replica and an object in its own right" (Shone 15). Shone had admirably articulated his take on what the cast displays as well as the function of the replica. I interpret his, 'reminder of the dead', as an acknowledgment of the past. Susan Stewart argues nostalgia cannot

exist without loss; once something is in the past it is no longer present and that is how I would like to interpret his use of death. In my work, I am not referring to death in the literal sense, rather I am interested in spirit and the idea of something having a presence and putting into question its relocation. I chose to work with plaster cast moulds specifically because of the presence they have as a finished product and associations to historical interiors, ornaments, figures and busts of 19th century Europe. The plaster cast figure, object or bust has a haunted aura trapped in time, their often white monochromatic features are detailed and the objects stillness seemingly tells expressive narratives of their own amidst their silence. This was the aesthetic and feeling I wanted to attempt to produce and convey in the replicated objects I made moulds of in *Sentiment Pile*. The other point of interest is the fact that moulds are made to be reproduced. By creating an object and reproducing that object, it becomes apparent that the object itself is an inanimate form, an unlimited edition. In *Sentiment Pile* I made reproductions of the replicas to further demonstrate a separation of narrative from object, by displaying the idea that objects without human connection have no intrinsic value. The vessels are merely the carriers for narrative and experience.

Each of the objects I have cast in plaster is either from a silicone mould or is an impression. I used clay to make impressions of sentimental/biographical objects and poured plaster into clay moulds to create a rogue marking. I have considered Ahmed's research while reproducing objects in which she says, "In order to construct this narrative of interiority it is necessary to obliterate the objects context of origin" (Ahmed 158). I believe I have exercised Ahmed's concept by casting and replicating, distancing the vessel from its context. The stages of my installation have gone through many transformations, for example an initial idea to make a 3d video installation, projected on four walls, floor to ceiling; in addition to writing this entire thesis as a screen play. I had to narrow down and digress because of time constraints, lack of experience, skill set and financial realizations. Ultimately, intermittent poems

throughout the thesis attempts to connect the narrative and critique and set the tone for the installation.

The installation is to feel like an island, desolate yet holistic, there is a swarm and in this context my swarm is narrative.

The gallery space is blacked out with minimal staged lighting. The room is to feel vast, viewers are to have the option to walk around and amongst the installation, to come close, to listen in or move away; the performative element occurs as viewers become a part of the swarm through the act of listening and moving around it, creating an intuitive choreography. The integrative process within my installation establishes a transformative narrative process by introducing performative aspects of sound, installation and viewer integration. Braid articulates this concept when explaining how “Varying degrees of artistry may transform the narrative sequence, creating recoverable but complex relationship between the events and their portrayal in narrative” (Braid 8). This is my interpretation of disrupting the narrative sequence, thus abstracting or enhancing the existing narrative.

My previous art practice was built on poetry readings and performance, with an interest in synchronicity and serendipitous moments. Having been based in Berlin from 2008-2018, I frequently travelled around Europe observing people and scenarios. Language was transcribed as sounds, bad translations or simply made up. To ‘understand’ became subjective; I found other ways to “understand” without relying heavily on language. I directed and produced poetry as performance, ‘physical poems’ through film like sets, in which poems were studied as scripts and acted out. Performances and readings monumentalized or paid homage to fleeting moment; gestural debris, moments gone un-noticed; sound-scapes were recorded, overlapping read poetry as an attempt to trap a moment in time, abstracting fact or fiction like a bad translation.

At present my art practice is based around sculpture, audio recordings, poetry and installation. Explorations of narrative and ways of presenting it have become a fundamental part of my methodology. I consider sculpture as a verb and its potential performative aspects. I embody written poetry as audible narratives as a descriptive study and gestural observation. I am interested in the connectivity by which material culture coincides with identity-culture and narratology (that which deals with the structure and function of narrative and its themes, conventions, and symbols). As a means to explore these concepts I work with materials such as plaster, silicone, epoxy, glass, ice and sound; which exemplify reproduction, fragility and temporality. Text is silk-screened and hand bound or recorded to capture artifacts of fleeting moments and conversational debris. Through this I am exploring the ontology of sentiment, self-extension and material semiotics.

Chapter 2: Biographical Objects

They who sing the hymns of consonants and vowels, try to articulate a narrative of wonder and awe struck assemblages, of causal wisdom, and mystery which relies on unchartered narratives and personas for example the girl next door, or the boy with soft eyes or the heavy reader, the overly popular, the magnificent wallflower, the young driver, the party thriver, the 'walk me home won't you' wonder.

Human beings are sentient creatures composed of five aggregates: matter, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness. We continuously negotiate and navigate ourselves through our diversified interiorities composed of values, morals, logic and pragmatism, all of which impact happiness, love, hope and a sense of belonging as well as isolation, conflict, insecurities, abandonment and loneliness.

Responsibilities are not only to ones' self but to where one has come from geographically, culturally and ancestrally. Memory, which pertains to the past, plays a profound role in the narrative of the present and the future of ancestral and cultural cultivation. Memories are often preserved through various forms of

story-telling/ recording/ archiving/ documenting. The object becomes a signifier for the memory or narrative. Hoskins says a biographical object is defined by that which is woven into existence by the layering of personal relations and stories around it. She writes, "In certain contexts, persons can seem to take on the attribute of things and things can seem to act almost as persons" (Hoskins 74). Hoskins' view connects with Woodward's perspective that the object assists the effective performance of an identity. The objects become active agents conjunctively offering the individual an opportunity to look outside of the self as an artistic endeavor, literary exploration or potential self-reflection. I question, how do we experience our personal narratives? How can it be reassembled or transcribed? How does it impact, connect or extend on to other people's narratives?

Hoskins distinguishes the difference between a biographical object and commodity when she observes that, "People who surround themselves with biographical objects do so to develop their personalities and reflect on them, while consumers of public commodities are de-centered and fragmented by their acquisition of things, and do not use them as part of a narrative process of self-definition"(Hoskins 78). It could be said that some people use public commodities as a means to develop their personalities. This kind of stature is more visible in western-culture; attributing to frothy elitist characteristics and narratives where consumption is confused with value. To some, one's present status is the crux of their personal narrative; having said that, it is true that people who are not concerned with social status may also not be concerned with biographical objects or sentiment as a means to further develop personal narrative. In turn living with sentimental or biographical objects can be experienced as a burden because of an apparent responsibility to the past and the psychological clutter of memories from others.

There is an ascribed value in the things we live with. This value is different than monetary value. The greatest value is received when in the possession of the individual who has a relationship to the object and narrative. Philosopher Anthony Hatzimoysis writes on the subject of sentimental value and explains that,

“The notion of sentimental value is at the centre of a triangle whose points are defined by emotion, memory, and the self. Tracing the lines that connect these points would show how a non-reflective sense of oneself is generated when consciousness encounters objects whose past life give rise to certain emotions in the present” (Hatzimoysis 373). I think Hatzimoysis’ constructs an informed triad as an infrastructure for sentimental value. It creates a relational foundation which helps clarify the distinction between sentiment and commoditization.

In, *Sentiment Debris*, I am suggesting a separation of narrative from the object in turn, demonstrating that objects do not have intrinsic meaning and only become sentimentally valuable through emotional and experiential transference, as expressed in Hatzimoysis’s triangle. Understanding or gauging the ‘value’ of a biographical or sentimental object is a subjective procedure. It can only be decided on by the possessor and in many cases will only be of value to that individual, relationship, culture or ancestry. Rene Descartes offers a critique of the idea that objects have causal properties, suggesting that we don’t have feelings for objects because of the nature of objects. “Feelings instead take the shape of the contact we have with objects” (Ahmed 5). The shapes which Ahmed speaks of are the early developments of situated narratives. It is a unique experience or happening which can become important to the artist or writer to transcribe said shapes or forms, into verified objects of expression.

Chapter 3: Amongst the Walls I Had Harnessed

There are walls, walls with high ceilings, walls that let the wind blow and the sun cast down skylights and the noise off the street seeps through letting itself in, grabs a coffee and a book and slouches down beside me on my broken brown sofa.

“You gotta a cig?” Street noise says to me,

“ahhhhh I don’t smoke, but I saw someone throw a pack underneath that plant over there.”

Street noise finds the tossed stale pack of cigarettes and lights up.

Wind through the walls remarks, “Howwww REPULSIVE! Can’t you smoke outside! She’s trying to work in here she doesn’t need you parading around your smoke stack capitalist pollution! And neither do I quite frankly!”

The wind blows stronger clearing the stale soggy smog out of the studio.

Street noise responds, “awwwww go suck a lemon wind, yer so naïve, you can’t even see for yourself that we ARE outside! Yer delusional! Yer a street block hack, yesterdays tear down! This is public domain fool! This block was well aware of my debris when it was being developed!”

Street noise takes a deep drag of its cig and exhales quickly in order to banter on, “and yah, see that old brown sofa, and this wet box of books, that was kicked to the curb weeks ago! The trash collectors are on strike! AGAIN!”

The wind dies down as I walk in circles around my studio, head down, head up, hands in pockets... only to notice I was walking the perimeter of the city park by my house... but for a few short sweet minutes I felt vibrant solitude with magnificent creative proportions, amongst the walls I had harnessed.

Within private space, the artist can explore methodologies around research for creation, research from creation, creation presentation of research and creation as research. Their world suggests that the space/studio does not need to inhabit four walls but it should harness some sort of physical, metaphysical, cerebral, corporeal, imaginative etc. space. By facilitating an intimate bond with a personal biography, somehow the relationship needs to transform into an objective question or comment which can then be presented in a public domain if so decided. Artist and Scholar, Graeme Sullivan, has put forward in his text, *Practice and Beyond*, “The studio is a place of inquiry that is not bounded by walls or removed from the daily grind of everyday life” (Sullivan 72). The studio is a conscious space but not necessarily a physical space. Often I make work within the four walls of my studio space and just as frequent I need to take to the streets and let the surroundings make an impression on me; sounds, colours, textures, conversational debris, movements and gestural observations. The time in which I am not making work is equally as crucial as the time that I am. John Baldessari said in an interview (that I cannot retrace but always resonated with me) is, “you must go to your studio every-day, even if you have no ideas, you must show up and at least sweep the floor”. I think that quote can be taken literally and symbolically. There is something sacred about ones studio and the commitment to ‘show up’.

When Sullivan writes, “Personal elements can never be hermetically sealed from social, communal, collective, conventional, socio- culturally marked realities and their direct or indirect effects” (Sullivan 80). I think what he means is that it is impossible to not feel the impact of human existence, presence and actions. We are susceptible to one another and that notion is what frequently generates the creative process. It is through a practice led methodology that an artist has the space and freedom to shape shift into the other, to vicariously harness a new form through intimate and private spheres. It is in the metaphysical and subconscious space or state that the artist harnesses a temporal infrastructure aiding as studio in order to realize these narratives. Sullivan writes that, “If epistemology is to be opened up to new conceptions, for instance barriers that previously separated perception from cognition, emotion from

thought, and intuition from intellect dissolve, we come to know more about how we create knowledge by what the mind makes of what the eye sees” (Sullivan84). Sullivan’s quote applies to Hatzimoysis’s triad of sentimental value as they are both talking about separating conceptions of human knowledge, experiences beyond commoditization. This formula acts as a methodology in practice led narratology methods, coinciding with a studio practice that is not hermetically sealed rather it is based on intuitive, personal and social awareness.

In order to create, *Sentiment Debris*, I collected stories and objects of others. I selected participants from my community in Toronto and abroad i.e. my graduate cohort, family, friends and colleagues. I asked participants to lend me one or multiple objects which they considered sentimental or biographical of themselves. Having composed a series of interview questions, I asked each participant if I could interview them to better understand their personal narrative and relationship to these objects. The interviews took place as anonymous recordings and were then created as a sound piece for the installation. Narratives are subject to personal surrounding and influences how an individual constructs their own narrative. The way to better understand a set of impressions, inferences opinions based on personal experience, qualitative data must be collected; my data collecting being the interview process. Cropely explains,

‘The information qualitative researchers collect in order to gain the necessary insights is largely, although not always, obtained by means of *narratives* in which the people being studied communicate the way they understand the world. This involves most obviously speaking or writing, but can involve other forms of communication such as diaries, literary or journalistic works, audio or video tapes, or artworks, or even result from close and systematic observation of people going about their lives in their usual manner. It is common for narratives to involve interviews although this is not necessarily the case’ (Cropley, 10).

I have used data collection not as a means to analyse people but rather to accumulate personal experiences and share them in a way that overlaps and loops as non linear configurations. Every story is different just as every individual is different. There is no right or wrong narrative, each experience has its own unique spirit that I embrace and am honoured to have the opportunity to borrow these narratives for my installation and research.

In, *Sentiment Debris*, as all my work, I practice narrative and poetic methodologies. The function of narrative is that it acts as a device which transforms temporal relationships bounded into webs of interrelationships which in turn can become examined and better understood. Where non-fiction writing represents the truth and reports on true events and fiction describes imaginary events and people, fiction also has the power to allow people to comprehend grander themes and morals that can closely relate to lived human experiences; giving room for speculative expansion in perception and observational studies which pertain to lived human experiences. If one was to consider the objective-self as a certain fictionalized-self, fiction could be thought of as a self-extension. Fiction becomes more than just a platform for leisure story-telling; it becomes a cognitive laboratory for comprehension and expansion of a subject matter and/or existence. William Lablov and Joshua Waletzky, known for sociolinguistics in America, identified several formal and functional properties of personal narratives which contributed to a methodology and a theoretical purpose. "Making the Point" is a conclusive chapter they wrote together on the two functions of personal narrative; "The referential function is to describe the action, time, place, participants, and details of the incident. The evaluation function is to identify the narrator's interpretation of the incident, his personal reactions, and the consequences of the incident for himself or significant others" (Robinson 63). *Sentiment Debris*, practices narrative methodologies as stated by Lablov and Waletzky, the referential and evaluation function can only work together to activate the speculative experience that is central to the essence of narrative. "When we attempt to trace the history of the self, we of course know that we are dealing with shadows in a dark land. Our predications must be diffident; our conclusions can be only speculative" (Trilling 54). Ultimately, there is no such thing as a conclusion full-stop. The idea that conclusions are speculative means continuation can occur at any time. The story may sleep but it does not die.

Chapter 4: Literature Review

Sentiment Debris, is presented as an enclave, a stack of memories, a heap of narratives, an island of misfit vessels. A chance to remember, to reconfigure, to reassign meaning, to spring clean what was and what needs to continue to be; narratives echo and intertwine amongst the representations of sentimental objects. Stilettos power walked the streets of New York in the 1980s, an impressionable time-line, each step a confession, "I was here", a focused stare, a superstitious shoulder pad, a golden stride in slow motion. A fine pen that signed its name to hearts of fans and fame, a crystal from Spain, a rock from a lover on the beach of Brighton, old poems about Pap and Beckett and laissez-faire power walkers on the boardwalk of every port city known to man. A ring that says 'love', as if that would help, but for some it does, a mug with a broken handle from a brother, a finger nail from an old friend saved in a tin, a list of everything ever lost, in general, a hoop earring found outside a club, a lighter given by a friend, kept it for years convinced love was part of the equation, a small aluminum lobster from the eternal companion, rain on stained glass memories of Glasgow, a secret sequined pink bag of money behind the books, a chain link necklace that means family, commitment and relentlessness, Paul Mc Carthy rhinestone earring, big debut, a tiny cat that sits on the back of a soap stone fish, you don't know why, but you can't let go. Drum sticks are idle, irritating the mind, attention needed forever and always, sentimental Black Sabbath will do more than fine as the elevator music to my negotiable staccato.

In, "Passions of the Soul", Descartes offers a critique of the idea that objects have causal properties, suggesting that we don't have feelings for objects because of the nature of objects. "Feelings instead take the 'shape' of the contact we have with objects" (Ahmed 5). *Sentiment Debris*, conveys Descartes point that objects have causal properties but an object does not have intrinsic meaning, meaning is always employed by human actors. As an exploration to exhibit this concept I have attempted to separate the object from the narrative, by creating an assemblage of objects which are replicas of their originals.

Objects are distanced, replicated and reproduced in multiples and disassociated from their corresponding narratives, audio recordings seemingly swarm throughout the debris as if ghosts haunting and searching for its severed vessel. This chapter highlights select theorists within my research who deconstruct and re-configure the conceptual understanding as to why we have relationships with objects and how to understand their currency and value system. I am concerned with objects possessed by narrative, emotion, memories and hold a physical anchoring. French philosopher Francis Ponge confirms, “The human being is a remarkable body that does not contain its own center of gravity, it needs an object as a mooring place or counterweight” (Ponge 44). *Sentiment Debris*, questions, what happens to our biographical objects once they are no longer needed as a mooring place? Where do those memories go which were so crucial to once being remembered and what is the significance of having them? A life-time is spent protecting the narrative but for what purpose if at the end they are lost? Susan Stewart writes, “Nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss” (Stewart 145). I interpret this as all memories experience loss as a memory is no longer present, but not necessarily in the perspective of being “lost”. There is a difference in being no longer present (loss) and entirely misplaced (lost) although both suggest something no longer present. So the same goes for one’s existence, we too become a memory, an object and no longer present. Humans of many cultures and heritage have participated in the innate act to save their memories and bring them forward into the present. Memory and preservation is imperative for cultural development, heritage and ancestry to thrive. In addition to this the roles of archeologists, conservators, archivists, historians, writers and artists, etc. are also vital in the preservation process.

As Descartes notes the nature of objects, there is also a nature to memory which is considered an object. In, *Sentiment Debris*, the objects become artifacts, they do not disappear as does the soul which connects to the vessel or body. The recorded narratives are swarming around and throughout the debris of objects dislocated from its inhabited vessel. Biographical objects are often passed down or discarded once their sentimental value has expired, often orphaned to charity shops and adopted by another person and given

new meaning or narrative. Opposing the commoditized object or consumerist persona, a person is drawn to an object because of its uncertain aesthetic energy or allure. Ahmed writes that “if the contact with an object generates feeling, then emotion and sensation cannot be easily separated” (Ahmed 6). This idea puts into question why a biographical object becomes an heirloom, something that has left an impression and is kept in the family circle from the deceased or put on a shelf of a second hand store to obtain a new life. Ahmed discusses the word ‘impression’ and through a series of anecdotes breaks down the complexity of a word frequently used and infrequently unpacked,

‘To form an impression might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion. But forming an impression can be an effect on the subject’s feelings, (she made an impression). It can be a belief (‘to be under an impression’). It can be an imitation or an image (to create an impression). Or it can be a mark on the surface (‘to leave an impression). *We need to remember the ‘press’ in an impression.* It allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very affect of one surface upon another, an affect that its mark or trace’ (Ahmed, 6).

It is through my artwork and research that I have understood the causal conjunction of impressions made and received every day. We all ‘press’ into things, emotions, bodies, the ground in which we walk; impressions to be left on others and objects. The commonly used term, ‘impression’ holds more power than considered; it is why artists make and writers write, friendships develop and bonds are made or broken. The impression provides a subject but it also implies an intrigue or motive. An experience or story resonates with a person because it leaves an impression on them opting to transcend onto an object. This makes it biographical because the impression left is from that person and their experience with one surface upon another. In, *Sentiment Debris*, the participants I interviewed about their sentimental objects made an impression on me. This impression inspired me, the artist, to create an installation and re-tell their stories through my artistic interpretation and inspired me to research the subject matter further. In turn, the impression made upon me from these collected narratives has become a part of my biography transcended through my art practice, in which I am now responsible for the replicated objects. This act participates in

the conjunctive concatenation Franco Berardi discusses in his book, *The Phenomenology of the End*. Based on Deleuze and Guattaris, rhizomatic theory, there is no end, just continuations of narratives and impressions. “How the object impresses upon us may depend on histories that remain alive insofar as they have already left their impressions. The object may stand in for other objects, or may be proximate to other objects” (Ahmed 8). It is to my understanding that the past will always leave an impression on the future and the sentimental or biographical object acts as the carrier through time and space preserving the energy and value of the narrative, thus, reinforcing a continuation.



Figure No.3 Jessie Holmes, *Broke a Heel from Sentiment Debris*, plaster cast, 2020

For goodness sake! Gesundheit. I could be an accident or a natural hot spring, a giant hug that collects all the memories, sweepstakes, arms swarming in a deep sleep, gold eyes, closed buttons and zippers and shoe ties, anything to seal history for a good price, eye’s wink in art deco crystal... that was my great great Oma's, she used to dance the streets with melodic feet and a glistening torso in the Weimar period, all I have left is this small diamond, encrusted in my left canine tooth, fictionally, it cost me 12,000euro, but money is not the same as sentimental value.

“We may value particular people, and we may also experience certain emotions towards them: however, the two do not combine to make those people sentimentally valuable. Even in cases where the locus of emotion and valuation coincide, they do not produce a third state of seeing a person as valuable sentimentally” (Hatzimoysis 375). What Hatzimoysis is referring to is the 3 part equation in which $A+B=C$. The person (A) and the emotion or experience (B) transcend or equal the object (C). In my art work, I am interested in separating the equation to better understand or question one’s own sentimental habitat. I have constructed my art work in a way that represents a structure which alludes to being a habitat or environment. By creating replicas of the sentimental objects, it becomes clear that these objects are just vessels or carcasses stripped of their original material form. Through my sound piece, I am providing the viewer/listener with (A) the person speaking (B) the emotion in the content of what the person is speaking about and (C) objects. This is intended to create a visual and audible demonstration of a relational system connecting people, emotions and objects. There is a perpetuating swarm around us acknowledging the abundance of emotional energy and narratives we live amongst, unseen to the eye and questioning how that may affect the psyche; the spirits of story swarm. Sentimental value also highlights the abundance of care and goodness encompassing individuals that can at times go unnoticed. In further defining what sentimental value is, Hatzimoysis writes, “It combines the viewpoint of care or appreciation, which is characteristic of value experience in general; with the perspectival element of emotional experience in particular” (Hatzimoysis 374). He further explains that sentimental value does not alter the quality of who we are as our own character; it does not define a person, which is essentially true but to what degree do biographical or sentimental objects provide us a sense of self or security?

Chapter 4.5 The Greats

There is an uncharted body of art and movements that have influenced me since adolescence, but for the nature of this research I have selected artists from movements who have informed my practice the most and artists which best support the nature of *Sentiment Debris*. Fluxus art, which is dependent on chance, DADA, absurdity as political revolt and Surrealism which internally strikes a chord in the depths of my day dream psyche; in addition to, the endless biographies I have read about individuals from these times, the artist's personal narrative transferring on to the object of art. It is through rebellion with purpose, the fearlessness to be surreal and the intuitive process of chance that some of the greatest art, music and literature have been created throughout generations. In this circumstance, I decided to review artists who share a similar obsessiveness with ephemera and the residual presence in which object narrative resonates, artists who understand the auratic presence of biographical debris and who feed off of that energy as an attempt to further provoke. All four artists I have chosen have an interest in biography, memory, narrative and aura, each attempting to categorically conceptualize their position as the collector, the witness and composer of the past.



Figure 4. Daniel Spoerri, 13 Tableaux –pieges astro-gastronomiques



Figure 5. Daniel Spoerri, *Prose Poems*, 1959-60.
Artwork credit: Daniel Spoerri, Image file credit: Tate (Photo: © Tate)

Daniel Spoerri (b.1930 Swiss, Romania) is an artist and writer of the Neo-Dada and Nouveau Realisme movements and is also well associated with the Surrealists and the Fluxus artists. He began his artistic endeavors as a dancer having classically trained with Russian Ballerina Olga Preobrajenskaya in Bern. From there he started staging avant-garde plays including Picasso's surrealist play, *Desire Trapped by the Tail*. Spoerri is best known for his "Snare-Pictures" which are assemblages of objects used by individuals most commonly table ware after a shared meal. He would invite various people to a meal and after the event he would glue the objects to the table exactly as they were left by individuals. What is interesting about his work is that the only thing which changes is the plane, from horizontal to vertical and it is in this shift which makes a domestic endeavor into a work of art.

What I interpret from this action, is that the information we need to further our knowledge is always right in front of us, it's just a matter of perspective. Spoerri's work is always influenced by the everyday which is the true nature of Nouveau Realisme.

'Following a rambling conversation with his dear friend Robert Filliou, Daniel Spoerri one day mapped the objects lying at random on the table of his room, adding a rigorously scientific description of each. These objects subsequently evoked associations, memories, and anecdotes; not only from the original author, but from his friends as well: a beguiling creation was born; it's a game, a poem, an encyclopedia, a cabinet of wonders: a celebration of friendship and creativity. The Topography personifies (and pre-dates) the whole FLUXUS spirit and constitutes one of the strangest and most compelling insights into the artist's life. From out of the banal detritus of the everyday a virtual autobiography emerges.' (Spoerri, 1).

Spoerri's life as an artist epitomizes what Berardi writes about the infectious collective of the conjunctive concatenation. A continuation, an acknowledgement, a head nod, and a lived experience turned into a work of art, which takes a could be "non-event" and turns it into an admiration and impresses upon art history. The collective causal event which occurs through Spoerri and many of the artists from this era epitomizes what I consider to be 'human alchemy'. I think such alchemy was on the forefront during this time because of political repression, world war, class wars and human inequalities. Many artists in this time turned to chance as a ticket to spiritual freedom, the miraculous unknown and affirmation from making. To let things happen in the moment, to celebrate the oddities of companionship and daily necessity, a moment simply flipped on its side, to make what could be considered the painful daily grind, a grand gesture, a celebration, the oxygen of the unknown but the recognition that the unknown is real, respected and praised. The artists which make Fluxus Art, Dada and Surrealism a movement are the reason I am an artist. Daniel Spoerri has crossed such sacred generational terrain, exemplary of cause and effect, concatenation at its finest. Everything is connected and gives energy to those who are yet to exist. If I could captivate only a fraction of the energy in *Sentiment Debris*, which Spoerri has captured in his *Snare-Pictures* that would supply me with enough stamina, inspiration and incentive to continue on the relentless odyssey as an artist.

Candy Jernigan

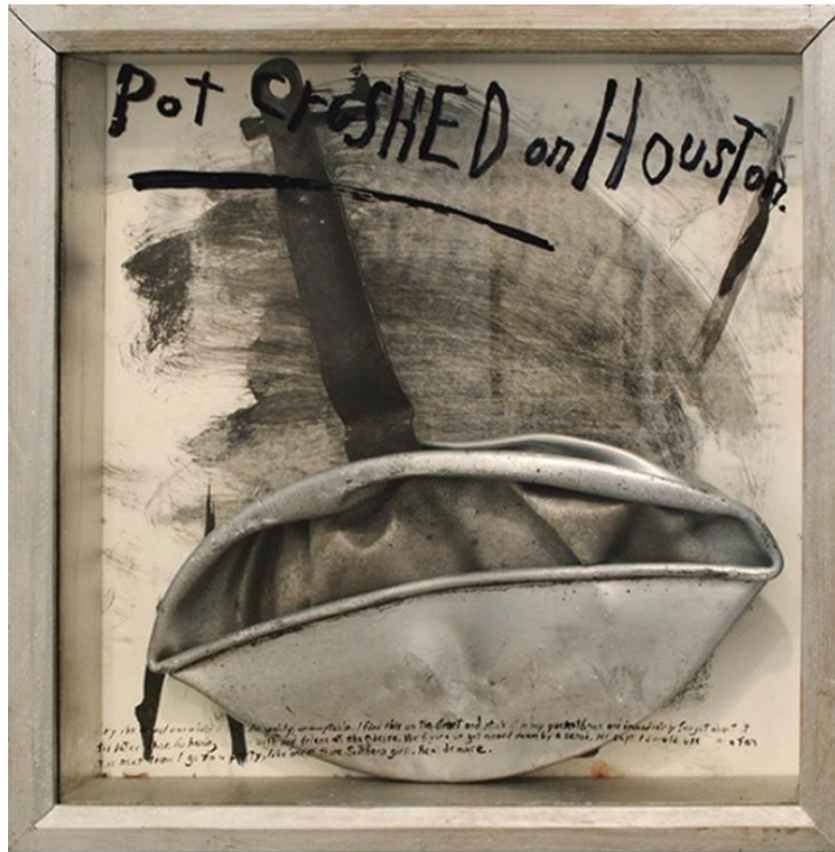


Figure 6. Candy Jernigan, Pot Crushed on Houston, 1986.

I have included Candy Jernigan in this selection of artists to show a different version of biographical obsession and unsentimental wit through collecting. Jernigan's work through the 1980s in New York was more a study about a changing city and fluctuating boroughs through its waste and debris found on the streets. Through these collections Jernigan brought to life the character in the object, for example, *Pot Crushed on Houston*, 1985-86 New York, a composition including a found distressed pot, paint and text which animates vigor and hostility, one can almost empathize with the life the pot had to lead under the care of some irresponsible human being. It is unavoidable to disregard narrative when viewing Jernigan's work.

While she considered her pieces to be analytical observations and collections, they animate and give life to debris and waste in the most colourful and informative way. Donald Braid discusses how narrative involves an ongoing process where the listener is constantly trying to unfold and integrate narrative and “the dynamics of performance into a coherent and meaningful interpretation of what happened” (Braid 6). It is Jernigan’s work which embodies an alternate form of narrative and communication which I am discussing throughout this research. It evokes the nature of performance, animation and documentary all within one still frame.



Figure 7. Candy Jernigan, *Found Dope*. 1986. 26 x 34 x 2 ¾ inches

When she made, *Found Dope*, 1986, it was during the drug epidemic in New York's Lower East Side. It has been said that one could tell the change in the city due to the amount of dope paraphernalia found on the streets and in the gutters. Jernigan also produced a sequel called, *Found Dope II*, 1986, which was made up of collected crack vials. What I take from the, *Found Dope*, series is not only an analysis of an economic crisis and a shifting narrative, but an example of the collective subjective narrative.

In every vile, needle or baggy found is an object touched by an incendiary journey into a troubled horizon. Jernigan brings these dispersive narratives together as if to host a meet and greet catered with coffee and donuts while debris exchange their experiences; each one unique but somehow connected.

After the artist passed, hundreds of drawings, journals, collages, collections and assemblages were found in her apartment. There were even eclectic installation pieces like, *Ninety-nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall*, composed of small laboratory bottles of beer mounted on her wall. What I appreciate about Jernigan's work is that even though she is defined as 'unsentimental', the way in which she collects and exhibits her findings is extremely animated and brings to her specimen a life of their own. In turn, Jernigan enforced an essence of sentimental value to the objects. Like I had stated with my position in *Sentiment Debris*; Jernigan's collections become a part of her biography and her personal narrative, which exemplifies a conjunctive concatenation. Although different approaches, I think Jernigan and I both share the desire to observe and record to achieve a greater narrative. Reflecting on both Spoerri and Jernigan's work, I remembered a quote by Berardi in which he says, "If the mind can process the world as an infinite set of co-evolving realities that act on one another, this is only because the mind is in the world"(Berardi15).

Joseph Cornell



Figure 8. Joseph Cornell. A Swan Lake for Tamara Toumanova: Homage to the Romantic Ballet.

Like Jernigan, Joseph Cornell was an obsessive collector. Born in 1903 in Nyack, New York, Joseph Cornell was a reclusive Christian-Scientist who was very close with his family, particularly his mother. He didn't feel the need to be running in close proximity to the known artists of that time such as Duchamp and Picasso, but he still knew of them and they were very much aware of him. Cornell's working method involved collected material files with a wide range of topics- Americana, ballet, astronomy, birds, the circus, Dutch-Flemish, envelope fragments, mathematics, maps, fashion, paperweights, grasshoppers, rabbits, and many others. Some files are dedicated to individual composers, ballet-dancers, film-stars, artists and writers for example Mozart, Fanny Cerrito, Joan Collins, Picasso, Hans Christian Anderson, others contain a fragmented, intense network of personal notation- subjective associations bound together within the covers of the dossier.

His collections went even deeper than what is listed and it is to my understanding that his assemblages and boxes, were his only way of exploring his repressed identity, the self observed.

Because of his faith, Cornell felt he could not entertain his natural urges and desires. The boxes became his compositions of desire and explorations. He was free to go deep within the psyche but confined to the box. This was very symbolic of his life, and it has been suggested that he felt burdened by his obsessive commitment to making them; it became compulsive (Blair 88). *A Swan Lake for Tamara Toumanova: Homage to the Romantic Ballet*, is one of my favourite art works by Cornell. The Russian Ballerina Tamara Toumanova was a friend and muse to Cornell. He used to often attend her ballets and wait in the wings backstage, with scissors in hand, to snip pieces from her costumes for his box assemblages. He made this box as a dedication to her which contains another smaller box with a window of blue glass, behind which a cutout of a swan from the Photostat of an old lithograph drifts past a castle, this echoing the ballet. The intricate box is lined with blue velvet, contains pieces of mirror mounted on the rear surface. The larger box features several white feathers which he snipped from Toumanovas costume. It has been said that people thought of him as an alchemist. Everything he touched, his nature, his relationship to reality as recorded, the material world, was that of an alchemist. My intrigue with Cornell is that he is this reclusive alchemist, artist, poet, and so deeply invested in his search for the absolute. But also that he was recognized for his giftedness, but chose to stay at arm's length. He was on his own spiritual quest and used the allegorical debris he was drawn to from penny shops and markets to build a language based on his own intrinsic meaning in search for the eternal.

Cornell lived vicariously through his boxes and dossiers. His compulsive act to construct assemblages was his way of exploring his own repressed desires and interiority. They were his way of self-exploring through the confines of a box. Sherry Turkle discusses how objects bring together intellect and emotion, "In every case, the author's focus is not on the object's instrumental power- how fast the train travels or

how fast the computer calculates- but on the object as a companion in life experience: how the train connects emotional worlds, how the mental space between computer keyboard and screen creates a sense of erotic possibility” (Turkle 5). Undeniably, object assemblages were Cornell’s companions in life experiences. It had been said by modernist artists of this time that “nostalgia was the enemy of Modernism, and Cornell’s work is saturated with it” (Bailey 67). Cornell used objects to keep the past alive, he was determined to do so in all of his work but it is also said in his biography, *Joseph Cornell’s Vision of Spiritual Order*, that “his active use of stored memories seems to also have been the counterpart to his obsessions with the internal journey- the journey of the spirit” (Bailey 71). It was only through the companionship of his collected objects and assemblages that his spirit could thrive. He was an introvert by nature who could come to life through his work. In this sense I find Cornell’s boxes and dossiers to be an example of self-extensions as an exploration to objectively understand the complexity of not only his own interiority but perhaps his perception of the world’s interiority as he understood it. Trilling writes, “The weightiness of things by thickening the past, making it exigent, imperative, a sanction of authority, an assurance of destiny. The tale they told interpreted the sound and fury of events, made them signify something” (Trilling 138). Cornell’s obsession with dreams, the past and spiritual awakening enshroud upon him a secretive world that perhaps was not so far from a truth, he stayed outside the box always looking in.

Iris Häussler



*Figure 9. Iris Häussler, Tochter der Schwester Der Mutter (Niece), 1999, 12 ½" x 15 ¼", Fabric, wax
Courtesy of Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto and Iris Häussler.*

Iris Häussler is a German born artist based in Toronto. Her practice is interdisciplinary, primarily based around installation and narrative stories. Häussler's artwork requires a certain level of decoding, leaving the viewer to question whether her narratives are fictional or non-fiction scenarios. I interpret her work as an orchestrated fantasy, one which questions a potential reality while not consumed with the definition of the word. It is as though she is trying an array of narratives on for size, to investigate how each one fits in differing contexts both inhabiting her personal interiority as well as a fictional exterior. Häussler appears to be encroaching on an exploration to alter the dynamic of her own narrative desires through objective expositions. She does this by cultivating both self-constructed and found objects sculpting them into a semiotic language of object based signs and symbols personified in her installations. By rendering found or constructed objects in conjunction with fine art techniques, her interdisciplinary expression crosses the terrain of both a fine art practice and that of a performance or film set.

I find Häussler's work similar to how Stewart explains the relationship between sign and interiority, Stewart suggests, "Each sign is placed in relation to a chain of signifiers whose ultimate referent is not the interior of the room- in itself an empty essence-but the interior of the self (Stewart 158). Specifically I see this in Häussler's wax work, for example in, *Schwester*, and, *Tochter der Schwester Der Mutter (Niece)*, the crumpled up pieces of clothing refer to a daughter and a sister and a mother, perhaps her own, cast in wax interpreted as the interior of one's self by revealing notions of familial dynamics through objects (textile) as a form of self-extension.



**Figure 10. ... Iris Häussler, *Schwester*, 1997, 12 ½ x 10 ¼, fabric, wax
Courtesy of Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto and Iris Häussler.**

In this series, Häussler has made wax structures which may be interpreted as the dimension of windows, textiles are representations of family members, inside looking out, or the viewer voyeuristically looking in. Simultaneously, there is a feeling of resistance as well as a stoic celebration experienced, a memory of three generations of women in the stillness of hardened wax. The window like wax compositions hung on gallery walls transform the public space into a private space, a suggestion of home.

This particular series makes me think of Joseph Cornell's boxes, although coming from a different process and relationship to objects and collecting then Häussler, their execution of narrative is magnificently conceived with the involvement of sentimental objects. Both Cornell and Häussler are orchestrating interpretations of interiority through compositional experiences. And they both successfully convey an auratic presence within the geometric frame almost contradicting the confines of what it means to be put in a box, to experience both artists work is to depart on a journey. Häussler's encaustic freeze frames encapsulate the past, present and future exemplifying the definition of a conjunctive concatenation. She does this by acknowledging disparate family relationships through the experiential process of art making and exhibiting them in a gallery space. The narrative is given an evolution, transforming a narrative from the past into a rendered narrative of the present and a speculative future. The sentimental value to the textile object changes as the biography changes, the narrative becomes connected to Häussler's narrative as an artist. Hatzimoysis suggests that "sentimental value concerns the relation between past and present moments in the history of oneself (Hatzimoysis 375). This is apparent in Häussler's work and I am curious to know if she considers the potential consequence of revealing subjective narratives or personal histories in public space when making an artwork? Was the use of pseudonyms, in past work, a way of protecting the authenticity of her personal interiority or was it a form of authorship like other writers who had used pseudonyms in the past?

Chapter 5: When Objects Are Lost, What is Found

The big dipper confronts the trespasser, “how did you get here in the first place?” With a spark in the eye, the sly passer-by who turns out to be a charismatic car saleswoman replies, “While it’s true I don’t belong here, it could be true that you don’t belong here also.”

Touché! Disco lights cascade vaulted skies, the big dipper and the car saleswoman held hands and disregarded passports. Their constellations gyrated, left to right, right to left, their celestial hair was teased and tossed, self-expression in sequin skirts was no longer a dream yet reality. Discrimination finally went to sleep and was never waking up; a conclusion which was merely speculative.

The world is in constant flux. Under the vast umbrella of unavoidable change, arching like an illusory horizon line is interiority and the intrinsic results of powerful minds; minds that operate intuitively, logically, semiotically and ultimately narratively. Theorist, Franco Berardi suggests that “Language is the realm where man brings forth being, and language is the conjunction of artificial fragments (signs) that produce a meaningful whole. But meaning does not take place in a preexisting nature or reality that exists as such, independently, it only occurs in the concatenation of minds” (Berardi 15). What Berardi may be implying here is that humankind was given a platform and humankind was given the opportunity to develop, navigate and negotiate through the conjunctions confronted upon us. Survival is instinctual but reason and moral are products of free-will. Berardi defines the term conjunction as, “a creative act; it creates an infinite number of constellations that do not follow the line of a pre-conceived pattern, or an embedded program” (Berardi 13). In turn, when Berardi says “language is the conjunction of artificial fragments that produce a meaningful whole”, I think what he is saying is, regardless of rapport, narrative is essential in how people reflect on life experiences and make connections between each another.

Disparate realities are what make the conjunction of narrative or existence complete.

Perhaps what is more problematic here is *not* excepting non-linear constellations whether culturally, politically or emotionally as part of a collective narrative. Communication or ‘sign making’, written, oral, sign language, through art making, music, Braille etc; only confirms that narratives are being communicated all around us with an intention to express a series of thoughts or expositions through signs. In my opinion, it is indisputable that humans would use objects as a communication tool for alternate modes of self-expression. Susan Stewart further contextualizes this idea by asserting that the object or souvenir “represents not the lived experience of its maker but the “secondhand” experience of its possessor/owner” (Stewart 135). An assemblage of biographical objects can be considered a series of conjunctions, a series of creative acts which create non linear constellations, people as creative acts, experiences and transference. When biographical objects are exchanged between two or more people a connective conjunction can occur, the non-linear constellation finds its place connecting the irregularity of its line, thus reducing sensations such as isolation and loneliness. The object relieves the interiority from the subjective narrative by elevating it to a social objective plane without dismantling its sentimental value. The “I” or the ego is taken out of the narrative. This perhaps challenges an alternate way of storytelling. Sherry Turkle, author of, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, holds that “certain authors reflect on an object’s role in a significant life transition- an object serves as a marker or relationship and emotional connection” (Turkle 5). I think the concept of connection is pivotal in, *Sentiment Debris*. In attempting to disconnect personal narrative from its original vessel, there is still a connection, a bond which cannot be broken without the consent of the possessor. However, even if the possessor disowns the narrative, the narrative does not vanish, it merely changes into a new narrative, an extended narrative and the concatenation evolves. For example, in the making of this work, by listening to the stories of others and selecting personal narratives as anecdotes and biographical objects to support my research and art making, a part of the participant’s story has now become a part of my story.

The objects and stories generously shared with me have allowed my research to develop and elevate my knowledge base and change my perception on the subject. I now have a new body of artwork based on biographies of others which have impressed upon me as an artist and the type of work I am now making. The collective narrative which has vaulted over my personal narrative and art practice has collectively enforced advancement in my knowledge as an artist and researcher which constantly continues to change but never entirely ends. This is what Berardi is speaking about in his book, *AND, Phenomenology of the End*. Another example may be when a biographical or sentimental object is inherited from a deceased family member or friend. This memento is being passed down with a history and that history may be re-told as a form of preservation, but the narrative which comes along with the object will never be the same narrative as when in the possession of its past owner. The narrative now includes the relationship of the new owner's inhabitation, a vessel to remember the past possessor, as well as the narrative which initially was connected to the object. The narrative will never end, it will just always slightly shift and change perhaps until unrecognizable but the spirit of its evolution always persists.

I believe that intellect and emotion are a conjunction through narrative in which the object can be the connection. Philosopher of history, Louis Mink claims that, "narrative is a primary cognitive instrument, an instrument rivaled, in fact, only by theory and metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible" (Braid 129). The sentimental or biographical object becomes a prop to the narrative to further elaborate on the flux of experience. I can appreciate the apprehension some may feel towards inviting emotional paraphernalia to further complicate the already complex infrastructure of one's life. I am empathetic to the concept of biographical objects as "self-extensions" to be overwhelming to some. As if one is not apprehensive by the managerial position to maintain the bodies we inhabit as it is. To further complicate, I am suggesting that our personal narratives also inhabit our possessions and we must also confront that as an extension of one's interiority and personal narrative.

Through my research I have discovered two conflicting theories in regards to the cause and effect of sentimental value in biographical objects. “Sentimental value”, writes Hatzimoysis, “is not something we may try to discover or to achieve either as an end of our activities or as a quality of who we are” (Hatzimoysis 376). Here Hatzimoysis is alluding to idea that sentimental value does not reflect on a quality of who we are. This concept potentially contradicts my use of the term ‘self-extension’ as I insinuate that a quality of a person could reflect through a biographical object. If something is to be considered an extension of oneself then would it not also represent aspects of quality? On the other hand, coming from the perspective of anthropologist, Janet Hoskins, she writes, “People who surround themselves with biographical objects do so to develop their personalities and reflect on them, while consumers of public commodities are de-centered and fragmented by their acquisitions of things, and do not use them as part of a narrative process of self-definition” (Hoskins 78). While it could come off as daunting to think that inanimate objects which decorate our mantels, dazzle our desktops and hang on painted walls, are in fact extensions of personal qualities and emotional complexity; it could be an effective or constructive way to expose and negotiate the complexities of one’s labyrinthine interiority through the objectivity of a self-extension; to navigate the object as a way to objectively self-observe. As an artist, I find this vantage point to have enlightened a new framework; the conceptual possibility to script object biographies as self-extensions into screenplays and installations. Stewart suggests, “Most objects exert their holding power because of the particular moment and circumstance in which they come into the author’s life” (Stewart 8). I believe that is true on many fronts. I think that goes back to Ezra Pounds’ suggestion that artists are the antennas of the human race, if one expands themselves and embraces the potential, like Joseph Cornell endured, the authentic experience will become evident; whether to create the next work of art or to merely be able to get up in the morning with purpose. A stream of interpretative solutions will make them-selves present when acknowledged, they may exist in objects, and one may decide to identify with them as self-extensions, but that is subjective.

Chapter 6: Speculative Conclusions

I would like to begin this speculative conclusion by reflecting on a quote by Janet Hoskins, who writes, “The narration of a life history is what locates and gives body to the value of an object” (Hoskins 71). This is essential to the definition of a self-extension and the relationship a person is able to have with an object. In the context of this research, the relationship between object, experience and person is an example of components working together instead of apart. They are conjunctions which have meaning and are given momentum in order to carry on an aspect of one’s personal narrative. By considering sentimental or biographical objects to be self-extensions, there is the possibility to explore one’s personal narrative through objective collective narratives within the objects in which we live with. Returning to Francis Ponge’s quote in which he says, “The human being is a remarkable body that does not contain its own center of gravity, it needs an object as a mooring place or counterweight” (Ponge 44). In my research and through my artwork I have come to the understanding that biographical objects as self-extensions of one’s personal narrative are just that, a mooring place or counterweight. They are something which stands in as a support system or stands in for someone or something else. Biographical or sentimental objects assimilate the essence or nature of a person or experience which could be impactful to an individual’s narrative at a specific time in one’s life. Biographical or sentimental objects may vary in sentimental value depending on developments in one’s life; relationships may change and one may outgrow certain memories as life evolves. I have found through collected interviews and personal relationships that many people depend on some form of biographical or sentimental objects as a sense of support as well as a means to create connections; self-verifying one’s existence as life advances forward into the future. I am not referring to this validation as a superficial gesture, more so a phenomenological gesture; a collection of objects and experiences which may attribute to the nature of human existence, as we know it or encounter it.

Sentiment Debris, is about signification and the possibility that biographical objects have a function rather than just being memorable vessels of past. Through this research I now consider biographical or sentimental objects as tools or props which may assist in a distinct progression in an individual's life in which objects function as mooring places and counterweights. Counterweights are physical visual proof that time has passed, events have occurred and experiences intermingled with non-linear constellations, maturing, and cultivating what is considered to be a personal narrative. Sentimental or biographical objects stand in as progressive nostalgic counterweights. Berardi's theories on connection, conjunction and concatenation offers an optimized perspective by disrupting the linear narrative, by suggesting a continuation of conjunctions rather than a severed end to the story, existence, or personal narrative. Everything is in momentum as a continuing narrative, each connection and conjunction unique and influential constantly informing one another as a collective whole.

It could be possible that a person who lives with sentimental or biographical objects may need to surround themselves with said counterweights to feel less fear, to feel more love, to not feel alone, to experience a notion of family, friends, inspiration or community. I have many objects that I feel keep me safe, keep the familiar close when I'm far away; I have experienced this since a young child having to travel across Canada to be with either my mother or father since the age of 4. Objects stood in for essential people I needed in my life when I couldn't be with them at different times, and continued to do so as I became an adult.

Just like talismans, once the experience has transferred into the object, an animate persona is present. Sentimental or biographical objects are not necessarily permanent fixtures, and are not replacements of the actual person, experience or memory; and if the object becomes lost or broken the experience and memory still exists and thrives on if need be. I think this is where Berardi's views come into play as well as Ponge's that there isn't an end as such, but a constant continuation with a staggering of mooring places along the way. The object creates a connection, a familiarity and lessens fear when fear gets in the way and has the possibility to strengthen one's personal narrative. Ahmed stated that objects also include the non-physical such as memory; I think that nostalgia and self-reflective anchoring points (object narratives) are what can contribute to drive and give momentum to move forward, into the future with ease in knowing that there is longevity in the investments one has made in this life. *There is no end, merely speculative continuations, speculative configurations, hypothetical, experimental, risky affiliations, with things that were and went, rusty narratives retold, repeated, depleted around the kitchen table, reinforced in the dinner fork, a night to always be remembered. Your eyes, that hair, the words in which you uttered, every December when the night sky turns mauve I remember your banter and the fork who declared our forever. But that was a lifetime ago and now I'm an old Frau cyborg, worth a galvanized fortune, left my limbs to my cats in my most updated Will, oh how the times have changed, there used to be a Judy and there used to be a Susie, and there used to be a Larry but that's all over now. I've got this bust I made at Slade from the turn of the century, a radio that used to tell me what's new in the 1920's, the dress I wore when knocking on my teenage door. This is, this was, my big debut and in my dust are rocks and rings, necklaces, and crystals, picture frames and perfume, flasks from the good times and flasks from the bad and a cascade of costume jewelry, oh legacy, dear legacy you are not me but you are the things before me which I guarded in my sleep, protected the heap and dusty debris of memories from I and others. Oh let us sleep, oh let us sleep, I speculate future encounters.*



Jessie Holmes, Ericas Candle from Sentiment Debris, plaster cast, 3''x1.5'' 2020.

Stay safe, stay healthy.

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