For the duration of my childhood my family lived in a modest two-story 1950's house in a northern mid-western American suburb. Common to homes of origin, it retains its evocative value as a site for identity-formation ripe with memories. Thirteen years later, my parents decided to upgrade and have a house built in a more lucrative developing suburb. The new house was beautiful and large, but filled with emptiness. The spaciousness and modern convenience never came to fruition as a home. Our family was crumbling within the freshly constructed walls. Less than two years later, my parents separated and my father moved out. Shortly thereafter, we all moved on.

Subsequently, my research begins with this nostalgic moment of leaving my childhood home. The root word of nostalgia comes from the Greek words nostos ('to return home') and algia ('longing'). This dual root suggests the ambivalence at the heart of the term itself. It can represent both the desire to return to a stable and secure point, and a recognition that such desire is always deferred to an unrecoverable past (Croft, 2006). My practice-led investigation explores how photograms create an alternative method of recording and archiving memory, autobiography and the experience of home. Nostalgia also conjures an encounter with the sensuous self. It is in the body where experience is preserved and memory reclaimed. Recollection is a collection of the sensual; a cumulative embrace that survives absence. We know that the past no longer exists yet we are never removed from it, nor do we stop looking for it. The past is a process of reconstruction. Whatever detail or fleeting impression retained is the truth regardless of historical evidence. The malleable nature of memory is the catalyst for self-invention; and home the embodiment for self-disclosure.

Home is a fundamental aspect of everyday life. The idea of home holds different meanings subjectively interpreted by individuals in the context of history, circumstance and culture. Regardless, home continues to be the base from which we start each day and to which we return. Home endures to represent a key component in the construction of identity, a point of reference into the patterns of society, as well as the universal experience of acquiring a place in the world. Within the home there are rooms where privacy is claimed, where nightly dreams are manifested, and where we experience our solitude, intimacy and vulnerability. There are designated spaces for both internal and external expression. Rooms reflect our comforts, frustrations, limitations, desires, and fears–the epitome of an autobiography. Autobiographical theorist Paul John Eakin suggests that the '[modern] autobiography seems to have emerged concurrently with – and is perhaps a symbolic manifestation of – people's acquisition of a distinctly personal space in which to live, rooms of their own' (Eakin, 1992). Home also has a particular connection with the way we locate memories both spatially and temporally. It is an intersubjective space, a catalogue of memories and emotions, and as such an autobiographical narrative. A visual and tactile translation of what occurs within these boundaries begins to define my investigation.

I wasn't looking for ageing photographic paper when I visited a country antique centre, but I bought

several unused boxes and began to experiment by constructing versions of the rooms I had once lived in. I adhered four sheets of the paper for the walls and cut out the remembered architectural placements of windows and doors. As I worked with the light-sensitive paper, I was inspired by what occurred when I layered a 'room' on top of another; light entered through the windows and doorways and created images onto the room below. When I fixed the paper in the darkroom, these impressions and new ghostly marks appeared when the chemicals interacted with the paper. This experimental process has enabled me to retrieve and visually articulate memory and domestic space through the combination of chance, material and technology. The advantage of the photogram lies in its reliance on the ephemeral and the tactile to reacquaint us with dimensions of both the familiar and hidden. Implicit in their creation, my photogram models are intimate and personal at the same time they share a common visual language of light and shadow. The models represent anyone's experience of a room and create a link between memory of a real or an imagined space.

The cameraless process of photography pre-dates the invention of camera photography of the late 1830s. Although a failed experiment, in 1802 Englishmen Thomas Wedgwood and Sir Humphry Davey are credited with having invented photogenic drawing–a technique of copying an image onto a silver nitrate coated piece of paper and exposed to sunlight; in essence a photogram. The experiment terminated when Wedgwood and Davey were unsuccessful for the purpose of endeavoring to fix the drawings thus obtained. The legacy of this experiment paved the way for a host of others to develop the chemical combinations necessary to fix the image as well as the mechanics to copy one. As I reconstruct from memory the rooms I have inhabited or have been a guest in, I involuntarily confront an array of unfixed images that were once a lived encounter. Transcribing what we see and other ephemeral phenomena onto a material surface as an effort to claim longevity continues to propel innovation.

Although not the sole inventor of the photogram, Constructivist and Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy could be credited to have invented the self-portrait photogram with his experiments done in the 1920's. A key aspect to Moholy-Nagy's approach was how he considered the inscriptions made on the photogram as a signature–the result of automatic writing with light. The photogram represents a new language. 'Photo-writing' fluctuates between chance and authorial intentions, thus suspending a simple conclusion. Moholy-Nagy's abstract compositions of his mask-like face in profile reflect his musing of the ambivalence between perception and reception, authenticity and deception. For Moholy-Nagy, the photogram made it possible to capture new methods of seeing objects, space and movement. In his essay entitled 'Production–Reproduction' published in 1922, he writes that art performs in such a manner to try and bring about new contacts between the familiar and the unknown optical. Examining the process of seeing was central to his artistic endeavors. Moholy-Nagy's self-portrait photograms encompass notions of the truth or the identity of the self. In a similar gesture, my photograms float between boundaries of remembrance and

actuality. Principally, they are self-portraits in domestic rooms.

The act of dwelling is something whose meaning is known in a practical way because it is an essential dimension of existence. Dwelling is made noticeable through one's own awareness of noticing. In a survey of the twenty-one residences I have inhabited, I observe how the rooms are interwoven into my autobiographical narrative. I no longer need their physical structures to validate my past. Validation is evidenced upon remembrance and presently communicated in paper sculptures. The photogram allows a materialisation of things unseen. I am not concerned with the factual accuracy of my recollections, but rather through my photogram models, their potential to awaken dormant memories.

Home can be differentiated from house in the sense that home reflects and narrates our identity, memories and aspirations. It is a process of creation and made meaningful through reflecting upon what it was, what it is and what it is to become. Architect Juhani Pallasmaa, notable for his haptic expressions in building, explains architecture as an act that frames, re-orients, scales, re-focuses and slows down our view of the world (Pallasmaa, 2010). My practice appropriately summarises his position. The making of my photogram models of rooms requires the steadiness of my hand, the patience of natural light exposure, fixing the image and allowing the paper to dry. In other words, my process mimics memory as an act of creation involving time, multi-sensory and dimensional interaction. The internal world of our psyches is constantly informed by the external material world and integrates these encounters into the on-going narrative about the self. The act of habitation assumes a sensual interpretation of our experience. Home, unlike house–a utilitarian structure for shelter–is a co-author of our histories and a stimulus for our memories. Home like art aspires to express our human condition.

Each of my photograms–a representation of a unique room–can be re-arranged in multiple ways thus generating a new reading into the sequence of time and image. Philosophers Martin Heidegger and Gaston Bachelard have been influential in uniting literature with our experience of architecture. Whereas Heidegger in 'Poetically Man Dwells' argues that a poem is a special kind of building, Bachelard asserts that a building is a special kind of poetry (Fuss, 2004). Such metaphors speak to the interior (of mind and space) as a construction of meaning, built and interpreted in layers. This expression also applies to the hundreds of photogram rooms I have made through a process of layering.

Bachelard wrote in *The Poetics of Space* 'Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are "housed." Our soul is an abode. And by remembering "houses" and "rooms," we learn to "abide" within ourselves' (Bachelard, 1994). Bachelard's most enduring arguments in Western philosophy are his emphasis on the need for houses in order to dream and to imagine. He invites us to contemplate on particulars, such as wardrobes, drawers, and corners that participate in the

creation of our intimate surroundings. In one body of work, I have photographed the photogram rooms, printed them on paper and have folded them into iconic furniture found within a particular room. I have been hand-writing onto the miniature paper furniture the details which emerge exclusive to the narrative within these spaces, such as the coiled wax candle that could be cut to freshen the wick which sat on my grandparents coffee table and intrigued my twin sister and I every Christmas. This object creates a link between time and space. The paper sculptures give the memory a ‘place’ and validates perhaps otherwise insignificant occurrences.

It was a tradition that grandma Wilson made thin pancakes in the shapes of things for my twin sister Jennifer and I the morning following our overnight stays at her house. With the ordinary ingredients of flour, oil, eggs, butter and maple syrup, grandma’s pancakes somehow tasted extraordinary. She would stand over the stove wearing her robe and slippers and carefully pour the batter into the hot frying pan in a plotted arrangement for it to resemble a person or an animal. Jennifer and I stood on a chair and watched the pancakes take a more solid and abstractly recognisable form that we would then name. The characters were piled on a serving plate and placed in the center of the dining table. We would dissect and consume one pancake at a time mindful of which parts we were eating first and what was saved for last. It was at the dining table where we shared our experience of building and dwelling.

For Heidegger, building configures physicality and how we measure our place in the world. By recording traces of human engagement–at all scales–architecture can offer us places from which to inquire, reflect and remember. Heidegger compares an ordinary dining table with his notions of building as physicality and dwelling as nurturing. Building and dwelling are always associated with any dining table because the table necessarily participates in daily life. Using the table constitutes dwelling, and people’s engagement with it constitutes both. Moving the table around the room is building done in response to the needs of its users. Likewise, laying out places for a meal is also a kind of building, organized around how people anticipate eating there. In this way, dwelling (or human engagement) is dependent upon building (or the how it is located and organized for use). Meaning is often subconscious and related to and sustained in practice. The recurrent practices in which meanings are imbued are evidenced as ritual. An awareness of the daily micro-organisation of eating meals can foster both communal and individual identity. Home is an obvious subject to investigate the roles that meaning, familiarity and pattern have on the formation and sustenance of identity.

My research is deeply informed by material and spatial engagements of home. Being close to things is an intrinsic aspect of human experience. Heidegger underscores that the significance of a thing is its possibility to bring us nearer to ourselves. Things, such as the dining table, are appreciated through their engagement, which bring us into contact with the particulars of daily life. A direct encounter with material helps to frame our physical relationship and knowledge of the

world. Critical to my research is the belief that materiality enriches our understanding and facilitates meaning. Value in material resides in how it reflects our human condition; our own mortality. Material, such as paper communicates directly because it has a presence. Paper appropriately links memory, the sensory experience and home to process and technology. Paper is inherently familiar, malleable, portable, and fragile. In contrast, home represents safety, enclosure and structure. However, home presents its opposite characteristic and paper is rather similar. Embracing dualities challenges limitation and encourages cohesion. In the creation of meaning, home and paper can provide a link from layers of perhaps disconnected or non-linear sequence of happenings.

I have been examining how making sculptural photograms create a visual autobiography for memory to interact with. The removal of photographed representations of space and situations fosters an atmosphere for subjective engagement that lends itself to the collective story. Cultural historian John Berger poses a similar challenge for an alternative use of photography as a medium of social memory. He states that any response to a photographed moment is bound to be felt as inadequate (Berger, 1991). So why not re-direct the photographic moment as a preservation of memory to the memory of photographic paper itself?

Framing autobiography in domestic space is the emphasis of my practice-led investigation. Exploring tactile techniques using light-sensitive paper can introduce a novel approach to the inscription of memories. Bridging ordinary life-stories from the private sphere into the public domain could contribute to a fundamental change in perceptions of what autobiography is and how we remember and share our domestic space. Photograms have a unique aura about them because they capture moments that cannot be quickly altered and are physically present. Analogue techniques validate the process of becoming vital to personal and cultural identity. The implications of my research not only invites a dialogue, it also seeks innovation in developing light sensitive paper as a material to record our memories.

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