

“Echoes in the Void: Nostalgic Morse Codes”

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Abstract

This thesis explores how memories—shaped by social, political, and historical forces influence our identity and worldview. Growing up under dictatorship, apartheid, and war, my formative years were marked by fear, stress, and anxiety, alongside moments of joy. Childhood innocence was replaced by a reality of political instability, leaving little room for autonomy. These experiences fostered an early understanding of resilience and oppression that has shaped my adult perspective. By connecting personal trauma with broader collective histories, this multi-sensory immersive installation seeks to highlight the lasting impact of conflict and repression on individuals and communities, emphasizing the role of memory in shaping identity and societal awareness. The work uses several forms to create effect and connect trauma, lived experiences, and reflections of these things on our historical understanding.

1. Immersive, interactive installation
2. Asemic writing
3. The philosophies of Adorno, Haraway, Bhabha, and Dr. Little Bear.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional and unceded lands of Indigenous Nations, who have lived, cared for, and honoured this land for generations. We recognize these communities' profound connection with the land, waters, and ecosystems that have sustained them over millennia. We honour their resilience, cultures, and contributions, which continue to enrich our shared world.

This acknowledgment reminds us of our ongoing responsibility to support Indigenous sovereignty, listen to Indigenous voices, and respect and humble ourselves in stewarding this land. We commit to learning from Indigenous wisdom and histories while fostering relationships that promote justice, equity, and healing.

Dedication

I am grateful to my family—my mom, Dad, and brother—for their immense support. I extend my thanks to my thesis advisors, Natalie Waldburger, Julius Manapul, and Simone Jones. Additionally, I want to acknowledge Jay Irizawa, Michelle Gay, Peter Morin, Amy Swartz, and all the faculty and professors who have supported me throughout this project.

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A Walkthrough of the Exhibition

As the viewer steps into the exhibition, they encounter a dark, silent space. A pathway leading into the space is surrounded on both sides by walls that demarcate the edges of the visible room. They are uncannily at odd angles, seeming to narrow further down the darkened path. These walls, covered in cryptic asemic writing, are punctuated by jagged holes in the drywall revealing a darkened hidden room. As the viewer walks along the path, each footfall sets off a chain reaction within the installation. The pathway ahead narrows progressively, the walls closing in with each step.

The floor beneath their feet is cushiony and unstable, inducing a sense of unease. As the viewer moves down the path, floor sensors embedded in the false floor progressively activate lights and sounds. The layered audio is comprised of a number of recordings including the scratchy sound of writing on drywall, the wail of war sirens, and the distant hum of airport noises. There is a performative element to the work as behind the concealed wall, is the sound of scribbling, an audible reference to the asemic writing visible to the viewer. The sounds, movements, and responses, created by the artist hidden behind the false wall, subtly interact with the viewer's presence.

At the end of the pathway, the sensory experience reaches its peak. The sounds grow louder, and the lighting becomes more intense. Here, the viewer encounters a small suitcase, brimming with debris from the fragmented drywall. The darkness of the space behind them closes in like a void, its dimness and constriction amplifying the sense of isolation and introspection.

In-Process Images



Figure 30: A table covered with tools



Figure 31: A white floor with green lines

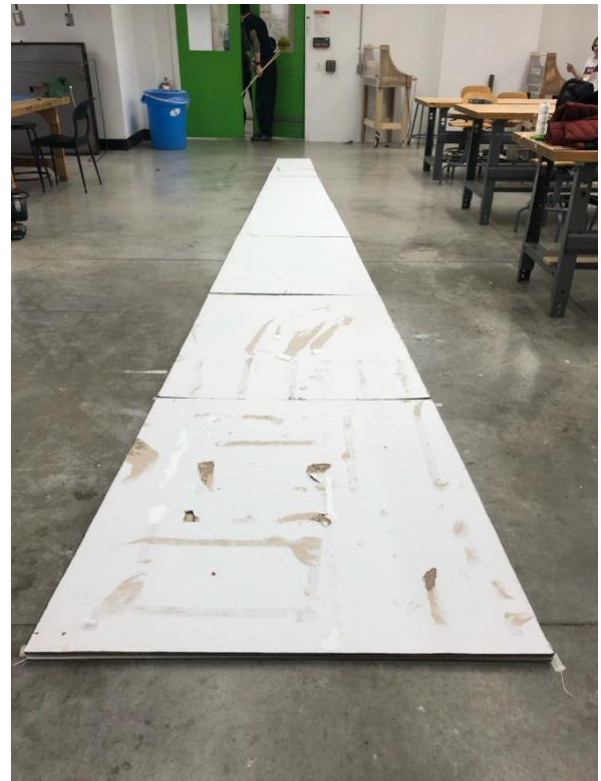


Figure 29: A white rectangular cardboard on a concrete floor



Figure 4: A wooden frame for drywall



Figure 5: A wooden frame for drywall



Figure 6: A wooden frame for drywall

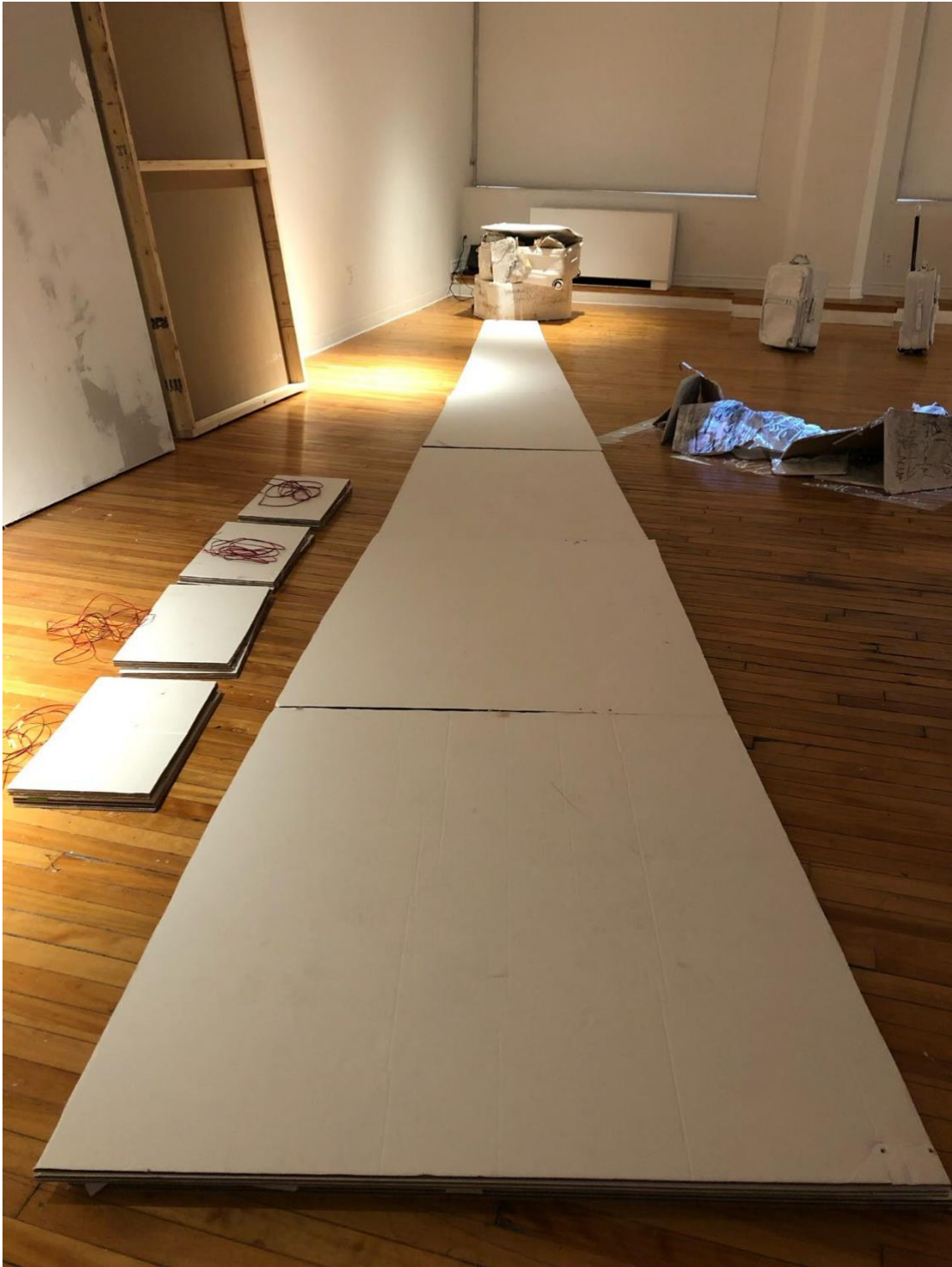


Figure 7: A long white flooring made of cardboard in a room

Introduction

The exhibition “Echoes in the Void: Nostalgic Morse Codes” brings together the themes of communication, memory, and longing. “Echoes in the Void” implies messages and signals sent into emptiness, referring to forgotten voices, distant memories, and attempts to connect across time and space. The “void” symbolizes the unknown space and the state in which we can clear our minds and put away all our thinking, see ourselves, or experience a different reality. The subtitle “Nostalgic Morse Codes” evokes unspoken emotions, fragmented memories, or messages that are difficult to reach their intended recipients. Overall, the title evokes a poetic sense of lost and fragmented communication, where nostalgia and coded signals attempt to bridge the distance between past and present, presence and absence.

The material used in the exhibition itself holds meaning. Drywall serves as a means of privacy and protection; the asemic writing scratched into the drywall, along with the symbolism of the suitcase, represents how this artwork explores the intersection of memory and trauma, transforming personal experiences into a collective narrative. Memory is not just a repository of past experiences; it is the fabric of our identity, shaping how we understand ourselves and the world around us. The intersection of personal memories with broader social, political, and historical contexts creates a unique lens through which we interpret our lives.

I grew up in a country ruled by a radical religious ideology that stripped away basic human rights and freedoms, where normalcy, as it is commonly understood, was a distant dream for many, including myself. The Iran-Iraq War began when I was just five years old and ended when I was thirteen. These formative years were spent under the constant threat of air raids and bombings that marked the images of my school’s shelter and wreckages.

The chilling sounds of explosions, the sight of shattered buildings, the sense of impending

doom and a tiny dark space underground that all the kids in my classroom could hardly fit in, these all became the backdrop of my childhood, leaving an indelible mark on my memory. Instead of enjoying childhood, we were experiencing a world where safety was fleeting, and a pervasive sense of insecurity overshadowed the everyday experience of life. This autoethnographic study is not merely a personal recount of past events; it explores how political instability and social oppression can leave lasting scars on an individual's development. The desire for a normal life was influenced by immigration and the decision to get apart, leave loved ones, and the search to enjoy basic human rights.

Research Objectives

- To explore how childhood experiences of political turmoil and social oppression shape the foundation of personal identity and influence one's worldview throughout adulthood.
- To delve into the role of memory in shaping individual and collective histories, how personal and collective memories intersect, and how they inform a generation's historical narrative.
- To investigate the potential of visual and multi-sensory art to communicate experiences of political and social oppression.
- To explore how asemic writing and installation elements (such as the suitcase and drywall) embody personal and collective memories of trauma.
- To investigate the use of art as a medium for expressing and processing traumatic memories

In terms of the latter objective, I see art as a therapeutic and communicative tool that plays a critical role in expressing and processing trauma. This objective will explore how creative expression, particularly through visual arts, installation, and sensory engagement, articulates personal and collective trauma. The installation will explore how the past continually influences the present, both in terms of societal structures and personal identity. The aim is to create an environment that reflects the instability of life under authoritarian rule while also highlighting moments of personal and collective resilience by recreating the space of my childhood during moments of trauma.

Literature Review

The Third Space: Hybridity, Dissemination, and Cultural Transformation

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explores how culture is not a fixed or stable entity but something fluid, created in interaction and exchange between different cultural identities. One of his central concepts, “dissemination,” refers to how culture spreads and transforms, often in ways that challenge rigid national or cultural purity ideas. Bhabha argues that cultural identity is always “in-between” in a space he calls “the third space,” where different identities interact and mix. This “in-between” space disrupts simple ideas of cultural origin or belonging and allows for the creation of new, hybrid identities. The hybridity of “the third space” challenges dominant cultural narratives and power structures, as it doesn’t fit neatly within established categories. Overall, Bhabha’s concept of dissemination shows how culture is a dynamic, ongoing process that involves negotiation, conflict, and change rather than being a fixed, homogeneous entity. This perspective highlights identity's complex, interwoven nature and the importance of recognizing cultural diversity as a source of growth and transformation. The interactive installation, featuring shifting light, sound, and asemic writing, creates a dynamic space that intertwines feelings and memories and disseminates thoughts and wonders.

Staying with the Trouble: Kinship, Conflict, and Collective Survival

Donna Haraway’s “staying with the trouble” concept explored in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* encourages us to face complex, unsettling realities directly rather than seeking simple or escapist solutions. Haraway advocates for developing more sustainable and reciprocal ways of coexisting in an age of ecological crisis, climate change, and

ongoing violence. Her approach is not about avoiding or “solving” difficult issues but engaging with them through collaborative relationships, creativity, and ethical responsibility. In the context of war and conflict, “staying with the trouble” involves recognizing and grappling with the deep-rooted, interconnected causes and effects of violence, including how they entangle humans, non-humans, and the environment. Haraway challenges us to “make kin,” or build relationships across species and ecosystems, to resist aggressive, extractive systems. This kinship rethinks boundaries between us and the “other,” embracing a broader spectrum of lives and perspectives. Haraway’s theory suggests that confronting the troubling legacies of war requires us to work collectively toward less violent futures, not through domination or division, but through mutual care, learning, and commitment to the complexities of shared survival. Instead of treating war as a force to be overcome in isolation, she advocates for acknowledging and transforming our complicity in conflict, fostering new forms of kinship that resist the allure of simple, often destructive solutions.

Healing in Connection: Trauma, Kinship, and the Body’s Memory

Considering Haraway’s theory of fostering a new form of kinship and staying with the trouble reminds me of “The Body Keeps the Score,” popularized by psychiatrist Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, which captures how traumatic experiences, including those from war, can become embedded not just in a person’s mind but in their body. Dr. van Der Kolk also suggests making relationships to help heal the trauma. Trauma, particularly from intense experiences like warfare, can profoundly impact a person’s nervous system, affecting how they process stress and emotions long after the events have passed. For individuals who have lived through war, trauma can manifest as physical symptoms—chronic pain, tension, fatigue, or even autoimmune

disorders. This is because trauma affects brain structures, the parts that are responsible for processing memories and managing stress responses. These brain parts can remain alert, causing people to feel hyper-vigilant or constantly anxious, even in safe environments. Trauma from war also often shows up in the way people move, hold themselves, or react to triggers like loud sounds or crowded places. War veterans, refugees, and those who've lived in conflict zones might experience flashbacks, nightmares, or intense stress responses, all tied to their nervous system's "memory" of past events. Dr. van der Kolk's work highlights that addressing war trauma often requires both talk therapy and body-based treatments, like mindfulness, yoga, or somatic therapies. These practices can help people reconnect with their bodies, regulate their responses, and, over time, reshape how they experience and process traumatic memories.

In *Body Keeps the Score*, Dr. van der Kolk explains that traumatized individuals often embark on a journey of recovery within the nurturing embrace of relationships formed with family members, close friends, and supportive communities such as Alcoholics Anonymous, veterans' organizations, or religious care groups. These connections are vital, providing companionship and profound physical and emotional safety. They create an environment where individuals can feel free from the heavy burdens of shame, admonishment, or judgment. Such supportive relationships empower individuals, bolstering the courage needed to confront their experiences, process their emotions, and ultimately come to terms with the sometimes-overwhelming realities they have faced. Our brains are intricately wired for social connection, highlighting the importance of being attuned to others. This neural wiring indicates that recovery from trauma is not merely an individual endeavour but a collective journey deeply rooted in human reconnection. These interactions are essential, reaffirming our inherent need for community, understanding, and support, forming a crucial foundation for healing. (van der Kolk

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Beyond Inner Freedom: Asemic Writing, Healing, and the Journey Toward Constructive Connection

Theodor W. Adorno criticized the Stoic idea of inner freedom—the notion that freedom can be attained by controlling one’s internal responses regardless of external circumstances. Adorno saw this concept as inherently conformist and a form of passive resignation. He argued that by focusing solely on achieving inner tranquility, individuals might accept unjust societal structures rather than seeking to change them. This perspective prevents people from engaging with social realities, reinforcing the status quo. In his *History and Freedom* lectures, Adorno challenges this retreat into internalized freedom, suggesting that such an approach neglects the structural injustices of society and reduces freedom to a personal, apolitical endeavor. I am delving into the freedom of gestural asemic writing and embracing the opportunity to reflect on my childhood emotions as I navigate the installation space, allowing me to appreciate the freedom I've felt throughout this process.

While Adorno criticized the Stoic focus on inner freedom as potentially conformist, my viewpoint resonates more with the ideas of Bessel van der Kolk and Donna Haraway, who emphasize healing and reconnection as pathways to continue life constructively. As I walk along the pathway, the sound grows louder, and the light shines brighter with each step, encouraging me to reach the end where the suitcase of memories awaits. This suggests a reconnection and a continuation of life. In his influential book *The Body Keeps the Score*, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk highlights how trauma is stored in the body and argues for the importance of developing new ways of engaging with life. Rather than getting trapped by unchangeable past events, van der

Kolk encourages methods of creating new narratives and relationships to foster healing and inner peace. By forming new connections or “making new kin,” we can find ways to live meaningfully beyond past traumas.

Similarly, Donna Haraway’s concept of “making kin” in works like *Staying with the Trouble* advocates building relationships beyond traditional structures. Haraway encourages embracing new forms of kinship and collaboration to navigate an unpredictable world. Her idea promotes interconnectedness, adaptability, and a forward-looking approach that accepts the past while actively shaping the present and future. Together, these ideas support a philosophy where maintaining inner peace is not about resignation or passivity but about actively reframing narratives, creating new relationships, and embracing the interconnected flow of life. This approach recognizes the limits of changing the past while focusing on what can be done in the present to cultivate resilience and healing peace.

Lost Hieroglyphs and Entangled Meanings: Embracing Uncertainty in Art and Thought

In *Asemic: The Art of Writing*, before the contents page, Peter Schwenger cites Theodor Adorno’s claim in *Aesthetic Theory*: “All artworks are writing, not just those that are obviously such; they are hieroglyphs for which the code has been lost, a loss that plays into their content.” Similarly, in *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway urges us to embrace complexity, dwell within uncertainty, and cultivate multispecies and multi-temporal ways of thinking. Schwenger’s notion of artworks as lost hieroglyphs—inscriptions whose codes are elusive yet rich with meaning—resonates with Haraway’s call to engage with entangled, non-linear narratives rather than seeking resolution. Both perspectives suggest that meaning is never fixed but continuously shaped by shifting perceptions, interpretations, and the unfolding of time.

The Circle of Life: Interconnectedness, Memory, and the Flow of Time

Thinking about the past and delving into memories to analyze our experiences, I've realized that there isn't a definitive starting point. Every life event we encounter is intricately linked to something that happened earlier, creating a ripple effect in our lives. This interconnection resembles a domino effect, highlighting the continuous flow of events. In his lecture at Alberta University, Dr. Little Bear speaks to the idea that the universe is in a constant state of transformation, reformation, and deformation. He suggests that all creatures are immortal; they transition from one form to another. This perspective beautifully illustrates why we cannot pinpoint a single starting point within the circle of life. Everything is part of an ongoing cycle, constantly evolving and reshaping our understanding of existence. This insight encourages us to appreciate the complexities of life and the interconnectedness of our journeys. Every life event occurs for a reason; the events in life are interconnected and flow from the past. Time passes, but memories persist and form a new layer in the circle of life.

Methodology

The Void of Memory: A Multi-Sensory Journey Through Trauma, Identity, and Migration

This autoethnographic work culminates in a project that is an immersive, multi-sensory installation that speaks to embodied experiences. By crafting a space that actively engages the senses through movement, sound, light, and texture, the installation invites participants to navigate a deeply layered narrative about memory, trauma, and identity. The dynamic interplay of these sensory elements allows viewers to experience the evolving story personally, transforming them from passive observers into active participants within the space. The tunnel-

like environment serves as both a physical and metaphorical passage. Entering the dimly lit space, viewers are immersed in an atmosphere of subtle discomfort, tension, and anticipation. This discomfort is not arbitrary; it evokes the emotional weight of historical traumas, political oppression, and the anxieties of growing up in environments defined by conflict. The sensory layers are carefully curated to mirror this journey, reflecting the struggle from darkness to illumination, repression to awareness. The accompanying sound component of the work is comprised of different layered audio tracks; war siren, writing with chalk on the blackboard, and the sound of the airport. The faint glow of light, reminiscent of wartime blackouts and the associated fear, sets the tone for an experience that is as much psychological as physical.

The gradual intensification of light as participants move through the installation symbolizes the unfolding of memory and understanding. This dynamic progression—structured to increase brightness across six floor tiles—mirrors how personal and collective histories can be uncovered, piece by piece. As the light increases to its brightest point, illuminating the “memory suitcase”, the viewer is encouraged to pause and reflect. The suitcase, symbolizing migration, memory, and identity is a focal piece that invites deeper contemplation of the traumas and stories it carries. The soundscape plays a crucial role in reinforcing these themes. The rhythmic and provocative sounds add a visceral quality to the experience. Sound is not merely background noise but an active force interacting with and directly referencing the physical environment with its drawings and asemic writings. In this way, it acts like memory. The sounds—sometimes subtle, sometimes intense—mirror the unpredictable and fragmented nature of memory, trauma, and historical experience.

Additionally, texture is employed throughout the exhibition contributes to the multi-sensory experience, whether part of the drywall installation or the heavily painted suitcase.

Viewers are encouraged to feel the physical surfaces, connecting touch with sight, sound, and movement. These tactile elements reinforce the embodiment of memory, emphasizing that our histories are not abstract but deeply felt through our physical presence and experiences. These layers of sound, texture, frenetic visuals, interactivity, and immersive installation seek to blur the boundaries between the personal and the collective, the sensory and the symbolic.

Ultimately, the project aims to provoke questions about how we experience, process, and remember our personal and collective histories. By immersing viewers in an environment that demands sensory attention and emotional engagement, the installation invites them to confront their relationships with memory, trauma, and identity. Carefully orchestrating sensory elements ensures that no two participants experience the space similarly. Each step they take, sound they hear, and light progression they witness becomes part of a unique narrative shaped by their personal histories and perceptions. This exploration is about presenting my story and creating a dialogue between my memories and the viewers' experiences. The sensory design encourages empathy, reflection, and perhaps even discomfort—feelings integral to understanding the enduring impact of trauma, migration, and conflict. In this way, the project transcends the boundaries of traditional storytelling, becoming a dynamic space where memory is felt, not just observed. A personal narrative proposes to understand a self or some aspect of life as it intersects with a cultural context and invites readers to enter the author's world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives (Autoethnography: Overview, P.279).

In conclusion, this immersive installation is meant to evoke the power of multi-sensory experiences. The project creates an environment where participants can reflect on their journeys and histories by engaging sound, light, and texture in a cohesive narrative. The void is

a space that acknowledges the weight of the past while offering a path toward understanding and illumination.

Asemic writing, autoethnography

Asemic writing is featured prominently in this project and offers a unique and powerful expression. Unlike traditional writing, where the emphasis lies on conveying specific ideas through words and sentences, asemic writing focuses on the visual and emotional impact of the marks themselves. Its abstract, often unreadable characters suggest meaning without providing clear definitions, allowing viewers to engage intuitively. Asemic writing taps into the unfiltered flow of human thought and emotion, capturing the mind's fragmented, often chaotic nature. Rather than presenting a logical sequence of words, it invites viewers to enter an emotional landscape where meaning arises from shapes, patterns, and textures rather than recognizable language. In this work, asemic writing reflects the expression of memory and identity. The complexity of thoughts, feelings, and personal history intertwine in a way that cannot always be expressed in clear, ordered sentences. By inscribing these abstract marks onto drywall, the installation captures the essence of inner dialogue and the complexity of personal history, free from the need for linguistic coherence. For the audience, this type of writing invites them to engage with the script's visual form. In "What Asemic Writing Is," Peter Schwenger claims that this form of writing can be seen as an image. In asemic writing, viewers are not asked to decipher a message but to interpret the aesthetic qualities of the marks—to feel the shapes and textures rather than read them. This interaction encourages each person to form a personal connection with the work, allowing them to draw on their memories, emotions, and interpretations to make meaning.

We need to separate the text from its meaning to view writing simply as marks on a surface.

This can be done by disrupting the usual way of reading text, which follows a straight line.

Asemic writing replaces familiar letters with mysterious symbols. However, much of this type of writing still has the linear structure of traditional writing. As a result, we feel confused: while we recognize writing, we also feel disconnected from it. This method does not offer a clear explanation; instead, it presents something that encourages us to think and reflect. (Schwenger, p7).

“What Asemic Writing Is” explains that asemic writing is a unique form of expression that encourages us to focus on what we see instead of what we read. It allows us to break away from traditional thinking patterns, even as we notice those patterns in front of us. The marks show how we think but do not communicate specific ideas. According to Barthes, these marks are not tied to any practical use; they are only defined by their shapes and the general idea of writing they suggest. (Schwenger, p7)

Images, which we used to think of as just a foundation for concepts in a standard text, now serve a different purpose. Schwenger claims that Asemic artists appreciate the beauty and complexity of handwriting, seeing it as a special way to express art, like drawing. Paul Klee highlights this connection by stating that writing the alphabet is like drawing. While Klee's idea makes sense in many ways, it is also important to realize that writing and drawing differ.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold points out four key differences that help us understand how writing and drawing relate to each other while also being distinct from one another.

“First, writing is a notation; drawing is not. Secondly, drawing is an art; writing is not. Thirdly, writing is a technology; drawing is not. Fourthly, writing is linear; drawing is not. None of these distinctions, as it turns out, is entirely trustworthy.

Writing is still drawing. But it is the special case of drawing in which what is drawn

comprises the elements of a notation. (120-22)” (Schwenger, p12)

The freedom and fluid body movements while writing became an excellent dance-like experience, serving as a trigger to connect more deeply with my childhood. The gestural markings, asemic writings on the suitcase, and drywall debris in the suitcase present an expressive narration of my childhood. These gestural marks represent my feelings of love, pain, and regret when I think about my childhood and early school years. The love for my family, the pain of experiencing war as a child, and the regret for the loss of childhood. At the time, I was too naive to understand the situation. All I could see from my childhood lens was my society, and I did not know about the rest of the world; this is reminiscent of Margaret Atwood’s “*The Handmaid’s Tale*,” women were kept by the patriarchal society the Republic of Gilead and had no power to exit from it. They had no knowledge of what was outside that society. When I grew up and had the chance to learn the truth, time passed, and the memories of a preteen schoolgirl's perspective remained. It is hard to articulate the feeling of emotion and express it in words in

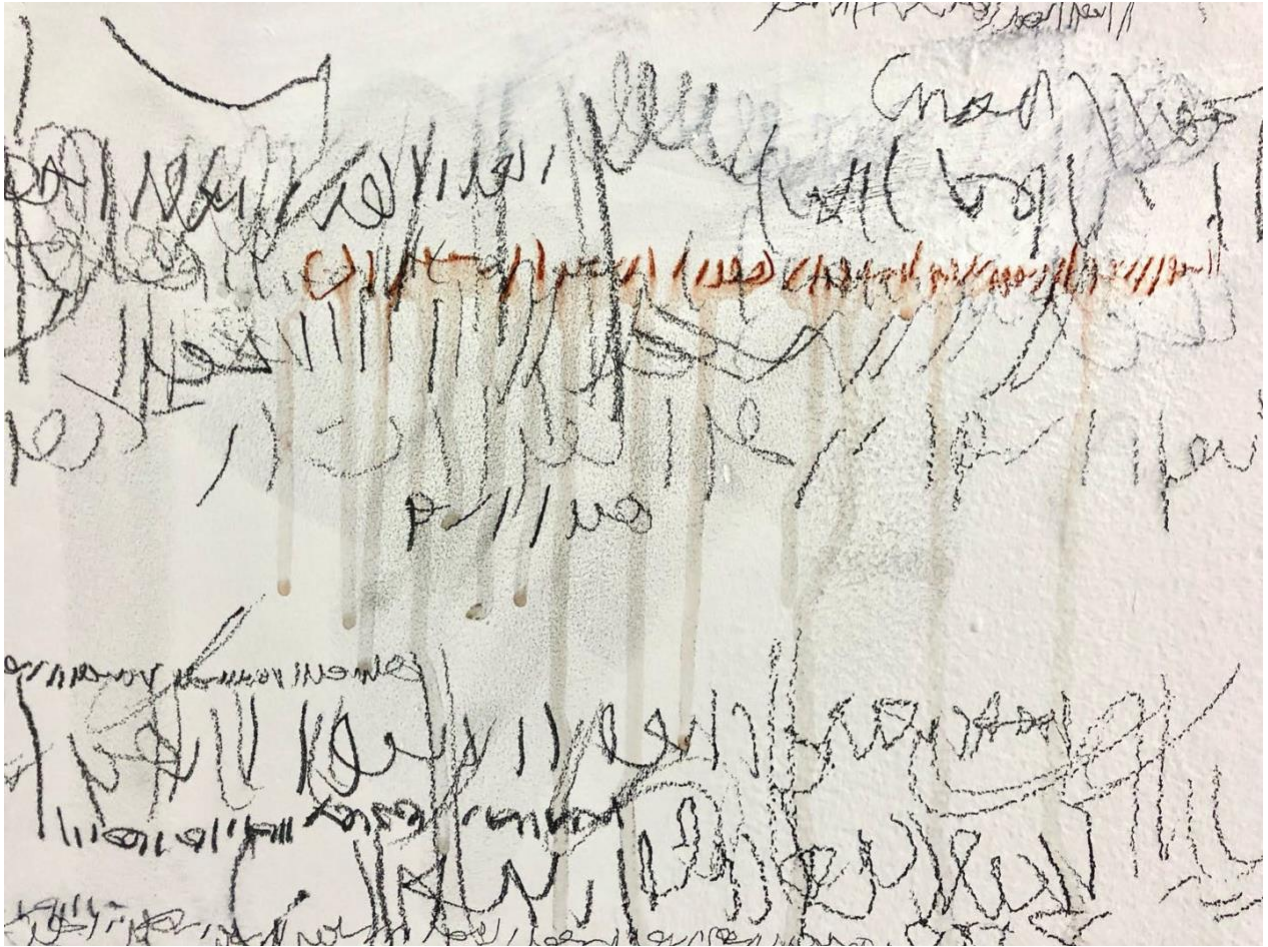


Figure 8: A close-up of writing on a wall



Figure 9: Close-up of a wall with writing

childhood; I am articulating my trauma by using mark-making in place of words.

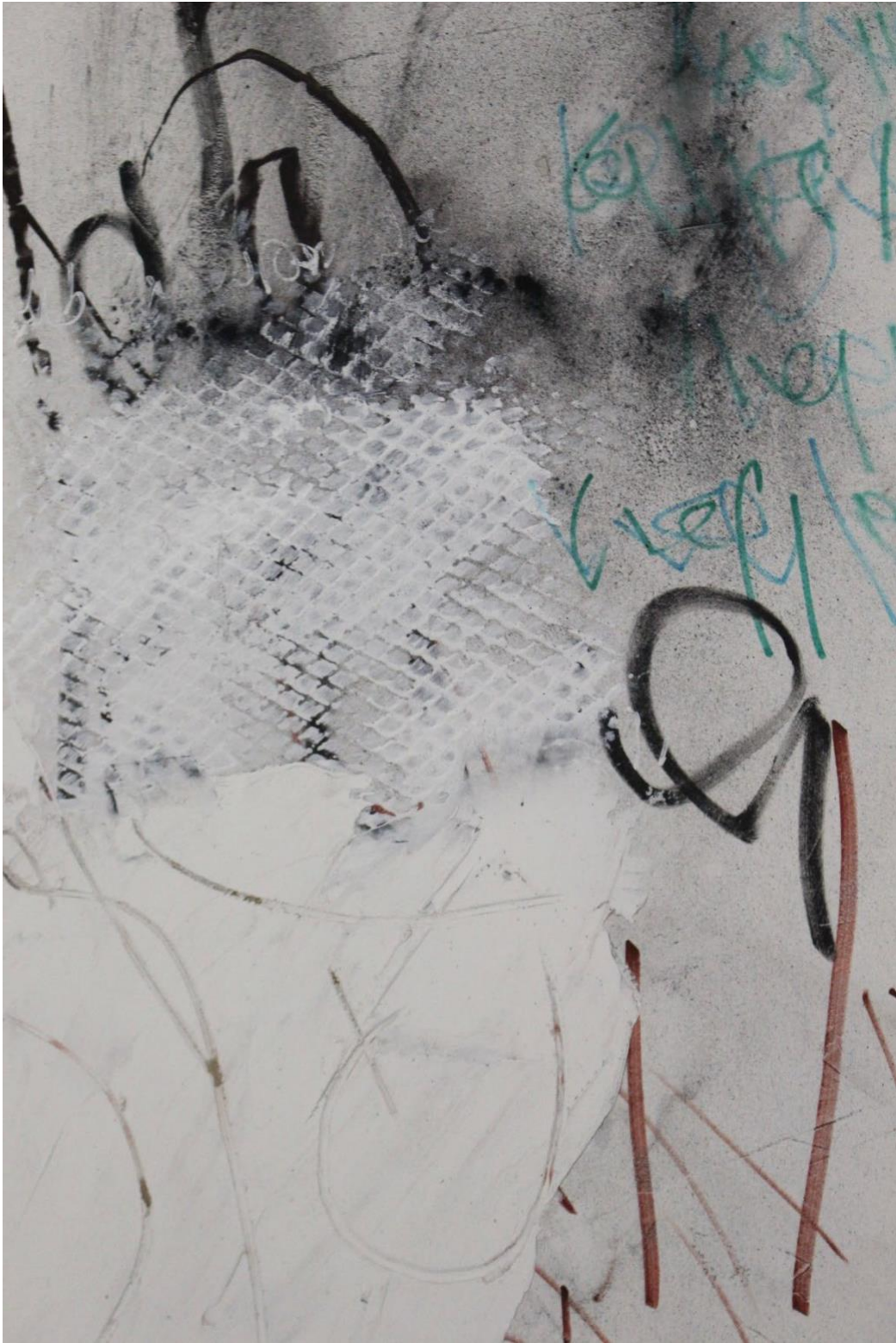


Figure 10: Close-up of a white surface with black and green writing

[illegible]

Figure 12: A white wall with writing on it

Asemantic writing also recalls the primal origins of human expression. Long before structured languages, early humans used symbols, scratches, and marks to communicate and express themselves. This primitive, instinctual mark-making connects us to a deep-rooted impulse that transcends linguistic systems, focusing instead on the sheer act of creating as a means of self-expression. In this way, asemantic writing taps into a fundamental human drive: to mark, leave traces, and communicate in ways beyond words. It reconnects us with an expression that feels ancient and universal, echoing early human marks etched on stone or drawn in the earth, capturing the raw desire to share, remember, and make a lasting impression. Using non-traditional drawing tools for excavating, scrapping and breaking for mark-making allowed me to experience the ancient feeling and raw desire to communicate in my work.

I chose asemantic writing to articulate my story as writing asemantic provided me with the freedom of hand and body movement and not to consider the conventional use of writing and structural sentences and the meaning of words. In “What Asemantic Is?” Schwenger explains that children at a young age do not see a difference between writing and drawing. Even before they can write their names, children often create symbols that resemble writing, even if they cannot read them yet.

Peter Schwenger, in “What Asemantic Writing is,” claims that “Asemantic works, then, may return us to our first childhood encounters with writing.” Schwenger is talking about the essay “All Writing Is Drawing” written by the cartoonist and child psychologist Serge Tisseron. Tisseron wrote, “single graphic gesture found in child first scribbles. This observation highlights how asemantic works resonate with our early encounters with writing. These phases of 'mock letters' and 'pseudo writing' reveal a natural progression in our understanding of symbols and marks, showcasing a formative link between our initial explorations of writing and the complexities of

asemic expression. This connection allows us to appreciate the freedom and creativity that comes with writing beyond conventional language. (Schwenger, p12)

Using *translingual* approaches, I incorporate asemantic writing—a form without semantic content—across two languages. My usage of the term "translingual" refers to the fluid use of multiple languages within a single system, blurring traditional understandings of separate languages. By drawing Farsi-inspired letters, I blend the familiarity of my mother language with the abstract nature of asemantic writing. This practice allows me to engage in a deeply personal exploration of language, identity, and comfort. Writing with my right hand—the dominant hand I first used to learn my native language—further connects me to the intimate experience of writing in Farsi. Even though the marks I create lack literal meaning, they evoke a strong emotional and cultural resonance rooted in my earliest interactions with language.

Asemantic writing is inherently open-ended, offering a visual experience that transcends the limitations of defined linguistic meaning. By producing marks that look like Farsi but do not form coherent words, I free myself from the constraints of syntax and vocabulary. Instead of focusing on the content, I can emphasize the writing process's rhythm, flow, and texture. This approach allows me to express feelings and memories that cannot easily be articulated through conventional language. The fluid, abstract symbols hint at familiar scripts, inviting viewers to question their relationship with language, meaning, and comprehension. Using my mother tongue as a foundation for asemantic writing is a way of honoring my linguistic heritage. Farsi is more than just a language; it is a conduit for my culture, memories, and sense of identity. Drawing letters resembling Farsi, I engage with my first language's physical and emotional comfort. The curves and shapes of the script, the way my hand instinctively moves to form them, provide a grounding experience. This act reconnects me with my roots, creating a sense of

belonging and familiarity even within the abstract nature of asemic writing. Writing with my right hand adds another layer to this exploration. My right hand was the one I used as a child when I first learned to write in Farsi. The muscle memory of forming those letters is deeply ingrained. When I use my right hand for asemic writing, I access that early comfort and confidence, allowing my body to reconnect with the rhythm and flow of my mother tongue. This physical act is both soothing and empowering, reminding me of a time when language was a source of connection rather than a barrier.

However, the asemic nature of my writing also reflects the complexities of my identity. Having lived through political upheavals, migration, and cultural shifts, my relationship with language has evolved. By combining the comfort of Farsi-inspired marks with the ambiguity of asemic writing, I capture the duality of my experience—rooted yet fragmented, familiar yet abstract. The absence of clear meaning mirrors the challenges of expressing identity in a world where languages, cultures, and personal histories intersect unpredictably. For viewers, these asemic writings offer a space for interpretation and reflection. They may not understand the marks as conventional language, but they can sense the emotional intent behind them. The flowing lines, the pressure of the hand, the rhythm of the strokes—all these elements communicate beyond words. In this way, my asemic writing bridges the gap between personal experience and universal themes of language, memory, and identity. Creating asemic writings inspired by Farsi with my right hand is a practice of comfort, connection, and exploration. It allows me to honour my mother tongue while embracing the ambiguity of identity shaped by personal and cultural histories. Through this act, I invite viewers to consider how language can express meaning, emotion, memory, and the nuances of human experience.

Incorporating left-handed writing of English-like letters into my writing is a powerful

metaphor for the discomfort and challenges of adopting new ways of thinking, being, and expressing. My left hand, untrained and unfamiliar with the fluidity required for writing, produces hesitant, shaky, and fragmented lines. This awkwardness mirrors the struggle of navigating an unfamiliar language and culture, especially when that language—English—represents a broader context of adaptation, migration, and identity transformation. Unlike the intuitive comfort I experience when writing Farsi-inspired marks with my right hand, the effort required to form English-like letters with my left hand reflects a disruption of the natural flow. The lines lack confidence and precision, often appearing strained or incomplete. This physical unease represents my emotional and psychological challenges while adapting to new linguistic and cultural systems. Each letter becomes a small act of resistance against the unfamiliarity, highlighting the conscious effort required to communicate in a language that is not my own. Left-handed English writing also symbolizes the process of unlearning and relearning. Just as I must re-train my hand to form letters, I have had to reshape parts of my identity to fit into new cultural contexts. This process is filled with discomfort, frustration, and moments of doubt. The imperfection and awkwardness in the marks produced are reminders that adaptation is not always smooth or seamless; it is often marked by struggle, uncertainty, and vulnerability. By sharing this aspect of my writing process, I invite viewers to witness and reflect on the tensions of adaptation. The visual discomfort of these lines underscores the broader challenges of reconciling identity, language, and movement through unfamiliar territory, ultimately illustrating that growth often comes through discomfort and persistence.

Observation on my use of language

Coming to Canada and distancing myself from the Farsi language, I found that

articulating and understanding through theory, writing, and reading in English allowed me to distance myself from trauma. I tried to incorporate Farsi into my writing, but it didn't resonate because using English in this context helps me reflect on my experiences from a protective distance. The English language doesn't carry the same connotations as Farsi for me. Similarly, asemic writing serves the same purpose as English: it distances me from the trauma and enables me to articulate it without getting too close to it.

The exhibition uses material sound and performance to achieve the following:

Room Within a Room

The choice of drywall as a medium is particularly meaningful in this context. More than a mere structural element, it symbolizes the fragility and impermanence of memory. Like memory, drywall can be marked, eroded, and changed over time. This installation serves as a canvas and structure, embodying the traces of personal stories that unfold and shift as they're inscribed onto its surface. Each mark on the drywall becomes a visual echo of the past, preserving memories while acknowledging the passage of time. For me, drywall carries a sense of nostalgia. It evokes the walls of my childhood bedroom, a space that was once a sanctuary of privacy, safety, and self-expression. Those walls bore witness to my formative years, filled with marks, notes, and drawings—personal traces that symbolized my growth and identity. The drywall of this installation also resonates with my more recent immigration experiences. Moving to a new place often involves leaving behind the comfort and security that familiar walls represent. Marking new walls becomes an attempt to rebuild a sense of home, to re-inscribe personal history onto unfamiliar surfaces. In this way, the drywall in this installation is not merely a medium; it becomes a symbol that bridges my past and present, intertwining my personal history with the

ongoing evolution of my sense of home. As I carve marks into its surface, I reclaim this sense of belonging, filling an unfamiliar space with traces of my own story. Each symbol, each stroke of asemic writing, transforms the drywall into a repository of my experiences and memories, creating a place where the personal and universal intersect. For viewers, this transformed wall becomes an entry point into their reflections on memory, identity, and home. By engaging with the marks on the drywall, they are invited to consider their own experiences of place, displacement, and belonging. The wall becomes a shared canvas, a site where individual and collective memories meet and where each viewer is free to bring their interpretations and emotions. The drywall bears the layered imprints of time, emotion, and memory, serving as a stage for deeply personal and universally resonant stories. In transforming this humble material into a canvas for asemic writing, I aim to create a space where the boundaries between language, memory, and identity blur, allowing for a powerful reflection on how we carry our histories within us and inscribe them onto the spaces we inhabit. This installation invites us all to pause, reflect, and leave our marks upon the walls of memory, creating a shared narrative that celebrates the beauty and complexity of our journeys. The experience of asemic writing on drywall is multi-layered, involving visual creation and a rich, tactile interaction with the surface. This practice invites sensory engagement that includes sound, as each stroke of the writing tool against the drywall produces a distinctive auditory element played as an audio track.

The healing sound of the writing process—its scraping, scratching, and reverberation—plays a pivotal role in transforming my installation into a multi-sensory experience. This auditory element introduces a dynamic layer that interacts with the other sensory components, such as light, movement, and texture. The noise produced is not incidental; it is deliberately shaped by the physical aspects of the writing process, such as the texture of the drywall, the

type of writing instrument, and the pressure applied to the writing tool. These variables create a rich spectrum of sounds, ranging from gentle and meditative rhythms to harsh, provocative noises. Each sound carries emotional weight and contributes to the evolving narrative within the space, resonating with me on a deeply personal level and inviting viewers to connect with the work on an emotional and psychological plane. The interaction between the writing tool and the drywall surface produces an array of textures mirrored in the sounds they generate. When the writing instrument moves smoothly across the surface, the resulting sound is often soft and rhythmic, almost like a meditative chant. This repetitive, soothing quality can evoke a sense of calm, contemplation, or nostalgia. It mirrors the act of revisiting comforting or familiar memories, providing gentle reassurance that some aspects of our history are safe to remember. In these moments, the writing sound becomes a form of sonic meditation, guiding participants toward introspection and reflection. In contrast, when the drywall texture is more uneven or the instrument encounters resistance, the resulting sound shifts dramatically.

The noise becomes sharper, more abrasive, and sometimes even jarring. These harsh sounds are deliberate and evoke tension, discomfort, or agitation. They symbolize the friction in confronting difficult memories, oppressive histories, or unresolved traumas. The scraping and scratching noises echo the emotional labour involved in unearthing these memories, making the audience viscerally aware of the struggle embedded in remembering. The sharpness of these sounds disrupts any sense of complacency, serving as a reminder that memory—especially memory tied to trauma or political repression—is rarely smooth or easy to process.

The pressure I apply while writing further influences the soundscape. The writing instrument glides effortlessly when applying gentle pressure, producing a soft, whisper-like sound. This delicacy can be interpreted as a metaphor for the tentative nature of some memories—those we

approach carefully, unsure of their impact or significance. Conversely, when I apply forceful pressure, the instrument digs into the drywall, producing a louder, more forceful, and commanding sound. This intensity conveys urgency, anger, or defiance, asserting one's identity or truth against oppressive forces. The forceful sound becomes a declaration that certain memories must be heard, acknowledged, and understood. These varying sounds resonate deeply with me, connecting to my personal history of growing up under a dictatorship, apartheid, and war. The sound of the writing process becomes a metaphor for how these experiences have shaped my emotional landscape. The rhythmic, meditative sounds remind me of moments of resilience and quiet hope, while the sharp, disruptive noises reflect the fear, anxiety, and tension that are part of my daily reality. In this way, the sounds generated by the writing process become an extension of my voice, articulating feelings that words alone cannot fully capture. The reverberation of these sounds within the tunnel-like space enhances their emotional impact. As the sounds bounce off the walls and linger in the air, they create an immersive atmosphere that envelops the participants. The reverberation gives the sounds a sense of persistence, much like memories that echo in our minds long after the initial experience. This lingering quality reinforces the idea that memories—especially traumatic ones—are not easily silenced. They continue to resonate, influencing our thoughts, behaviors, and identities. The sound component also interacts with the other sensory elements of the installation. The sounds evolve as the light intensifies along the participants' path, reflecting the shift from uncertainty to clarity. The dynamic lighting and soundscape work together to create a journey that is both physical and emotional. The interplay between the auditory and visual elements heightens the sense of immersion, making the experience more powerful and memorable. Participants do not just see or hear the narrative—they feel it through the vibrations and

resonances that fill the space. Moreover, the sound invites active engagement from the audience. The unpredictability of the writing process—how the sounds shift depending on the texture, pressure, and movement—means that each moment is unique. This unpredictability mirrors the process of remembering, where different memories may emerge unexpectedly. The sound draws participants into this process, encouraging them to reflect on their memories and the emotional landscapes they inhabit. In conclusion, the sound of the writing process adds a profound dimension to the installation, transforming it into a multi-sensory experience that resonates on both personal and collective levels. The scraping, scratching, and reverberation generated by the interaction between the writing tool and the drywall surface create an emotional soundscape that reflects the complexities of memory, trauma, and identity. Through these sounds, the installation becomes a space where the act of remembering is not just seen or thought about but felt and heard, making it a deeply immersive and transformative experience.

The walls of a room can be likened to the skin of a living being—both serve to enclose and reveal the essence of those who dwell within. Just as skin retains the imprints of physical injuries and emotional experiences, the drywall absorbs the vibrations of laughter, tears, and unspoken thoughts, silently bearing witness to the intimate lives of its inhabitants. In this installation, inscribing letters and marks directly onto the drywall transforms it from a mere architectural backdrop into a vibrant participant in the unfolding narrative. Each inscription resonates with the weight of personal history, as the walls evolve into a living canvas layered with fragments of memories and emotions, like skin that bears scars and traces of a fully lived life. This tactile relationship between the marks and the drywall creates an immersive experience, inviting viewers to connect with the stories embedded within the very structure of the space, evoking both the beauty and the complexity of human existence. The cushiony false floor,

constructed from multiple layers of cardboard, is designed to create a sense of instability and discomfort. Embedded sensors wired into the structure are programmed to activate in response to the viewers' footsteps

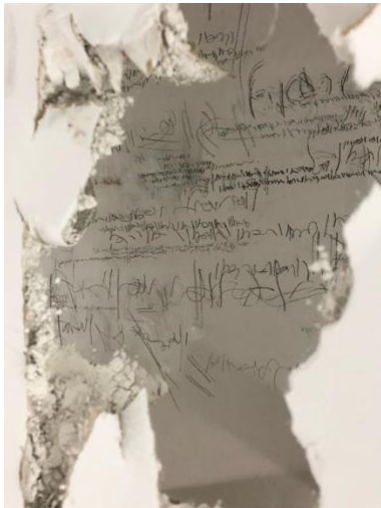


Figure 13: A broken wall with writing on the wall behind

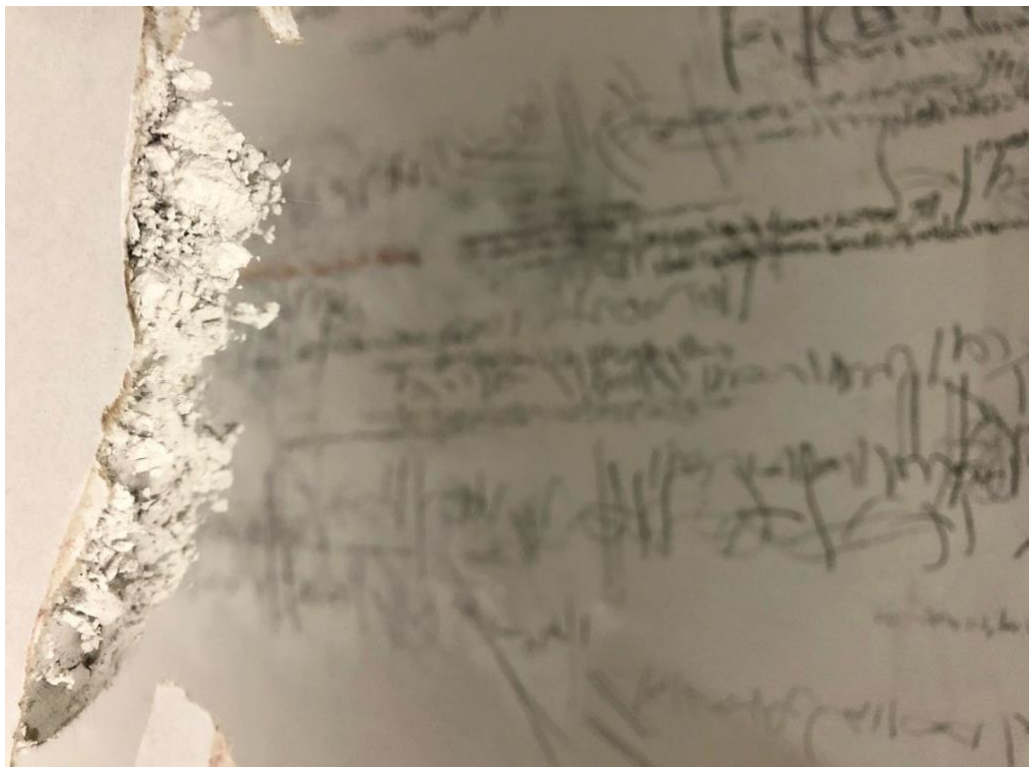
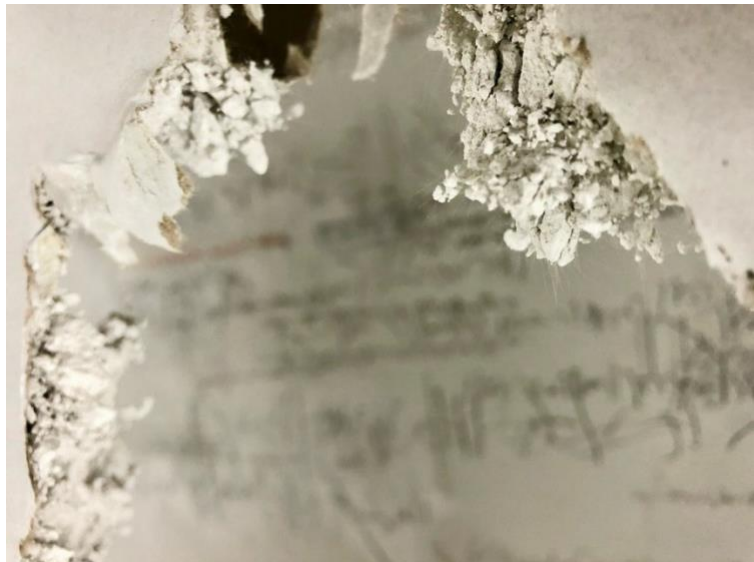


Figure 15: A close-up of a broken wall with writing on the wall behind it



Figure 16: A close-up of damaged drywall from the back

Suitcase of Memories

The suitcase is a profound symbol within this installation, representing themes of journey, displacement, memory, and the emotional weight of personal history. Far from merely a useful object, the suitcase is transformed into a mobile diary that narrates my life's journey, capturing the intricate interplay of memory, migration, and identity. This seemingly ordinary vessel, often overlooked as a container for belongings, takes on new significance as it becomes intimately tied to my adult memories. In this installation, the suitcase embodies the objects it might carry and the emotions, experiences, and memories accompanying one's life through time and space.

Through its transformation, the materiality of the suitcase evokes the nostalgia of my childhood and adult environments, particularly the familiar walls of my bedroom, once adorned with heartfelt writings and messages from family and friends. These walls, covered with marks and messages, encapsulated moments of joy, love, connection, and shared experiences. These symbols of belonging have now been transposed onto the suitcase, turning it into a tangible repository of unforgettable memories. In this installation, the suitcase becomes more than just a storage item; it is a vessel of intimate recollections, embodying the beauty and pain of memory.

The suitcase is filled with fragmented pieces of written memories among drywall debris and a soft mesh fabric that serves as a reminder of joyful times. The walls, like the skin of the space, capture the joy and love of the family that once lived there. The suitcase and broken drywall symbolize the tale of departure. As a symbol of immigration and relocation, the suitcase also reflects the transient nature of my own existence, embodying both stability and change. The suitcase holds not only my physical possessions but also the essence of my

experiences. It encapsulates the many emotions associated with departure and arrival, with the bittersweetness of parting and the joy of reuniting. It resonates with broader narratives of displacement, migration, and belonging, speaking to anyone who has ever had to pack up their life and start anew. The suitcase, therefore, transcends its ordinary, practical function. Instead of merely storing items, it becomes a conduit for storytelling, a keeper of memories, and a catalyst for reflection. It invites viewers to think about their journeys, the places they have called home, and the memories they carry with them. In addition, the suitcase addresses themes of trauma, resilience, and healing. Migration often entails separation, loss, and the need to adapt to new environments while grappling with the lingering effects of the past. As a vessel of memory, the suitcase acknowledges the pain of departure and the challenges of starting anew. Yet, it also embodies resilience—the strength to carry memories, overcome hardship, and continue moving forward. Ultimately, The Suitcase is more than an art piece—it is an invitation to explore the connections between memory, identity, and place.

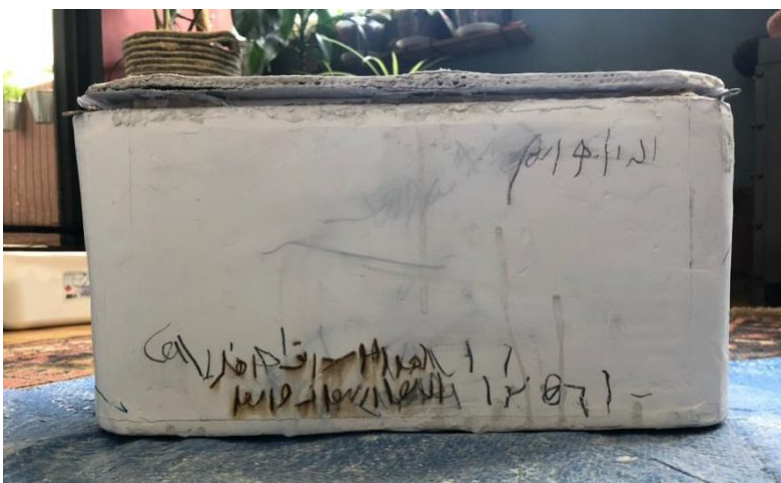


Figure 17: A prototype white suitcase with writing on it



Figure 18: A prototype white suitcase with writing on it

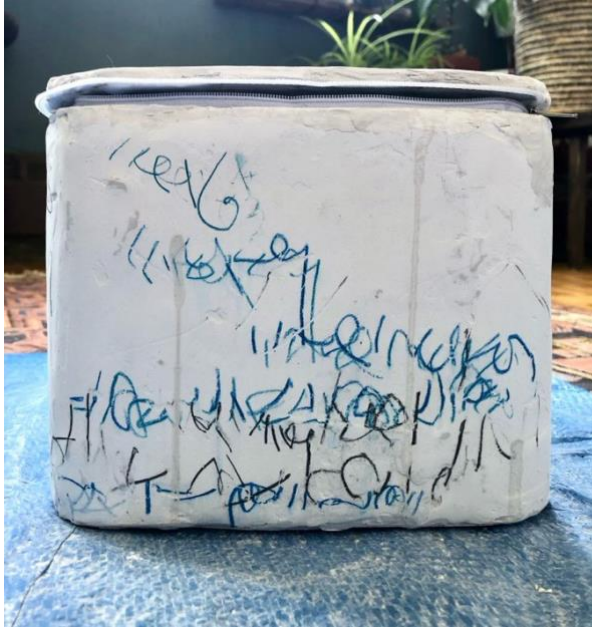


Figure 19: A prototype white suitcase with writing on it



Figure 20: A prototype white suitcase with writing on it



Figure 21: Drywall debris



Figure 22: Drywall debris



Figure 23: A group of luggage on a table



Figure 24: A white suitcase



Figure 25: A white suitcase on the floor



Figure 26: A white pathway and two stacked suitcases full of debris



Figure 27: Stacked suitcases full of debris

Sound

The sound of asemic writing is an incidental byproduct and a crucial element of the creative process. The auditory experience becomes a part of the artwork, amplifying each visual stroke's impact. As explained in the Asemic writing section, as the writing tool moves across the wall, it produces a rhythm that echoes through the space, giving writing a musicality. This rhythm can be steady, like a heartbeat, or unpredictable, reflecting the emotional intensity of each stroke. It becomes a pulse that connects the viewer to the flow of creation, a subtle guide that draws them into the work. The rhythmic nature of the sound plays an essential role in structuring the viewer's experience. Just as musical rhythm can evoke emotions and shape how we perceive time, the repetitive, patterned sounds produced by the writing tool create a sense of tempo and continuity within the installation. This rhythm may remind viewers of natural cycles, like breathing or a heartbeat, or it may develop its unique cadence, adding an underlying structure to the piece. The sound mirrors the created visual forms' rhythm and tone, influencing how viewers interpret and feel about each line and curve on the drywall. At times, the sound takes on a provocative quality, disrupting the silence and compelling viewers to pay closer attention. This is more than mere background noise; it is an active element that challenges viewers' expectations and stirs their senses.

The intensity of the sound can evoke a visceral reaction, enhancing the emotional weight of the artwork. Depending on the rhythm and texture of the noise, it might feel unsettling, soothing, or even confrontational, inviting viewers to explore their responses to the experience. This layered engagement not only enhances the visual impact but also reinforces the overarching themes of the piece, inviting viewers to connect on both intellectual and emotional levels.

The interaction between the complexity of the marks and their corresponding sounds highlights the nuances of the artwork, emphasizing the attention to detail in both the auditory

and visual elements. Sound has a unique ability to stir emotions, and in this installation, the rhythmic and provocative nature of the writing sounds amplifies the emotional impact of the visual work. A fast, erratic rhythm can evoke excitement or tension, while a slow, steady beat might induce calm or contemplation. The sound thus plays a pivotal role in shaping the emotional landscape of the viewer's experience, enhancing the visual narrative with auditory cues that heighten the mood and atmosphere. In this way, sound acts as both a guide and a pulse, helping viewers navigate the visual experience. It is a rhythmic foundation that ties together the visual and tactile elements, anchoring the viewer's attention and creating cohesion. The auditory "pulse" aligns with the progression of marks on the wall, offering a steady rhythm that resonates with the visual flow. This rhythmic unity reinforces the immersive quality of the installation.

The sound bridges the gap between what is seen and what is felt, linking the visual and tactile elements of the installation. While the eye perceives the intricate marks and patterns, the ear connects to the physicality of the writing process, reinforcing the sensory experience. This connection enhances the viewer's perception, creating a more holistic encounter with the work. The sound draws attention to the act of writing, making the viewer aware of each stroke and marking it as a deliberate, expressive act. By weaving together the auditory, visual, and tactile aspects, the installation invites viewers to connect more deeply to reflect on the role of memory, expression, and the primal urge to leave a mark. Sound becomes the heartbeat of the installation, a subtle yet powerful element that pulses through each mark, drawing the viewer into a shared space of creation and reflection.

The Xs:

I continuously used a cross shape "X" in asemic writings and mark-makings. The "X" is a visual element with layered interpretations that connect personal, social, and historical

experiences. The symbol of protection, represented by the “X,” evokes the use of X-shaped tape often seen on windows during conflicts or natural disasters. This practical application serves a vital purpose: preventing glass from shattering inward and ensuring safety. Beyond its functional role, the “X” becomes a powerful symbol of resilience, capturing the essence of guarding against chaos and destruction in uncertain times. Thus, the “X” shape becomes a poignant representation of safeguarding and stability, reflecting a subtle yet profound commitment to protection against chaos and destruction vulnerability.

The “X” also symbolizes erasure or rejection, reminiscent of crossing out text or images. This simple gesture implies a sense of refusal, signaling the removal or invalidation of narratives, ideas, or memories. When combined with its role as a mark of protection, the “X” emerges as a multilayered emblem within the artwork. It embodies resilience and negation, inviting reflections on the complex themes of safeguarding and consideration, as well as dismissal and erasure. The dual nature of the “X” encourages deeper contemplation on the interplay between protection and rejection in our lives and experiences.



Figure 28: A white suitcase with torn mesh and drywall debris



Figure 29: A white suitcase with torn pieces of mesh and drywall

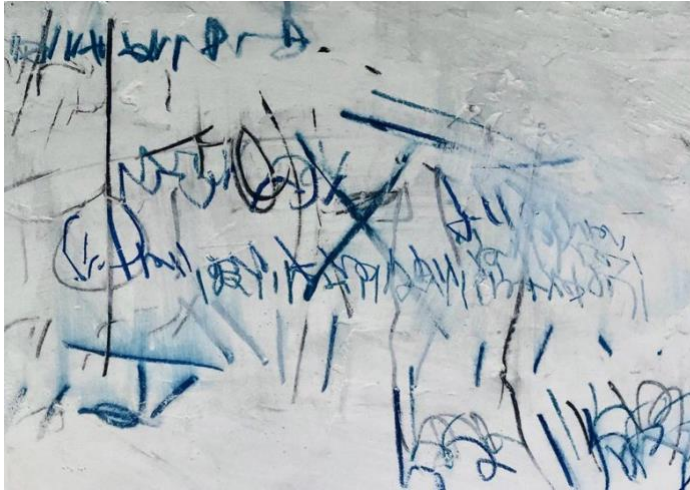


Figure 30: A white wall with blue writing

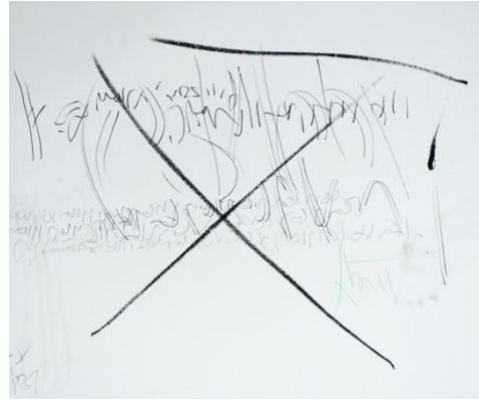


Figure 31: A close-up of a wall with writing

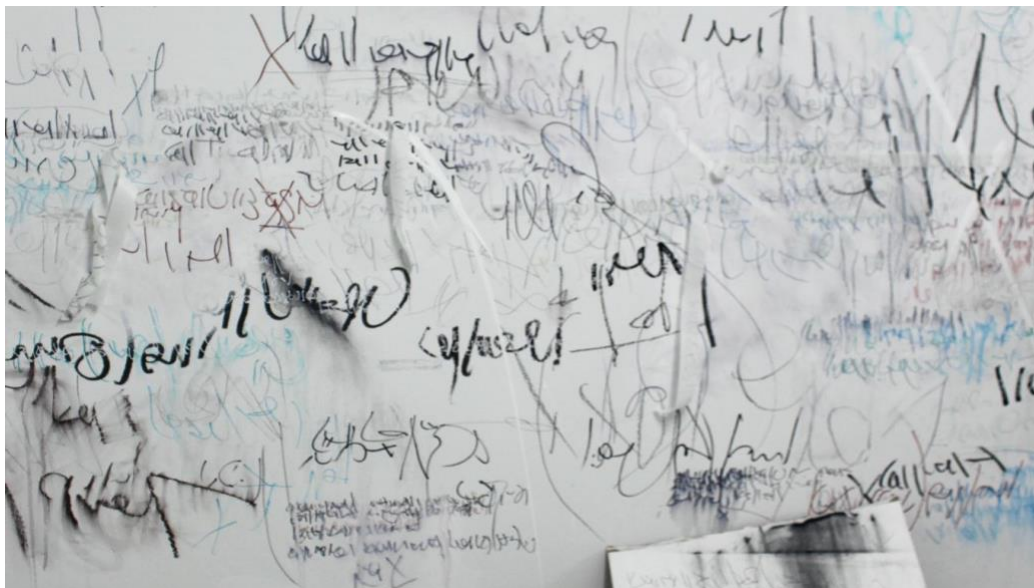


Figure 32: A wall with asemic writing

Conclusion

The multisensory concept transforms my project into a fully immersive installation that offers participants an embodied experience. The installation becomes a dynamic environment that invites deep engagement by carefully orchestrating the interplay of movement, sound, light, and texture within a tunnel-like space. Each sensory layer is designed to evoke emotions, provoke reflection, and mirror memory, trauma, and identity complexities. As participants move through the space, they are not only passive observers but also active participants in the evolving narrative. The gradual intensification of light, the rhythm of sound, and the tactile qualities of the textures create an ever-shifting atmosphere that resonates physically and emotionally. This design aims to blur the boundaries between the personal and collective to make each individual's journey through the installation unique and meaningful. Through this project, I seek to explore how viewers respond to these sensory elements and how they interpret the layered narratives presented. By immersing themselves in this experience, participants can confront their memories, reflect on broader historical and social forces, and connect with the themes of resilience, migration, and identity. "Echoes in the Void: Nostalgic Morse Codes" becomes more than just a physical space, evolving into a space for personal reflection, collective insight, and meaningful conversation.

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APPENDIX A











