

A Psychogeographical Approach to Photographing Loneliness in  
the Urban Environment

By

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# Abstract

Loneliness, is a universal theme in art with its many expressions and underlying causes a focus of exploration for individuals across space and time. As an international student identifying as a visitor from China, the solitude I encountered during my time in Toronto was surprising and intense. This sparked a profound reflection on the origins of this sense of loneliness within me.

My thesis reflects upon my personal experiences abroad as an international student to examine loneliness and alienation among individuals. I use photography and images as my main creative mediums. In the process, I capture photographs and document my observations, gradually producing visual works that portray the symbolic and actual landscapes that convey the sense of individual isolation within a cityscape, specifically downtown Toronto.

Throughout the creative process, I integrate documentation from my current residential environment, layering it over depictions of individual isolation and landscapes to establish a nuanced dialogue between Individual residential environments and urban landscapes. I discovered a close connection between my emotions and the images I captured, visualizing an archive of experiences of a diaspora in a foreign land.

## **Acknowledgment**

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# Introduction

## My Archive

In 2021 I made the decision to continue my studies abroad. I come from Xi'an, an historically rich city located in the central region of China where I finished my undergraduate studies. Before I came to study in Canada I thought it would be fun to learn and live in an unfamiliar place on my own, and at the time I didn't have a lot of concerns, but also, it is an adventure for me. Before going abroad, my research focused on family and intimate relationships through photography and moving images. However, my exploration of these topics was temporarily suspended during my study abroad period. Nonetheless, this hiatus provided me with time to delve into personal feelings and themes of self-discovery.

Living and studying by myself, I started to gradually focus on issues related to personal feelings of loneliness and isolation during my two years in Toronto. Since it was my first time studying abroad, the loneliness that I had felt was magnified by being in such a big environment, and the images, things, and buildings that I saw and experienced seemed to be closely related to it. My life here changed from the colorful life in which I could always be with family and friends in China to the simple and monotonous life in Toronto. While studying abroad, I have experienced the loneliness and alienation that comes from being in a foreign country. So I began to think and reflect on why this feeling of loneliness was so strong. Gradually, I noticed and paid

attention to things in my daily life, such as the landscapes I saw on my way to school or the isolated individuals I encountered on my walks in the city.

These surroundings seemed to resonate with my sense of loneliness and alienation.

The issue of feeling lonely has been a persistent concern for me during my two years of studying abroad. So, I have decided to delve deeper into it and make it the focus of my thesis research.

My thesis work is an interdisciplinary exploration of loneliness through different media and theories in four chapters. In Chapter 1 (theoretical section) I will analyze theories related to loneliness, alienation, and psychogeography, as well as their subtopics, which are diaspora, non-place, and the flâneur. I explore how the medium of photography can be used to create a narrative about loneliness and alienation that is personal to me. Photography, as well as images and video, are mediums I use often. I will be working with photography, as well as archival records such as photobooks, which contain my everyday images, photos from my cell phone albums taken in previous inadvertent moments, and statements from my personal journals and poems. These images and archives carry my personal memories.

In Chapter 2, Methodology, I will use the theories of Guy Debord's *psychogeography* and urban theorist Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* as a combination of visualization methods to create my work. I also reflect on contemporary artist Sophie Calle's work as an important reference for me in the creation of books. Her work inspires me in terms of visualizing narratives and the

connection between words and images. I create a personal narrative about the loneliness and alienation that I have experienced as an international student.

In Chapter 3, Inspiration, Processes, Outcomes, describes my production. I will detail the entire process of production and outcome. In the outcomes section of this chapter, I will look at the work of contemporary photographer Paolo Emanuele Barretta, and American Realism painter Edward Hopper as references, and case studies to develop an analysis and critical dialogue with my works.

Moreover, formal and as well as compositional visual references are extracted from the photographic works of Sophie Calle and Wolfgang Tillmans.

In Chapter 4, Conclusion, I will summarize the research, creative process, and final outcomes of my thesis. Additionally, I will analyze the shortcomings in my creative process, then elucidate my "method" - an autobiography of a diaspora.



# Chapter 1 Theory

For international students studying abroad, it is not uncommon to feel lonely and alienated because of being in a foreign country and at the same time temporarily missing intimate relationships, and contact with family and friends.<sup>1</sup> I will analyze the sources of this loneliness from intimacy, and social connection in the first section.

## 1.1 Loneliness

In the last 50 years, publications on loneliness have steadily increased with more documentation on global migration, building upon the scholarship of previous decades. Daniel Perlman, scholar and researcher in ‘Intimacy’, mentioned in the chapter of his work *Loneliness*, that “loneliness is an unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relationships is significantly deficient in quantity or quality.”<sup>2</sup> This article summarizes and outlines a definition of the types of loneliness and what creates loneliness within a person. It also provides a conceptual model to understand the phenomena associated with loneliness. At the end of this article, a treatment program for overcoming loneliness is provided.<sup>3</sup>

To illustrate a framework for comprehending loneliness and its associated phenomena

*Figure 1* proposes that loneliness arises when there exists a substantial disparity

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<sup>1</sup> Başak Bilecen, Isabell Diekmann, and Thomas Faist, “Loneliness among Chinese International and Local Students in Germany: The Role of Student Status, Gender, and Emotional Support,” *European Journal of Higher Education* 0, no. 0 (2023): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2023.2215992>.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, “Loneliness,” *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, 2.

between an individual's existing social connections and the social connections they desire or require.<sup>4</sup>

This model played a significant role during the initial stages when I grappled with feelings of solitude and embarked on introspection to understand its roots. During moments of solitude at home, I couldn't help but reminisce about the cherished memories with my family and friends from my hometown—these were the social bonds I longed for but were temporarily absent.

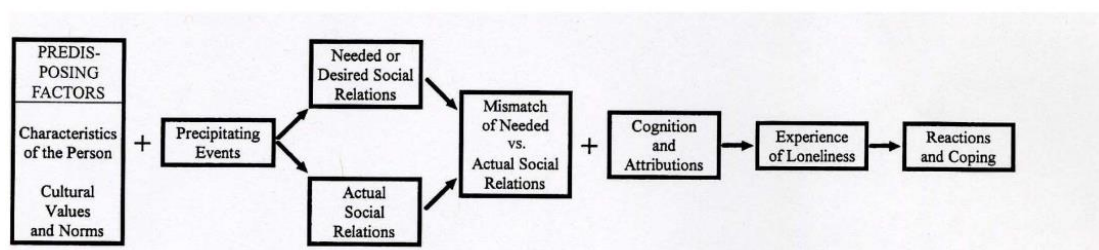


Figure 1 A model of the experience of loneliness, “loneliness”, Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, “Loneliness,” *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*, 1998, 2.

Perlman and Peplau summarize two types of loneliness:

Social isolation and emotional loneliness.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Emotional loneliness: the type of loneliness that occurs when a person lacks a relationship or attachment object, such as the close attachment object that parents provide for their children.*
2. *Social isolation: the subjective heart unfitness that people experience when their social network is significantly lacking in*

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, “Loneliness.”

*quality or quantity.*<sup>6</sup>

Their analysis enabled me to better understand and define the type of my own feelings of loneliness, reflecting on how I missed my family and friends. In my case, both definitions of Perlman and Peplau's loneliness occur.

*Figure 1* also highlights how cultural values and norms play a crucial role in shaping an individual's susceptibility to loneliness. In the United States, culture is marked by a strong emphasis on personal independence and the pursuit of individual objectives, often prioritizing these over social connections. Conversely, in various cultures across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, a more collectivist approach prevails. These cultures prioritize values such as familial loyalty, adherence to group norms, and fostering harmonious social relationships within one's community. Cultural disparities in values, such as individualism and collectivism, can significantly impact the experience of loneliness.<sup>7</sup>

This factor contributes significantly to my experience of loneliness. During my study abroad, I encountered challenges in socializing due to divergent cultural values. As a result, I found myself navigating most aspects of daily life alone during this period.

This transition proved to be particularly challenging for me, especially considering the strong support network I had back home comprised of friends and family.

Research studies in a BBC loneliness survey, which was conducted in 2023<sup>8</sup>,

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Perlman and Letitia Peplau, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Kangning Zheng et al., "The Experience of Loneliness among International Students Participating in the BBC

produced a report on a survey of international students who feel lonely in the UK. The study samples international students from different countries and ages and gives different reasons and explanations based on interviews. According to the research, 'It is thought to be prevalent among international students, but few studies have investigated this.'<sup>9</sup> International students feel lonely and do not adapt to their surroundings because of the unfamiliar environment, and some of them even suffer from depression. In the BBC Loneliness study, the authors used a model-type test to select international students of different ages to go for interviews and research, and this survey is known as the largest loneliness survey in the world.

The researchers identified six themes of negative psychological and social aspects of loneliness, namely: the distressing experience of being alone; the disrupted ability to make meaningful connections; a sense of entrapment in a state of loneliness; the awareness of others' stigmatizing perceptions of oneself as lonely; and perceptions of positive aspects of loneliness.<sup>10</sup>

The researcher write: "the first theme delineated specific negative aspects of loneliness, but these negative aspects also permeated themes two to five."<sup>11</sup> The sixth theme (Perceptions of positive aspects of loneliness) overlapped with other themes only in that a small number of individuals described both positive and negative

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Loneliness Experiment: Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Survey Data," *Current Research in Behavioral Sciences* 4 (January 1, 2023): 100113, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crbeha.2023.100113>.

<sup>9</sup> Zheng et al.

<sup>10</sup> Zheng et al., P5.

<sup>11</sup> Zheng et al., "The Experience of Loneliness among International Students Participating in the BBC Loneliness Experiment."

aspects of loneliness, albeit with negative experiences more dominant.<sup>12</sup> The six themes were therefore not mutually exclusive.”<sup>13</sup> The fourth item in the theme of the survey results “sense of entrapment in a state of loneliness” gave me a deep impression that I could relate to.<sup>14</sup> When international students feel lonely, it is also accompanied by a sense of helplessness and powerlessness.<sup>15</sup> These feelings also happen to be reflected in my photography, namely the seemingly common landscapes.

## 1.2 Diaspora

For international students, loneliness is even more inevitable in a study abroad experience. Such a feeling made me start researching and thinking about the concept of ‘Diaspora’. In an article on the study of the Japanese diaspora, the author, and researcher, Wolfram Manzenreiter, defines it this way: ‘diasporas are often in exile dreaming and fantasizing about going home.’<sup>16</sup> This is one of the premises that defines diaspora, where living in one place and dreaming of another is at the heart of the fragility of the diaspora. This article delineates the primary components of diaspora theory and posits that the conceptual differentiation between diaspora and homeland should be construed through the dynamic interplay of space, time, and identity.<sup>17</sup> Different cultures and backgrounds are also felt as the diaspora wanders into other countries and spaces. When they feel the difference in cultural

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<sup>12</sup> Zheng et al.P6

<sup>13</sup> Zheng et al.P6

<sup>14</sup> Zheng et al.P6

<sup>15</sup> Zheng et al.P6

<sup>16</sup> Wolfram Manzenreiter, “Squared Diaspora: Representations of the Japanese Diaspora across Time and Space,” *Contemporary Japan* 29, no. 2 (July 3, 2017): 106–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2017.1351021>.

<sup>17</sup> Manzenreiter, p3.

backgrounds, they often feel nostalgic for their hometowns. The isolation I feel in my "exile" life also makes me feel a strong desire to go back home, and this is where the fragility comes from. I frequently find myself yearning to return to my hometown. Moreover, whenever I consume food from China or purchase products originating from my hometown, it evokes vivid memories of my life there before I embarked on my study abroad journey. In this way, I also identify with the many diaspora communities in Canada who are in one place called home and dreaming of another time and place simultaneously.

Dr. Ben Lazare Mijuskovic, renowned and prolific philosopher, and author, claimed: 'In principle, loneliness is considered to be temporary. Some philosophers, however, are convinced that loneliness and the struggle for intimacy are the essence of human existence and, as such, are permanent and universal experiences.' He has analyzed the different aspects of loneliness in the fields of philosophy and psychology, literature, and also emphasizes and analyzes the connection between loneliness and intimacy in his text, which allowed me to better understand both in my subsequent work and to more fully translate the theory into practice.<sup>18</sup>

As Lazare Mijuskovic explains in his book *Psychiatry*, every meaning and concept holds a profound counterpart, and the antithesis of loneliness is intimacy.<sup>19</sup> Lazare Mijuskovic argues that "intimacy embodies a reflexive, inclusive sense of mutual

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<sup>18</sup> Ben Lazare Mijušković, *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature*, Third edition (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc, 2012)p22.

<sup>19</sup> Mijušković, P41.

solidarity or belonging to another unique being. Any imposed segregation inevitably leads to detrimental feelings of loneliness and abandonment.”<sup>20</sup> Loneliness begins to accompany us when we briefly lose intimate connections or familiar communities. Before I studied abroad, I also felt lonely when I was alone, but those were short-lived episodes because there were ways to regulate it. For example, going to meet and talk to friends or sitting down at home and talking to family, this approach also coincides with what Lazare Mijuskovic mentioned, which is a temporary relief from loneliness but doesn't change the essence of the situation. However, in my experience of loneliness as an international student, I also feel as though I am evered from all my intimate relationships, such as family and friends. This is also identified as the primary source of my sense of loneliness, according to Lazare Mijuskovic's theory.

### **1.3 Alienation**

At the same time, the terms "alienation" and "isolation" became important concepts to me. In the realm of social sciences, alienation denotes a condition of feeling estranged or disconnected from one's surroundings, labor, its outcomes, or even one's own sense of self. Despite its widespread use in scrutinizing modern existence, alienation persists as a concept with ambiguous connotations. Within this framework, social isolation is defined as a sense of loneliness or exclusion within social relationships (such as among members of minority groups).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Mijušković, P40.

<sup>21</sup> “Alienation | Causes, Effects & Solutions | Britannica,” January 12, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/alienation-society>.

Renowned American sociologist and psychologist, Melvin Seeman, defines in his article five sociological dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. In reviewing the article the definitions of ‘Powerlessness’ and ‘Isolation’ resonate with my own experiences and feelings. Regarding the definition of ‘isolation’ Seeman provides examples to illustrate the disconnect between intellectuals and popular culture, which results in alienation due to the inability to adapt and integrate into the current environment.<sup>22</sup> Simultaneously, these two conditions interact with each other; that is, once a sense of ‘powerlessness’ arises, feelings of ‘isolation’ follow suit.<sup>23</sup>

However, in my case, powerlessness is more about feeling incapable of achieving one's desired objectives or goals. This reflects the dilemma I face when encountering unfamiliar urban landscapes which makes me feel isolated because they are not the familiar communities or sceneries I am accustomed to, and my sense of powerlessness stems from the temporary separation from my hometown.

## 1.4 Non-place

In the landscapes I photographed, people were largely absent, which got me thinking about the concept of the ‘Non-place’, environments documented and captured as public places in the city such as bus stations, piers, bus stops, and terminals. Marc

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<sup>22</sup> Melvin Seeman, “On The Meaning of Alienation,” *American Sociological Review* 24, no. 6 (1959): 7, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2088565>.

<sup>23</sup> Healy, M, “Theories of Alienation- Seeman and Marx,” in *Marx and Digital Machines: Alienation, Technology, Capitalism*. Pp.7-26. (London:University of Westminster Press., 2020), p3, <https://doi.org/10.16997/book47.b>.



Augé, the French anthropologist, defines Non-places as types of places that anyone can feel 'at home' in them regardless of their actual background because they are equally alienating to everyone.<sup>24</sup> I interpret this to mean that if we travel to a country that is culturally alien to us, then the most familiar and welcoming aspect of that country is its general non-places, which in this case seem to be universal.<sup>25</sup> He was the first one who came up with and defined the concept of non-place.

This concept really resonated with me and my photo and studio work. That is the images of the landscapes that I document and photograph also all seem to be alienated. They appear to be alienated from their environment.

In Toronto, there are also many such places, such as lakeside marinas or bus stops on the street and some small public parks. I was also discreetly and personally looking out for these places as I photographed them in trying to find a connection between my own feelings of loneliness. These sites are common in everyday life and are often easily overlooked. While they are all highly functional, they can also be alienating and lonely.

The appearance of nonplace in images or photography is often inseparable from the words alienation and loneliness. Jessie Martin, a professor at The University of West London, mentioned in their article *Deconstructing Understandings of Emptiness: An Examination of Representations of Transitory Space and 'Non-place' in Photography*:

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<sup>24</sup> Marc Augé and Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Reprint (London: Verso, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> "Non-Place," Oxford Reference, accessed January 11, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100237780>.

“In teaching photography, photographs of empty urban spaces consistently precipitate discussions on alienation, loneliness, and dislocation, responses associated with placelessness. There seems to be an almost psychological pull towards such photographs as traces of these emotions that viewers can invest in and personally relate to.”<sup>26</sup> Martin ‘s students commonly explore the empty city as an image to express the inner sense of loneliness and alienation. Urban landscapes are also explored through the use of color in the creation of photographs to mobilize people's senses and emotions. Like the information and content of Martin’s own works, grey tones are attached to empty urban landscapes, and most of their works are also created at night. Martin’s own work *Night moves* has a certain narrative quality to it, usually a view of the artist walking through the streets of London, and enough to give a strong sense of detachment.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.5 Flâneur

Flâneur is a French term coined by nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire to identify an observer of modern urban life.<sup>28</sup> Flâneur and flaneuses are observers, perceivers, recorders, and re-narrators of the city; wandering and loitering are their way of life.

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<sup>26</sup> Jessie Martin, “Deconstructing Understandings of Emptiness: An Examination of Representations of Transitory Space and ‘Non-Place’ in Photography,” in *Watching, Waiting*, ed. Sandra Kržić Roban and Ana Šverko, The Photographic Representation of Empty Places (Leuven University Press, 2023), 275–304, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv3596qdx.P15>.

<sup>27</sup> Jessie Martin, “C.V.,” Mysite, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://www.jessiebiancamartin.com/c-v>.

<sup>28</sup> Tate, “Flâneur,” Tate, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/flaneur>.

In an article by Gregory Shaya, a historian primarily focused on 19th-century European and French history, he mentions, for Walter Benjamin, the flâneur represented not only a modern artist and observer of humanity but also someone keenly attuned to the hustle and bustle of modern urban life—a sort of amateur detective and investigator of the city. Moreover, the flâneur serves as a symbol of urban alienation under capitalism.<sup>29</sup>

It is evident that the flâneur emerged as a product of 19th-century European capitalism and likewise became subject to capitalist alienation.<sup>30</sup> In contemporary terms, photographers who roam the streets capturing urban landscapes are often referred to as "armed" flâneurs.<sup>31</sup>

In Kirsten Seale's article, she mentions, "He metamorphoses, palimpsest-like, into contemporary incarnations -- ragpicker, stalker, photographer -- by adding and/or erasing layers, while retaining the ghostly residue of the original archetype."<sup>32</sup>

Flâneur navigates through the urban spaces of modernity, yet perpetually seeks the past. He rekindles memories of the city, rejecting any self-authority of technologically reproduced images.<sup>33</sup> This intriguing definition prompted me to reflect on my actions as a "foreigner" in Toronto, photographing landscapes and feeling like an isolated

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<sup>29</sup> Gregory Shaya, "The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860–1910," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/109.1.41>.

<sup>30</sup> Shaya, p2.

<sup>31</sup> Catherine Chan, "Effects of Internet on the Concept of Street Photographer as Flâneur: Interaction between Virtual Spaces and Physical Cityscape," 3, accessed March 7, 2024, [https://www.academia.edu/10242182/Effects\\_of\\_Internet\\_on\\_the\\_Concept\\_of\\_Street\\_Photographer\\_as\\_Fl%C3%A2neur\\_Interaction\\_between\\_Virtual\\_Spaces\\_and\\_Physical\\_Cityscape](https://www.academia.edu/10242182/Effects_of_Internet_on_the_Concept_of_Street_Photographer_as_Fl%C3%A2neur_Interaction_between_Virtual_Spaces_and_Physical_Cityscape).

<sup>32</sup> "Kirsten Seale - 'Eye-Swiping London: Iain Sinclair, Photography and the *Flâneur*' (Literary London Journal)," accessed April 29, 2024, <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2005/seale.html>.

<sup>33</sup> "Kirsten Seale - 'Eye-Swiping London: Iain Sinclair, Photography and the *Flâneur*' (Literary London Journal)."

individual. Through this process, I have endeavored to find parallels between myself and the flâneur, viewing the images I capture as a sort of archive or diary of the flâneur's experiences as an observer not from the same time or place.

## 1.6 Psychogeography

Psychogeography is the most direct theory and methodology for me to explore the feelings of loneliness and alienation. The notion of psychogeography was defined in 1955 by Guy Debord, a founding member of the International Situationists. The avant-garde movement Situationist International was an international movement of artists, writers, and poets who aimed to break down the barriers between culture and everyday life. It is meant to be an immersive experience of urban architectural space during the exploration of a city, allowing pedestrians to detach themselves from their measurable paths and gain a new understanding and appreciation of the urban landscape. Debord's description of psychogeography suggests that it could dedicate itself to studying the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment—whether consciously organized or not—on the emotions and behavior of individuals.<sup>34</sup> It also emphasizes focusing on people's psychological experience in the city, the impact of emotions and behaviors, as well as digging into forgotten and marginalized built landscape environments, invariably emphasizing the importance of people's subjective will on the city.<sup>35</sup> In modern life, people can get so busy that they

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<sup>34</sup> Debord Guy, "The Situationist International Text Library/Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," p1, accessed September 29, 2023, <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/2>.

<sup>35</sup> Tate Museum, "Psychogeography," Tate, accessed September 29, 2023, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/terms/p/psychogeography>.

forget to discover these marginalized urban landscapes, whether they are nice to look at or novel or ugly. I noticed this when I first started using psychogeography methods in my photographic works. Applying the methods and logic of psychogeography, I gradually explore the impact of urban landscapes on my emotions during the process of photography, providing me with a perfect methodology. As it encourages people to discover overlooked aspects of the city, such as seldom-trodden forest paths or inconspicuous individuals and objects along the roadside, I have also gradually identified what I want to capture with my camera through practical experience.

Emma Arnold, a professor from the University of Oslo whose research focuses on sociology and human geography, discusses the concept of the flâneur and psychogeography. In her article, *The Flâneur, Wandering and Strolling Through the City*, Arnold further explores the novelty of urban surroundings, drawn to the diverse landscapes the city offers.<sup>36</sup> This approach also presents a new perspective on viewing the city from one's standpoint. The flâneur's promenades are intricately linked to the notion of walking advocated by psychogeography.<sup>37</sup> Exploring the novel aspects of the city through leisurely reflective walks and discovering and documenting unnoticed details provided me with valuable insights during my practice. It was through this process that I gradually unearthed overlooked landscapes or individuals, which became akin to self-portraits of my experiences during my study abroad.

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<sup>36</sup> Emma Arnold, "Aesthetic Practices of Psychogeography and Photography," *Geography Compass* 13, no. 2 (2019): e12419, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12419>.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold, 3.

In this chapter, I provide a summary of theories that have deeply influenced me, including important explanations of concepts such as non-place and diaspora. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the methodology I employ in my creative process, detailing the application of psychogeography and explaining the use of tracing paper as a medium in my creative methodology.

# Chapter 2 Methodology

## 2.1 Psychogeography

Psychogeography has gradually emerged as a research approach in urban culture, urban architecture, and related industries and professions. Researchers from different disciplines have found that this psychogeographical approach to walking is well-suited for exploring the diversity of perspectives individuals hold toward the same city.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the relationship between photography and psychogeography, Professor Emma Arnold also argues that urban walking and photography are intuitive and sensory means of exploring and capturing various aspects of the city. Both photography and psychogeography can be considered aesthetic pursuits, as they require sensory engagement within urban spaces. Their integration not only contributes to a study of the city but also a study of the experience of the city.<sup>39</sup>

In my process of research and work, photography and psychogeography are inseparable. As I contemplate my feelings toward urban landscapes, I continuously document them with my camera, thus establishing a close connection between the two. I use a psychogeographical perspective to analyze the individual's sense of isolation in a new urban, geographic environment, by allowing myself to walk around the city without following a set route and documenting it with photography and the

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<sup>38</sup> Arnold, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Arnold, p3.

collection of objects. I also create a map to illustrate how I wander and walk through the city.

These landscapes are the ones I pay the most attention to daily. However, living in cities and bound to established paths, people often neglect their feelings and psychological experiences of objective things such as landscape and architecture.

When I notice these things, my most intuitive feeling is that they convey melancholy and loneliness to me. Therefore, I will use poetry and images to express the loneliness and alienation I feel in the city of Toronto through the use of psychogeography. This is reflected in my book of graphic photographs, where I record my feelings about the landscapes and individuals I photograph in the present moment while taking the images. This be is laid out in the book, forming a logical archive of personal narratives that link image and text.

## **2.2 The Image of The City**

The theory of Kevin Lynch regarding representation of space and place is also one of my relevant methodologies and a reference used in my creative process. Kevin Lynch is an influential American urban planning expert who helped establish the urban planning system, and his theoretical research has opened up a new world for the study of urban design theory. In his book *The Image of The City* he talks about the face of the city, its importance and variability. The landscape of the city is equally visible, memorable, and a source of delight among the many roles of the city. Giving visual form to the city is a special and fairly new design problem. The author investigates



and analyzes the urban imagery of three U.S. cities, Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles by both map sketches and verbal descriptions, proposes concepts about public imagery, and discusses issues such as urban imagery and its elements, and urban form.<sup>40</sup> He conducts a more in-depth study on the elements of human "urban perception" imagery, interprets the methods of interpreting and creating cities from the perspective of environmental psychology, and summarizes the study of the material form of urban imagery into five elements - **roads, boundaries, zones, nodes, and landmarks**. While this book is intended to be a methodology for urban planners and architects, it has been a great help and contribution to the landscape planning industry. However, there are still relevant theories in it that have inspired and helped me a lot in creating my work. During my production process of exploration through urban wandering, I took my camera and shot places while taking notes of landscapes located in different locations, and applying and combining the 5 elements summarized by Kevin Lynch, scurrying and shuttling to different regions to find representations of and answers to my questions of alienation and isolation. My exhibition reassembles my experience of the city within the 5 elements as the grounding principles for the city's image.

## 2.3 Tracing Paper as Method

Tracing paper or transparency paper is a common paper used for commercial printing, and it is not uncommon to find it among the pages of some advertising brochures. At

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<sup>40</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 33. print, Publication of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 2008), p14.

the same time, many artists and designers also use tracing paper to trace and build up the basic lines in the process of drawing sketches. Due to the special material and presentation effect, it is usually frosted and the content of the next layer of paper can be seen through the light source. I noticed this special material when I was thinking about the presentation, and I also researched the visual presentation of tracing paper in some art design books. The effect of being able to see the next layer of paper is a good reflection of my idea about the work. For example, when I overlap scenes of my own residence with the outdoor cityscape, I can get a new image as shown in the picture (*Figure 2*).



*Figure 2* Image set from ‘Untitled Archive’ Exhibition,12”x17”.Yitong Wang, 2024.

This effect also expresses and emphasizes my understanding of alienation and isolation. As for me, an international student, alienation and loneliness are generated from the inside out, and these two different types of landscapes and images are inseparable. The use of tracing paper for the print allowed me to better reflect this atmosphere.

I also utilize tracing paper in the creation of the book archive, which contains poems that I have personally written, and they go throughout the book in a diary-like format. When flipping through the book, one can directly see the effect of overlapping images and words on the paper, and the tracing paper gives a sense of the accumulation of time.

## **2.4 Design Book/Archive Narration As Method**

Reference Artist: Sophia Calle

As Rosa Saverino, researcher, and Ph.D. graduate from the University of Toronto claims in her thesis:<sup>41</sup> "The main objective of our thesis on word and image relations is to assign an innovative character to the life narratives of Barthes and Calle. It is through their manipulation of visual and verbal phenomena that Barthes and Calle are able to forge complex links between text and image that transcend the boundaries of autobiographical writing to express identity as a cultural and artistic phenomenon."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Rosa Saverino, "Word and Image Relations in The Autobiographical Narratives of Roland Barthes and Sophie Calle" (Thesis, 2013), <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/68962>.

<sup>42</sup> Saverino, p133.

This kind of creative and poetic connection between words and images can present a different visual experience. The viewers can be guided visually by the images and thus better read the narrative part of the text in the work. Such a presentation is unique and innovative in the narrative genre. In the analyzed autobiographical narratives, the relationship between text and image plays a crucial role in the construction of the autobiographical subject. In the narratives of Roland Barthes and Sophie Calle, photography interacts with language to ultimately present the author's self as a marker of difference.<sup>43</sup>

Narrative forms of composition are something I've been focusing on and practicing. Short and effective language is usually the most powerful. I have a habit of writing down my feelings based on the pictures I take in my daily life, so I try to incorporate them into my creations. Whenever I want to reminisce, these words and pictures are my own "memory archive". For my book, I drew on Sophie Calle's work and visual presentation. Sophie Calle is one of today's great conceptual artists who engages in writing, photography, installation art, and filmmaking that is provocative and voyeuristic. Her approach is often participatory and incorporates elements of surveillance. Notable projects include acting as a hotel maid and rummaging through guests' belongings; inviting strangers to lie in her bed for hours and recording the results in a daily diary. Her works are often highly provocative, but the narrative

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<sup>43</sup> Saverino, p133.

about the juxtaposition of images and text in her work Autobiographies *The Family*  
(2023) <sup>44</sup> inspired me a lot.

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<sup>44</sup> Link to Sophie's work:[https://www.artnet.com/artists/sophie-calle/autobiographies-the-family-a-ffXSDsH1OyG\\_R8uVDtufKg2](https://www.artnet.com/artists/sophie-calle/autobiographies-the-family-a-ffXSDsH1OyG_R8uVDtufKg2)

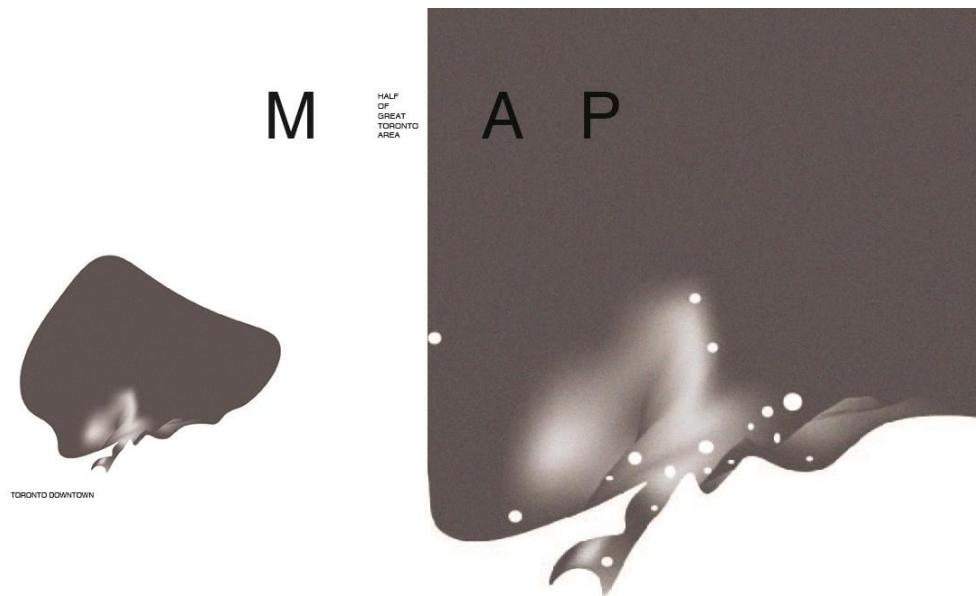
## Chapter 3 Inspiration, Process, Outcome

I have divided my work into two parts, the first part is the photography on tracing paper and hot press paper, which covers two groups of photography. I draw on Paolo Barretta, Edward Hopper, and Wolfgang Tillman's work as my main references. The second part is a photo design book, which is a personal narrative of my experience of the city of Toronto. Both use a psychogeographic methodology and combine it with literary expression in the form of poetry to reflect the loneliness and alienation I feel as an international student in a foreign country. The design book contains poems written by me combined with images to present an archive about myself as, an individual and flaneur, and also I draw upon Sophie Calle's work as a reference.

### 3.1 Designed Book/Archive

I have structured and designed a map of my activity area. On this map (*Figure 3*), I have also marked the locations where I frequent, akin to a heat map. Guy Debord also mentioned the necessity of creating a map while wandering in the city, which greatly aided me in the production of my work.

I also simultaneously reference Kevin Lynch's theoretical approach, paying attention to certain paths or streets, which provides a basic framework for me as I roam the city. The overlapping use of these two methods results in a diversity of landscapes and scenes in the images I take.



*Figure 3* Untitled Archive. Yitong Wang, 2024

From the image, one can discern my range of activities, from the contours and shapes, it is also evident that the map is based on the downtown area of Toronto. I have also marked the locations where I have been photographing.

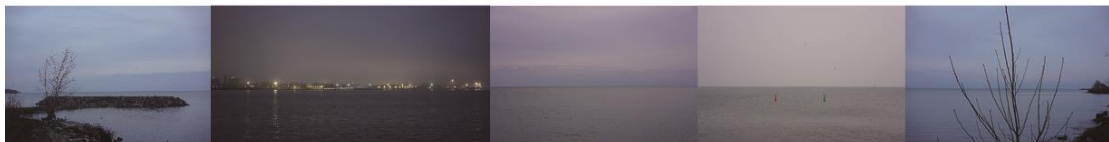
In the process of creating my artwork, I depict the cityscape that I encounter daily, often featuring a few isolated individuals. The reason I capture these commonplace cityscapes is that the absence of seemingly ordinary, tidy, and magnificent landscapes can evoke feelings of powerlessness for people in a metropolis like Toronto.

Moreover, observing these formal landscapes also deepens my sense of loneliness. In later pictures, I attempted to adjust color tones using software, aiming to reduce the vibrancy of the scene, as individuals experiencing loneliness often perceive their surroundings in subdued gray tones. I will continue to document these objects already

present in the landscape. At times, I feel that these seemingly estranged objects mirror my own state—lonely and struggling to integrate seamlessly into the environment.

Since psychogeography emphasizes exploring cities by following non-established routes, the first place that comes to mind whenever I pick up my camera is around Lake Ontario. Perhaps because my hometown is a landlocked city, it also doesn't have the same urban layout as Toronto where you can see large expanses of water in the city center. So these are new to me as well. When I feel depressed inside, a walk around the lake is often the last way for me to detox and soothe those emotions. In such a noisy and busy city, it was as if the only place I could feel a trace of silence was at the lake.

AROUND LAKE



*Figure 4* Untitled Archive. Yitong Wang, 2024



At the same time lakeside piers, and beach seats, are also a kind of non-place for us, they represent the very common, but alienating space for each person. Therefore, both in the books and in the photography, I have included scenes from the lakeside. In the book presentation (*Figure 4*), I have assembled many lake views together, each representing scenes from different time periods and locations. This serves as a unique memory archive for me as well.

### **3.2 Phone album**

The appeal of the documentary nature of a photograph is that it brings back memories of a specific period. That's the reason why I usually have the habit of looking at my phone's photo albums over a period of time. Some unintentional photos in my phone album can also remind me of what I did during that period. It's an "antidote" for me in my current lonely and wandering life. The inclusion of these cell phone album images in the design of the book is a good way to embellish my own experience of living alone in my daily life, as well as to provide visual and conceptual support for the general logic of the book. Some people might utilize journaling to keep track of their daily routine, and for me, images are the special things. Then in the creation of the photography book, to add coherence and completeness to the narrative, I included some screenshots from my personal albums. Some of these images are tattered and incomplete, and I feel that this is an appropriate representation of my attachment to past memories, in fact, it is like a visualization of a personal diary. In the layout of incorporating images from my phone album, I experimented with two different

approaches, as shown in *Figure 5*. Initially, I felt that adding a matte texture using Photoshop would provide the best presentation. However, after attempting to blur the entire image, I found that incorporating both layouts in the book would evoke a stronger sense of longing for intimacy while feeling isolated.



*Figure 5* Untitled Archive. Yitong Wang, 2024

As I mentioned in my Methodology section, I referenced Sophie Calle's autobiographical form of narrative in terms of the logic of the book's creation as well as its visual presentation. Alongside my shots of interiors or cityscapes, I designed a typographical treatment to add verses I have written myself:

Poem: when I enter the winter season, I can't raise my spirits and I often fantasize that I'm back in my hometown when I dream during my naps.

Sometimes I dreamed of going back to my hometown in a state of exile.

Sometimes I also dream of the future in my sleep.



*Figure 6* Untitled Archive. Yitong Wang, 2024

*Figure 6* depicts the chair where I sit on the balcony to smoke, it looks ordinary, but it is the chair that carries a lot of the moments when I feel lonely. So I took my camera to capture this scene and recorded the date for my archives.



*Figure 7* Untitled Archive. Yitong Wang, 2024

Poem: On New Year's Eve, I went to a bar and bought a cup of old-fashioned. After drinking I came out to see a moment like this, in an abandoned space undergoing renovation, but with a piece of warm light.

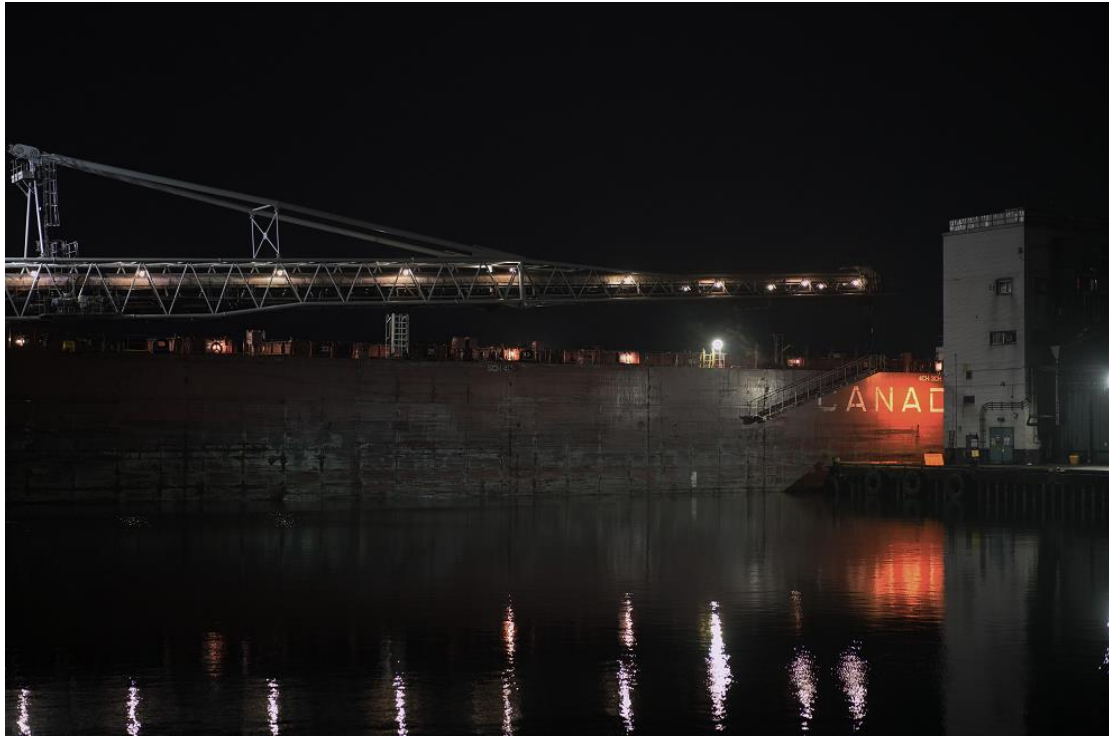
One of the intriguing picture I took came out on New Year's Eve. I was walking by myself that day from Queen Street West to a bar near Front Street, where I sometimes visited alone during the year. Being in the bar environment is both a relief for me and a reminder of the time I spent with my friends back home, all laughing and drinking together. When I came out of the bar after 1am, I saw the scene as shown in the picture, in a space but there is a piece of light shining out, this kind of industrialized

scene and the hustle and bustle of the people on the street into a stark contrast. In the crowd, it was also as if I was the only one who was thinking of my hometown and community. I used gray tones for the design and layout of the entire book, trying to maintain visual unity with my photography.

### **3.3 Photography**

During the process of taking photos, the content of my works encompasses both non-place and individual landscapes and objects. I attempted to juxtapose them to see what kind of effect it would produce. I was also in my daily walks, looking out for these places, and trying to find a connection between my feelings of loneliness and those of the environments I saw. These sites are common in everyday life and are often easily overlooked. While they are all highly functional, they can also be alienating and lonely. I start to focus on finding places like this. As for me, where I am in a foreign country and temporarily lose contact with my family and friends who are far away from me, and this loss of contact is long-term and can only be carried out through social media to connect with each other. All things and difficulties also need to be faced alone, which is a new challenge for me personally. Leaving a familiar community can also be challenging, which means that your circle of friends and surroundings change dramatically when you arrive in a new community. And here I am, in Toronto, and every time I feel like I don't really belong here, my feelings of homesickness are at their peak. This is perhaps an example of the specificity of social alienation, which is particularly pronounced when a person loses contact with a

community.



*Figure 8* Untitled Archive. Digital Photograph, 20"x24". Yitong Wang, 2024

I took this photo (Figure 8) at 6 am by Sugarbeach in Toronto's east end. I have a habit of going for walks around the lake. Sometimes walking by the lake and looking at the calm lake surface can make me feel a short period of tranquility and coziness. As you enter Sugarbeach you will see a dock with some construction going on and a small beach with scattered seating on the side. As I approached and sat on the seats, I realized that this non-place was distinctly different from other non-places in the city. One could sit in the chairs and watch the lake, but the view is blocked by the marina and the huge boats, although this may be temporary. Blocking the view also meant that the ferry diminished the usefulness of the chairs as a public area. It also made me

think that this relationship is the alienation I want to express. I sat there and watched for a long time.

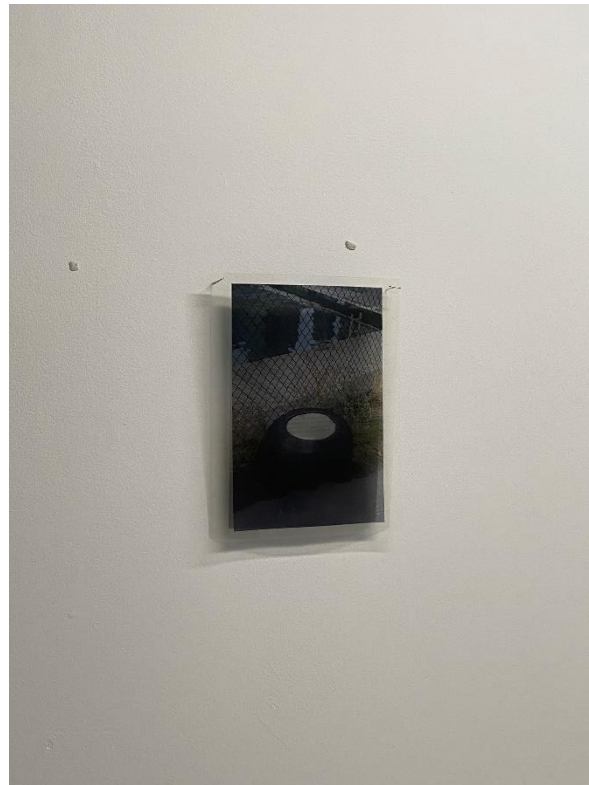
### **3.4 Process of making overlapping photos**

During the production of the photographic series on tracing paper, I experimented with various possibilities. This included adjusting the transparency of the images and trying both the first and second layers of images. Initially, these attempts did not work well, as seen in *Figure 9*, where the lower layer of images was nearly invisible unless illuminated from beneath or behind.



*Figure 9* Work Sample

I also attempted to change the medium by printing the images on transparent film (*Figure 10*). However, this medium also required illumination from behind or adherence to glass to reveal the content of the lower layer. Ultimately, after further experimentation, I found a solution. I printed the lower layer of images on regular paper and the upper layer on sulfuric paper, as shown in *Figure 11*. This resolved a series of imaging issues, and the final exhibition result was quite satisfactory.



*Figure 10* Work Sample 2





*Figure 11* Untitled Archive Exhibition. Double image set. 11”x17”. Yitong Wang, 2024

### **3.5 Photographer as reference**

Contemporary Italian photographer Paolo Emanuele Barretta gives me an important reference point. When you see his work you feel a sense of loneliness and sadness. His work is often filled with dialogues and connections between people and their surroundings. He specializes in placing his models in seemingly constructed environments and sites that feel powerless and alienating. This, coupled with his post-processing and correction of the images, allows the viewer to empathize with his work on a deeper level. In his work series *Middle of Nowhere*, he tries to tell a story of solitude and silence that is far from home. He said this series remains his favorite group of work, and embodies the same state of being as he is now, not knowing where

to go. My work investigates how photography can be used to put one's emotions into a visual form. The uniqueness of photography is the process of putting one's own emotion into the work and then resonating with the audience through the work.<sup>45</sup> This photographer is using his own unique expression to convey to the audience this feeling of powerlessness due to loneliness. So it's easy to see in his work the way photographers usually express loneliness and the visual presentation.<sup>46</sup> Empty scenes, and less saturated colors, are all important references for me in the creation of my vision. Although his work is usually portrait-oriented, I was very inspired by his creation of the environment and sites as a whole. This is reflected in my work with isolated individual objects and landscapes.

### **3.6 Photo on Tracing Paper**

I have simultaneously documented and photographed my living environment, which is precisely what creates an inside-out illumination of the cityscape. It is also a spatial representation of my state of being an international student facing everything alone. I believe that capturing the interior of living spaces, including indoor landscapes or objects, is particularly important because it can complement the outdoor content I photograph. This is a conclusion I arrived at through contemplation during the shooting process.

In this series of photographic creations, my presentation style resembles an

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<sup>45</sup> "Paolo Barretta," Paolo Barretta, accessed March 7, 2024, <https://www.paolobarrettaph.com/>.

<sup>46</sup> Link to Paolo's work :<https://www.paolobarrettaph.com/>

overlapping pattern. Can such a presentation better reflect my feelings of loneliness? It is not difficult to find the answer from the artist's works, in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's work *lover*<sup>47</sup>, he places himself and his lover as a metaphor using two clocks, and as time passes, one of the clocks will inevitably stop moving first. He utilizes such poetic techniques to express his understanding of this relationship and intimacy, and in this way also presents "the feeling of loneliness is never the presence of 1, but the absence of 2."<sup>48</sup> Gonzalez-Torres' visual and metaphoric language also informs my work. I draw on such a similar 'twinning' in my own visual language in my finished set of photographs. As I mentioned above, these works are a reflection of my own sense of self in space, deriving from the overlapping placement of images from the inside out. I was asking myself what are the factors that make me feel alienated when I am in an unfamiliar environment? The answer gradually emerged when I saw the overlapping images.

In this group of works, I have gradually established the direction of the narrative photography I want to do, and I can also see from the images that I am recording the different landscapes and individual objects I see, which is mixed with poetry and my personal understanding and contemplation of loneliness and alienation. However, in my experiments with printing images I realized that when overlapping images are combined individual objects that in their daily lives with urban landscapes and

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<sup>47</sup> Link to Felix Gonzalez-Torres's

[https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81074?classifications=any&date\\_begin=Pre-1850&date\\_end=2024&q+=Felix+Gonzalez-Torres&utf8=%E2%9C%93&with\\_images=1](https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81074?classifications=any&date_begin=Pre-1850&date_end=2024&q+=Felix+Gonzalez-Torres&utf8=%E2%9C%93&with_images=1)

<sup>48</sup> Alex Greenberger, "How Felix Gonzalez-Torres's Unabashedly Political Art Lent Minimalism a New Context," *ARTnews.Com* (blog), May 6, 2021, <https://www.artnews.com/feature/who-was-felix-gonzalez-torres-why-was-he-important-1234592006/>.

individuals with each other, it creates a logic and narrative from the inside out. And this has become extremely crucial in my work. In this series, I take 9 combinations of photography. In each of these 9 groups of photographs, there are memories and narratives of loneliness that belong to me and are about myself.

### **3.7 Wolfgang Tillman's photographic presentation**

In the creation of the photographs, at first, I planned to use a relatively straightforward and traditional presentation, installing this series of images depicting non-place and self-portraits on the 8-meter wall at the Ignite Gallery. Later, when I printed out the samples and laid them out on the wall in the studio, I realized there was a better approach. During this process, it reminded me of Wolfgang Tillman's photo exhibition presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario, which I attended: "To Look Without Fear (2023)". The artist's bold and innovative exhibition style in such a spacious environment left a lasting impression on me.

Tillmans has discarded the common conventions of photographic presentation, continuously evolving the connection between his photographs and the exhibition space. In his installation works, unframed photographs are either taped to the walls or hung from pins, while framed photographs appear alongside magazine pages.<sup>49</sup> "I see my installations as a reflection of the way I see, the way I perceive or want to perceive my environment," Tillmans has said. "They're also always a world that I want to live

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<sup>49</sup> "Wolfgang Tillmans: To look without fear | MoMA," The Museum of Modern Art, accessed March 7, 2024, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5440>.

in.”<sup>50</sup>

In the installation of my exhibitions, I also employ a similar approach as his, for example, using clips to secure the photographs to walls. I believe this method preserves the original appearance of the photograph or image, without the embellishment of fancy or distracting frames.

### 3.8 Exhibition

As according to my planning of the exhibition, the show is divided into three sections. It consists of overlapping images made of tracing paper, designed books, and images of non-places, (*Figure 12*).



*Figure 12* Untitled Archive Exhibition. Installation view, Ignite Gallery. Yitong Wang, 2024

Upon completion of the installation, the overall presentation reflects the logical

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<sup>50</sup> “Wolfgang Tillmans.”

progression of the artwork as anticipated, starting from left to right, beginning with the connections and resonances from indoor to outdoor spaces, transitioning to the documentation of non-places, and culminating in the formation of a personal narrative archive.

During the audience's experience of the artwork, I observed their meticulous examination of the faintly emerging photographs behind the tracing paper, which aligns with the intended effect of intimate interactions with the subject matter and form of the images (*Figure 13*). Additionally, each individual takes care to thoroughly read through my books and often poses questions regarding the use of images within.



*Figure 13* Untitled Archive Exhibition. Book Work. Yitong Wang, 2024.

This marks my first attempt at installing photographic works using Tillman's approach. On the Ignite gallery's 8-meter wall, the overall presentation of the images has designed rhythm and flow and all the images have their own psychological and all the images have their own (*Figure 14*).



*Figure 14* Untitled Archive Exhibition. Ignite Gallery March 15-21, 2024. Toronto Canada.

At the end of the exhibition, I included a quote from the protagonist of Haruki Murakami's novel "*Norwegian Wood*" where he describes and reminisces about his university days while on an airplane.

*"I have this strange feeling that I'm not myself anymore. It's hard to put into words, but I guess it's like I was fast asleep, and someone came, disassembled me, and hurriedly put me back together again. That sort of feeling."*

Murakami portrays this dialogue in the context of the protagonist's conversation with his college classmates on the plane. I read this book when I was in high school, and at

that time, I didn't have much of a reaction. However, now, during my solo journey, I can deeply feel the endless loneliness and confusion embedded in this quote. It resonates with my psychological state when experiencing loneliness. Therefore, I incorporated this quote into the final part of the exhibition as shown in the *figure 15*. I printed it on photo paper using a modified font, presenting it in a manner similar to visual artworks. From the feedback received on-site, it indeed provided a fitting conclusion to the exhibition and summarized it effectively.





*Figure 15* Untitled Archive, Yitong Wang, 2024

## Chapter 4 Conclusion

In summary, I have applied the creative research theories and methodologies in my work to develop and substantiate my creations. Throughout the process, I encountered various challenges, including defining the visualization of loneliness at the outset of the project. During the initial stages of the photographic process, the content of my images was less than satisfactory.

I have utilized a diasporic perspective and my own identity to explore the experiences of an international student and the concept of loneliness in my creative work. This approach has enabled me to construct a narrative that serves as both an exploration of diaspora and an autobiography detailing my personal encounters with loneliness. This not only enabled me to explore and study the sources of my own sense of isolation but also allowed me to present my narrative in a relatively poetic manner. I believe that through the content of my work, many international students and diaspora members can resonate with it on a personal level, despite it being my individual narrative archive.

My entire works and research will continue to evolve, and there are still some shortcomings and issues to address in the final exhibition presentation.

I hope through my personal narrative auto-biography this work resonates with individuals who have undergone similar experiences of drifting abroad, offering a perspective for contemplation. This perspective involves understanding the role of loneliness in my journey through the content I capture, narrate, and document.

However, the impact varies depending on each individual's state and diasporic lived experiences. I now believe it will undoubtedly have a positive effect, as loneliness remains a constant element in our growth process. Therefore, I advocate for viewing it as a 'companion' to be embraced.

# Appendix

## **Diaspora auto-biography (auto-ethnography) as a method**

In the process of my creative work, I initially conducted research on the concept of diaspora. Through the process of creation and observation, I discovered my own "observational approach," which involves transforming seemingly isolated individuals and urban landscapes into visual representations of my personal experiences.

Consequently, I developed a personalized narrative and visual archive. Initially, I had not envisioned a project involving archives, but during the process, I deeply felt the close connection between myself and the seemingly alienated urban environment.

Thus, I decided to consolidate these contents and create my own narrative archive.

My unique observational and research perspective—establishing my own "method" through observing urban and residential environments, as well as personal narrative experiences—presents a distinctive sense of loneliness. I will continue to research and practice related works and content.

## **Oil Paintings Reference**

Photographers also often draw the inspiration they need from the composition and color palette of paintings. If we look through postmodern paintings, it is not difficult to see that many artists have depicted loneliness in their works. For example, Edward Hopper, an American realist painter (July 22, 1882 – May 15, 1967), creates works that are often single men and women and all of them are quiet and despondent, which

gives a sense of stillness and overflowing detachment. *Nighthawks* is considered one of the most famous works of American art of the 20th century. The temporal setting of this singular of works was during World War II, and in them he depicts people in Philadelphia eating in a restaurant at midnight, and the characters feel alienated and disconnected from each other, which is reflected in the viewer's true distance from the interior scene, which is separated by a glass façade with no clear entrance. Although my work does not specifically explore loneliness in the same way as Hopper's other works, which feature a number of shapeless men and women, when he says of the painting, he says "unconsciously, probably, I was painting the loneliness of a large city."<sup>51</sup> Hopper's work has had a profound impact on my understanding and perception of loneliness. This is not only due to his masterful composition but also because of his exceptional use of color and light.

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<sup>51</sup> Sarah Kelly Oehler, "Nighthawks as a Symbol of Hope," March 24, 2020, <https://www.artic.edu/articles/808/nighthawks-as-a-symbol-of-hope>.

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