



***KANASHIBARI, SHADOW ARCHIVE***

by

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B.F.A, Simon Fraser University, 2000

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

In the  
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## **Abstract**

*kanashibari, shadow archive* is an interactive website and a sculptural, drawing and light installation that examines the impossibilities and possibilities that exist within articulating and archiving traumatic, collective and personal memories. Both works echo already existing contemporary forms of the archive and the memorial as a means to understand and question the absences within “history.” Each form examines our desires to replace the absences of history with manifestations of material culture.

Both projects are equally important components and thus mutually interdependent. Online viewers who visit the virtual “archive” activate the installation by triggering a small light. The illuminated drawings appear from the darkness as a ‘trace’ of what is barely invisible and constantly disappearing within the attempts to articulate the memory of historical traumatic events. The website continues to exist on the web, while the installation’s temporal and spatial manifestation is now a ‘memory’ for audiences who experienced the work.

# Dedication

*for Fumiye Mochizuki (1911-2003)*



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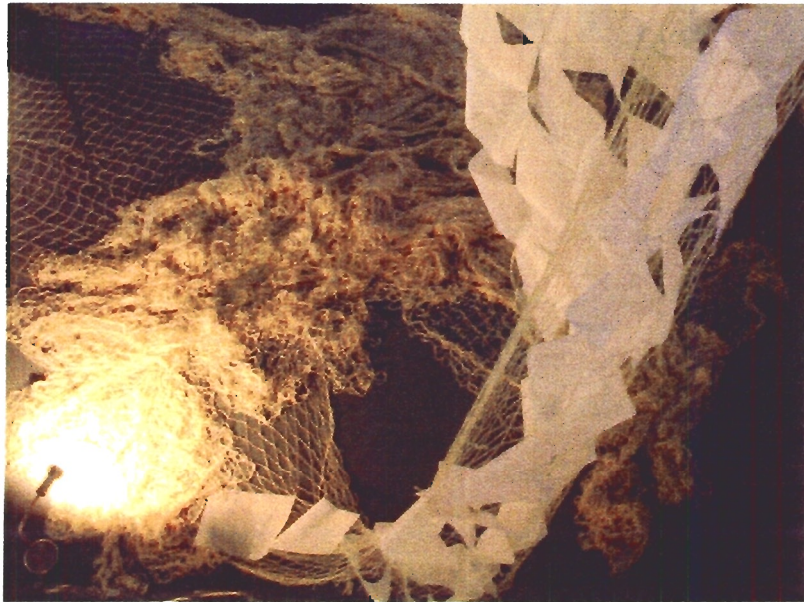
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*kanashibari, shadow archive*



*Figure 1 Installation view, **kanashibari, shadow archive**,  
2006*

# Chapter 1: Trauma & Memory

***kanashibari***  
***“tightly bound”***  
***in scientific terms ‘sleep paralysis’***  
***to encounter a ghost***  
***the body is so tired that it becomes heavy and immovable while the***  
***mind continues to race ahead causing hallucinations and bad***  
***dreams.***

(Kokugojiten)

## 1.1 Return to Paralysis: Repeating Traumatic Narratives

Something falters and shifts in me when I re-visit the Japanese Canadian National Archive in Burnaby, B.C. that houses some thousands of images, texts, documents, and objects that remain of the Japanese Canadian internment during WWII. The mass of images, documents, and articles are flattened onto one plane and speak to me with an impersonal voice.<sup>1</sup> Maybe this makes these documents easier to witness, that I cannot link a person and his/her story to the photograph. The growing collection of artefacts still reflects a void that is unspeakable. Although still an important and necessary mode of remembrance, the limits of an archive as an institutionalized and museological setting once again silences the voices of thousands of Japanese Canadians.

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<sup>1</sup> I have taken the idea of the flattening of surfaces from the condensation of materials that were once housed in an archive from Dr. McAllister’s article. McAllister, Kirsten. “A Story Escape: Family Photographs from the Japanese-Canadian Internment Camps.” *Locating Memory, Photographic Acts*. Edited by Annette Kuhn and Kirsten McAllister. Oxford: Berghan Books. 2006. (83).

As an artist who has chosen to examine personal and collective history and memory, I realize that I have entered into a domain of creative production that is both liberating and binding. The process proved to be one that was both a productive dialogue and collision between ethics, aesthetics and materiality. For the past six years of my artistic practice prior to my MFA, the ideas around my family history were never given my full attention. During these past two years I have lived closely with these documents, stories, and articles while spending time interviewing members of my family who were interned. The residue of trauma that was felt in my own personal and lived memories of a particular historical moment with which I had no direct experience, was something that proved to impede my artistic production but was nonetheless valuable to me as an artist and an individual. This work begins for me at a place of questioning and speculation. The artistic process and journey has cracked open for me a new terrain of understanding memory and history - in particular my personal history and how I have grown to understand and make sense of it since childhood.

Within the first stages of the production of my first year project, I had begun to raise questions regarding the impossibility of articulating traumatic memory and the complications of materializing it in a state long enough for people to witness and recognize before its disappearance.<sup>2</sup> The echo of Theodor Adorno's assertion that "Poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric"<sup>3</sup> lingered in my mind forcing me to consistently question my intentions as an artist and the ways in which I would think about working through memory and its slow and highly

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<sup>2</sup> I am making reference to Walter Benjamin's quote "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and never seen again." as cited in Maclear, Kyo. "The Art of Witnessing," *Beclouded Visions Hiroshima/Nagasaki and the Art of Witness*. New York: State University Press. 1999. (1). Original quote from Benjamin, Walter. "Theses of Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. 1968. (447).

<sup>3</sup> Here I make reference to Susannah Radstone quoting Adorno's assertion which can be found in "Working with Memory: An Introduction," Original citation is Horkeimer, M. and Adorno, Theodor. W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. (1947). Edited by G.S. Noerr, Translated by E. Jephcott, California: Stanford Press. 2002.

reflective process. I was aware of the dangers and pitfalls of aesthetic creation within the ethics of history and trauma that often lead to the monumentalization of the historical: the beautiful monument.

Absence forces one to begin to rebuild a history that gives witness to our memories and imagination. It requires the time to be memorialized both personally and collectively. What I was attempting to build was a way of working that was distinguishable from both documentary and an abstract aesthetics.<sup>4</sup> The process guided me to search for a new poetics in order to speak of my personal memory as influenced by the abundant official and material forms of history.

As I began creating this work, the materials themselves started to take shape and highlight its process, one that was constantly being disrupted by the sound of my own self-reflexive, questioning voice. In *At Memory's Edge*, James Young claims that “these interruptions would also remind [audiences] that this history being told and remembered [was] by someone in a particular time and place, that it was the product of human hands and minds. Such a narrative would simultaneously gesture both to the existence of my deep, inarticulable memory and to its own incapacity to deliver that memory.”<sup>5</sup>

Andreas Huyssen elaborates on globalized culture's obsession with 'memory' which has led to the normalization of the task of remembering as the very gesture that now has been integrated into our everyday lives by the convenience of technology. The media, newspapers, Internet, and more specifically, museums, monuments and archives have made historical commemoration a national performance.<sup>6</sup> Our obsession with memory has erased the actual ground zero that continues to inhabit the body of human

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<sup>4</sup> Hirsch, Marianne. “Mourning and Postmemory.” *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Edited by Marianne Hirsch. Cambridge : Harvard Press. 1997. (23).

<sup>5</sup> Young, James “Art Spielgman's Maus and the After Images of History,” *At Memory's Edge*. London: Yale University Press. 2000. (14).

<sup>6</sup> Huyssen, Andreas. “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia” *Present Pasts Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Edited by Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries. California: Stanford University Press. 2003. (17)

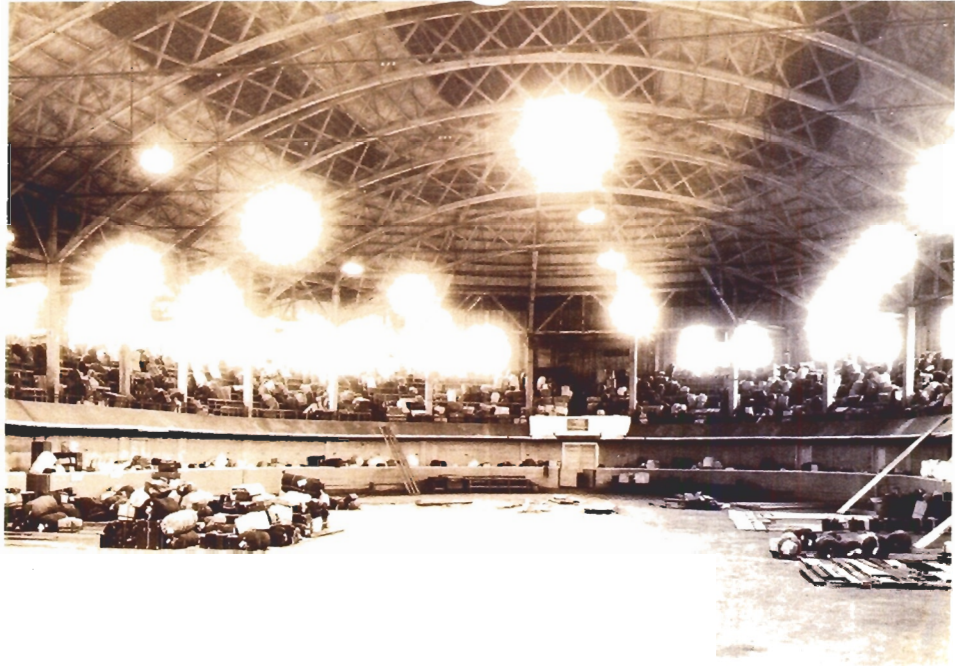
experience of those who are affected by racial discrimination, war, genocide, and the residue of historical trauma. The after effects of both physical and psychic violence are alive in the body memory of those who have survived and live on.

The remains of war and other traumatic historical events do not sit still. They continue to haunt society like historical *de-ja vu* beckoning us to listen carefully, to take the time to remember. What forms of artistic production are used to challenge official notions of 'memory' and 'history'? Is it possible for memory work<sup>7</sup> and artistic production to exist simultaneously? How might these forms take shape? What are the artistic strategies?

Three major projects were developed during the past two years. Each work examined ideas of memory and history, loss and trauma, materiality and absence. In what follows is a short description of each of the three works.

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<sup>7</sup> Here I am making reference to a term by Annette Kuhn called memory work which is 'an active practice of remembrance which takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its reconstruction through memory.' Kuhn, Annette. "A Journey Through Memory," *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by Susannah Radstone. New York: Berg. 2000. (186).



*Figure 2: "Building "B" Baggage Room - Formerly Horse Show Building)" Hastings Park, Vancouver B.C. ca 1942.*

*Leonard Frank, photographer.*

*Alec Eastwood Collection. JCNM 94/69.3.026*



## 1.2 Wake

*Detective: How is anyone able engage with what you are saying? How does anyone make sense of what you saw?*

*Witness: True to me. Detective, how does one measure and make sense of truth?*

*Detective: Then go on....  
(Excerpts from Wake, 2005)*

My first year project was a fictional murder mystery set in contemporary Vancouver at a location known as Hastings Park. This area was once called “The Pool” during WWII. “The Pool” was a holding pen for Japanese Canadians from the interior and the coast who were forcibly removed from their homes by the RCMP during their internment<sup>8</sup>. The video installation was projected in a dark room on three floating plexi-glass screens in the gallery space of Video In Studios. There are two variations of this work: a three channel video installation and a site-specific sound walk.

Among *Wake*’s references are the works by multi-media artist Dana Claxton, *Waterspeak* (2000) and video artist, Stan Douglas, *Pursuit, Fear, Catastrophe: Ruskin B.C* (1993). Both works involve fictional characters and create a space for dialogue around geographical land, nature and the complexities of histories that inhabit these environments.

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<sup>8</sup> Kitagawa, Muriel and Miki, Roy. *This Is My Own, Letters to Wes & Other Writings on Japanese Canadians 1941-1948*. Vancouver: Talon Books. 1985. (193)



Figure 3 Installation View, **Wake** 2006

Cindy Mochizuki.

The screens formed a triptych that floated in the middle of the gallery, forming three scenes into a fictional space. The Detective appeared on the right channel and the Witness on the left, bracketing a middle screen that suggested a third space that called forth three key dramatic sequences of the murder mystery. This work takes on the cinematic style of film noire, a genre of film from the 1930's that literally meant black film and took on themes such as detective stories, gothic novels and crime noire.<sup>9</sup> The narrative style takes the form of palm story<sup>10</sup>, a literary term coined by Japanese writer Yasunari Kawabata used to describe short stories that are character driven and leave the audience with a sense of longing or desire. The video vignettes never quite establish a complete narrative, but suspends themselves in an unstable space of constant questioning and interrogation. The characters are suspended between sleeping and waking;

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<sup>9</sup> Macey, David. *Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, England: Penguin Books. (129)

<sup>10</sup> Kawabata, Yasunari. *Palm of Hand Stories*. Translated by Lane Dunlop and J. Martin Holman. San Francisco: North Point Press. 1988.

much like the state of 'kanashibari' or sleep paralysis which frequently appears in the form of gothic novel or murder mysteries in Japanese literature.<sup>11</sup>

The video begins in media res:<sup>12</sup> a Detective played by Hiro Kanagawa is called forth to interrogate a Witness played by Maiko Bae Yamamoto. The Witness, Mrs. Takasaki, has found the body of an elderly Japanese woman along the New Brighton shoreline. The video plays three vignettes that are based only on the interrogation dialogue of the Witness and the Detective. These scenes all take place in the interior of an enclosed office space with windowed walls that peer out to a room of workers repeatedly filing documents away into cabinets. The Detective who is fixated on testimonies of 'truth' questions the Witness by having her repeat and return to the testimony of what it is she 'saw' the morning of the elderly woman's murder. The Witness is able to move between various forms of memory; at once seeming as though she has direct connection to the elderly woman's past, and at other instances questioning her own reliability and thoughts.

Three additional scenes are played suggesting the Witness's flashbacks within the third screen of the installation. These memories are interspersed within the interrogation scenes, providing insight and clues into how one might re-construct the 'facts' around the murder at the New Brighton shoreline. A young Aboriginal boy is established as a third witness at the top of a hill near Hastings Park and a man is seen lifting a body out of the shoreline inter-cut with an old black and white archival photograph of a Japanese Canadian man leaving the site of Hastings Park. The final scene involves two characters that appear to be the Detective and the Witness, only they are both wearing pedestrian clothes. The scene takes place on the bridge that leads towards the New Brighton Shoreline and begins with the Detective in the midst of discussion while walking with the Witness. The Detective begins recalling the last words of a dying woman

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Sato, Ayako. Professor at Meijin Gakuin Tokyo University, Tokyo, Japan. Interview 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Latin proverb for being in the middle of a sequence of events, as in a literary narrative. Literally in the 'middle of things.'

who was once held within the “Pool.” It is in this scene that the majority of the ‘information’ around this murder is revealed but channelled through the testimony of the Detective, who much like the Witness in earlier scenes, is haunted by an unshakeable memory he has of the elderly woman’s past. These three scenes riddle the dialogue and complicate the Witness’s testimony. In this piece, even though it appears that the Detective remains calm and poised on wanting to know “just the facts” of the murder, it is evident by the end of the video loop that both the Detective and the Witness are haunted by a repressed, historical past that is seeping into the present landscape.

*Wake* is located within a traumatic narrative that is culturally specific to a localized history and geography that may frame the work as only relating to the historical injustices of Japanese Canadians within the ‘Pool.’ However, its significance extends to a larger provincial, national and international recognition of human injustice and racial discrimination that can be located within many other urban cities around the globe. Neighbourhoods, streets, and other public spaces intersect with our present everyday lives and histories. These geographical locations become the very site for such traumatic events and also a space for constant re-negotiation and questioning.

A variation of this work was also presented as a 20 minute soundwalk at the actual location of Hastings Park. I led audiences who listened to a variation of *Wake* on audio headsets through various periphery locations around the Momiji Garden memorial park. This park was constructed as a means of apology to the Japanese Canadian community. Audiences with their headsets traced the area by walking through Hastings Park which becomes much like a palimpsest. They listened to the dialogue between the Detective and the Witness which were mixed with other ambient sounds of the present area. Audiences were able to meander through the site and experience a palimpsest that was being suggested as they wandered through the racetrack, the bird sanctuary and the Pacific National Exhibition grounds.

The palimpsest or the layering effect of tracing the city through walking allows for another imaginative, narrative landscape to be imposed onto the pedestrian’s ‘reality’ of the actual environment. Site-specific soundwalks, such

as those produced by visual artist, Janet Cardiff, illustrate similar ideas around the palimpsest which allow for ‘doubled vision’ - seeing another location through what is layered on to our consciousness through sound.

### ***1.3 15<sup>th</sup> file***

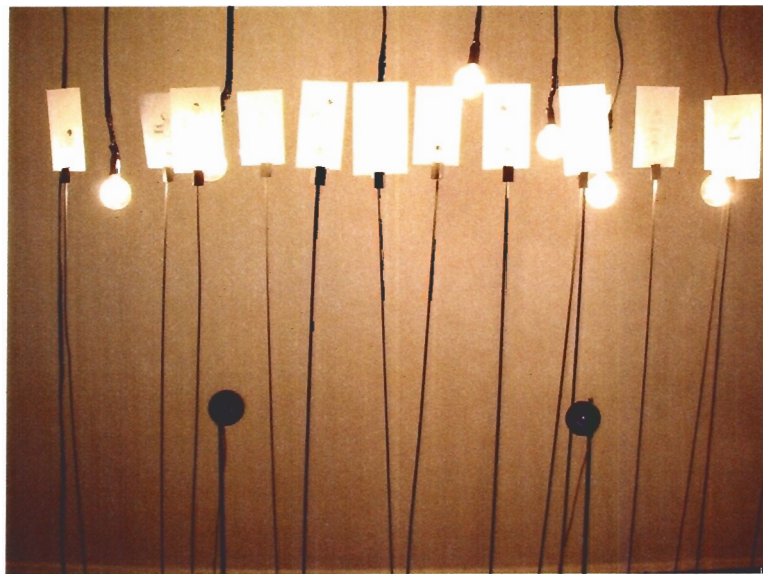
*15<sup>th</sup> file* is a light and drawing installation piece that was a work in progress towards the installation portion of *kanashibari, shadow archive*. I wanted to spend this time working through ideas of technologically mediated histories (radio) and personal memories through the visual and virtual realm that were later explored in my final MFA graduating work. Fifteen light bulbs were strung from the ceiling of the small white room of the Bartlett Exhibition and Performance Space which illuminated 15, thermally printed drawings onto small, thin screens mounted on black stands.



*Figure 4 Detail, 15<sup>th</sup> file, 2006*

*Cindy Mochizuki*

In this work, I began examining gallery-based installations that alluded to ideas of monuments and memorials within the gallery setting. In particular, the installations of Christian Boltanski<sup>13</sup> needs to be referenced as a work that influenced how I would materialize absence. During this time, I asked fifteen individuals to pose with an empty banker's box to propose the idea of waiting, longing, catching, and holding, which were all gestures suggesting containment of materials, in particular, archival storage. The row of box carriers were lit up with small bulbs and the room was also animated by a ghostly soundscape of crackling, found radio pieces of public speeches by Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy during WWII. The haunting soundscape would weave in and out of these speeches as well as the sound of the radio crackling. This sound piece was heard through two tiny speakers also mounted on black stands.



*Figure 5 Detail, 15<sup>th</sup> file, 2006*

*Cindy Mochizuki*

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<sup>13</sup> I am making reference to such works as *Monument, Les Enfants de Dijon*. 1986.

Audiences would enter into this enclosed space and would be drawn to the small pictures revealed through the light and to the audio piece that would require one to move closer to the speakers. The piece is intended as a quiet space for reflection, and perhaps by the material fragility, a space for mourning.

#### ***1.4 kanashibari, shadow archive***

My graduating thesis exhibition consisted of two components: an interactive website and an installation that worked simultaneously to re-imagine spaces of remembrance. An accumulation of white on white drawings were created and tied onto both sides of an expansive linen fishing net that flowed from the ceiling to the floor of the Bartlett Exhibition and Performance Space. The remaining tethered ends of the fishing net lay in small heaps on the floor lit by five gooseneck lamps. Within the structure of the piece, under a sweeping 'roof' of drawings adhered to the fishing net, sat a white table, chair and computer which allowed for viewers to surf the online component. The fishing net was an actual memento kept with our family from my late uncle who was a fisherman in B.C. In this sculptural piece, the usual function of the fishing net is upturned as it no longer serves its purpose to capture and contain sustenance, but instead temporarily adheres over 300 white on white traced drawings tied onto both sides of the netting. The net can no longer carry the accumulating weight of the paper and suggests a dispersing of documents across the space.



*Figure 6 Installation view, **kanashibari, shadow archive**,  
2006*

*Cindy Mochizuki*

Embedded in the installation were 21 small LED lights that were hung from the ceiling, which lit up 21 drawings of tracings of a sleeping woman. When online viewers visited the virtual archive, a single light would awaken the drawing and pierce a small glowing light through the tracing paper. Like fireflies, the drawings on paper appear to be attracted to the lights on both sides of the net creating an image of a chaotic spill or papers in flight. On first appearance it seems that suspended from the ceiling of the gallery space is a net of blank sheets of plain white paper, but upon closer examination one notices the white ink drawings that are traced onto the sheets of paper. As well, one sees the fine detailing of the linen nets as they too create a web-like structure that produces shadows onto the gallery walls and the paper sheets. The floor of the gallery space is also filled with a pooling mass of the remaining nets, piled and left as heaps on the floor. The melancholic slack of untouched nets are unattended and



limp, counter to the suggested life and movement of the drawings and netting caught in the air. The computer terminal positioned at the centre of the chaotic spill of drawings indicates the place of archival study or research.

The web component of this work poses itself as a fictive official website of the Japanese Canadian internment. It is titled in a stylized, western font as “The Official Documents of the Internment of Japanese Canadian Citizens 1942-1949.” Taking the aesthetic and rhetoric of popular, historical, museological websites,<sup>14</sup> I created the interface of what would appear to be a historical site that would feature three viewing options: Internment Sites, Documents and Interviews. Within this website are fourteen possible sites with three additional ‘easter egg sites’, a term used in media based culture such as web and CD roms to describe a secret site that a careful viewer might catch by chance. Within this site, viewers encounter a historical tour of the internment sites that display four animated postcards, boxes of found articles, and video documentation of interviews of individuals who were interned.

Each page comes to life as the online viewer must scan the surface of the computer screen with their mouse looking for clues that will activate the otherwise dormant works. Upon clicking various images, short stories, animations, audio and video works are triggered and begin to unravel a series of memory works<sup>15</sup>. For example, in *Notes on Walnut Grove*, an old 1940’s article discusses the ‘Japanese Problem’ and the berry industry. A strawberry shaped cursor guides the viewer through the fading article which is replaced by the appearance of berry pickers, including my grandmother, in a strawberry field. Upon clicking on each berry picker an animated rendition of an ‘enemy alien’ is activated and we see the berry pickers joined by the animation of three monsters.

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<sup>14</sup> An example of websites is the American Holocaust Museum <http://www.ushmm.org/>. or the Japanese American National Museum. <http://www.janm.org/>.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 5 on Young’s description of such memory works building on a process of “both deep inarticulate memory and its own incapacity to deliver that memory,” hence the creative decisions to have a singular image trigger an associative animation, video, interview, etc.

These fanciful animated monsters, their bellies full of red fruity liquid, pointedly remind us of the inability to echo such traumas solely through the voices in nationalized discourse. The fictive and the imaginative are called forth in my work much like the usage of mice and cats in Art Spiegelman's profound comic book about the Jewish Holocaust, *Maus*.

It is intentional that within my website some of what you are able to see is overlooked until a subsequent visit which might change the experience of the piece entirely. This process of revisiting and reinvestigating points to memory work and its inability to be achieved, only inhabited through the active process of memory. At first, one might not catch an 'easter egg'; discovering it leads to further clues and information that could change the contextual reading of the work.

## Chapter 2. Ghosts & Ruins: An Exploration of Invisible Forms

### 2.1 The Haunting of Absence

*Wake*, *15<sup>th</sup> file*, and *kanashibari*, *shadow archive* all illuminate that which is invisible, absent and unseen from the human eye in the present. They are calling visions forth that are felt and experienced in our collective memories; of a time torn from reality and taking shape in new and hybrid forms. Each aesthetic form that I chose to work with pays careful attention to one's inability to fully and comprehensively articulate trauma and gives space for the work of absence. I have specifically chosen to work with interactive technologies such as the web and temporally based work such as installation for various reasons. Each form requires one to work from a place of memory and to imagine ways of exposing new modes of remembrance that are revealed from privileging absence. Like historical *deja-vu*, the works mimic a recognizable form of popular culture, whether it be a dramatic film noire or a website. It is from this place of appropriating familiarity that I play with moments of disruption. Within my work, analogue forms meet digital constructs creating contact with not only the past and the present, but also a space for an imaginative future - one that is destabilized from linearity and not tethered to the burdens of official and linear history.

Within this chapter I will explore the formal element of my work, in particular the use of drawing, archive, and the web. All three forms carefully consider ways to articulate and access different aspects of memory and the realm which is invisible and absent from our daily sight. By use of artistic forms, I highlight Kyo Maclear's questions around the day-to-day 'witnessing' of the representational horrors of history by asking audiences to consider how

consistent witnessing of traumatic memories and histories push the limits of our ways of seeing. Maclear pointedly reminds us to see where the ‘visible cheats us knowledge and (why) memory is intrinsic to the act of meeting absent worlds.’” She suggests that art has a “potential to introduce a new pace for eyes.”<sup>16</sup> A new pace for the way we remember, see and imagine, which influences our ways of remembrance and mourning.

The final section of this chapter, titled *Resisting Monuments*, attempts to summarize and conclude my desire to build and research material relationships to memory. Furthermore I explore forms of popular monumentalization which occur when memory becomes commodified. Each of these chapters considers the material forms and genres that have influenced all three works created during my MFA.

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<sup>16</sup> Maclear, Kyo. “The Art of Witnessing,” *Beclouded Visions Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of Witness*. (75). New York: State University Press. 1999. (75).

## 1.5 2.2 Mediated Marks, Rehearsal of Tracing

The drawing for the sculptural installation of *kanashibari, shadow archive* was created from hundreds of sheets of white, translucent paper, bearing traced white line drawings of people, objects, animals, creatures and hands. The sources of these drawings are derived from photographs and video stills that were used in the creation of the animation and video within my website. As such, each tracing depicts the accounts of my own associative process. The drawings, which are white lines on white paper, remain barely visible on the paper until the gallery viewer takes a closer look. Alternatively, another way the drawings become more visible is when a LED light is triggered by an online viewer surfing the site.

The relationship between the mediated representation of the photograph and video sources and the traced drawings suggest the necessary relationship between the documentary and the aesthetic discussed in Marianne Hirsch's "Mourning and Postmemory."<sup>17</sup> These mediated photographs and video stills act as evidence of our histories, carrying the quality of "having-been-there." "They remove doubt and can be held up as proof for the purposes of the revision. In contrast, the aesthetic or in this case, the traced drawings, are said to introduce agency, control, and structure and, therefore, distance from the real, a distance which might leave space for doubt."<sup>18</sup> The website combines numerous forms of media; newspaper articles, archival photographs, interview documentation and animations. The ephemeral aspect of the white on white drawings questions the reliability and limits of the official forms of documentation. Such forms as the photographic image of a traumatic event are necessary as reference for a re-

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<sup>17</sup> See footnote 5 for further clarification on the terms of 'documentary' and 'aesthetic' as discussed by Marianne Hirsch. The term 'postmemory' will be defined in chapter 3.2 see footnote 14.

<sup>18</sup> Hirsch, Marianne quoting John E. Frohmyer in "Mourning and Postmemory," *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1997. (24-25).

working of these histories and memories. Hirsch uses the example of Spiegelman's *Maus* and its usage of the photographic images of family members within his comic book. "These family photographs are documents both of memory (the survivor's) and of "post-memory" (that of the child of the survivors)," and thus, the combination of these forms of media "can interact to produce a more permeable and multiple text that may recast the problematics of Holocaust representation and definitely eradicate any clear-cut distinction between documentary and aesthetic."<sup>19</sup> In my work, the hand rehearses and translates these still images of documentary photographs creating a process that can call upon the necessary and important historical documentation of the internment, yet questioning its reliability and ability to perform the work of mourning.

The spill of drawings in *kanashibari*, *shadow archive* can indirectly allude to Jeff Wall's photographic work, *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, 1993. Wall's print references a 19<sup>th</sup> century Hokusai print called *Ejiri in A Suruga Province (a sudden gust of wind)*. The photographic work also depicts a landscape with figures encountering a flurry of papers suspended in the sky. Wall's photographic work plays with contemporary realities and fantasy, which he calls "hallucination or vision" by "experimenting with the interface between the real and the imagined," and is able to change the scene from a 'record' of a particular moment to a comical farce.<sup>20</sup> The ephemeral nature of faint drawing on tracing paper thus becomes an action of memory; a place of speculation and doubt. In this installation, two-dimensional, static drawings are animated both by light and by their sheer accumulation taking shape in space as a vortex of unarchivable memory – an impossible landscape frozen in a "sudden gust of wind."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid (24-25).

<sup>20</sup> Wagstaff, Sheena. *Jeff Wall Photographs 1978-2004*. London: Tate Publishing, 2004. (15).

<sup>21</sup> Taken from the title of Jeff Wall's photograph and Hokusai print. See footnote 19.

## 2.3 Invisible Archives

I have taken the term 'shadow archive' from Arthur Mizuta Lippett's book *Atomic Light, Shadow Optics* in which he explains that "an archive is always burning, turned to cinder and ash," suggesting that all archives are realized in destruction and also preserved by the very traces of destruction.<sup>22</sup> We have an expectation of what an archive can hold and contain. We also have certain expectations and desires of how history should be represented and preserved. *The Official Documents of the Japanese Canadian Internment*, the website component, exists online; however, it does not hold a tangible material form, but rather it exposes another space - a shadow space which is "made possible only by the imaginary and hypothetical space always left vacant by the archive."<sup>23</sup> Mizuta-Lippett's theorization offers the possibility of another space. He responds,

An alternative archive outside the archive...anarchive and pararchive. A secret archive and an archive of secrets, this semantic archive survives the archive's destruction. It is founded on its ruin, against the law of the archive as paradox. It protects what will have been a secret, the topology of the 'secret history of kept secrets.' The other archive, shadow and anarchive, preserves the history that has never been a history, a history before history, destroyed as it were, before becoming history as such. An archive of that which has not been - a universe of the unarchivable.<sup>24</sup>

My website poses as an official website that allows audiences to discover Japanese Canadian history. This website discloses the alternative space; an absence which holds both documents of official histories, and my fragmented interpretation of that history as it has been mediated to me and passed down. In this work the movements of the online viewer are tracked by the LED lights in the

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<sup>22</sup> Mizuta-Lippett, Arthur. "Introduction," *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*. University of Minnesota: Minnesota Press. 2005 (9).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid (7).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid (12).

installation. The shadow of the viewer is cast onto a different space, exposed as light in the gallery breaking through the paper and exposing tiny voids. Mizuta-Lippett begins to foreground an aesthetic that manifests from the dark corridors of ruin. He suggests that such phenomena as Xrays, psychoanalysis, and cinema pursued the opening of interiority, the opening of the mind, body and the world.<sup>25</sup> Mizuta-Lippett especially makes historical connections to such horrific visions such as nuclear disasters like the atomic bombing of Hiroshima that literally destroyed a nation and their people from the inside out as a visual horror that remains in the minds of many individuals.

*Wake, 15<sup>th</sup> file, and kanashibari, shadow archive* are three works that speak to the ideas of articulating from this place of ruin. All three manifest from the archives deep within a personal and bodily memory that is not only linked to the past but to its re-visitation in the present moment. Because of the emergence of new technologies and media that imitate and recreate an experience that is immediate and present, such factors as global wars and historical events become easily accessible through mediation and are re-experienced second hand. Personal histories and memories become available for public witnessing but often at a surface level. This then poses the ethical question: How then must we perform the role of witnesses and what kind of witnesses will we be?<sup>26</sup>

## **2.4 Historical *Deja-vu*: Online sites of Trauma**

Within *kanashibari, shadow archive* I wanted to explore themes of what I call historical *deja-vu*: a re-appearance of something from the haunted past that appears once again in the present landscape in a new and unrecognizable form. Each of the works that I created explores the landscapes of 'memory sites.' I am particularly interested in Pierre Nora's concept of the '*lieux de memoire*,' a memory site that is material, symbolic and functional. The *lieux* not only

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. (5).

<sup>26</sup> I have taken this idea of questioning the act of witnessing from Maclear, Kyo. "Introduction," *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of the Witness*, NYC: State University Press. 1999.



functions to block the work of forgetting, “but only exists because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of meaning...”<sup>27</sup> The historical *deja-vu* is about the “embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.”<sup>28</sup>

The regions of the Interior of B.C. - especially the area of the internment camps, have become ghost towns - a term with double meaning as it was originally used to describe mining towns. However the memory of the internment is not limited to that area but seeps into Vancouver. In this work I have taken the location of internment, the landscape of the Interior of B.C., and attempted to move beyond sanitized and ethno-specific representations of this event, in order to slip in and out of these two forms, constructing the unfamiliar and deconstructing the familiar.<sup>29</sup> How might audiences move beyond distant analysis and actively engage with the forms of remembrance that implicates all citizens?

I have taken the popular and familiar form of historical website in this instance for de-stabilizing the familiar expectations of remembrance. ‘Heritage,’ usually a government sanctioned word to discuss multiculturalism, has made a re-appearance in technological forms such as the web to create fabricated, virtual and historical experiences that have become popular vehicles for the purpose of leisure or education. A web search of ‘heritage’ sites shows a booming industry interested in creating historical displays on the web for the world to see. The sudden interest in this form accounts for the commercialization of history and memory and the growing aesthetic of nostalgic, historical forms which attempt to create an “immediacy in the ‘experience’ of the past.”<sup>30</sup>

My project plays on this element of ‘heritage’ site and our desires to become immediately immersed in the experience of a history now past. We as

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<sup>27</sup> Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History. *Les Lieux de Memoire.*” *Representations*, No. 26 Special Issue: Memory and Counter Memory (Spring 1989). (18).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. (7).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. (15).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid (8).

consumers expect that these sites will easily perform our acts of memory. The model of a heritage site assumes it will provide the most accurate transparent information. It becomes a reliable and trustworthy form as there appears to be a clarity of information flow: dates, times, people, accounts, and other forms of factual data are presented in a cleverly designed format for easy viewing. However, in contrast to these usual expectations, the highly interactive element of the *kanashibari, shadow archive* is not necessarily user friendly; I beckon viewers to take an active role in the kinds of remembrance that are possibly created in a fictive virtual space. It demands that you trace over the screen with your mouse in order to find the holes that will allow you access to another sound, another image, another story, but never a direct representation of the Japanese Canadian internment of 1942-1949.

## 2.5 Resisting Monuments

In the summer of 2005 Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemorated its 60 years since the dropping of the atomic bomb. I decided at the same time to begin to research and interview family members that were currently living in Japan. As a tourist I stepped onto the expansive Hiroshima Memorial Park and Museum, which had encased ruins of buildings, detailed photography, shrines and plaques all through the park within walking distance of the actual epicentre of the bombing. All month the park has events, tours and exhibitions to remember that day and its repercussions. Peace advocates from all over the world joined the *hibakusha*, survivors of the A-bomb, to work towards a *Never Again* and the stopping of more nuclear warfare.<sup>31</sup>

It is here that I made the symbolic link to this land and its history, and its choices in history that shaped the fate and destiny of Japanese Canadians living

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<sup>31</sup> Recently, nuclear testing in North Korea triggered reactions by Japan, Taiwan and South Korea to reconsider their options for nuclear warfare. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been considering re-opening the constitution for use of nuclear weaponry. These reactive responses highlight the importance for the careful understanding of traumatic histories. Email Correspondence to Professor Jin-me Yoon, October 2006.

on the West Coast who were to be branded “enemy alien”<sup>32</sup> and exiled from their homes. It is here where I visualized the complex web of lines that trace multiple histories over and over again. My concerns were primarily about voices that become homogenized under the commodification of historical trauma. Survivor testimonies and other living forms of memory have been capitalized and commodified as a means to fill the voids. At the actual site of Hiroshima, I could feel the push/pull of the commodified forms of memory and the ‘deep memory’ of those who continue to survive. ‘Deep memory’ often times was a form of memory that was invisible and hidden, submerged in the consciousness of survivors. ‘Deep memory’ often prevents imagination from having refuge from these traumatic events.<sup>33</sup> The only visible traces of history were often highlighted through monumental forms often privileging nostalgic, historical narrative. Whether they be mainstream Hollywood films, memorial parks, or heritage museums, each monumental form does not allow audiences time for reflection but rather an easy linear flow of ‘information.’ The invisible scars of trauma had become erased because they were normalized and neutralized under only one mode of remembrance. It also seemed that private memories could be accessed by the public through such forms of technology as the Internet for instantaneous viewing: we could see the representations of the horrors of history whenever and wherever we wanted.

The memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had become monumentalized into one large city narrative through its vast memorial park and museum. The citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s historical memory of the atomic bomb and its memory had been cemented into the everyday actions of ‘what-to-see’ in their city. The memorial park had become a large tourist attraction beyond our imagination, bringing in many people from all around the world to re-see the horrors of what remains, and turned into official historical narratives.

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<sup>32</sup> Miki, Roy and Kobayashi, Cassandra. *Justice in Our Time*. Talon Books: Vancouver. 1991. (22).

<sup>33</sup> Langer, Lawrence. “Deep Memory: The Buried Self,” *Holocaust Testimonies the ruins of memory*. Yale University Press: London. 1991. (13).

The memory projects, such as tourist attractions and memorials that affix themselves onto commodified memories, assist in the construction of nation states. Benedict Anderson discusses the idea that all communities are imagined. The nation, as he says, is radically imagined and cannot be experienced solely through the sense of perception.<sup>34</sup> Marc Redfield reads this concept further into the aesthetics of our culture by unveiling the specter as signs of 'nationalism.' He implies that the imagined term we call 'nation' which ceases to exist and lacks visibility, only appears within the aesthetics of our culture through such signifiers as a "flag, anthem, building, (and) cultural monument."<sup>35</sup> Redfield argues that the concept of 'nation' is fictive and imagined. "The nation can only be visualized – imagined – through the mediation of a catachresis, an arbitrary sign."<sup>36</sup> The specter of the nation only appears in Walter Benjamin's 'homogenous empty time' that is experienced via technology. Drawing from Benedict Anderson, Redfield uses the example of print-capitalism as a form that introduces markets, thus creating a universalized language through narratives in novels and newspapers - set in 'homogenous empty time.' Thus we must question the imaginings of the construction of yet another war memorial or museum and ask: for what purpose, whose agenda, and whose voice is being privileged within a so-called democratic society?

Under usual circumstances it takes time for a *milieu de memoire* (real environments of memory) to undergo the radical change to make the transition into what Pierre Nora calls a *lieu de memoire* (sites of memory)<sup>37</sup>. Historical battlefields and ground zeroes become memory sites only after the actual events "...have been 'replaced' and rearticulated through commemorative monuments that had literally occupied – if not symbolically taken over – the site. Statues,

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<sup>34</sup> Redfield, Marc. "Imagi-Nation: The Imagined Community and the Aesthetics of Mourning," *The Politics of Aesthetics Nationalism, Gender and Romanticism*. Edited by Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries. California: Stanford University Press. 2003. (49).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid (55).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. (49).

<sup>37</sup> Stamelan, Richard quoting Pierre Nora in "Between Memory and History," *Trauma At home After 9/11*. Edited by Judith Greenberg. London: University of Nebraska. 2003 (14).

obelisks, cenotaphs, *arc de triumphes* and memorial events add to the historical site their own history (of design, construction, political debate, public reaction, controversy) as motivated and shaped by the ideologies and symbols inherent to the act of commemoration itself. Interpretation overwhelms events; metaphor replaces history.”<sup>38</sup> Metamorphosing from a locus of history into a site of memory requires a passage of years, generations, even centuries.<sup>39</sup>

According to Huyssen, it is too simple to say that commodification equals forgetting and leads to cultural amnesia. What is at stake is the “slow but palpable transformation of temporality on our lives, brought on by complex intersections of technological change, mass media and new patterns of consumption, work and global mobility.”<sup>40</sup> Huyssen raises the idea of ‘musealization’ that seems to suggest that we as a culture are replicating museological ways of obsessing with our past. This term was brought to light by German philosopher Hermann Lubbe; “musealization” claimed that this process was no longer simply bound to the institution but rather had the ability to *haunt* our everyday lives.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Stamelan, Richard. “September 11: Between Memory and History,” *Trauma at Home After 9/11*. University of Nebraska: London. 2003. (14).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. (15).

<sup>40</sup> Huyssen, Andreas. “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia” *Present Pasts Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Edited by Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries. California: Stanford University Press. 2003. (21).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. (22).

## Chapter 3: Sleep Paralysis and Waking: Performances of Memory

### 3.1 Waking from Slumber, Mobility and Possibility

*the song is  
about tortoise*

*and not the hare  
not the hare*

*(Kiyooka, Roy from Kyoto Airs)<sup>42</sup>*

*kanashibari, shadow archive* engages in a practice that Annette Kuhn calls 'memory work'<sup>43</sup> which attempts to articulate a *process* that acknowledges the porous-ness of an authenticity of what is remembered as well as a *telling* through careful re-construction of the impossible. The research of this project allowed me to confront the past by immersing myself in both the institutional world and the private world of old photographs and articles, all of which pertained to the historical events in Japanese Canadian history, with particular reference to the internment.

I will call and compare my artistic and theoretical thinking process around memory and forgetting to the Japanese term *kanashibari*, or sleep paralysis. The definition carries the quality of forgetting during the waking moments of the day and remembering in the slumber of sleep. As a commonly used term in

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<sup>42</sup> Kiyooka, Roy. "Kyoto Airs," Pacific Windows. *Collected Poems of Roy K. Kiyooka*. Edited by Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talon Books. 1997. (7),

<sup>43</sup> Kuhn, Annette. "A Journey Through Memory," *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by Susannah Radstone. New York: Berg 2000. (186).

Japanese culture, it also implies that one is being haunted by ghosts, or in the case of this work, the sleeping, haunted past. I was drawn to this concept because of its ability to create two spaces: the conscious and the unconscious, day and night in tandem with one another. In the flows of remembering and forgetting, something new can be imagined.

The paralysis can also be elaborated through James E. Young's definition of what he calls the "single double stranded narrative,"<sup>44</sup> utilized to describe the comic book of the Holocaust, *Maus*, by Art Spiegelman. Within this series of comics a collision of two types of memory occurs: common memory and deep memory. *Maus* attempts to tell the tale of Spiegelman's father's history as it also self-consciously reveals the very process of how the tale was passed down to Spiegelman himself.<sup>45</sup> 'Common memory' is a form of memory that is detached and attempts to restore the self to its normal pre-and post-trauma self. 'Deep memory' is a form of memory that is submerged and tries to recall itself from the time of trauma.<sup>46</sup> Within the archive that I have constructed, there are two strands of movement through time. As a fictionalized yet historic site, the website lays the illusion for a certain type of read and flow of information exchange. The website refuses restorative and repetitive forms of completing official historical narratives but rather honours the fragile and intangible nature of traumatic memory. This work begins to lay out my understanding of the complexity of family history and the internment as it is understood through my memories- I, the one that has no direct experience or tangible relation to the horror of the camps. For me, the real and the imagined realms are freed up by the possibilities offered by the web - a space and time that houses these poetic animations, images, audio pieces, drawings and video interviews meshed within actual historical documents, photographs and articles.

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<sup>44</sup> Young, James. E. "Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the After-Images of the Holocaust," *At Memory's Edge*. London: Yale University Press. 2000. (23)

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* (23).

<sup>46</sup> Langer, Lawrence. "Deep Memory," *Holocaust Testimonies*. Yale University Press: London. 1991. (6&7)

The single double stranded 'narratives' unravel and lead audiences to no end point but rather to a place of questions and possible puzzlements. For example, on one site called 'Lists for Treasures,' an ad (dated from 1942) selling property and items from the Enemy Custodian appears onto the screen. Within seconds small firefly-like lights begin to buzz at the surface of the historical document which has now become a visual text. Audiences are encouraged to follow the yellow balls of light and upon clicking on them will activate small yellowed text that appear and fall to the edges of the page like dead weights. The text evokes imagery of highly personal memory objects such as "my mother's sewing machine," and "wooden tops." There is personal, familial meaning behind these pieces of text in comparison to the ominous text of the Dry Cleaning Equipment for Sale Ad in the Vancouver Sun from the 1940's. The first line of the article reads, "The Secretary of the State of Canada acting in his capacity as custodian pursuant to the provisions of the Consolidated Regulations Respecting Trading with the Enemy."<sup>47</sup> The newspaper clipping is a notice from the Secretary of the State of Canada selling the items once belonging to the Japanese Canadians. The transcriptions of my father's testimony taken from a series of casual conversations of belongings confiscated for resale float up through the article juxtaposing itself with the bureaucratic, official language of wartime history found in the media. Lists of highly selective, idiosyncratic items loop over and over again, plucked and tossed into perfect piles onto a virtual surface of the computer screen. The words begin to take on a physical materiality by the sheer repetition of stacking or repeating records of lost items over and over again. By use of technology such as Flash and the virtual space and time of the Internet, I was able to create sites of memory that are not confined to a specific place nor a specific time, like the installation. Moreover, these sites cannot be activated or recalled without an online participant. The interactive visual texts require the click of the mouse in order for the pieces to advance or to move forward. Without the touch of the human hand, the piece lies dormant and asleep.

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<sup>47</sup> "Dry Cleaning Equipment for Sale," The Vancouver Sun, August 10, 1944. Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum.



### 3.2 The Acts of Memory: Understanding Postmemory and Memory Work

Marianne Hirsch uses the term 'postmemory' to describe generations that have no direct experience of the historical event/trauma itself. "Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives (and silences) that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated."<sup>48</sup> A postmemory aesthetic would be influenced by mass media, films, music, novels, plays, and other already existing forms of culture that have through the decades attempted to 'tell-those-stories-about-forgotten-histories.'

Working from this place of postmemory provides the possibility of testing the limits of memory. This form of remembrance makes the connection to its object or source mediated not through recollection but through an imagined investment and creation.<sup>49</sup> "...Memory never provides access to or represents the past 'as it was'; that the past is always mediated – rewritten, revised, - through memory; and that as an act of remembering is consequently itself far from neutral. Memory does not simply involve forgetting, misremembering or repression – that would suggest there is some fixed 'truth' of past events. Memory actually is these *processes*, is always already secondary revision."<sup>50</sup> This process describes the acts of memory performed by those artists and practitioners that are able to intervene with history and time in order to question

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<sup>48</sup> Hirsch, Marianne. "Mourning and Postmemory," and "Past Lives," *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1997. (22).

<sup>49</sup> Radstone, Susannah. "Working With Memory: An Introduction," *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by Susannah Radstone. New York: Berg. 2000 (22).

<sup>50</sup> Kuhn, Annette. "A Journey Through Memory," *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by Susannah Radstone. New York: Berg. 2000. (186).

and revise the official forms. These documentary forms are necessary as questionable pieces of 'evidence' of history. As we begin to see their limits as historical records, these documentary forms become a platform for their unseen shadow<sup>51</sup>: the possibilities of artistic intervention and production produced through the imaginary, which allow for the voices of fragile and intangible questionings of memory.

As an artist, 'memory work' seemed to advocate for a practice that was not an easy task because of my association with the lived memory of the historical events and my refusal to simply represent how the traumatic events bind the memories of individuals, groups and 'nations.' Instead I hoped to convey a process that revealed the complexity of memory within its partiality - its temporality, construction and imagination. There was a process that was working two fold: within memory work there is a maintaining of a "third position that can place itself within the partialities and particularities of memory while it listens and hears the split from each other and hears and describes the split."<sup>52</sup> The self-reflexive and questioning voice was able to build through the work, acknowledging the influences of common and deep memory<sup>53</sup> and allowing for the voice of absent and inarticulable memory, linked to both history and fantasy, to emerge.

### **3.3 Between Languages: Paralysis of a Kika Nisei**

The Internment Sites page entitled 'Slocan' animates one singular photograph that appears on the backside of an empty postcard. This photograph is of my father, his siblings, father and mother a few days after the Japanese Canadians were permitted to leave the internment camps in 1946. Government

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<sup>51</sup> Please refer back to Arthur Mizuta Lippett's term 'shadow archive' in footnote 21.

<sup>52</sup> Here I am quoting Radstone using Stephan Feuchtwang's ideas around memory work. Radstone, Susannah. "Working With Memory: An Introduction," *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by Susannah Radstone. New York: Berg. 2000 (16).

<sup>53</sup> Please see footnote 30 on Langer's definition of these terms for further clarification.

regulations had finally been lifted after Japan's surrender during World War II and Japanese Canadians living on the West Coast who were imprisoned in camps were given the deceptive 'choice' to either move east of the Rockies or to Japan.<sup>54</sup> To many Japanese Canadians the Japanese language and the country of Japan were foreign to them. My grandfather, because of his ties to Shizuoka, Japan, made the choice to move to Japan, becoming a generation of Japanese Canadians known as post-war *kika-nisei* (to go to Japan in its fragile state post-war and return to Canada later). This generation decided to begin life again in post-war Japan and to assimilate into Japanese society despite lack of Japanese language and a previous immersion in North American society.<sup>55</sup>

The photograph embedded in the postcard is followed by the fall of green sparrows alongside a bittersweet country song. This aspect of my work mirrors the relationship between the documentary and the aesthetic. Like the shower of sparrows and the Slocan postcard, many of the segments on this site appear to have non-related components that shadow its official form. The lines draw on connections from each piece that are fragile and may appear to be dis-associative in 'real' time but cohesively work within the fictional and cyber space. A photograph during internment, which was next to impossible because cameras were confiscated from the Japanese Canadians during the internment,<sup>56</sup> is now placed onto the web space disrupting the forms of traditional archival modes of preservation. The photograph becomes animated next to the other multi-media dimensions, taking on new meaning through the work of 'postmemory.' These multi-media pieces perform a highly personalized understanding of the internment which has been influenced by popular culture media, such as cinema and animation, the family accounts of their post war experience and silence.

For my family, the accounts of the actual internment are hazy. However, the memory post-internment, of their lives in Japan, is much clearer. Hence the

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<sup>54</sup> Miki, Roy and Kobayashi, Cassandra. *Justice In Our Time*. Vancouver: Talon Books. 1991. (49-50)

<sup>55</sup> Kage, Tatsuo. *Nikkei Canadajin no Tsuiho*. Akashishoten: Tokyo Japan. 1998. (135).

<sup>56</sup> Miki, Roy and Kobayashi, Cassandra. *Justice In Our Time*. Vancouver: Talon Books. 1991. (23).

memory process of the internment experience gets played out on Japanese soil, in a historical and political context completely different from a Canadian context. As an interviewer I realized that the internment history within my familial frame<sup>57</sup> was blanked out because it was either too painful to return to, or inaccurate because the majority of siblings were too young to remember those years and favoured talking more about the years in Japan and the struggles there. Thus for me, the Japanese Canadian history of the internment was always a mystery and always a strange puzzle. Even if I was being represented and appeared to be Japanese Canadian, my telling of this history would take place in another nation and language. The *kika-nisei* happened to be a generation who were nostalgic to return 'home' to Canada. Thirteen hundred of the three thousand nine hundred sixty five of the *kika-nisei* were under the age of 16.<sup>58</sup> These individuals only have recollections of the internment experience, therefore there is a longing for memories of their time during the internment camps.<sup>59</sup> The *Interviews* section of my website shows short video interviews that I conducted of my four aunts and my father who are *kika-nisei*. Behind the camera, I was able to witness the work of common memory as each survivor attempted to normalize the camp experience and mediate the atrocity<sup>60</sup>. I had realized that this was the only way they could tell their story; through the desire for narrative and for autobiographical telling. Working through these deep memories with my family slowed down the process around my work and its production. In my attempt to find a trajectory in order to understand and articulate my personal memory of the historical past, I was awakened by the work of trauma as it complicates the flow of 'information' from one to another, thus making this journey more difficult than I had imagined.

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<sup>57</sup> McAllister, Kirsten. "A Story of Escape: Family Photographs from the Japanese Canadian Internment Camps." *Locating Memory, Photographic Acts*. Oxford: Berghahn Books. 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Sunahara, Gomer Ann. *Politics of Racism The Uprooting of the Japanese Canadians During the Second World War*. Toronto: James Lorimer Publishing. 1981. (143).

<sup>59</sup> McAllister, Kirsten. In conversation. September 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Langer, Lawrence. "Deep Memory," *Holocaust Testimonies The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1991. (9).

### 3.4 Thinking Forward, Recent Past: Virtual Productions & Transnational Identities

In the mid 80s and 90s, a rise in a movement often referred in short hand as “identity politics”<sup>61</sup> began to take shape within artistic production by so-called minority artists and artists of colour.<sup>62</sup> Artists, writers and activists began to utilize memory as one strategy to further examine the complexities of the subject and subjectivity alongside formations of identity and difference. Memory work within artistic production was recognized on the West Coast of B.C., particularly in Vancouver, by artists and writers such as Roy Kiyooka, Joy Kogawa, Roy Miki, Harkuo Okano, Henry Tsang, Paul Wong, Jin-me Yoon, and Sharyn Yuen. Internationally the artistic production of such artists as Christian Boltanski, Coco Fusco, Mona Hatoum, Felix Gonzales-Torres, and Jochen Gerz began to foreground issues such as the memory of the Holocaust, AIDS and post-war diasporic loss and longing for ‘home.’ During this time, municipal galleries and museums in Canada and artist run centres were also showing the work of contemporary First Nations artists.<sup>63</sup> Many artists foregrounding questions of identity and history worked through an aesthetic of memory either within the gallery, within textual and visual means, or within public spaces to directly challenge ideas of memorialization and its relationship to mis-represented pasts.

An abundance of cultural activities and productions took shape as interventions to the larger Canadian cultural domain. Many of these artists took on curatorial roles and self-organized events such as *Yellow Peril Re-considered*,

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<sup>61</sup> Citing Monika Kin Gagnon referencing Henry A. Giroux’s definition of “identity politics” as emerging from Post WWII civil rights movements and can be simply defined as self-naming and self-identification of individuals around a common identity category in order to make intervention. Gagnon, Kin Monika. *Other Conundrums Race, Culture, and Canadian Art*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2000. (22).

<sup>62</sup> Lai, Larissa, “Foreword,” *Other Conundrums Race, Culture, and Canadian Art*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press. 2000. (15). Within the so-called minority groups of artists were also groups representing sexual difference, in light of the AIDS crisis.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. (25).

*Self Not Whole*, and *Racy Sexy*. While larger institutionally organized shows such as *Land, Spirit, Power and Indigena*, and ground-breaking conferences such as *Writing Thru Race* also contributed to the processes of change.<sup>64</sup> Each of these events became key moments in the production of identity, allowing artists without institutional support to be acknowledged and included within Canadian artistic practices. These key moments of cultural activism and artistic production produced a forum for representation that was absent from history, and carved out a space for artistic production, so that artists such as myself can place our practice within an already existing, active and ongoing historical context.

Contemporary art practices today that employ history and memory take shape in new formations found within the gallery space, in public and private space, and through new multi-media forms such as the web. CyberPowWow is one example of web based work that acts as a website and a “palace” through a series of graphical chat rooms.<sup>65</sup> The site becomes a functional space where information and ideas can be exchanged and becomes a platform for creative play. Another example is Walid Raad’s Atlas Group Archives site which attempts to document and research contemporary history in Lebanon.<sup>66</sup> The web in its first inception was to be used for war, but has become a public forum where artists are reinserting new narratives within a highly popular form. GPS systems or MAX MSP have been used by artists attempting to locate various ways of surveillance and patterns of movements to suggest variations on honouring absences. Within *kanashibari*, *shadow archive* I became interested in how technological forms can articulate new ways of thinking about remembering and forgetting.

Accelerated globalization has altered our everyday lives and through advances in technology. The space of viewing many of the world’s most traumatic memories is more accessible than ever. History unveils itself before our eyes in

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid (25).

<sup>65</sup> Taken from the Cyberpowwow homepage. [www.cyberpowwow.net](http://www.cyberpowwow.net)

<sup>66</sup> Taken from the Atlas Group Archives. [www.theatlasgroup.org](http://www.theatlasgroup.org)

the news, media and Internet. Countries that are oceans apart are tapped into at the touch of a television remote or the click of the mouse, that activates an Internet system. The viewing screen is placed in our very home for instantaneous viewing. Time and space, basic coordinates to understanding all systems of representation, have become compressed so that the world “feels smaller and that events impact people miles away.”<sup>67</sup> We as citizens and consumers become witnesses to a range of diverse world events. How do we bear the burden of the role of witness?

These processes of globalization have eroded away national identities and have made way for the birth of new hybrid identities that work across a span of diasporic histories. These diasporic individuals are located in symbolic space and time, which Edward Said calls “imaginary geographies.”<sup>68</sup> The very idea of a ‘home’ or ‘nationhood’ is no longer rooted in ‘place’ but rather moves between ‘space’ allowing the individual to visit virtually through technology and/or psychically through memory. “Psycho-geographies and the constructions of spaces that accommodated differences” were also terms used by the Situationist International as a means to inhabit dominant spaces in order to reclaim the lived reality from the realm of spectacle.<sup>69</sup>

Connected with this thought of the ‘imaginary geography’ is also the concept of ‘translation’ as “those identity formations that cut across and intersect natural frontiers, and which are composed of people who have been dispersed forever from their homelands.”<sup>70</sup> These people retain strong links to their traditions without the illusion of a return to the past, but coming to terms with new cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them and losing their identities completely. They bear the trace of the cultures, traditions and

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<sup>67</sup> Hall, Stuart, “Introduction: Identity in Question,” *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Oxford:Blackwell. 1996. (619).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. (612).

<sup>69</sup> Debord, Guy. “Situationist Space.” *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*. MIT Press: London. 2002. (254).

<sup>70</sup> Hall, Stuart, “Introduction: Identity in Question,” *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Oxford:Blackwell. 1996. (629)

languages that shaped them.<sup>71</sup> This definition of a new identity formation that is created by the shrinking of borders and boundaries closely resembles where I situate my subject positioning as an artist, with conscious acknowledgements that globalization projects do infect these very environments of practice, thus complicating the frameworks of subjectivity, time, space and memory.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid (629).



## Chapter 4: Forecasting Futures

### 4.1 Hope for Invisible Speculations

*i have altered my tactics to reflect the new era  
already the magnolia broken by high winds  
heals itself  
the truncated branches already speak to me  
the hallucinated cartoons spread their wings...<sup>72</sup>  
(Roy Miki)*

*kanashibari*, *shadow archive*, *15<sup>th</sup> file*, and *Wake* were created with an intention to challenge and further examine Adorno's haunting phrase that an act of poetics post-Holocaust should and could not be written. All of my MFA works were attempts to call upon ways of working through its own impossibility and materiality of "irretrievable memories of the untold dead and with the unspeakable, traumatic memories of those who lived on."<sup>73</sup> By following the historical and contextual background of this work through the tracking of an 'identity politics' movement in cultural production<sup>74</sup> and the progression of a growing interest in memory within society, I am aware that the way we think about cultural memory has shifted and will consistently need to be re-examined. Susannah Radstone argues that the experiences of the "immediacy, instantaneity, and simultaneity" of the development of new electronic technologies which have collapsed the distance that once separated an event from its representation. She argues that the memory crisis has now embodied more forcefully in its reification

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<sup>72</sup> Miki, Roy. "make it new," *Surrender*, Mercury Press: Toronto, ON. 2001. (9)

<sup>73</sup> Radstone, Susannah. "Working with Memory: an Introduction," *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by Susannah Radstone. Berg: New York. 2000. (6)

<sup>74</sup> The careful examination of the history of 'identity politics' involved deep questioning of the very terms of 'identity'.

in commodity fetishism, “a reification that can only be ‘undone’ through radical remembrance.”

Reflecting on all three projects during this time, I imagine them to be stepping stones towards an artistic practice that will question ways of remembrance not only materially and spatially, but also between the audience and the artist. This work I have built finds itself in what Radstone calls liminal spaces – which according to her is a practice situated “..between disciplines and deploys not just combinations of, but more accurately hybridized methods.” Hovering between the disciplines of visual arts, history, literature and sociology, I hope that my work also holds the “...tension of oppositions associated with memory”<sup>75</sup> as defined by each discipline.

Trauma “is precisely the open gash in the past that resists being healed or harmonized in the present. It is the prophecy of memories and truths yet to be symbolically, socially or politically achieved.”<sup>76</sup> Trauma is the repercussion of history that remains palpable in the bodies of humans that have survived after the event has come to pass. That human body is now the replacement - a living ruin that exists at the cost of human genocide, war, AIDS and famine. The deep scars left on survivors become invisible; left unseen and forgotten. We live with many victims of historical trauma in this contemporary society simply because violent conflict is evident in our immediate and intimate lives. Modern day technology has made our encounter with multiple histories feel closer to us. The economies of war are no longer just other people’s business. This business of war is happening right before our eyes.

I ask myself this question: Why return to an event from my historical past as a major thread within this body of work? Because witnessing numerous cataclysmic events that destroy many people, countries and communities in this present day calls forth the events of 1942 that are etched into my body and

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid (13)

<sup>76</sup> Maclear, Kyo, “Introduction,” *Beclouded Visions Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of the Witness*. State University of New York Press: New York. 1999. (11).

memory. The effects of watching and re-watching contemporary catastrophes in the media led me back to a place that was physically foreign, yet psychically familiar. The resurrection of ‘ground zero’ both “calls upon and calls out for symbolic support” to the many other ground zeroes that have already become memory sites.<sup>77</sup> An understanding of events far removed from our own homes take on a ghostly shape in our present reality, awakening one from the paralyzing state of forgetting.

I was re-awakened and willing to actively remember again. I had allowed myself the time to go through the process of handling archival photographs and to listen, one by one, to the testimonies of each of my family members. Through this process I have learned that the pitfalls of always remembering can lead to acts of forgetting. Monuments, national archives, commemorative parks and statues were being built while any kind of healing had barely begun. The slumbers of cultural forgetting had started to erase the memory work that many cultural practitioners and artists had worked and re-worked so insistently and actively. It was inevitable that to understand the complexity of history and to be compelled to engage in dialogue within a democratic society meant that people wanted to both forget and remember.

I had started to see that in the histories that I live in, the popular act of mourning starting to call forth the act of homogenizing all forms of traumatic memory, much like my experience of the official documents in the Japanese Canadian National Archives. There was an active process of wiping out difference and of universalizing all events of trauma under one symbolic meaning. But was there hope in mourning? Mourning also brings about a time of change and the possibility to imagine a destiny and a future. How then would my own artistic practice and project explore these strategies? How to engage the audience in acts of performing cultural memory?

By shifting away from the monument and toward the active spectator, the creation of both an interactive space for audiences to re-awaken historical

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<sup>77</sup> Stamelan, Richard. “Between Memory and History,” *Trauma at Home After 9/11*. Lincoln & London, University of Nebraska. 2003. (13).

materials and a quiet space for reflection that privileged absence placed the burden of remembrance on the shoulders of the spectator.<sup>78</sup> Writer and activist Roy Miki carefully examines similar practices of ethical responsibility by placing the responsibility of owning histories that may appear to be culturally specific onto the responsibility of other implicated Canadian “citizens” – individuals connected to all other ‘citizens’ within the Canadian nation.<sup>79</sup> Miki utilized democratic ideologies when interconnecting the trauma of Japanese Canadian internment as a means to actively engage others in the act of everyday remembrance. During the collective struggles of obtaining redress for Japanese Canadians that were forcibly removed from their west coast homes during World War II, Miki and his contemporaries created a ‘case for redress’ that highlighted the importance of the Canadian government’s betrayal of democratic principles. Instead of singling out this historical injustice as only a Japanese Canadian experience,

...the writers had to exercise considerable care to avoid rhetorical pleas- as tempting as such language can be – that would make Japanese Canadians appear to be more than ‘victims’ seeking compensation from the government. So the writers identified the Japanese Canadians as “citizens”; that is individuals who necessarily connected to all other “citizens” belonging to the Canadian nation. These were the “citizens” who were wronged when the democratic system was “betrayed.”<sup>80</sup>

Miki goes on to say that, “redress, from this position, becomes a public responsibility that looks forward to healing of the democratic system – and by implication, of the nation. By situating violated ‘citizens’ inside the nation, the

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<sup>78</sup> Dibosa, David. “Witness This : Art Memory Democracy,” Issue 07 08 09 on Democracy. Parachute. 2003.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid (234).

<sup>80</sup> Miki, Roy. “Getting the NAJC House In Order,” *Redress Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*. Raincoast Books: Vancouver. 2004. (234).

brief portrayed Japanese Canadians not as 'victims' but, more significantly, as the agents of change..."<sup>81</sup>

Taking the words of Roy Miki, I too wanted to awaken my work from a place of paralysis to an active, reflective and hopeful place of change. I also wanted to imagine how an artistic practice engaged in such material as cultural memory could function within a democratic society. Utilizing the personal was an effective artistic strategy to talk about collective histories and memories that were not only mine through lived experience, but also interconnected and tapped into many other complex histories that were played out within Canadian history. These histories re-emerge and rework themselves into and within artistic production. Historical traumatic events are not simply limited to the boundaries of their nations and states but can also be connected to numerous accounts of human injustice and discrimination suffered by citizens around the world. Much like the forced removal of Japanese Canadians on the West Coast, the after effects of war and its unpredictable impact can be felt by peoples living miles and miles away and the various acts of mourning and remembering of such events can and should continue to exist as a means of imagining and creating possible futures with hopes of peace.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. (234).

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## **Appendix**

A DVD is included as part of this thesis. QuickTime Movie is required to open file. Each DVD is 254.1 MB.