HONORING GHOSTS & THE NATURE OF GRIEF
Artmaking as Transfiguration

By

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A THESIS ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

2020

Abstract

This thesis project is rooted in relationships– the deep bonds which we share with one another, with our more-than-human kin, *and* our relationship with the abundant animate life that exists in the natural world. After losing several loved ones to cancer in a short time I became drawn to the interplay of grief and wounded ecology. This led to a methodological framework for making which involves thinking *with* grief and thinking *with* and *through* nature.

Through curious and embodied engagement with the natural world, my aim is to create a material vernacular for grief using the formal and metaphoric language of nature. The questions I am researching through my thesis work are:
How is the transformational nature of grief enacted through the intuitive, embodied, material, and metaphoric processes of making?
How can the absence created by death be materially and conceptually made present through space and form?

The research takes a phenomenological approach through walking, observing, sensing, and collecting organic ephemera in the natural environment. This sensorial experience includes an openness to the spectral– making space to listen and commune with ghosts while in nature and in the studio. My embodied experiences in the natural world and the organic matter I've collected are then translated through various material investigations in the studio including relief printing, repetitive layering to build up forms, generating 3D sculptures, and finally, creating largescale immersive installations.

This thesis has elucidated how death can be a type of refugia in both life *and* artmaking – allowing us to draw from the compost of loss and chaos to re-order and reanimate them through altered forms. The final artworks have been propelled by asking: What material processes *enact* regeneration– extracting a quality from the debris of our losses to *make new* with? The thesis project explores what it looks like to actively grieve, to go on living *with* death. It enacts the hopeful potentiality in the simultaneous work of mourning while making new.

Dedicated to:

My grandmother, whose curious and brave spirit lives on in me. I am so grateful I had the chance to share with you that I was starting my MFA. Though you are gone, I still journey with you.

Shawn, the funny ginger haired boy who made the art room his home. I will always cherish the quirky and thoughtful portrait you made for me. It was my deepest honour to be your teacher and to have you call me your friend.

Buddy, my adventure dog, studio companion, and best friend. Someday we will walk side by side again.

Acknowledgements

To Ingrid Koenig,
Kimberly Phillips, Alla Gadassik, Birthe Piontek, & Lyse Lemieux.
Thank you for your guidance, excitement, encouragement, and conversation.
Each of you has enlivened and enriched my thesis project
through your discerning and invaluable insight.

To my husband Craig, for your unwavering belief and support,
and for making me dinner for the past two years.

To my mother, who instilled in me the tenacity to work hard to achieve my goals.

To my students, who inspire me to keep learning and sharing. It is a
privilege to walk alongside you while you forge your own creative paths.

WILD GEESE

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body love
what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

-Mary Oliver,
Dream Work

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A Journey Through Nature and Grief
(Introduction)

"Life is up to the living. When a person we love leaves our midst, all we are left with are the remnants, either object or immaterial. It is up to the eulogist-artist to take these fragmented bits of highly subjective meaning and reposition them for a broader public. By this process, the narrator is nudged into the position of defining who they are themselves, as a survivor and a memory keeper."

- Kelly Korducki, *Coming Through Grief*

This thesis traces an emergent art practice that applies a methodological framework for making that involves thinking *with* grief and thinking *with* and *through* nature. It explores how curious and embodied engagement with the natural environment can change our perception and provide a visual and metaphoric language used in artmaking to articulate the complex and often abstract emotions of grieving. This thesis, explored through theoretical research and rigorous formal and material investigations, examines how artmaking expresses the materiality of mourning while enacting the transfigurative process of learning how to live once we are changed by loss.

Artmaking makes sense to approach this subject as it speaks to the embodied labour of grieving while also expressing the ineffable sorrow that overtakes us in the wake of a death. Artmaking puts action and form to this process- animating the gestures of reaching out to embrace lost kin, and then creating new spaces for memory and memorial for the viewer.

My thesis work is presented as a rhizomatic journey of learning which enacts the transformational premise of my research. This journey originates in response to environmental degradation then unfolds with both personal narratives of grief and experiences in the natural world to examine the different ways of knowing that have bourgeoned in my art practice in the past two years: knowing through our bodies, knowing through nature, and knowing through making. My thesis artworks trace relationships that are unseen and make them visible to others— inviting them to make metaphoric connections with themselves and nature, to feel, to remember, and to commune with ghosts.

This is a story that traverses the open plains where the yawning expanse of earth meets the blue sky at an endless horizon. It follows rivers: The Red, the Assiniboine, and the Mighty Fraser. This story walks paths, enters moss covered forests and sits beneath cathedrals of ancient trees. It labours through snow, swims in cool lakes, turns over discarded bits of bark, collects stones, and bends to look closely at the small and exquisite wonders surrounding us in the natural world.

It is also a story that follows the body's betrayal. It stays vigil next to those whose spirits remain strong through last breaths, while their bodies diverge their own paths, failing them in a slow and painful depletion.
It is a story of watching those whom you love disappear before you, in pain, suffering, and yet with profound courage and strength.

When I look back to consider where it all began— who I am and how I came to think, move, and make in this world with grief as my steady companion— I am brought to a quiet winter morning in November of 1990. The ground was frozen, and the sky was clear. This is the day my sister died. I was 10 years old.

I learned then that losing is a part of loving, that loss is always near, and that grief changes us and stays with us. I learned how to carry it. How to live on with it. I learned what it means to live with the presence of absence.

This is a story of nature, relationships, and honoring ghosts. It follows the movement of my body and the way grief moves through us; not how we move past it— rather how we move <u>with</u> it. Like a current, we step into its flow and are taken somewhere new.

Wounded Ecologies & Speaking for the Dead

(Positionality and Practice)

Drawn to the interplay of grief and ecology, I am exploring disrupted ecologies in relation to both the human body and our non-human kin in this time of environmental degradation and accelerated extinctions. Through curious and embodied engagement with the natural world, my aim is to create a material vernacular for grief using the formal and metaphoric language of nature. The questions I am researching through my thesis work are:

How is the transformational nature of grief enacted through the intuitive, embodied, material, and metaphoric processes of making?
How can the absence created by death be materially and conceptually made present through space and form?

Coming into the MFA program I was exploring wounded ecologies in the Anthropocene.[1] My artistic research focused on the environmental impact of mining and the residual ecological effects caused by the industrial exploitation of natural resources. This practice involved visiting and exploring decommissioned mine sites in British Columbia (the Britannia Mine, Nickleplate mine and Mount Baldy) and researching mining operations across BC. I created responsive artworks through a variety of material investigations including paintings, drawings, and assemblage sculptures made from discarded objects collected from mine sites.

Often my research impacted me quite viscerally. It was hard not to feel overwhelmed and horrified by things I was learning: reading reports about the Mount Polley Mine tailings pond[2] breach in northern British Columbia, watching videos which captured the black toxic slurry

[1]The Anthropocene is a term describing the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment

[2] Tailings ponds are described as "huge storage facilities that are the result of the controversial practice of mixing mine waste (tailings) with large volumes of water and holding it behind earthen dams" (Foy: Wilderness Committee Vol. 35 No.1/2016).

rage through hectares of forest to pour into Quesnel lake[3] (which eventually feeds the Fraser River); or learning how decommissioned mine sites can still leach toxins into surrounding land and waterways to wreak havoc on delicate ecosystems supporting myriad of plant and animal life and First Nations peoples who continue to rely on the land and rivers for sustenance. I spent a lot of time walking in nature and making in the studio to process and communicate the grief I was feeling about these devastating ecological losses. My practice became rooted in loss and expressed a poetic lamentation for the wounded ecologies and land hauntings created by industrial exploitation and degradation of the natural environment.

While my practice was already embedded in grief, a pivotal turn occurred in my thesis during the first year of my MFA which intensified this emotion. After losing several loved ones in a short time to cancer, I could not help but consider how the ways that we have harmed the environment are also harming us. My research expanded to explore the links of environmental toxicity and biological cancers. I first read *Silent Spring*, the seminal text by Rachel Carson which brought attention to the insidious and toxicological effects of rampant and indiscriminate pesticide use. I then read *Living Downstream* by Sandra Steingraber who is an ecologist, cancer survivor, and renowned public advocate for reducing carcinogens in our environment. Steingraber's scientific research asserts direct links between the industrial pollution which cause climate change to be the same toxins that cause cancer in living beings. There was no escaping the body burden carried by the earth and its inhabitants.[4]

As a highly relational and empathic individual I was left bereft by the visceral experiences of watching those I love suffer while their bodies were changed and depleted by disease. I came to see the body compromised by illness as a wounded ecology. I began considering how our lives and relationships are a type of ecology which also must heal once a loved one dies. In response

[3] Mount Polley Mind (BC) tailings pond wall collapsed at one end in 2014, an estimated "8 *million* cubic metres of solid mine tailings were mixed in with the slurry that spewed into the lake. Materials (in that) mine waste include arsenic, cobalt, copper, lead, manganese, mercury, nickel, phosphorous, and vanadium." This event was the worst in Canadian History, catastrophically changing the landscape between the tailings pond and Quesnel Lake forever. (Foy).

[4] Body burden refers to the total chemical saturation in a living organism at one time.

to these experiences, my art practice offers a requiem to loved ones lost. It expresses the gravity and gravitas of the body and negotiates how to live on with the presence of absence.

Donna Haraway is a contemporary multispecies feminist theorist who has deeply influenced my understanding and appreciation of our complex intra-relationships in this world and how to negotiate loss through the act of making. Haraway confronts the Anthropocene (and the deep sense of foreboding and grief that comes with it) by proposing radical new ways of knowing and living alongside our more-than-human kin so that we may envision and work towards hopeful and creative action in our uncertain future. Often, she employs metaphor and storytelling as generative responses for imagining and making the changes needed in this epoch of accelerated loss and rapid extinctions. I am inspired by Haraway (among many other theorists and artists) that artmaking is a productive response to both personal and environmental grief.

My practice was drastically transformed after watching one of Haraway's lectures which she gave with social anthropologist Anna Tsing entitled "Tunneling Through the Chthulucene" (Youtube 2015). During this lecture, Haraway shared the premise for her speculative fiction series the *Camille Stories* in which she envisions a future where humans will have bonded with a more- than- human species and must pass on the knowledge of caring for it to proceeding generations. I was struck by the following quote from Haraway regarding what she terms being a 'Speaker for the Dead'[5] in times of loss and extinction. A 'Speaker for the Dead' helps others come to terms with death, helping them to use their loss as refugia[6] to move forward in life:

> …the role of Speaker for the Dead, travelling to places where people cannot come to terms with their dead, cannot come to terms with going on, *until somehow the dead are made present in such a way as to give heart to the living*. So that the job of the Speaker for the Dead in our times of extinctions, our times of urgencies, is a job of resurgence– in a way *the Speaker for the dead understand the dead as refugia for giving heart for the ongoing work of making live.* (Haraway 2015)

[5] Haraway acknowledges that she has borrowed the term "Speaker for the Dead" directly from the 1986 science fiction book of the same name, written by Orson Scott Card.

[6] *Refugia* is a biological term which refers to an area in which a species or community of species can survive through a period of harsh and unfavorable circumstances or extinction.

Upon hearing Haraway's description and exhortation of what it is to be a 'Speaker for the Dead' I felt that she was offering a mantel to be taken up, and recognizing the clanging resonance within my own heart and art practice *I responded to that call*.

Being a 'Speaker for the Dead' as a part of practice is to embrace the *hopeful potentiality* of perceiving 'death as refugia'. It is to take on the responsibility of leading others through loss to imagine and move towards new futures. In my thesis, I utilize this notion of *refugia* in two ways: First, refugia as *a place* – I see both nature *and* the gallery as *places* of refuge, meaning-making, and resurgence. Secondly, refugia as *humus* – lively matter created through decomposition providing vital nourishment for the furtherance of life and new growth. From Haraway's exhortations, I see using death as refugia, and being a 'Speaker for the Dead' as both creative and inherently hopeful endeavors. It takes vulnerability, emotional courage, empathy and imagination to acknowledge loss and make something new from it.

Death and regeneration are embedded in the life cycles of nature, while also being common themes moving across cultures, philosophies, religion, sciences and time. The studio is a transformative place to embody and express the experience of grief with its simultaneous tensions of loss, absence, and longing *with* those of hope, memory, and regeneration. These tensions of grief elucidate how death can be a type of refugia in both life and artmaking – allowing us to draw from the compost of loss and chaos to re-order and reanimate them in new altered forms. For me, making art is a way to order the chaos that death causes[7] in our life while creating new spaces for sharing grief and honoring the ghosts who live among us.

[7] In *Chaos, Territory, and Art (2008),* Australian philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz writes that art making is a way to communicate sensation to others by extracting certain qualities from chaos. (Grosz 8). See the *Nests & Drawing* section of this paper for an expansion of this concept as applied to my practice.

Listening to Ghosts

I have always walked with ghosts. For as long as I can remember I have had the ability to perceive a world beyond the visible. Sometimes this has been an attunement to place, to the hauntings left by those who have been there before me. Other times my experience is rooted in memory, a deep stirring of the traces which remain embedded both inside and outside of me to those I have shared kinship with. Yet other times my experience with ghosts is a deep sensorial awareness of the animate and spectral world which surrounds me. I am certain that my connection to ghosts spring equally from both my intimate relationship with nature and my spiritual/theological experiences and training. While I don't necessarily believe that ghosts are spirits who have returned beyond the grave, I do assert that there are lively immaterial presences in this world which remain, even when physical bodies pass on. These absent presences require attending to. In *Specters of Marx- The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Jacques Derrida expounds on the necessity of engaging with ghosts in our lives. "Learning to live (means) learning to live *with* ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, (and) the companionship… of ghosts" (Derrida xviii). Learning to live with ghosts helps us to come to terms with death, while enabling us to see our place and interconnection with things that are beyond the here and now.

Derrida asserts that acknowledging ghosts is also about acknowledging our responsibility to memory, inheritance, and generations (xvii). In my own life and practice, interacting with ghosts is about stewarding relationships– those that I have shared with people *and* more-than-human kin. Every living organism relies on a complex assemblage of other beings to nourish it as it grows. This is evident in relationships in nature, and those between humans. Even when one living being passes on, whatever it has been in relationship with continues to carry part of it forward. In this way we are formed, nourished, and haunted by the complex ecological interconnections in our lives (whether this be a new sapling growing from the stump of an ancient cedar, or the curiosity that I continue to engage in the world with, instilled in me by my grandmother). Our lives are an impartation and expression of our relationships with others,

which is why it is necessary to "speak *of the* ghost, indeed *to the* ghost, and *with it*" (xviii). This impartation does not end when bodies move beyond their original material forms. Rather than seeing death as a mute and inert end to our existence, author and English professor Michelle Ballif writes in *Regarding the Dead* that "the dead is a condition of possibility for the human. The dead haunts "the human" in a constitutive way" (Ballif 458). My relationship to ghosts is indeed constitutive as I am led by them and respond to them in my every day. I follow them, wait for them, and listen to what they have to say.

This type of haunting is also at play while working in the studio. The act of making is lively and opens liminal spaces where I engage with those I've lost in new ways. It is not just a process of invoking memory, but a point of connection, a communion of sorts where I feel closer to those I've lost. The studio is a place where I actively engage with and work alongside ghosts.

Another important place whereby I experience a vital communion with ghosts is in nature. Nature is haunted by its past– that which is no longer present is still alive, woven into the fabric of animate beings. It is full of traces of its former self – remnants providing refugia for the ongoing work of making live. Nature is full of speaking ghosts. To hear them, you must be open to new modes of perception and unfamiliar forms of language. Writer and cultural critic Dilia Narduzzi draws attention to the fact that many ecofeminist theorists "argue the natural world cannot be understood or captured linguistically". She goes on to make profound connections between ecofeminist theory and Derrida's concept of ghosts as offering new ways knowing:

> The non-linguistic and non-material elements of the ghostly, as maintained by Derrida, and the natural world, as maintained by (ecofeminists), both suggest that there is something profound at work that goes beyond material reality, yet both make known that the experience of the so-called immaterial reality offers an *alternative* means in which to perceive material reality. Immateriality informs materiality- relationships between the manifest human and natural worlds are constantly being reconstructed, restructured, and newly imagined through the incorporation … of the ghostly and the *felt* experience of nature. (Narduzzi 64).

While nature offers a rich physical environment for our bodies to encounter, it is the imminent immaterial reality which surrounds us there that enlivens our ability to commune with ghosts. The deeply sensorial experience of interacting with the natural environment carries the same intangible yet weighty awareness that comes with the spectral. Time expands in nature, folding the past, present, and future together. This non-linearity is something that Derrida also attributes to ghosts. It is in nature, and while engaging with animate materials that I am able to perceive those I've lost and hear them speaking anew. My art practice endeavors to create similar types of liminal spaces where viewer/participants can sense the immaterial reality of the spectral while being immersed in the material installation.

Thinking *With* Grief
(Methodology)

"To be creatures who love, we must be creatures who despair at what we lose".

-Andrew Solomon
The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression

I frame thinking *with* grief not within the familiar concept of moving through the prescribed five stages of grieving as a process of beginning, middle, and eventual end.[8] Conversely, my thesis asserts that grief is an experience that is *transformational* and *enduring*—we live *on* with it. Grief causes us to think and approach the world in new ways. In addition to Donna Haraway, my methodology for thinking *with* grief as a part of my art practice was also deeply influenced by reading *Mourning Nature- Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief* edited by Dr. Ashlee Consolo and Professor Karen Landman (2017). This pivotal text interweaves critical essays sharing both personal and collective stories of loss and grief for other humans and more-than-human kin (both species and ecological loss). In their essay 'To Mourn Beyond Human', the co-editors write:

> And this is where the "work" of mourning lies: in understanding our shared vulnerability and our shared finiteness; embracing the responsibility of the labours of grief that this entails; and understanding that all we have to give to the dead, to what we have lost, is our own living and our own acts of mourning and remembrance. Mourning then, is a call to responsibility to engage with what was lost, and in this light, becomes work to which we must always attend (Consolo & Landman 8).

We are inherently altered when we experience a death, and the labour of grief is something that carries on with us thereafter. Whether grief is personal or for our more-than-human kin in these dire ecological times, my thesis examines a methodology of engaging with grief as a multifaceted affective and transformational mode of making. Thinking *with* grief in my practice allows me to lean into this transformation as a productive artistic response, to express

[8] The five stages of grieving have become synonymous with grief processing/counselling after first being introduced by the wildly popular *On Death and Dying* (1969*)* written by psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

the ineffable, and to create installation spaces that offer viewers new modes of remembering, acknowledging grief and contemplating absence.

Knowing Through the Body:
(An Embodied and Phenomenological Approach to Practice)

My practice is driven by embodied ways of learning and knowing. Walking, collecting, responding to lively materials, hand printing, building 3D forms and creating large-scale installations are all embodied actions. 'Embodiment' is explored through both the cognitive sciences and phenomenological theory[9]. Mark Johnson is a philosopher and accomplished author who has researched and written extensively on the subject of the embodied mind—specifically how our "sensory-motor experience play a crucial role in what we can think, how we think, and the nature of our symbolic expression and communication" (philosophy.uoregon). This embodied understanding of knowledge is at the heart of my practice as it insists on the pre-eminence of the body while embracing the concept of knowing *as a process of inquiry and transformation*, rather than something that is objectively fixed. Embodied cognition acknowledges both the sensing, moving body *and* our emotions as integral to how we acquire knowledge and understanding (Johnson 145). Embodied cognition stems from Phenomenology. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty was an early pioneer of Phenomenology, emphasizing the primacy of our visceral engagement with the world and the entities that surround us. Phenomenology, for Merleau-Ponty "invites us to recognize, at the heart of even our most abstract cogitations, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself" (Abram 45). Merleau-Ponty, like Johnson, asserts that our perception arises from direct physical and sensorial experience: "The living body is thus the very possibility of contact, not just with others but with oneself- the very possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge" (45). My practice is rooted

[9] Phenomenology was first introduced by Edmund Husserl in the early 1900's. Husserl defined Phenomenology as a rigorous science that sought not to "explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience" (qtd. in Abram 35).

in a phenomenological and embodied engagement in both the natural world *and* in the studio where I feel and make in order to think and know.

Tracing Your Ghost: Animating Memory and Making Space for Ghosts

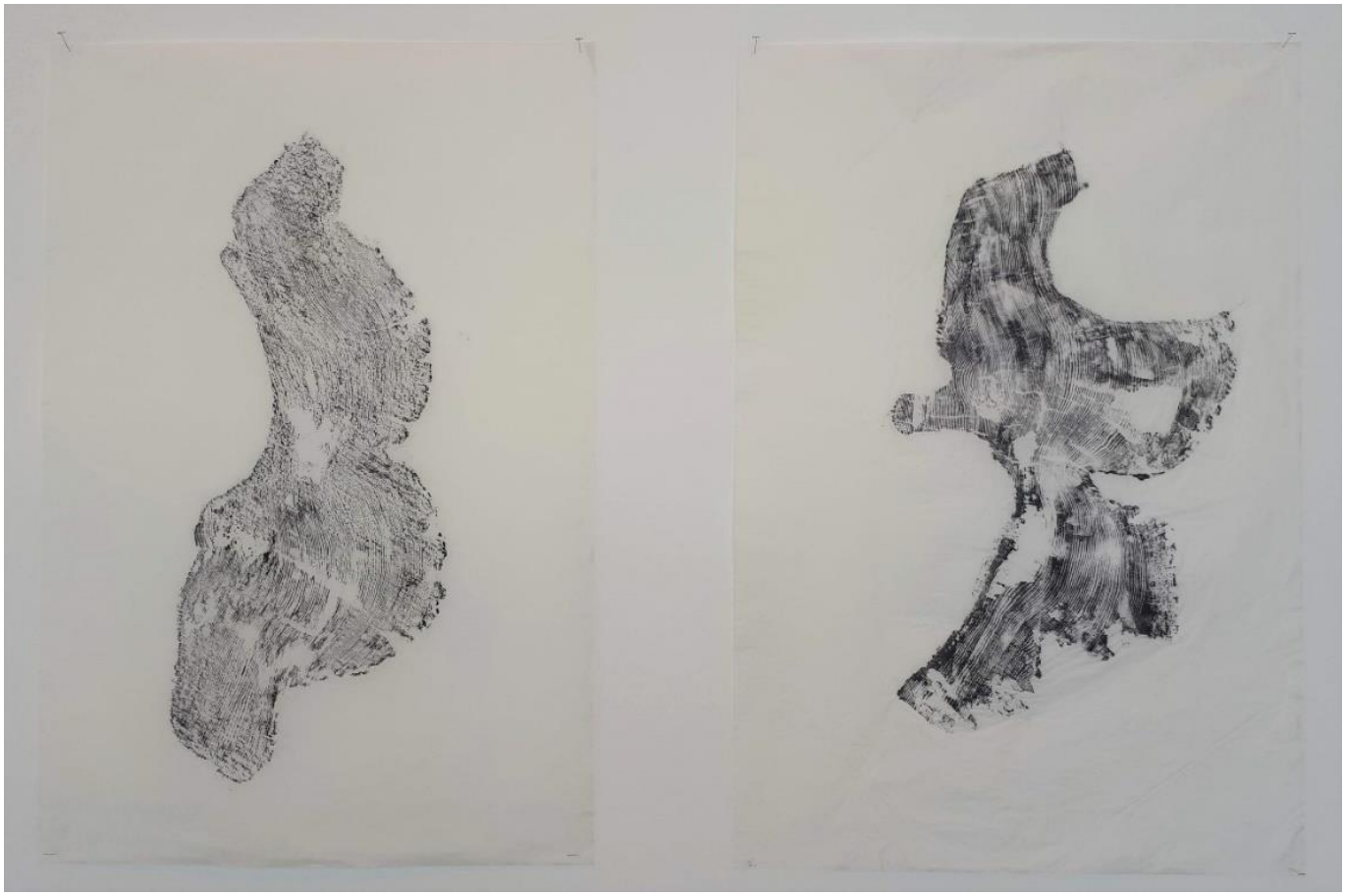

Fig. 1 *Tracing Your Ghost*, 2019 (fragmented Pine tree relief prints on paper 25x37)

The thesis artworks borrow language and processes from the natural world. As my work progressed from first to second year, my practice has become driven to enact new cycles of transformation and metamorphosis through the process of making in the studio. I also aim to draw attention to both absence and presence through the formal considerations of the work and

the space created in installations which invite participatory movement amongst the hollow sculptures. I will begin by sharing *Tracing Your Ghost II (2019),* one of my most recent installations which provides rich contextualization for my practice.

For my Interim exhibition, I included 2 largescale relief prints entitled *Tracing Your Ghost* (2019). The prints were made from a fragmented pine tree stump which I had physically dragged from the forest. The fractured organic forms resonated with me, invoking a sense of the human body broken and compromised by illness. The impressions were a vital record of my own engagement with the tree stumps and the emotions I experienced during the process of relief printing– that intimacy of laying the paper like a shroud over the stump, running my palms across the grain, the nurturing touch required to cause the inky lines to surface. The prints provoked varying readings—from topography to lungs, all of which related to both the natural world and living bodies. The images achieved what I had anticipated, but these ghostly impressions on paper were not enough for me. As soon as I hung them on the wall, I felt an impulse to turn them into 3D forms. I needed to bring them back to the physical body; I needed to bring them back to life.

Fig. 2 *Tracing Your Ghost II*, 2019 (1st Iteration)

The first iteration of the 3D forms was quite modest. I made relief prints of fragmented stumps (black ink on white rice paper) and tore the inked images from the paper. I then glued the frayed seams together with rice glue to create delicate hollow sculptures. In borrowing language from nature, the white paper forms were reminiscent of empty pods or cocoons. Each form was open, either on the top or the bottom, with some small tears revealing glimpses of their insides. The “pods” hung from thin white thread and appeared to float as they spun mid-air. They were installed so that people could walk in and among them.

As the sculptures progressed through further experimentation, the paper forms became more complex. I continued the repetitive action of creating relief prints from the collected organic matter. I maintained the black ink but eventually worked with a more naturally wheat-toned paper which I applied in pieces to the top layer of the existing white forms. I also activated the inside of the forms more intentionally, adding lichen patterns which visually relate to the circulatory system, as well as ponderosa pine prints which resemble foreign matter (tumors, masses) that can grow inside the body.

Making these sculptures was both a dynamic and emotional process. Every time I ran my hands over the stump, I would experience an activation of my memories, and feel a connection to lost kin. I couldn't explain why this abstract connection occurred, but this sensorial, emotional, and material crossover became vital to my practice. Leaning into emotions and responding to materials while making is a way to come to new revelations and give space for ideas to take new forms. I came to a deeper appreciation of the embodied experience– how action and making are all connected to our imagination, feelings, thinking, and coming to know.

Social anthropologist Tim Ingold has provided generous contextualization for understanding making as being a lively and transformational experience. Ingold exhorts that making is an ongoing process of growth and a dynamic correspondence between the artist and their materials: "in the process of making he 'joins forces' with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, synthesizing and distilling, in anticipation of what might emerge" (*Making* 31). Through making we enter a dynamic and reciprocal relationship with materials. Ingold cites Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari who insist that whenever we encounter matter it is "matter in movement, in flux, in variation', with a consequence that 'this matter flow can only be followed" (25). This concept has resonance for me in my practice— that as artists we do not simply impose our ideas on a material to make a thing, rather we enter a 'flow' of active materials and processes which both reveal themselves and lead us as we engage with them. Following Delueze and Guattari's premise, Ingold states that: "Artisans or practitioners who follow the flow are, in effect, itinerants, wayfarers, whose task is to enter the grain of the world's becoming and

bend it to an evolving purpose. Theirs is an 'intuition in action'" (25). In making my thesis artworks I relied on intuitive connections to my materials while following the flow of how they performed and developed throughout the active process of working with them.

Philosopher and author David Abram theorizes in a similar manner to Ingold, describing our "immediate experience of thing… (*as*) an experience of reciprocal encounter—of tension, communication, and commingling. From within the depths of this encounter, we know the thing or phenomenon only as our interlocutor– as a dynamic presence that confronts us and draws us into relation" (56). In my own practice, the act of making is a responsive and reciprocal relationship with dynamic materials.

Through each step of making the *Tracing Your Ghost II* sculptures— gathering the organic material, recognizing the resonance with the human body in the patterns, making various relief prints, learning new printing methods, and forming, tearing, and layering the delicate paper— I was aware of the liveliness of the process and that as the materials were transformed, so was I.

Fig. 3 *Tracing Your Ghost II*, 2019 (Detail)

Fig. 4 (a,b & c) *Tracing Your Ghost II*, 2019 (Installation Detail)

As the sculptural forms developed, they continued to mimic language and processes from nature (layering, cocooning, shedding), but with much more complexity. The forms also progressed from simple pod shapes to varying expressions, some resembling torsos while others, abandoned cocoons. Each organic form has a long tubular extension which the hollow bodies hang from. This installation is decidedly ephemeral rather than being monumentally fixed. My impulse for this aligns with Ingold who posits that monuments assert an end, while ephemeral sites *perdure*[10]— they are places where "memory-work" actively carries on with the living. (*Making* 80). When installed, the fragile forms are suspended from the ceiling and turn quietly on their own, spinning more dramatically as people move near them– something I consider akin to how memories carry on with us and are reanimated as we move through our lives.

[10]To *perdure* is to remain in existence throughout a substantial period of time; to endure.

Fig. 5 *Tracing Your Ghost II* Installation, 2019, Sculptures made from relief prints on rice paper

Empty cocoons, shrouds, skin, layers, and fragility– my thesis installations all express the materiality of mourning. These aspects resonate with the work of Columbian artist Doris Salcedo. Salcedo also deals with suffering, fragility, and the body. Her artwork is intensely visceral and addresses themes of absence, trauma, violence, and loss. Salcedo's "Flor de Piel" (2014) is a woven sheath made of hundreds of flower petals, all hand stitched together. This delicate and intricate artwork speaks of the human body, skin, and vulnerability. I relate this process to my own use of gathered natural materials which I print repeatedly to enact the persistence of mourning through my artworks.

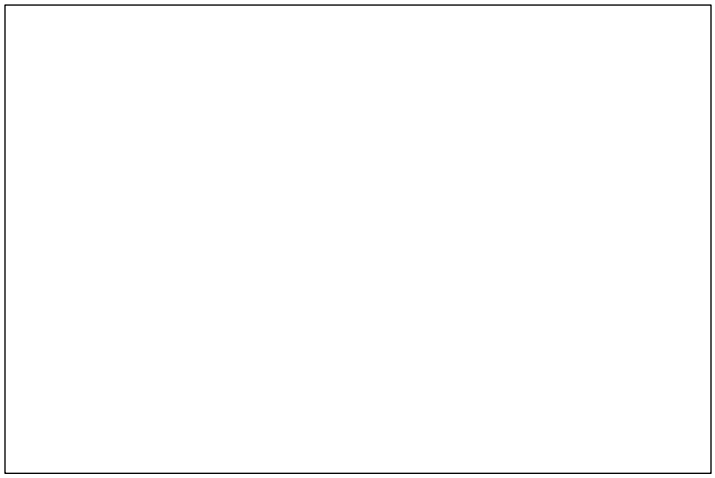

Fig. 6 Salcedo, *Doris Flor De Piel*, 2014

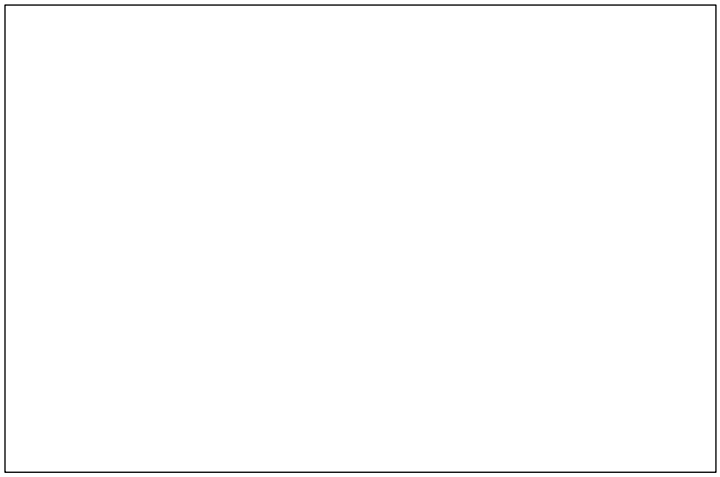

Fig. 7 Salcedo, Doris *Flor de Piel*, 2014 (Detail)

Figures removed due to copyright restrictions. The information removed are images of Salcedo's artwork "Flor de Piel", a delicately handsewn shroud of thousands of red rose petals. A detailed image shows Salcedo's hands as she surgically stitches the petals together.

Similar to Salcedo's practice, the materiality in the process of making, as well as the act of care through the engagement of the body, are both crucial to the work. The gestures of softly hand rubbing fragile pine bark to make prints, or creating delicate ghostly forms by layering thin printed paper are both nurturing acts which enact a relationship with the body– bodies known and loved, and my own body expressing and tending to my memories of loved ones and their absence after they have died. Through my prints of fragmented pine stumps and bark I document traces of wounded forms, while my sculptures allow me to wrap my arms around the empty space created by death. Creating these forms is a way to honor ghosts and let their presence breath again– the bodily forms re-animating their memory and physical presence among the living.

Trace Memorials: Moving Grief Through Our Bodies

While I began by describing the artwork most recent to my thesis, I will now return to the earlier works which elucidate the journey by which I developed the methods and methodology which inform my practice today.

Not long after a warm early winter of 2019 in which I was going outside to make artwork (doing black charcoal circle drawings on rocks and creating sculptures out of fallen branches), it snowed, and the snow stayed. While I was exploring ways to respond to environmental losses, I was also enduring my own profound personal grief having just lost my grandmother, one of my high school art students, and then my beloved dog, all of whom succumbed to cancer. I spent the new year experimenting with new types of artmaking. I had previously collected discarded pieces of wood near Mount Sheer[11] in Squamish. I altered these by rubbing charcoal into their ends to blacken them. I then used the wooden planks to assemble temporary installations in the forest, as well as making charcoal compositions in the snow. Most of these ephemeral artworks were composed with a blackened void at their centre. I would create the work, document it, and then gather the materials up, leaving behind only the impressions of my actions in the snow. I called these new works *Trace Memorials.* Over and over I would carry heavy bundles of wood and bags of charcoal into the forest or out into fields through 2-3 feet of dense snow. There was something in this physical effort and toil that was integral to the work. My personal grief was so heavy, so hard to bear each day, that the act of carrying the cumbersome materials through difficult terrain articulated the emotional labouring of that sorrow.

[11] Much of Mount Sheer is owned by the Britannia Mine where I had previously explored backroads to document decommissioned mine sites and gather discarded objects from the abandoned infrastructure to use in artworks.

Fig. 8 (a, b, & c) *Trace Memorials* 2019 Ephemeral Installations of charcoal and found wood

Movement and grief are discussed by journalist and cultural critic Kelli Korducki in an article entitled *Coming Through Grief*, in relation to Maryanne Casasanta's work titled "*Grief Work* (*Ask Your Body*)" (2016). In this short video, the artist filmed herself dancing spontaneously only three weeks after her father's sudden passing. "Moving forward calls for actual movement— a physical manifestation of what we vaguely call "processing" says Korducki. "Casasanta describes her performance as trying to move grief through her body… Life, the work implies, moves through loss; movement sanctifies absence" (Korducki: Canadian Art 92). The bodily effort of creating the *Trace Memorials* artworks was a physical manifestation of ineffable emotion.

At the time of making these physically demanding yet fleeting art installations outside, I was still describing my practice in relation to environment degradation and grief. I asserted that these *Trace Memorials* were a lamentation to ecological loss, however, this explanation was no longer sitting right with me. I had to come to terms with the reality that my art practice had

shifted, and rather than responding to environmental losses, I was now being compelled by profound personal experiences with grief.

Trudging through the deep snow-covered forest or walking over dense terrain to create ephemeral memorials became an embodied means for me to acknowledge loss and move grief through my body. These actions made visible the invisible gravity of emotion I was experiencing while elucidating the way loss manifests suddenly and often unexpectedly as we move through life.

Wayfaring: Lines of Movement and Connection

Walking has always been a part of my life. As a teenager I would walk for hours beside sprawling yellow prairie fields. I have persisted with this practice through the years, aware of how this joyful embodied action is full of generative potential. Walking has enlivened my body, helped me to process emotions, and inspired new ways of thinking. I was not surprised to learn in reading *The Nature Fix* (Williams 2017), that scientists have discovered a connection to walking and divergent creativity– referring to our ability to come up with more than one answer for complex problems (46). This aligns with the many new revelations that I have arrived at through my MFA while simply going for a walk. In her book *Wanderlust*, writer and historian Rebecca Solnit echoes that walking is by no means a neutral activity, asserting instead that it is a holistic and highly generative action. "Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world" (Solnit 29). There is no way that we can know things without embodied experience, and walking is literally a way to think through moving to arrive at new points of understandings.

In walking through the forest during my MFA, I have become acutely aware of my actions as both a way of processing and a type of mark making. Tim Ingold defines this practice as *wayfaring*—a concept which connects lines and drawing with the act of physical movement:

> The practice of drawing has little or nothing to do with the projection of images and everything to do with wayfaring– with breaking a path through a terrain and leaving a trace, at once in the imaginations and on the ground, in a matter very similar to what happens as one walks along in a world of earth and sky (*Lines* 179*).*

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While some of my early explorations of drawing in the forest did involve using moss to create compositions on the forest floor, other walking experiences have drawn invisible lines in my imagination while I work through ideas and make connections with what I am physically experiencing, my emotions at the time, and the richly textured natural environment around me.

Ingold writes extensively on how lines, walking, and making all relate to one another. Donna Haraway writes about lines not only as connections to new ideas, but as connections to greater living networks that surround and entangle us. In her essay on "Tentacular Thinking", Haraway evokes the image of an octopus feeling, reaching, and exploring as a multimodal means of engaging in the world. "Tentacularity is about life lived along line— and such a wealth of lines— not at points, not in spheres. "The kinds of inhabitants of the world, creatures of all kinds, human and non-human, are wayfarers", generations are like a series of interlaced trails" (Haraway: *e-flux* 2).

Wayfinding and embracing artmaking as a lively, tentacular, dynamically expanding process of interconnection with the world around me has become essential to my research and practice in the development of this thesis.

Knowing Through Nature

"For our senses disclose to us a wild-flowering proliferation of entities and elements in which humans are thoroughly immersed."

-David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*

It was after the shift in my practice occurred to making work which examined and expressed concepts of personally situated grief that I began to understand my engagement with the natural environment as an essential site of research and meaning-making for my practice. This is a phenomenologically based approach in that the artmaking is initiated by wayfaring through old growth forests, scrambling through ravines, and walking along rivers or lakeshores, whereby sensorial experience is then later translated through material processes and completed artworks in the studio.

In his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram expounds on the richness of embodied experience and the participatory nature of perception experienced in the natural environment. He quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who exhorts that "A truly authentic phenomenology (*is a philosophy which would*) give voice to the world from our experienced situation within it, recalling us to our participation in the here-and-now, rejuvenating our sense of wonder at the fathomless things, events and powers that surround us on every hand" (qtd. in Abram 47). My thesis work has bourgeoned from my time spent immersed in nature, being led by curiosity, allowing myself to be present in my sensing, moving body, while experiencing an intimate connection to the animate world around me. Abrams writes that "Perception, in this sense, is an attunement or synchronization between my own rhythms of the things themselves, their own tones and textures" (54). My art practice is rooted in this type of synchronization with the natural world.

Fig. 9 (a & b) Collected organic materials & ephemera from nature

My synchronization with the natural environment has also involved a great deal of intentional looking and openness to the visual and sensorial complexity around me. It is through curious engagement and actively *noticing what I'm noticing* that I became acutely aware of what draws my attention while outside (organic matter, patterns, forms, entropy, new growth…) and how these resonate with the human body and relate in an abstract and yet deeply emotional way to the expression and experiences of grief, absence, and death. While I've always enjoyed collecting natural matter and ephemera, it became integral to my practice to allow these materials to guide and inform my artmaking in an intuitive manner. Political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett examines this type of lively relationship with objects in her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010). Bennet exhorts that both organic and inorganic matter are *vibrant*– full of reciprocal potential should we open ourselves up to them. Bennett focuses on the unique agency that matter asserts (both organic and inorganic) while speculating that it also has its own self-organizing capabilities. While I am not personally convinced that inorganic matter is able to self-organize, what resonates with me in Bennett's writing is the concept that all matter has a vibrancy to which we can respond. I have always sensed that materials hold a certain energy, memory, or haunting depending on the 'life' they have lived with others. My thesis, however, focuses specifically on the liveliness of *organic matter*. Because humans are of the same matter

as the organic world we live in, I believe that natural materials have unique possibilities to reveal things to our perception. Bennett also emphasizes this point: "We *are* vital materiality and we are surrounded by it" (14). This couldn't be truer than when we are immersed in the natural environment—the place from where we evolved as a species in a complex and entangled ecology. The natural world is where humans developed our sensorial awareness to survive, to understand and move through our surroundings, and to be in relationship with one another and our more-than-human kin. It is also where our imaginations and creativity first developed and where our metaphors were formed.[12] We are rooted in this earth. It is alive, it is speaking, and it is beckoning us to listen. The foundation of my art practice is listening to what it has to say.

Discovering a Language for Grief in the Natural World

While walking through the forest and along the lakeshore in the first year of my MFA, I began collecting various organic materials: small bits of bark, leaves, moss, and lichen. Drawn to the varied forms and patterns I felt compelled to make prints of these things, to see what trace they would leave. It was in making the first relief prints— inking up the material and rubbing my hand over the delicate paper to create an impression— that I first began to see an echo of the human body in the patterns and forms that emerged.

I started by printing the delicately shed scales of ponderosa pine bark. The imprinted forms summon visceral memories of x-rays of tumors I have seen in medical body scans. I then printed the patterns carved on the inside of discarded bark– the meandering tracks left by pine

[12] English Naturalist and journalist Michael McCarthy has written extensively on our deep connection to nature in his book *The Moth Snowstorm: Nature and Joy* (2016). McCarthy, along with Yoshifumi Miyazaki, a physical anthropologist at the Centre for Environment, Health & Field Sciences in China (*The Nature Fix* 2018), both assert that because we evolved in nature, it is where we feel most inspired and content. Their research asserts that nature is where humans inherently draw metaphor from and develop a deeper perception of self.

beetles chewing beneath a tree's outer skin. The lines which emerged from these galleries[13] looked like circulatory systems and lungs—the conduit paths of life moving inside the body.

The relief prints made from the fractured pine tree stumps I had dragged out of the forest were much more physically involved. Rather than using my fingertips to gently draw out delicate textures, I would impress my palms on the paper shrouding the large stumps, moving my hands and arms back and forth repeatedly until the history of the tree's life surfaced with agitated inky black lines. To me, all these delicate traces spoke in an intuitive way of the wounded and fragile bodies of those I had loved and lost, becoming part of the material vernacular for grief I would use in future artworks.

Fig. 10 Relief printing test from pine beetle galleries in bark

[13] *Galleries* is the technical term for the hollow pathways that adult bark beetles bore under tree bark to lay their eggs in.

Fig. 11 (a, b, & c) Relief printing tests with pine galleries & ponderosa pine bark scales

Fig. 12 Relief test printing with lichen

The gray whale. I remember how I sensed it was going to return. The time of day, the dusk settling over calm waters. I could read its presence in my body. And then I heard it surface. It blew its mighty breath and I looked up to see the enormous form crest above the water not thirty feet away. How we ran down the rocky beach, scampering over logs and uneven ground to glimpse it again. The other people did the same until we were all moving in a crowd, gasping when the whale emerged and moving forward in anticipation around the edge of the bay just to see it one more time.

There is something to that intuition. I knew. The hospital room. The ocean's edge. The gravity of it all. The expelling of breath. Not knowing if you would surface again.
Reaching, scrambling, moving over uncertain terrain– the laboring of a body. My body. Your body. To get one last glimpse of you. To be near you.
Wonder. Shallow breathing. Weight.

This is a terrible kind of beauty to share. Beauty and suffering. I am in awe of it all.
The memory of it now lives in me, in my stomach, in my bones, behind my eyes.
The whale. Your fragile frame. Your hand in mine.

That last breath before you dove into the deep never to return.

This Body Won't Hold You

"To write about oneself may be to write of death, but to write about death is to write of everyone".

-Anne Boyer, *What Cancer Took Away From Me*

Death is an irreversible loss which will occur throughout the course of our lives– suddenly or expected, peacefully or painfully prolonged– we will all face the space in our lives made barren by death and negotiate how we move forward with the presence of that forever absence. *This Body Won't Hold You* was my first exploration into how this absence could be materially and conceptually addressed through both form and space.

In reflecting on the *Trace Memorials,* I resolved that I wanted my artworks to be shared; something immersive and embodied for the viewer/participants to experience. I decided to take my subjective embodied experience and ephemeral artworks and translate them to public, communal[14] installations. I also recognized that in wanting to communicate absence, I had to physically create an empty void. Thus, followed the first iteration of my organic sculptures with their small fragile bodies which could be cradled in your arms.

Reminiscent of wasp nests, seed pods, rocks, or puffball mushrooms, the grey paper clay forms were mere shells, each with a hole burrowed into their side revealing acrid inky black interiors with hand ground charcoal spewing onto the floor.

[14] The installations become communal for me in their potential as shared experiential space which have the potential to provoke and invite people to consider our common connection to nature, loss, and to how we negotiate grief in our lives both personally and collectively. In another way, I also aim to create a space where people have a sense that they are *communing* with ghosts.

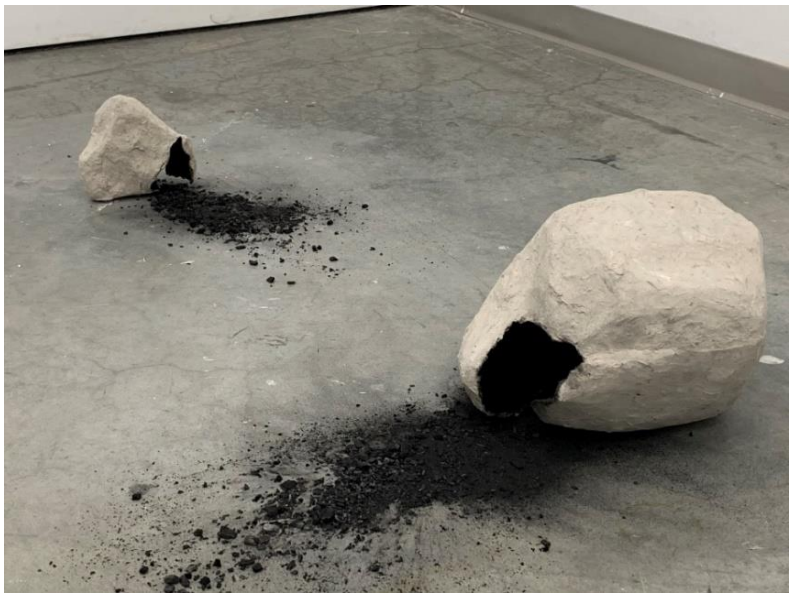

Fig. 13 Small paper clay sculptures (1st iteration), 2019

Rachel Whiteread invokes a sense of loss and absence in her sculptures that are often "casts that exist as negative impressions, which reveal the forms of their original objects in details, but not their physical presence… *Ghost* documents the shape of something, yet notes its very absence" (Transient Spaces 52). While my own sculptures are not casts of negative spaces, they draw attention to emptiness and loss with a palpable blackened void. Like Whiteread's work, they manifest the undeniable presence of absence.

Fig. 14 Whiteread, Rachel, *Ghost,* 1990

Figure removed due to copyright restrictions. The information removed is an image of Whiteread's sculpture "Ghost" which is white plaster cast of a Victorian living room. This monumental sculpture is a formidable assertion of how absence cannot be got round.

For my interim exhibition, I knew that I needed to scale these sculptures up. I wanted them to have a stronger physical relationship to the body and to feel more monumental. I installed six sculptures in total (3 new large ones and 3 small) with charcoal spilling, spewing, and pooling from the empty cavities in their forms. I placed them with enough space to walk in an amongst them and intended the space and experience to be both quietly contemplative and deeply emotive.

Fig. 15 *This Body Won't Hold You* Installation, 2019, paper clay sculptures & hand-ground charcoal

The process of making these artworks was quite instinctual, emotional, and rooted in the sensory experiences of being with those in pain and dying of cancer; watching their bodies

change and waste away from tumors and illness, and negotiating the profound and overwhelming experience of knowing their bodies have now been reduced to ashes. While the forms appear empty, they are in fact heavy with the fullness of absence and loss.

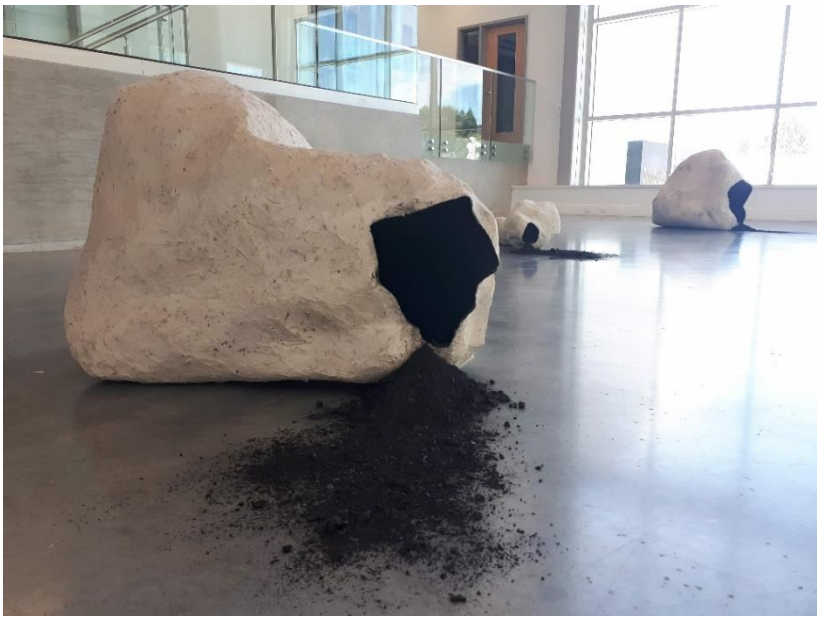

Fig. 16 (a & b) *This Body Won't Hold You* (Detail), 2019

A small unassuming catalogue of Naomi London's 1995 exhibition has been instrumental for me while exploring the topic of grief in my thesis research. In her series entitled "Grieving Equipment" London created artworks which have to do with the physicality of grieving and the great longing for the touch of those who have passed away. It is not only the minimal yet highly affective interactive sculptures which struck me, but the two essays bookending the catalogue wherein the writers discuss the artwork and share highly emotional and personal accounts of their own recent experience with losing someone they love. London's artworks make a space that is safe and inviting to acknowledge vulnerability and loss, to feel our grief in public, and to reach out for the "bodies" we long to embrace.

Fig. 17 London, Naomi
Object to be Embraced, 1995

Figure removed due to copyright restrictions. The information removed is an image of London's artwork "Object to be Embraced" which is a textile sculpture suspended from the ceiling. The soft tubular object invites the viewer to wrap their arms around the bodily-sized form to embrace those they have lost.

For both *This Body Won't Hold You*, and *Tracing Your Ghost II*, my intention is similar to London's— that the installation would create a new type of space for dealing with death: a space to move through while locating grief in our bodies, a place that invites us to acknowledge loss, artworks which invoke a resonance between the human form in the visual language of nature; and space to remember and commune with our ghosts.

In *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials* Dr. Erika Doss cites current clinical research which "maintains that bereavement should be considered an unending cognitive and emotional process that affects the mourner for the rest of his or her life. People are changed by the experience; they do not get over it, and part of the change is a transformed but continuing relationship with the deceased" (Doss 21-21). Doss is not implying that the intensity of our grieving does not lessen, but that we experience "continuing bonds between the living and the deceased" even after they have passed.

In exploring how to nurture the bonds that persist between myself (the living), and those whom have passed away, I have been able to think *with* grief in order to express the sense of loss, absence, and longing that take up the space left by their missing bodies. Making art has been a way to trace and formalize these persisting invisible relationships, as well as my own embodied and intuitive experiences in the natural world, making them visible to the viewer.

Nest Building- Towards a future of Bringing Order to Chaos
(Thesis Exhibition & Conclusion)

Fig. 18 *Untitled*, Thesis Installation (Detail), 2020 Chicken wire, paper, acrylic paint, monotype relief prints

For my final thesis exhibition artwork, I have continued to enact new cycles of transformation through material investigations which express both a materiality of mourning, and the processes of metamorphosis and regeneration. I have been thinking a lot about how art responds to the world and what it offers in relation to Elizabeth Grosz' book *Chaos, Territory, and Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (2008). In this text Grosz asserts that "art does not produce concepts, though it does address problems and provocations. It produces

sensations, affects, and intensities as its mode of addressing problems" (2). For humans (and non-human beings) death, while part of the natural cycle of life, is 'a problem'. Humans are relational beings who are deeply interdependent. Our relationships are a vibrant and interconnected ecology. Death creates a rupture in that ecology– leaving an unfillable void that cannot be got round. In drawing attention to the 'problem' of this absence, I am making artwork which aims to provoke the sensation and intensity of grief while addressing the chaos it creates in our lives through a distilled focus on material and formal expression:

> Sensation is what art forms from chaos through the extraction of qualities… The chaotic indeterminacy of the real, its impulses to ceaseless variation, gives rise to the creation of networks, planes, zones of cohesion, which do not map this chaos so much as draw strength, force, material from it for a provisional and open ended cohesion, temporary modes of ordering, slowing, filtering" (Grosz 8)

Continuing to draw from the material vernacular of nature I am exploring the form and process of nest building as a method of ordering chaos. Notably, Grosz asserts that chaos should not necessarily be understood as absolute disorder, "but rather as a plethora of orders, forms, wills— forces that cannot be distinguished or differentiated from each other" (5). While death creates chaos, it also reveals the complex entanglements, interdependencies, and connection that humans and creatures have with one another and this earth. I am thinking of death as chaos in the damage and absence it leaves in its wake, while also exploring the potential it holds as refugia to bring about regeneration.

Much of my thesis work has been guided by asking: *What happens in nature?* Nests are both a natural and metaphoric process of ordering chaos. Nature continually orders chaos by using death (entropy and decomposition) as refugia to create new forms. Birds collect detritus and discarded organic matter of varying sizes to create one final cohesive form to live in and house their young. Other small mammals do the same. Wasps chew up wood and it is this fiber, mixed with their saliva, which creates the delicate papers they layer to make their nests and

hives. My final thesis installation concept was stirred upon learning about super wasp nests[15] which grow exponentially beyond normal size, often with multiple colonies living in them. These nests are called perennial nests because the wasps do not die off during the winter due to milder climates. What strikes me about these nests is how they are both terrifying and beautiful. They speak to the incredible resilience of animate life in the natural environment to *forge on*, while also pointing to the pressing reality of our changing climate. Nests go through cycles of life and death, from fullness to emptiness. For me this signifies the tensions of life *with* death, and the act of transforming materials as an expression of 'death as a type of refugia'.

Fig. 19 Collected Wasp Nest

Fig 20 *Untitled*, Thesis Installation Sculpture, 2020

[15] Typical wasp nests are the size of a volleyball and house about 4,000 to 5,000 workers. Super wasp nests can grow to be the size of a Volkswagen Beetle, with multiple colonies with over 200,000 wasps (livescience.com).

My final thesis exhibition involves a cluster of organic sculptures inspired by super wasp nests. The main sculpture is significant in size (5 ft tall by 5 ft wide and 3 ft deep) and is installed four feet from the ground, a height which creates a confronting/looming effect on the viewer. There are three similar smaller forms nearby appearing to grow from the surface of the walls. The largest of the forms has four tubular black voids which the viewer can peer into. For the viewer, there is a tense uncertainty as to whether this foreboding sculptural form is empty or full. To create the outer textural covering, I have repeatedly layered paper monotypes printed from fragmented tree stumps and lichen. The paper varies in tone as I have dyed it with different natural hues.

Fig. 21 *Untitled*, Thesis Installation Sculpture, 2020 (Detail)

In addition to the nest-like sculptures, a largescale drawing done with white paint on a charcoal black wall is set directly across the installation of *Tracing Your Ghost II*. This dark wall acts as a type of reverse shadow to the physical forms hanging across from it. My aim is that these two works set across from each other create a liminal space where absence is made present both through the negative space of the wall drawing and in the physical voids of the floating sculptural forms.

In making this final body of work, I have been propelled by the question: What material processes *enact* regeneration– extracting a quality from the debris of our losses to *make new* with it? Which forms found in nature embody this process? The obsessive and repetitive process of layering paper to create a nest was my answer. The persistence of repetition is inherent to the life-goings of the natural world. There is fervent repetitive activity performed by all animate life which is creative, world-building, unrelenting, and resilient. Nothing is lost or wasted in nature-— detritus is collected and organic materials are transformed to make nests and death is a type of refugia which nourishes new growth. My final thesis artwork explores what it looks like to actively grieve, to go on living *with* death. It enacts the hopeful potentiality in the simultaneous work of mourning while making new.

Going forward, my artwork will continue to express a deep kinship with nature, while exploring what we can take from death that honors whom and what we've lost, while giving heart to the living as we move forward with our ghosts.

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