

Memories For The Future

by

Stephanie Gagne

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Approval

Name: **Stephanie Gagne**

Degree: **Master of Fine Arts**

Title: **Memories For The Future**

Examining Committee: **Chair: Arne Eigenfeldt**
Professor

Sabine Bitter
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Elsbeth Pratt
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Allyson Clay
Supervisor
Professor

Marina Roy
External Examiner
Associate Professor
Art History, Visual Art and Theory
University of British Columbia

Date Defended/Approved: September 10th, 2018

Abstract

Memories For The Future is a wall-mounted photographic and sculptural installation emerging from my archive of affective family snapshots from the 1990s and 2000s. Everyday textiles, bodily substances, and shadows are abstracted from these fragmented photographs to form accompanying wooden cut-outs. This doubling adheres to the more classic Freudian notion of the uncanny, being a thing or event encountered in a psychologically unsettling context. The unsettling childhood narratives display private desires, passionate behaviours and domestic situations, first as photographic spectacles, and more recently as aesthetic objects in a gallery setting. The absurd child recognizes how objects, places, and thoughts become invested with both happiness and unhappiness. The project thus rejects good cheer and common sense to delight in the abject nature of point-and-shoot photography, reflecting another side of photography, in relation to today's performative selfie culture.

Keywords: photography; sculpture; uncanny; abject; affect; self-portraiture

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Defence Statement

Methodology

My graduating project, entitled *Memories For The Future* is a collection of photographs combined with sculptural abstractions. My methodology consists of selecting, tracing, cropping, isolating, and recombining uncanny photographs from my familial archive. The original prints depict my family and myself in various scenarios throughout the late 1990s to the early 2000s. I am interested in using these atypical photos because they contain inherent elements of the uncanny, the affective and the absurd.

The technical processes I use, mostly montage, strategically enhance the uncanny bodies and overtones of failure already present in the photographs. I project the photographs onto my studio walls and trace the outlines of fluid substances, textiles, and shadows, so that they become only abstract shapes. The slimy food and feces, the comforting drapery, and the mysterious silhouettes and gestures, are fragmented and then reconstituted into new compositions. I bring together the strangely shaped photographs of crying children, shocked parents, middle fingers, and playful hitting to confront my audience with the uncanny.

From the tracings I make wooden cut-outs. I juxtapose these shapes with the image fragments. The sculptural process, which involves an everyday material, at once clarifies and obscures the understandability of the photographs by mimicking and overshadowing them. My repetitive treatment accentuates the traced matter surrounding the subjects in the scenes. The manifestation of solid cut-outs physically contrasts the instability and ephemerality of these substances, textiles, and shadows.

The painted shapes add gravity to the composition, as the sculptural elements slightly overlap and mimic the content of the photos. The shapes affix pressure by leaking over and occupying more three-dimensional space than the flat photographic prints. In turn, the photos are cut to mimic the wood shapes and thus become secondary elements. The wood shapes obscure even further by pointing to the ambiguity of what is lost in the shaping of the photos, adding mystery to the interpretation of once clearly

depicted events. The paint colours chosen for the wood shapes also mimic the traced elements in the photographs.

The sculptural elements broaden the reading of my printed photographic archive by diverging from typical encounters with digital self-portraits. My alterations also embrace the history of the materials, as small imperfections in the prints and woody surfaces, such as dust, wrinkles, knots, and grain are unedited. The interplays between sculpture and photography turn familiar scenes into mysteries through considerable repetition and methods of abstraction.

The Uncanny

The methods I use in creating this project only leave the viewer with outlines of enigmatic shadows and traces of matter. The manner in which I treat the common substances, objects and shadows as strange, adheres to the notion of the uncanny, a theme often adapted within contemporary art. The uncanny is anything strange or mysterious, but further describes an incident where a familiar thing or event is encountered in a psychologically unsettling context (Blazwick 168).

Artworks that are uncanny consistently address the unconscious, the split personality, the body cut into pieces and the return of a ghostly past. In *The Uncanny* psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud engages in an aesthetic investigation into the relationship of the uncanny to emotional impulses (168). He reviews the people, objects, impressions, processes, and situations that arouse an especially strong sense of the uncanny.

Uncanny motifs within my project involve the idea of the double and the identical. Freud explores the connections which link the double to mirror images and shadows (170). Originally, the double was an assurance against the extinction of the self, a narcissistic, childish, and primitive defense against annihilation (170). Cases of the uncanny lead back to an old animistic view of the universe characterized by spirits and magical powers granted to alien persons and things (170). The double, having once been a promise of immortality, thus becomes an uncanny harbinger of death. I am consciously referring to this doubling by pairing and repeating shapes in my works.

The uncanny is a switch from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Psychoanalytic theory asserts that affect is converted into fear when repressed (170). Uncanny elements are

nothing new or strange, but long familiar to the psyche and estranged through repression (171). The uncanny is something that should have remained hidden yet has come into the open.

This motif returns to highly ambiguous and ambivalent emotional attitudes towards the dead (171). Severed and detached limbs are highly uncanny, especially when credited with independent activity. Freud considers animism, magic and unintended repetition, factors that turn the frightening into the uncanny (172).

A living person may also be called uncanny if they are credited with having evil intent or special powers. Uncanny effects within storytelling are produced by epileptic fits and manifestations of insanity that lie hidden behind the common image of a living person (168). These forces are not typically suspect in fellow human beings, so even the act of uncovering these secret forces becomes seen as uncanny (172). *Memories For The Future* allows me to uncover these same enigmatic forces and personas within my family members and myself.

The Gothic

The term Gothic is grounded in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature, but is now applied liberally to contemporary artworks centering on psychologically charged sites, objects, and fragmented bodies (Blazwick 12). The Gothic rejects the norms of bourgeois behavior and values such as hard work, family, good cheer and common sense (15).

Investigations of the uncanny lead to a consideration of the origins of the term Gothic in art history. The Gothic is related to terminology like the uncanny, the grotesque, the abject and the horrific, as it delights in trauma and terror (14).

In this body of work, I am participating in the attempt, along with many other artists, to bring into a contemporary context the Gothic genre's strategy of fragmenting the body. I reference the Gothic by using memories of an unhappy childhood (12). This inclination to transcend the ordinary and cultivate the anti-social makes Gothic posturing in general a haven for outsiders and juveniles (15). In the end, Gothic art asserts that the conventional values of enlightenment are less instructive than darkness (19).

My Family Archive

Memories For The Future uncovers the aesthetics of the uncanny through unsettling representations of quotidian objects, people and circumstances. My family archive is the source for the photographs which I crop and incorporate into sculptural installations. This collection of photos surveys pleasurable objects, domestic settings, everyday situations, and social interactions that are already inherently strange.

Figures 1-3 depict scenes that feel ominous to me, in which wedding gifts are unwrapped and collectively celebrated. The curious social scenarios and emotional experiences captured in these private photos are atmospheric. The process of tracing the outlines of shadows in these photos and recreating these out of wood solidifies the impermanent shapes produced by the harsh light. The additional three-dimensional shapes then create their own shadows, projected onto the photos. My fixation on darkness, in conjunction with the indexical recordings of light hitting photographic film, distinctively augments the feelings of gloom and ominousness emanating from this setting.

For me, the dark community space captured in these photos calls up haunted houses while simultaneously containing romantic marital rituals. The stark lighting and point and shoot camera work used during the photo session tie back to horror film techniques, instead of typical event photography. The strange green-tinged spotlights and silhouettes confuse the family fun and proper wedding etiquette, through the simultaneous concealment and overexposure of the subjects.

Interactions between persons and objects are frequently put on display in my project. The wedding guests stare as the happy couple publicly unveiled common household objects. The behaviour of this community is rendered emotional, as small casts of light and shadow at the same time illuminate and hide their intense facial expressions. Here I see a mix of love, shock, and curiosity conveyed by their bodies. This spectacle of gestures and reactions emphasizes the uncanny due to its moody lighting, assortment of affects and gifts.

The content and background of these photos speak to psychoanalytical definitions of the uncanny, and Freud's outlook on familial relationships, involving the father, mother and child is playfully suggested in this situation. The future demise of my

family unit through divorce, occurring fifteen years after the photos were made, is part of this nostalgic reflection on my personal and family history. At the time the photos were made my mother was pregnant with me, turning these photographs into self-portraits.

Public Displays of Private Situations

Figures 4-9 depict instances where everyday substances, such as food and excrement, are turned into destructive forces smeared across bodies and domestic spaces. My use of doubling forms and cutting out of shapes is a way of both physically discarding and remembering the ephemeral matter portrayed. In these scenes, daily bodily occurrences such as eating and defecating take place in an unusual manner and context. The provided sweets and excrement cover my body and household objects, instead of being contained in my mouth, plate, toilet or diaper.

In my affective montage of photos, anxiety and pleasure coexist in the same time and place. There is a multitude of emotions in the photographs; I am either psychologically disturbed or amused by the substances. Displaying unsightly personal histories is a means of sincerely remembering my past and acknowledging heightened feelings. The aesthetic weight of the wooden cut-outs additionally adds gravity to the situations, as it reflects the societal pressure I am feeling as a child.

My greedy and mischievous childhood self destroys the cleanliness of my body and belongings, making these especially unhomey scenarios. The once contained substances and emotional impulses are not new or strange to the viewer, but long familiar to the psyche. However, the natural human need to consume and expel is decontextualized in a bizarre way.

This raw portraiture frankly displays unpleasant and grotesque situations, as the child is consuming or expelling matter captured by the camera. While covered in feces, the child rejects common sense and wellbeing either due to not knowing any better or as a means of exploring and learning about authority. This symbolic force is not typically displayed in public, so the uncovering of my private childhood messes becomes seen as uncanny. This filthy scene should have remained hidden but has come into the open space of the gallery; it consequently contrasts the cleanliness and “sacredness” of the present day modern white cube (O’Doherty 15).

This exhibition of my feces and food is thus related to abject art, which explores themes that transgress and threaten cleanliness and propriety. The term abject covers bodily aspects and functions deemed impure or inappropriate for public display. Abject artworks typically reference the refuse and death thrust aside in order to live. This recurring theme within contemporary art embraces the complexities and hidden activities associated with the body.

The abject and the uncanny play a significant role within contemporary art history. Many artists, such as Ingrid Berthon-Moine, Helen Chadwick, Tracey Emin, Karen Finley, and Kiki Smith prominently fuse food, feces, sexuality, and repulsion together. Paul McCarthy's sculptural and photographic artworks also contrarily combine childish imagery (kids' toys) with vulgar bodies (adult toys). This artist constructs depraved self-portraits and consumerist objects inspired by Disney characters, kitchen disasters, and polished turds. McCarthy's controversial work aims to make audiences feel uncomfortable by exposing the interior of the body, along with its many orifices and taboos.

In *Memories For The Future* childish obscenities involving consumption and discharge are similarly exhibited. The ability to let matter that was once confined or empty, to flow out or in, is the prime focus of scatology within the arts. This freedom to honestly display disturbing scenarios allows me, along with McCarthy, to celebrate bodily functions and unconcealed emotional reactions of everyday life.

In figure 4 I am a crying child, because I know I am being observed, failing to behave properly, and afraid of being punished. My mother represents the hygienist, saving me from my scatological unhappiness, or at least capturing my unhappiness with a camera. My family and the photographer witness the events involving these familiar substances. My family delights in my emotional impulses, whether I am happy or unhappy. Instead of intervening, by cleaning up drips, drool and tears, these exploitative photographers utilize disposable cameras to capture the circumstances. This action highlights the apathetic photographers' unwillingness to intervene in the matters, thus pointing to the problems of agency and control within the practice of photography.

Photographic Agency

My once insulated family snapshots underscore how the private becomes charged differently once made public. In figures 10-14 I am photographed playfully fighting while being traumatized by a photographer. In these scenes, the photographer and the child treat each other as intrinsically different and alien. The child clearly has a reaction to the photographer, as she either playfully attacks (by throwing a pillow, verbally lashing out, and pulling on garments) or attempts to hide from the intrusive interaction (by turning away, closing her eyes and covering her ears).

These photos, depict my suffering as a child caught off guard during an unexpected event, then seized upon in mid-action by the alert photographer. In Susan Sontag's text *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she describes the violent act of making a photograph. Photographs objectify and violate, they turn events and people into possessions (64).

The relationship between the subject, photographer and viewer is complicated by this agency and the taboo of showing violence. Photos of other people's pain give rise to opposing and contradictory viewer responses. (13).

Sontag defines the dual powers of photography as the generation of documents and creation of art. These opposing powers can produce exaggerated expectations about what photographers ought or ought not to do (61). The photographs I have selected and chosen to intervene in similarly give mixed signals: they urge, "stop this", but also exclaim "what a spectacle!" I put these photographs forward as a spectacle by exaggerating their visual impact through abstraction and the use of bright colours.

Photographs of suffering people are more than reminders of death, or failure, or victimization, they invoke the miracle of survival. I undertake the continual task of revisiting and refreshing my memories through photos for this reason. *Memories For The Future* remembers my childhood suffering and frames these uncanny violations through otherwise straightforward portrayals of domestic experience.

Scary Social Interactions

In figures 10-14, I am being affected by amusing and unpleasant photographic interactions. There is an ambiguous fluidity between the positive and negative emotions I

display because the viewer is uncertain if the photos prove the fun or anxiety I am experiencing. My project's affective dichotomy between laughter and tears fits with the uncanny, being the familiar turned strange, as my family drama confuses play with war. I invite the viewer to feel the strangeness of the uncanny by affirming an alternative imagining of what good and bad feelings look like.

In these photos, the child is reminiscent of *Frankenstein* or the child protagonist in *The Exorcist*. I am experimenting with cropping my own body, as it were, as well as with the process of emphasizing inanimate matter. These procedures relate to Mary Shelley's Gothic and Romantic horror story in which Frankenstein is treated in the same manner as my pre-teen self through his cropped body parts obtained through dissection, and the "montage" of his reconstructed monstrous body. Such characters do not belong, they are brought into this world of suffering by people and exterior forces that do not seem to care.

My interest in the occult also connects to William Peter Blatty's novel *The Exorcist*, and William Friedkin's adapted film from 1973. In *The Exorcist*, a juvenile girl undergoes disturbing psychological and physical changes during her demonic possession and exorcism. She refuses to sleep, becomes withdrawn, disobedient and aggressive; her body and surrounding objects shake violently, a scene I also employ in my work *Memories For The Future*. The series of strange and vulgar acts performed by the confined female children in both my work and the film are captured within domestic settings. Scientific explanations, imaginary friends, and omens clash in these pending confrontations with evil.

Personal Portraits and Objects

The sculptural symbols in *Memories For The Future* are created through the abstraction of everyday objects in the photos. Common textiles, such as blankets, clothing, stuffed toys, and silk curtains are traced and cut from wood, an unrelated material. My artistic process of transforming comfortable textiles into rigid cut-outs contradicts the objects' familiar features.

Childhood collections of kitsch textiles are also incorporated into Mike Kelley's art installations. These found objects, mostly soft toys, connote symbolic violence and are a key component of the trend towards contemporary ready-mades and abject themes in

1980s and 1990s art history. Kelley acts as a pop ethnographer of lowbrow culture and everyday suburban life. The stuffed animals are familiar, but through the collecting and mounting, become unfamiliar distortions. He explores repressed memory, recollection and anxiety through these highly personal objects. Kelly's work brings together autobiographical elements along with an investigation into the impulse to collect and categorize as a means of understanding the past.

Memories For The Future comparably finds no comfort in the soft objects from the original photographs. The project is filled with autobiographical symbols which tie back to my own personal memories and (sometimes unhappy) childhood. The material things that can be seen and touched become fixed self-portraits. My self (and family) portraiture, through archiving, photography, and woodworking is a reflection on my inner and outer situations. While these old depictions of me are no longer up to date, there is a sense that I accept these past versions of myself. My activity as an artist looking back and altering personal archives distills and focuses on the self. This act not only remembers the past but also brings these uncanny states into the future, for the viewer.

Ambivalent Emotions

Through the cutting into and collaging of my photos, once fixed stories are reimagined into a new and enigmatic pattern of feeling, action, and circumstance. My archival photos portray delightful and horrific incidents, along with a spectrum of emotions. Studies within the affective, in the social sciences and humanities, have the capacity to clarify the affective complexities in these photographs. An affect is an emotion or desire that influences behaviour or action. Affect theorists define interactions and encounters that are not necessarily limited to human sensibility or representation.

In the text, *Happy Objects*, Sara Ahmed describes affective causalities and moral economies by recognizing how objects, places, people and thoughts become invested with happiness. According to Ahmed, when happy objects circulate as social goods, they accumulate positive affective value (29). These objects are already attributed as being the cause of happiness or unhappiness, even before they are directly encountered by an individual (35). So, choices are not simply idiosyncratic likes or dislikes, they can also gather as a shared form (44).

Social groups cohere around shared orientations towards certain objects as being good (35). For instance, in my family, love also means knowing the diverse peculiarity of other's likes and dislikes. So even though each member finds different things delightful, we can still celebrate a collective appetite for happy objects, by refusing to secure a singular promise of what constitutes the good life (43). Happiness is not just promised by certain objects, it is also a promise we give others as an expression of love (41). Happy objects are not just physical or material things, but anything that might lead to happiness, including values, practices, styles, and aspirations (41).

According to Ahmed, affect is felt as a kind of alienation when there is a gap between the promise of happiness and the feeling of happiness. Affect aliens expose unhappy affects and question the presumption that bad feelings are backward and good feelings are forward (50). Ahmed thus suggests a rereading of melancholy subjects, the ones who refuse to let go of suffering, as an alternative model of social good (50).

The various scenes, in *Memories For The Future*, are characterized by displays of intense and mixed emotion. My prints are filled with bad feelings like shame, hate, and fear. But they are also filled with happy feelings, like love, comfort, and entertainment. The groups of people in my project similarly share happy objects with each other. They share the same orientation by providing food. They express their love through a traditional wedding ceremony. They celebrate by playfully photographing one another.

However, there is violence in the photographic act, and it's repeatedly performed. My project represents both personal and collective encounters with happy and unhappy objects. I strategically arrange conflicting facial and bodily expressions without assuming the distinction between good and bad will always hold.

Memories from the Past

Memories For The Future alters personal histories by shaping new readings and narratives about common events from the past. My photos show ambivalent affects as important factors in happy and unhappy childhood narratives. They arouse an especially strong sense of the uncanny because my intense desires, behaviors, and situations are displayed as public spectacles.

I intentionally take on the more classic Freudian tradition of the uncanny, as being linked to issues of the insulated nuclear family, domesticity, trauma and repressed

memory. I aim to channel these uncanny motifs through formal repetition, obscuration, and the objectification of mental life.

My photos and manipulations condone ambivalent human emotion, prompt photographic agency, and the grotesque. I, along with other artists such as McCarthy and Kelley, strategically transform familiar histories into psychologically unsettling encounters.

This project comparably channels the uncanny by blurring the comforting with the upsetting. *Memories For The Future* confuses the warm and fuzzy with the wet and sad, to remind everyone how strange life can be.

Figures



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

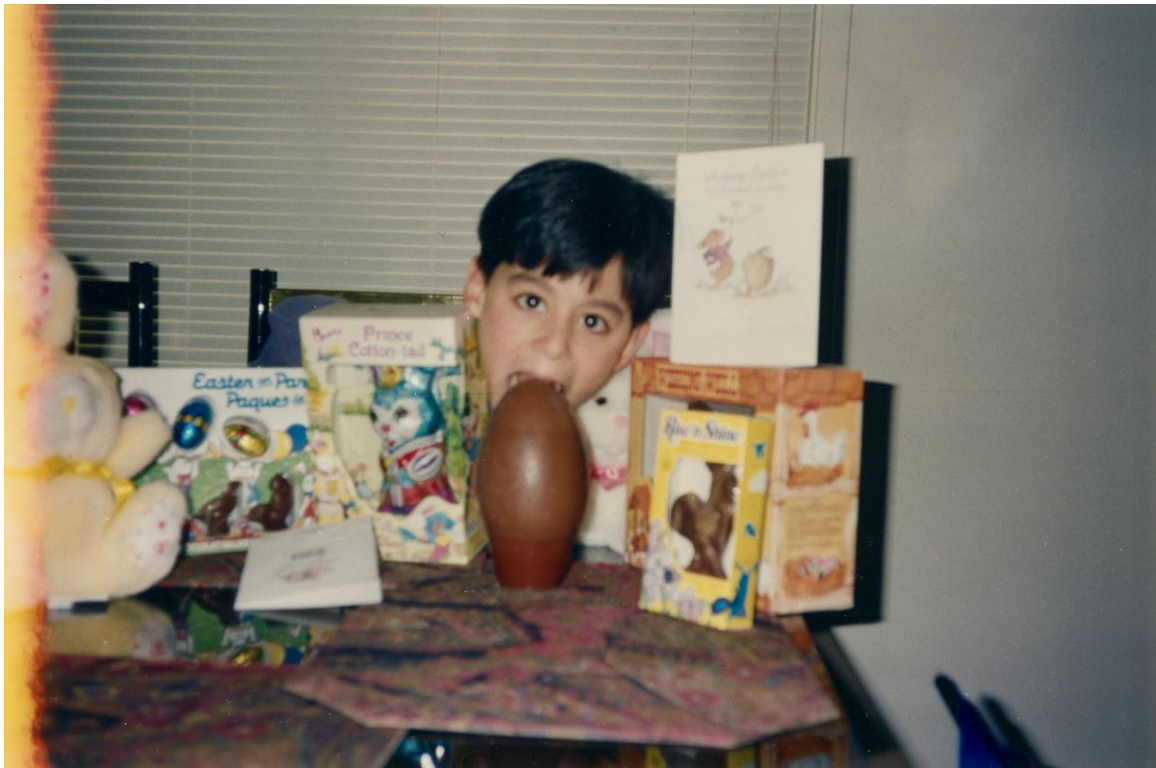


Figure 7.



Figure 8.



Figure 9.



Figure 10.



Figure 11.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.



Figure 14.

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Project Documentation

Details of the installation: *Memories For The Future.*



















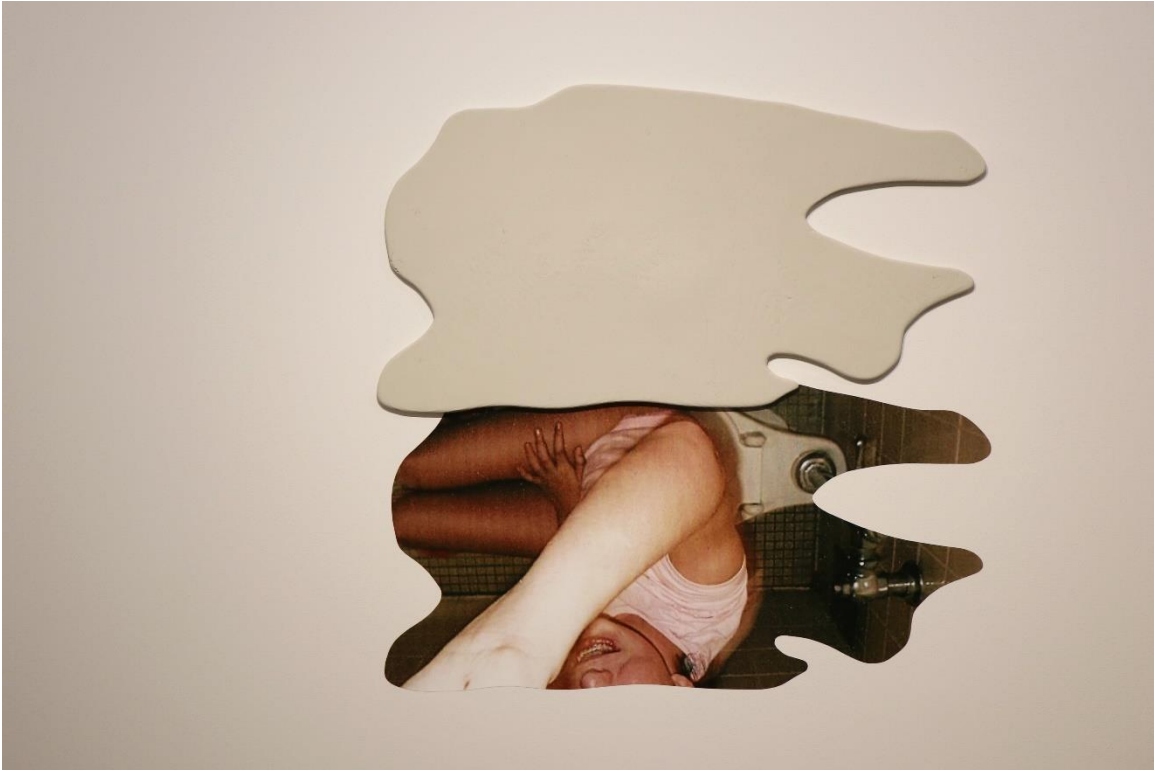


















Appendix A.

Happy Times

Personal Scrapbooks

Memories For The Future is a wall-mounted photographic and sculptural installation, based on my archive of family snapshots from the 1990s to the 2000s. The preliminary research for my graduating project focuses on personal prints, albums, and scrapbooks. While my methodology consists of moving photographs from a private collection to a public gallery, scrapbooking is still the first formal and theoretical framework for my installation.

The themes, techniques, and aesthetics within popular forms of scrapbooks influence how I layout my project, as I similarly combine self-portraits with abstracted shapes. By analyzing pages from my personal scrapbooks, I consider scrapbooking's early historical development, as distinct from other album making activities, and its connection to contemporary selfie culture.

Memories For The Future recalls my first use of photography which I trace back to when I started scrapbooking as a hobby. Scrapbooking is generally a method of containing miscellaneous memorabilia, such as photographs, prints, and small objects, collected over years. My mother provided me with an archive of photographs, as well as point-and-shoot cameras, to capture my everyday life. I began making amateur photographs, collecting textual information, decorative papers, purchasing commercial embellishments, and souvenirs.

The way I use photographs, in my scrapbooks from the early 2000s, reflects the progression of my current interdisciplinary practice. The context of scrapbooking is similarly interdisciplinary, as it merges literature, photography, collage and sculpture. In both my early books and recent artworks, I find relationships between images and objects, in order to build formal associations and uncanny narratives. The study of specific references in my pages also provides an overview of scrapbooking's technical, historical, and conceptual evolution.

Literary Influences

My scrapbooks are made up of cropped, recomposed and decorated portraits of family, friends and myself. The photographs collaged into these books depict both everyday events and special occasions. I am seen swimming, riding horses, dancing, partying, shopping, studying, visiting museums, zoos, and public parks.

My scrapbook pages typically contain a central title which focuses the narrative and aesthetic. Some of the titles, such as “with love”, “flirt”, and “I [heart] being me!”, chronicle romantic emotions. Comments, like “cutie”, “hot stuff” and “scary!”, visually describe people. While other pages address friendships, with headings like “you’re so good”, “I feel relaxed when I am with you” and “good friends good times”.

This practice of including thematic text dates back to early scrapbooking and other album making activities. Scrapbooks developed from European commonplace books, which were popular in the sixteenth century to the twentieth century (Mecklenburg). Commonplace books are compilations of personally meaningful textual excerpts, organized under individual thematic headings like love, politics, and religion (Havens 19).

Common-placing is used within the pedagogy of classical rhetoric and theological traditions. This activity is carried out by writers, students, and scholars, and aids in the remembering of particular interests, useful concepts, and facts. In contrast to journaling, which is chronological and introspective, readers collect and copy text from authoritative sources to form volumes for quick research.

These collections provide insight into the private tastes, interests, and concerns of their individual compilers. Therefore, a commonplace book serves as a symbol of the keeper’s psychological and literary identity. My own scrapbook pages are not as extensive as these information management devices; however, they are filled with valuable textual evidence. The headings and comments, whether they are original or appropriated sources, guide the reader through a narrative progression. These texts comparably signify my personal emotions, appearance, and relationships.

Autograph Books

Figure A1 depicts a specific scrapbook entry, entitled *Just Having Fun!*. This page holds photographs of my friend and I cuddling up to mascots in Disneyland Park. The caption reflects our amusement, as we hug and receive signatures from strangers, dressed as Minnie Mouse and Pluto. Lining up to collect iconic signatures in autograph books is a prominent custom at this famous park.

Our interactions are not spontaneous entertainment, but fandom performed and documented through the collection of photographs and signatures. Disney characters' images and ideals are meant to appeal to children. My friend and I define our own identities based on the cartoons, as we are similarly wearing branded merchandise and rigid smiles. We are participating in commodity fetishism, surrounding the fame of these fictional personas. Bordering the cropped photographs are commercially printed souvenirs, referencing the colours of the American flag and these animated cartoons. The cultural emblems not only represent our time spent together but a kind of social index through autographs.

Operating alongside the framework of scrapbooks, autograph books were popular among aristocrats and scholars during the sixteenth to the nineteenth century in central Europe. Autograph books are collections of autographs exchanged among friends, relatives and colleges. Gradually this form expands from mere signatures to longer texts and visuals, as publication companies respond to trends by inserting blank pages into books.

The autograph album thus circulates as a written record of parlour-room sociality, where members of individual communities inscribe their relations; recall physical presences and bonds of friendship (Hess 47). Participants record their names, coat-of-arms, and genealogical tables. Autograph books thus begin functioning not only as sentimental artifacts but also as scholarly credentials and lists of references. Their modern derivations include yearbooks, friendship books, and guest books. My scrapbook brings new light to both traditional and modern autograph books, as the signatures I collect are not those of close friends, but strangers dressed as friendly cartoons.

Extra-Illustrations

In Figure A2, a colour photograph and print are collaged into my first scrapbook. In the central photograph, my brother and I are depicted stiffly sitting at a picnic table in a sunny neighbourhood park. A commercially printed illustration of bees makes up the decorative border around the photograph. The playful bee pattern, hastily cropped from a seasonal calendar, mimics the snapshot's setting. My authorship in this page is shown through the connections I make between both personal and commercial imagery.

I pull and pair content from my photographs with illustrated patterns, to form a charming childhood fantasy. My process involves making thematic connections between the living insects in the park, and the bees abstracted from mass-produced prints. The everyday situation, presented in my photograph, is thus reconfigured in relation to commercial illustration. Instead of adding personal material to pre-constructed layouts, I am attaching commercial material to my photographs.

This method relates to the eighteenth and nineteenth century practice of extra-illustrating, a precursor to scrapbooking, which involves adding personal material to published books (Wark 151). Extra-illustration is the process of expanding and customizing completed books through the additional incorporation of thematically linked documents. Prints and watercolors, paired with text, depict particular histories of areas and peoples. This practice stimulates the destructive process of cutting up copies of books, to illustrate other books. Extra-illustrating onto specifically inserted blank pages, later turns into personalized bookmaking from scratch, as blank volumes are increasingly sold (Mecklenburg).

These common extra-illustrated books persist during a time when black-and-white printing and colour lithography make the acquisition of printed scraps significantly easier. With the introduction of new printing processes and modern photography, like Kodak's Brownie camera, the concept of pairing found matter with personal snapshots allows for a new kind of graphic authorship (Helfand).

Scrapped Aesthetics

My scrapbook's kitschy aesthetics depend on my chosen themes, materials and methods. I often highlight specific moments, people and objects in my photographs. I combine my photographs with hand-made, found and purchased materials. These

commercial scrapbooking products are typically thematic kits, which include customizable papers and cut-outs. I also bring together found objects like buttons and tickets. I then laboriously sort and process my resources into new compositions through fragmentation and collage. These sculptural layouts consequently reflect both my personal experience and documented environment.

Figures A3 and A4, entitled *fun at camp*, display my own handcrafted cut-outs made of inexpensive construction paper and sequins. These pages mark a moment in which I was more involved in the production of thematic additions. My individualized cut-outs include everyday objects and elements from my photographs that capture a camping experience. I create stylized representations of objects like flip flops, bug spray, and a flashlight. Along with natural symbols, such as a moon, rain cloud and pine tree. These constructed cut-outs highlight the irony of using commercial products within the natural landscape.

Contemporary Scrapbooks

The term scrapbook was first recorded in 1825 and describes a blank book in which pictures, newspaper cuttings, and the like are pasted for preservation. Scrapbooking is a prevalent cultural practice during the nineteenth and twentieth century (Stembovska 164). Scrapbooks are strategically marketed for specific professions, ages, materials and with predetermined titles referring to common themes for educational, archival, or personal use (Mecklenburg).

Scrapbooking is a more efficient means of recording individuals' physical, textual, cultural, and commercial interactions. So instead of hand copying text, widely circulated media are cut and pasted. Popular images within these early scrapbooks consist of flowers, Cupids, happy children, and famous political figures (Hart). Later in the nineteenth century, scrapbooks are seen as functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. Advancements in colour lithography, printing and photography, contribute to scrapbook's move towards aestheticism.

While scrapbooks were originally educational projects, scrapbooking today is seen as a hobby of decoratively recording personal events. The aesthetics of contemporary scrapbooking are closest to my own personal pages. Contemporary scrapbooks are not considered to be art due to their tendency to be dismissed as low-

quality crafts, created just for a family's enjoyment (Reynolds 13). However, I aim to study my scrapbook as a relevant cultural artifact that contains richly contextual narratives of selfhood and society. I seek to untangle meaning and highlight the importance of my scrapbooks, as revealing lived experiences, commercial material and visual culture.

Girly Girls

Throughout my scrapbook, I am wearing tiaras, excessive makeup and fairy wings. Figure A5 particularly illustrates the slang term “girly-girl”, since it details predominately feminine behaviour. In the photographs I perform activities associated with the traditional gender role of a girl. I am redecorating the living room while wearing a faint milk moustache. I am sickened while preparing burnt cotton candy in the kitchen. I am pretending to knit while dressed up “like a granny” on a rocking chair. I am also showing off my coiffed hair while sitting pretty on a La-Z-Boy chair.

Being a girly girl in these photographs can be seen as a fluid and partially embodied position, a form of discourse taken up, discarded and modified for the camera. Marketing surveys indicate that scrapbookers mostly identify themselves as white, middle-class women (Reynolds 26). Scrapbooking is considered a largely female industry, as it often conforms to conventional gender roles and emphasizes normative family stories (Buckler 9). My own practice allows me to consider these female anxieties and standards of beauty. The melodramatic photographs, hot pink backgrounds, flowery titles, and marketing slogans depict my fantasies about feeling and acting like a girl.

In figure A6, entitled *gorgeous!*, my female friends and I are seen posing with an Elvis statue, Easter mascots, and attending birthday celebrations. The gendered aesthetics, humorous sayings, and flirty poses call attention to my interest in arranging attractive representations. The matching decorations, including a “boys are smelly” sticker and pink animal prints, fit the overall theme of feminine beauty and friendship.

Since collecting is the main goal, rather than commercial publishing, scrapbooks generate small communities and domestic publics. Although scrapbooks mostly remain private, there are social situations called crops, where scrapbookers share materials and narratives. My page exemplifies how this female-centric practice gives young teens a forum to voice their personal opinions and share experiences with friends.

Commercial Archives

Archives make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present by elaborating on ready-made images, found objects and installation formats (Foster 4). My own scrapbook underscores the utopian nature of archival materials, as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private. In figure A7, entitled *ginger the 1 & only!*, I archive memories using mass produced prints. For this page, I find connections between my everyday surroundings and commercial imagery. Inexpensive prints such as dog calendars and decorative papers aid in forming a specific theme around my beloved pet.

Figure A8 archives my experience at Disneyland by similarly connecting personal photographs to commercial imagery. This layout is filled with promotional documents gleaned from the theme park. The layering of pink hearts and glittery stars augments the kitschy theme. In my crookedly cropped photographs, hired impersonators sign my branded autograph book and perform in spectacular public parades. The misspelled title, *I'm A Princesse*, satirically reformulates my identity through the granting of an artificial royal rank. Since the park is a place of fantasy and make-believe, my own constructed narrative turns me into a Disney princess. While this exaggerated self-titling seems narcissistic, it also allows me to personally relate to these mass-produced identities.

There is a mix of girly and creepy aesthetics, established through the juxtaposition of everyday visual culture and malevolent archetypes, wearing Gothic gowns. This uncanny dichotomy, between beautiful good and ugly evil, is emphasized by the inclusion of old Queen Grimhilde from Snow White, who possesses a maniacal smile and extravagant diamond necklace. The industrially produced advertisements, based on various animated films from the 1950s, are no longer simply souvenirs. These representations of supernatural cartoons become famous heroines and villains with reputations that are owned and collected in my archive of signatures and paraphernalia.

This page demonstrates my childish impulse to collect and archive common material that culture established through the cult of constructed Disney personalities. Throughout my scrapbooks, I make beautiful and beastly narratives about myself, by appropriating symbols from popular American culture. My archive contrastingly anatomizes how industrially produced advertisements are used to sell relatable

identities, which are then consumed through Disney attractions. My personal practice is thus closely tied to impersonal narratives of collective consumerism.

Auto-Ethnographic Scrapbooks

Some of the scrapbook pages relate to psychoanalysis, in that they consciously present my repressed fears and conflicts within everyday domestic situations. These curated portraits address my troubling experiences, as well as personal and social reflections. Figure A9, entitled *Special Birthday*, contains an absurd photograph of me elaborately tied to my bed with scarves and pantyhose, while two playful friends proudly lean over me. The additional *my big mouth* title explains the reason behind this sadistic bondage, being my indiscreet and boastful behavior. My shocked facial expression and smiling friends delineate conflicting expressions of amusement and distress. This strange scene embodies the uncanny, since it captures an incident where a familiar event for children is encountered in a psychologically unsettling context (Blazwick 168).

This self-reflexive practice allows me to understand my own performed traumas and mental states. I control my image with this abject self-portrait, even though it is an unpleasant and unattractive portrayal. As a first-person artist, I attend to popular materials while also trying to be socially aware of how I chose to conceptualize my constraints. While my pages are not transparently autobiographical, they are used to communicate observations of loved ones and individual identities.

Scrapbooking aligns with the ethnographic turn in contemporary arts, in its theorization of cultural difference and representational practices (Foster 303). Scrapbookers and anthropologists share a concern for the politics of representation and social criticism. They organize cultural artifacts and form photographic series through the rubric of post-production. With this auto-ethnographic lens, scrapbookers explore social norms; value claims and chose activities for their potential to produce interesting layouts (Christensen).

Traditional scrapbooking tends to highlight cheerful familial themes, such as weddings, births, and other life milestones. However, scrapbooking is also considered a therapeutic outlet that publicly incorporates personal issues and traumatic experiences. This craft supports people coping with trauma or difficult life changes (Reynolds 12).

Although my unconventional photograph of the traumatic event is obviously an ironic performance, it proves that my seemingly innocent pages have a darker side.

Figure A10 depicts another birthday celebration for my extended family members. In the central photograph, a young daughter, son and father celebrate in front of a sculptural cake shaped like a rag doll. As a fellow partygoer, I remember the disappointing moment after this scene was captured. The immature birthday girl unknowingly spits all over the impressive cake in a sprinkler motion, instead of simply blowing out the candles.

Having once greedily admired the masterpiece, I now no longer want to try a slice of the dolly cake traced with saliva. The manner in which I treat the photograph, by violently cutting a zigzag border and drawing mysterious abstract swirls around it, reveals my frustration and disillusionment. The pages record my changing mental state and private desires; this includes worries and social struggles. My scrapbooks interpret the notion of the doppelgänger, through the doubling of photographed scenes and uncanny representations of the self.

Performative Photographs

The staged photographs in my scrapbook exhibit an array of emotions and behaviours. The models' silly faces and stiff poses draw attention to the photographer's camera. Figure A11 contains titles such as *Happy Times* and *laugh out loud*. In two different photographs, I am happily holding up flowers and my dog in the same exact position. This page commemorates my loved ones and gifts through staged, not candid, point-and-shoot photography. Within these scenarios, I am performing my happiness in front of the camera.

Figure A12, entitled *Sunny Days*, also addresses situations invested with different affects. In the photographs, I have an uncomfortable look on my face, while enjoying a cold treat. I am also bending over backwards, as part of a limbo dance in a public square. My mother and I are sitting in front of a vintage set design. These affective photographs present staged scenarios and feelings. The happy theme is confused by the *Sunny Days* title, incongruently printed within a rain cloud. These pages aim to present happy emotions exclusively, showing tailored representations of days filled with sunshine and cheer.

Figure A13, entitled *Wild*, presents public dance spectacles. The subjects of the photographs show off their energetic smiles and poses in mid-action. In figure A14, I publicly exhibit my recently purchased toy in front of Build-A-Bear Workshop. In these scenes, I am very aware of the camera and how I present myself on the public stage, making photography a performative act in itself.

Figure A15 presents professionally produced photographs, created at John Casablancas Institute. In these photographs, I am posing in front of a white backdrop, with professionally styled hair, makeup and clothing. The virtuosity of the photographs is not shown; instead they are arranged as small thumbnails, cropped from contact sheets. The pre-determined titles, such as [*Per.fec.tion*], [*hope*], [*smile*], and [*wish*], also echo the formality of this tailored photography practice. These spectacles display the difference between spontaneous and staged interactions among photographers and subjects.

Commodities

Figure A16 is an inventory of gifts, based on my birthday celebration at a local shopping mall. Various slanted photographs, along with grammatically incorrect notes, depict this gift giving ceremony between friends. In each awkwardly posed photograph, I stand next to a friend and hold up presents for the camera. The text bubbles emphasize their identities and the commercial products I received during this social and economic exchange. The page archives this public event in terms of the commodities I unwrap.

A specific section documents “Naomi and Me”, standing in the capitalist hub, exchanging new objects like a “bag” and “pretty rainbow jar”. This bag has a representation of Its Happy Bunny and the quote “its all about me deal with it” printed across it. The merchandise is attributed to the American cartoonist Jim Benton, who regularly combines this bunny with insulting slogans. The branded objects are ironically apathetic and tasteless, as they say things like “you suck and thats sad”, “cute but psycho”, “hi loser”, and “I am the dominant bunny in the world”.

The happy character aligns with the unplanned elements of dark humour in this collage. Without knowing it, I am mimicking this badly behaving bunny, by itemizing my social interactions through performative photography and scrapbooking. This page

comedically commodifies my relationships, as my social interactions are solely defined by the economic exchange.

My pages exemplify how traditional scrapbooking turned into a contemporary industry, devoted to manufacturing and selling commercial supplies. In figure A17, entitled *Fun with Frosty*, I am seen happily posing next to a pile of Christmas gifts, including a Walkman CD player, makeup, jewelry, and a hot pink Tamagotchi toy. For this page, I similarly define my interests and economic interactions, using commercial wrapping paper, covered in seasonal Hello Kitty icons.

I do not see this hobby as simply being emblematic of declining tastes, but instead as a method of appropriating popular culture and the visuality of consumerism. I use kitschy scrapbooking materials, sold in stores like Michaels, DeSerres and Dollarama, to alter and represent my image. Throughout my scrapbook, I commodify my own identity and reconstruct autobiographical memories using material possessions. Scrapbooking therefore captures the desire to possess objects, and understand oneself through possessions.

Scrapbooks display artifacts while tracking the migration of ideas and commodities up and down the cultural hierarchy of capitalism (Buckler 3). Scrapbooks enact rituals of consumption and hoarding while presenting multifaceted interpretations of everyday objects from mass culture (Buckler 6). Individuals find their identities inscribed in these intimate archives, however, scrapbooks represent a formal construction of identity outside of authoritative records. Crumbling scrapbooks can also be conservation nightmares; archivists take them apart to save them, further highlighting their fleeting usefulness and ephemerality.

Scrapbooks interestingly shift from real to imaginary realms, as the contents fracture chronology and objects of desire. There are no substantial peer reviews to pass judgment on their taste or truthfulness either. Everything exhibited has been removed from its primary environment and artificially reconstituted. These gestures of disturbance and fragmentation produce counter-memories and new cultural knowledge. Scrapbooking thus adheres to reception theory, as hobbyists are able to counter interpret popular culture, emphasizing their unique interpretation of visual materials.

Technological Innovations

Figure A18, entitled *Precious*, depicts humorous snapshots of abject and anamorphic bodies. Two of these photographs are created in commercial booths, that badly insert my face into pre-determined scenes. One depicts me styled as a shirtless man; with a ridiculous tan and seductive pout. While the other captures my large smiling face pasted over a baby girl's body, creating a creepy appearance and supernatural scale. Another snapshot on this page depicts my friend changing at a public beach, as another comrade purposefully drops her towel, revealing her semi-naked body. The troublemaker simultaneously looks into the camera with a menacing face.

These poses and scenes exemplify the performative practice of photography, treating bodies as fluid simulations and public spectacles. The candid photographs not only capture these comedic displays and humiliating pranks but also allow my community of friends to recall and share these moments continuously. My page juxtaposes childish innocence with lewd bodies, reflecting my developing understanding of selfhood and technology. Since this layout contains digitally distorted photographs, it also coincides with a crucial shift in the development of scrapbooking from a physical to a digital mode.

Digital Scrapbooks

In the 2000s, the scrapbooking industry transitioned due to the influence of new technologies and digital sharing. Contemporary scrapbookers no longer psychically collage, but utilize electronic technology to produce digital scrapbooks (Delacruz 36). The availability of online storage and pre-uploaded albums makes composing digital scrapbooks more convenient for users. Digital cameras, electronic die cut machines, scanners, image editing software and websites are now indispensable tools.

Some technological advantages are material diversity, non-permanent manipulation, archival preservation, environmental impact, cost savings, faster sharing, and general ease of workflow. Digital filters and restorable materials replace traditional aesthetic and tactile qualities, such as torn edges. This shift leads to the formation of online platforms for displaying, selling goods and sharing expertise within scrapbooking communities. In the mid-2000s, there was a significant decline in scrapbooking, most likely due to the rising popularity of social media sites. This shift in album making is

interesting, as it confirms the rise of the digital self-portrait, as a significant artistic and cultural form.

Contemporary Selfies

Self-portraits are no longer bound by the style of traditional scrapbooks, due to their digital dematerialization. The album has changed drastically, having once been shared through generations of families and friends, as a domestic craft. But with the advent of social media, there are new possibilities to publicize the virtual self, using edited photographs. Social networks allow normative portraits to shift from private to online publics (Reynolds 12). Comparably, *Memories For The Future* makes my personal photographs public, in the space of the contemporary art gallery. In this project, I explore how my archive rings true for a larger public since these portraits are turned into spectacles.

Figure A19, exemplifies how scrapbooking, as a cultural phenomenon, is linked to other ways of image making, gathering and sharing online. It contains a printed selfie, downloaded from Facebook, of my friends and I attending a house party. While this physical page, entitled *Where's the party?*, is never uploaded online, it still embodies contemporary selfie culture. The self-portrait is clearly made using a smartphone camera at arm's length, by one of the featured subjects. The selfie seems to be created for vanity, as it's made to appear flattering and casual in nature.

Another photograph on this page captures my surprised friend, sans pants, attempting to cover herself. This snapshot resembles candid photography because it is filled with tense body language, semi-nudity, and public humiliation. These embarrassing photographs are repositioned into my scrapbook and shared among my community of friends. The page as a whole considers proper party and selfie etiquette. It questions whether these social ramifications and photographic practices are truly where the party is.

Figure A20, entitled *lots of love lives here!*, depicts my smiling friends and I performing our love for the camera. We are seen practically attacking each other with cuddles and hugs. We are covered in makeup while displaying ironic kissing and sour faces. There is a mixture of uncomfortable frowning and sexy pouting, as these selfies represent the complex affective and performative features of communal photography.

The selfies display how emotions are inauthentically performed and passed around like currency, throughout my relationships. In these selfies, I not only stage friendship for the photographer, but I also curate bodies and interactions. The photograph on the bottom is digitally altered to augment the romantic atmosphere, using a pink filter and heart symbol, similar to those found on Instagram. These curated portraits show both my ironic love and hatred for others. My scrapbook proves that selfies are a technical and social tool, used to simultaneously degrade and publicly honour personal memories.

Social media services introduce pervasive changes to communication between individuals (Ibrahim 32). These platforms allow users to publicly share portraits filled with heightened emotions and behaviours. Photographers are affecting individual and collective memory by redeveloping visual culture online. The theory of self-preservation explains that participants will consciously manage their identities in social contexts (Maddox 32). So, when users are not accepted online, they feel authentic emotional pain.

The teenage girls depicted in my selfies also manipulate their self-presentation, to achieve a sense of beauty projected by their peers. They compare and present themselves in an effort to earn regard and acceptance, which can lead to problems of self-satisfaction (Papacharissi 1). Contrastingly, this kind of advertisement and objectification may also lead to an uncritical satisfaction with oneself. Performative selfie culture is still developing, along with the social implications of photography as a whole. The contemporary selfies in my scrapbook exemplify personal concerns around the control of mass image.

Remembering Everyday Lives

The methods of post-production used in my archive have deep ties to the history of scrapbooking and contemporary selfie culture. My reflexive reading of individual scrapbook pages continues to have an impact on my photography practice and public engagement. The psychological and economic condition of my scrapbooking is a basis for my project. *Memories For The Future* alludes to the future of point-and-shoot photography, as both a common practice and high artform in a gallery context.

My scrapbooks and graduating project allow me to make sense of my identity, self-representation, and background as an artist. They show my deliberate efforts to make sense of my life and larger social memory by composing them. Photographic albums chronicle innermost thoughts and market selfhood, making them windows into broader culture and social circumstances. Scrapbooks remain important models for researchers who value their own unique visual culture and surrounding labour industry (Kuipers 89).

Contemporary artists continue to collect sources from the mega archive of the Internet, making personal interpretations of popular culture and issues of originality especially important. Scrapbooks are thus valuable genealogical artifacts that implore us to remember who we were and why it mattered. Although photographic albums are often dismissed due to their mass-commercialization, they will surely remain a significant personal and collective phenomenon for years to come.

Appendix B.

Figures



Figure A1.



Figure A2.



Figure A3.



Figure A4.



Figure A5.



Figure A6.



Figure A7.



Figure A8.

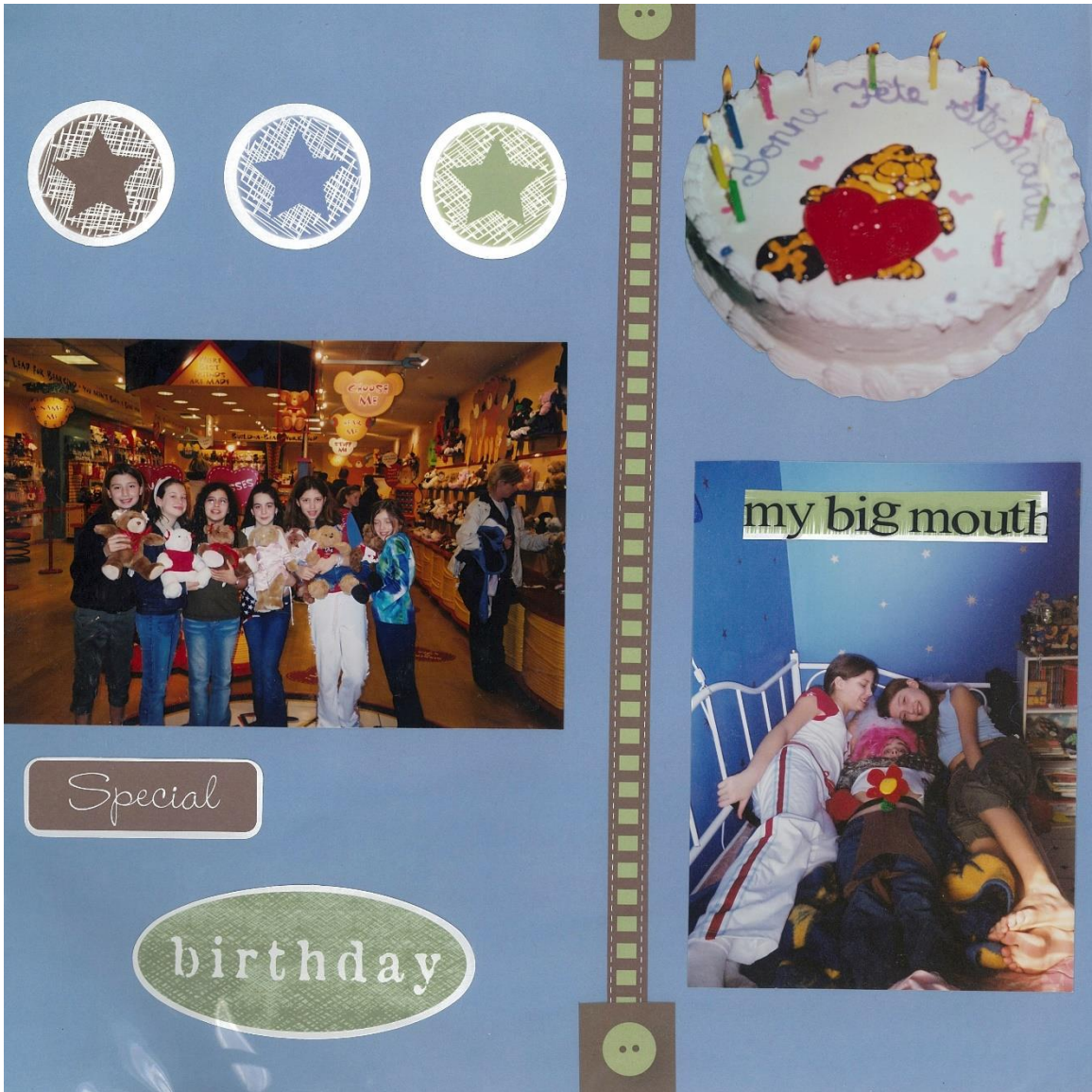


Figure A9.



Figure A10.



Figure A11.



Figure A12.



Figure A13.



Figure A14.

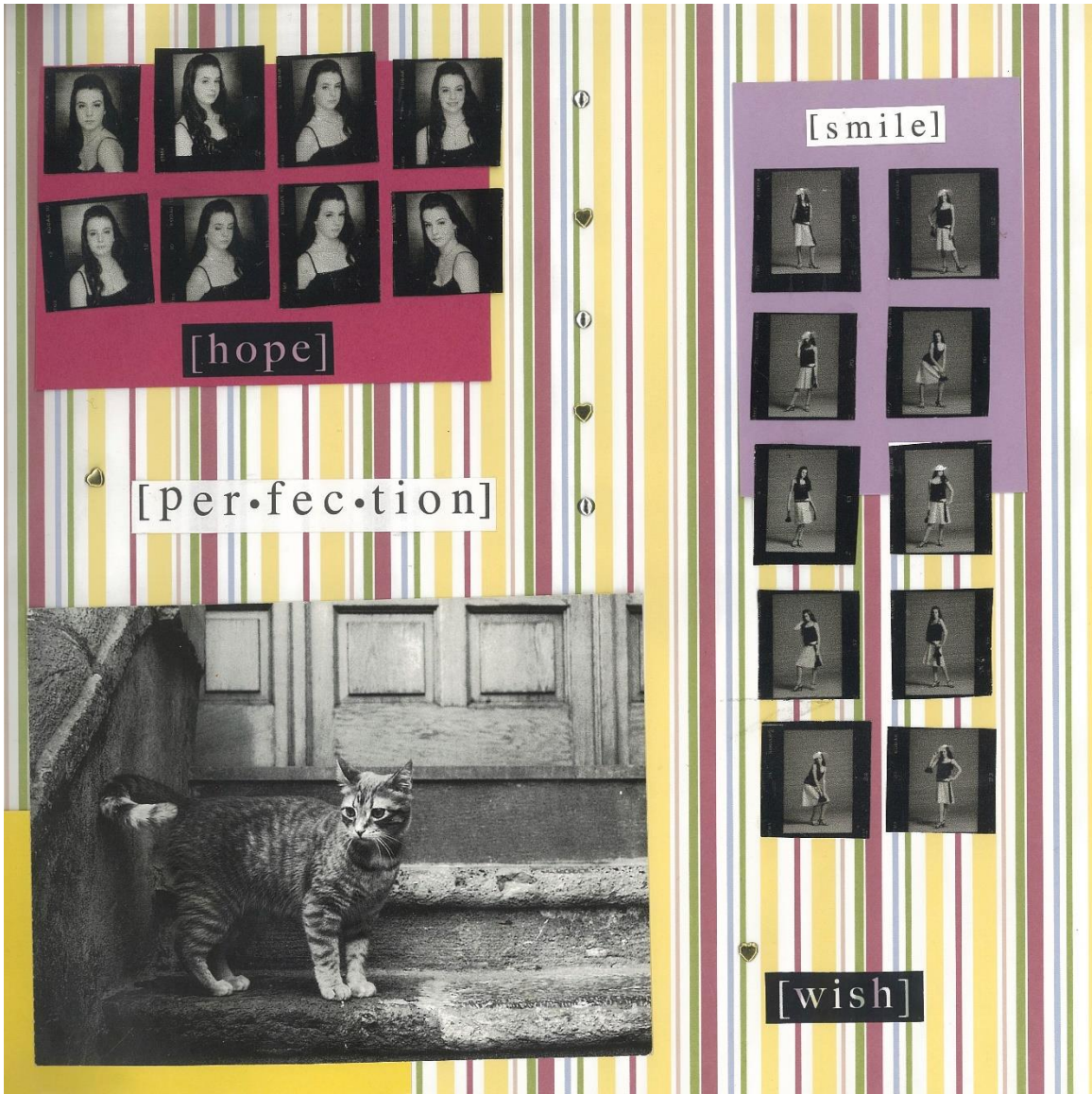


Figure A15.



Figure A16.



Figure A17.



Figure A18.



Figure A19.

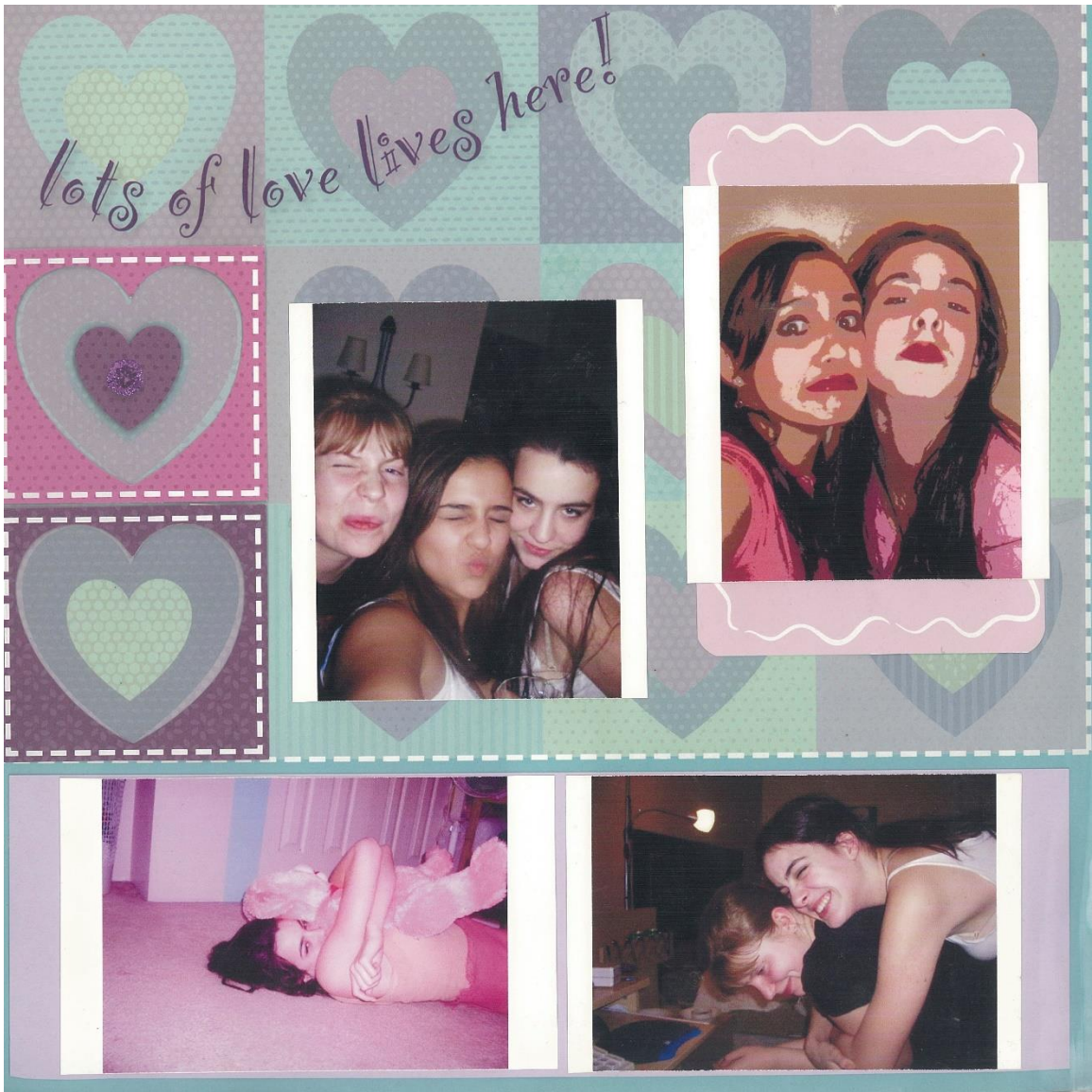


Figure A20.

Appendix C.

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