

THESIS

COLLECTED FRAGMENTS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

COLLECTED FRAGMENTS

This paper explores the connections between memory and identity existing in my artworks that reimagine family photographs. I am interested in the ability of photographs, objects, and patterns to prop up, and in many cases, form our understanding of past moments that connect family members who are both absent and present. My work explores how these connections forge a family's collective memory. As photos within an album create a disjointed narrative with reoccurring actors, my work questions how in time our understanding of a person, or group of people, may change. Hierarchy among the various elements captured in a photograph becomes dependent upon my emotional and aesthetic response, allowing objects or patterns to act as visceral representations of a person, and at times catalysts for masking and presenting.

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COLLECTED FRAGMENTS

Memory is an equalizer. We all encompass memories in varying degrees and store them in personal and infinitely divergent ways. The human presence is not fixed. We migrate, we age, our bodies grow and shrink, and in time we die. Objects and photographs have the ability to act as place markers in time: they are constant in their existence. In my work I am interested in the ability of photographs, objects, and patterns to prop up our understanding of moments past by exploring how these connections forge a families collective memory. Through these explorations I am investigating the lives of my family members to formulate an understanding of our shared, evolving narrative. As photos within an album create a disjointed narrative with reoccurring actors, my work creates a disjointed understanding of a person, or group of people. Hierarchy among the various elements captured in a photograph become dependent upon my emotional and aesthetic responses allowing objects or patterns to act as a visceral representations of a person, and at times catalysts for masking and presenting.

Photograph

My process for creating artworks starts by going home, physically and metaphorically. When I travel home for holidays and family gatherings, I sift through albums, envelopes, and boxes of photographs haphazardly shoved under beds and to the back of closets. As I excavate these images, I create piles of photos pulled from the spots they have occupied for decades. The images are not idealized; they simply capture moments in the spaces my family lived. They were in their homes, their yards, on their vacations. The moments captured are often planned events, all active with lengthy pre-meditated reasons for being. The unseen layers of personality and place existing outside of the photographs taken are veiled by these snapshot moments. During

the process of winnowing photographs, members of my family join me periodically and tell stories about their memories as they are jarred loose by the images. This often leads to late night family conversations that inform my understanding of the photographs and of the moments in-between that were not captured.

The photographs that I work from are meticulously chosen from the thousands of images my family keeps stored. What I am looking for is a moment that creates a hanging dialogue formed through storytelling, secrets revealed, and imaginative creations of my own. This amalgamation helps me narrate my journey through the lives of the people I am so intrinsically connected to. I create my paintings through reimagining the photographs I collect while reflecting upon memory and utilizing the oral history I have accumulated over time concerning my family.

My aim is not to represent the photograph as it is or to try to fully narrate the scene that has been captured. Rather, I point to memory's ability to mask and present while simultaneously feeling comfortable and distorted. Memory is not a simple recording device that preserves everything our senses take in; it filters and selects, reorders and obscures. *Root* is based on a photograph of my aunt during her time as a cheerleader in high school (Fig.1). The painting is on a wood panel and fluctuates between thin glazes of oil and rich built up texture of oil pastel. As wood peeks through the painted elements a sense of nostalgia and disillusionment of an exact time and place is created. The veneer of the wood has a dreamlike quality as the visible grains move sleepily through the undercurrent in the painting, while the warm tone of the wood's muted color evokes a faded photograph. The narrative is elusive. Nostalgia in its nature is disruptive; it can be a default of how we choose to remember. With *Root*, nostalgia presents itself as the familiar- the football field, the cheerleaders, the clothing. The act of obscuring suggests that

perhaps the entire story is not visible. The viewer is invited to question who the people are and why they are blocked out, seemingly silenced and featureless. By obscuring the most identifiable emotional tool, the facial features, I am relinquishing the narrative to the viewer and delving into the evasive nature of recollection.

I was not present when the image that *Root* references was captured, the moment occurred nearly fifty years ago. I believe that there are two ways that we view photographs, one where we consider the moment that was captured, the other considers what we now know. Individually we accumulate histories that define the people around us. As I contemplate these photos my interpretation is shaded by what is revealed to me overtime. Astrid Erll describes a family structure as typically being comprised of an inter-generational memory- a collective memory that is constituted through ongoing social interactions and communications between children, parents, and grandparents.¹ In her study, she discusses French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' argument of collective memory being oriented towards the needs and interests of a group in the present. As we proceed in a selective and reconstructive manner, what is remembered can become distorted to such an extent that the result is closer to fiction than to a past reality.² Memory thus does not provide a faithful reproduction of the past. Halbwachs states, "A remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present and by reconstructions of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered."³ Much of my work coincides with Halbwachs' summation of a collective memory. *Root*, like other works in this thesis, is created retrospectively in relation to the photo it

¹ Erll, Astrid. "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42, no. 3 (2011): 314.

² Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," 314.

³ Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," 315.

references. When I construct these paintings, I consider the stories that I know and fit them to the photos I see; therefore, the paintings are inevitably composed through the distorted lens of social interaction.

Artist Neo Rauch also addresses collective memory in his work. His paintings are riddled with semiotic perplexity that often challenges the possibility for a definitive answer. He came to age in the inclusive German Democratic Republic, but was young enough to absorb the imagery of comic books, television, and computer graphics that shaped the broad stylistic tastes of his generation at large.⁴ He is a bridge between the older political painters of the G.D.R. and the young artists of a unified Germany. In his painting *Konvoi*, an ominous air lingers as viewers look towards a succession of vehicles that allude to the constant supply of aid to the center of some violent activity (Fig. 2). A Samaritan dresses the wounds of a victim while treasures and trophies are destroyed or concealed in the lower basements at the right of the scene. In the background, a corpse is illuminated upside down. At the center of the image, the painter is equipped with spray paint while he hesitantly strides about while leaning on a blind man's cane. Rauch has said that his subjects often derive from his "dream sand" and that the recurrent characters portrayed in his scenes all represent him.⁵ His paintings are curiously mobile as they represent time. It is possible Rauch is conveying details in and around where he grew up in Leipzig. He accesses the popular culture of a time that has ended in a country that no longer exists.

⁴ Boehm, Gottfried, Holger Broeker, and Neo Rauch. *Neo Rauch- Neue Rollen. Paintings 1993-2006*. (Germany: DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, 2006), 18.

⁵ Boehm, Gottfried, Holger Broeker, and Neo Rauch. *Neo Rauch- Neue Rollen. Paintings 1993-2006*. Germany: DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, 2006. Pg.18

Just as Rauch recasts characters, I utilize a recurring cast of individuals who exist within the photos I work from. Rotating among these characters are my parents, my maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Rarely do I introduce anyone from outside this familial network. As family members age and stories arise my understanding of their identities becomes fluid. Philosopher and professor Katherine Elkin's research has found that memory is believed to exist in a category of isolated, partial remnants that only allow us to remember the past in fragmentary and discontinuous ways.⁶ These fragmentary recollections are forgotten segments of our past that we leave behind as we move forward in time. Our memories become dispersed in multiple regions of the brain and remembering is an act of recollecting fragments scattered across these different regions.⁷ In recollection we are not referencing the original moment; rather, we are evaluating an invented memory and retrospectively accepting it as if it were true. Scientists have termed this act as "non-computational". Our brains allow us to continually adapt our response to environmental stimuli without storing records of all the stimuli experienced.⁸ These mental rearrangements have caused me to explore a gradual dissolve and simplification of forms to confront an ever-shifting narrative of our fragmentary ability to conjure memories. The paintings *After Laughter Comes Tears*, *Nearing Novelty*, and *Never Rocky, Not Once*, are explorations of an inability to recollect past events in their entirety (Fig. 3, 4, & 5). These three small oil pastel drawings share a similar aesthetic. They rely heavily on general marks, abrupt transitions in color, and ghostly glimpses of facial features. The

⁶ Elkins, Katherine. "Middling Memories and Dreams of Oblivion: Configurations of a Non-Archival Memory in Baudelaire and Proust." *Discourse* 24, no. 3 (2002), 48.

⁷ Elkins, "Middling Memories and Dreams of Oblivion: Configurations of a Non-Archival Memory in Baudelaire and Proust," 48.

⁸ Elkins, "Middling Memories and Dreams of Oblivion: Configurations of a Non-Archival Memory in Baudelaire and Proust," 48.

importance of the figures lingers as they are the clear subjects, but the obliterating qualities of the oil pastels invite us to question, as we do in Rauch's work, whether the air is ominous or simply nostalgic. The contrast between nostalgia and threat can derive from our minds propensity to create invented memories. In recollection, a memory of an event can change as new information is introduced- A moment in its original production may be more pleasing with the passing of time as we form new memories, causing us to confuse fragmentary memory with something that was closer to the initial reality.

In *Camera Lucida*, philosopher Roland Barthes aims to find certainty in memory as he recollects through photography. He believed photographs carry a trace of what really existed. Barthes describes looking at photos of his mother after her death and having the ability to move back in time with her.⁹ Though understanding a photograph is unique to the individual, this act of engagement with the image reinforces the relationship between persons and things by mobilizing memory. For Barthes, the ability of the photograph to carry a trace of its referent is its distinguishing feature. He states, "Photography never lies; rather it can lie as to the meaning of the thing... but never as to its existence."¹⁰ Photographs then act as an imprint of a moment showing evidence of an intractable reality while sublimating that reality. They are wholly subjective and rest upon a learned history of the events captured. Barthes believes part of the truth existing in photographs is that they are also haunted by the certainty of "this-has-been" and "this-will-be," emphasizing that death will inevitably occur in time.¹¹ Viewing images becomes simultaneously pleasurable and confrontational as the reality that lies beyond the picture frame

⁹ Rose, Gillian. "Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 1 (2003), 8.

¹⁰ Rose, "Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study," 10.

¹¹ Rose, "Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study," 11.

evokes both presence and absence. Beyond the truth existing in what the photographs capture, I think of the photograph itself as an object that signifies the past. Often the photos that I work from have notes written on the backs of them. In some cases this is just a date, in others a brief description of the events that transpired. The presence of the person the photo belongs to becomes identifiable, pointing to their existence and to the act of archiving these events.

Object

In my work, figures in photographs succumb to existing as passive participants within my constructed narrative, and objects begin to act as stand-ins for the human presence. After my grandmother passed away I had to reconcile the experience of loss. I had to consider what it means when a person is absent due to distance or death. When I went home to be with my family, all I had of her were her things, her scarves, her makeup and jewelry, little notes and books with her handwriting scrawled across them. They became the tangible remaining parts of her life. Objects and patterns began having a more pronounced presence in my work. They became identifiable representatives of a person - relics of sorts. Barthes viewed the photograph as a means to mobilize memory and afford a tangible presence of a person, I believe objects operate in a similar way.

My time contemplating my grandmother's things led me to investigate chairs and how they tell a story in the absence of the bodies that occupy them. In *The Lineup*, small chairs are delicately painted in a vibrant red watercolor and stand against faded sea-foam green already present on the found box they are painted on (Fig. 6). The chairs are arranged in a row to give no hierarchy and allow the viewer to experience them individually. Each chair is representative of a family member; all the chairs have long existed in the homes of loved ones. There is a relationship that is constructed between the painted forms and the materiality of the panel the

chairs exist on. The wooden panel points to the past with its tinged color and corners rounded with age.

The counterpart to *The Lineup* is the painting *The Breakdown*, which mimics the former by using the same chairs and the same delicate lines of red paint (Fig. 7). However, in this piece the viewer sees chaos and deterioration as the chairs lie in a broken heap. The found panel they exist on is dissected between the bottom half's white surface, intact with the painting on it, and the top half's cracking paint, hanging tightly to the panel in sections. Where *The Lineup* acted as a way to quietly celebrate and honor the people which the chairs were representing, *The Breakdown* forced me to address the fragility surrounding life and death.

Janet Hoskins defines biographical objects as being woven into existence by the layering of personal relations and stories around them, causing objects to be an evolving reflection of selfhood.¹² This idea stresses that the value of objects lies in how they are coveted. Annette Weiner suggests that the value of an object is dependent upon individual and ancestral histories as well as economic and cosmological values.¹³ These components generate what Weiner terms "Object Density", which serves to rank the importance of an object on a personal and/or global scale.¹⁴ As with photographs, objects function as tools within memory to represent the past. As objects are illuminated they may lead to a^[1]rejuvenation of a personal family history. Without context, or in my case preservation through visual exploration, the "value" associated with such objects could easily become void. An artifact or heirloom could, over time and through the loss of translation, be forgotten as a simple "thing."

¹² Ajit, Aarth. "Oral Heirlooms: The Vocalization of Loss and Objects." *Oral History* 43, no. 2 (2015), 71.

¹³ Ajit, "Oral Heirlooms: The Vocalization of Loss and Objects," 71

¹⁴ Ajit, "Oral Heirlooms: The Vocalization of Loss and Objects," 71

Photographs and objects function in a similar perpetual state of reinvention regarding use and meaning. The relationship between person and object is no new theme in the history of art and it continues to be relevant within the contemporary art world. Whitfield Lovell is an American artist interested in the intense societal and political changes that happen in what he calls the “gray area” between slavery and the civil rights movement from roughly 1870–1940 in America.¹⁵ In his series *Kin*, Lovell creates articulately rendered charcoal portraits of African American men and women on paper paired with objects, begging the viewer to create a relationship between the artifact and the person. In *Kin XXXVII (Cancion de Cuna)* we can see a portrait of a man paired with a rusted fire alarm bell (Fig. 8). As viewers, we are confronted with creating our own narrative leading us to inquire who the figure was based on the object/person relationship Lovell has presented us with. Ultimately his intent is to make the man’s humanity evident. By forging a relationship between object and photo, Lovell deepens our understanding of the fragility of narrative surrounding objects.

Pattern

Parallel to the rise of objects as characters in my work, pattern began to challenge the ways in which I viewed connections within my family’s collective memory. Just as patterns repeat, repetitive acts occur in our daily lives that ultimately shape our identities. They slowly carve grooves into our core understanding of self. Pattern plays many roles in my work. I use pattern to represent repetitive acts, as a tool for obscuring, and to support the roll of a character. Anthropologist and philosopher Michael Rowlands theorizes that repetition has a direct

¹⁵ Lampe, Lilly. "Exhibition Reviews." *Art in America*, October 1, 2013. (accessed February 24, 2017.) <<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/whitfield-lovell/>>

correlation to objects and memory. He believes the act of repetition or replication of an original object or memory evokes its ability to exist in renewed ways.¹⁶ He proclaimed,

Structurally, logically and axiomatically, an original form can only be repeated, and with each act of replication, the illusion of the original value of the object... becomes the indisputable ground beyond which there is no further model, referent or text. However false or fictional it might be, the illusion of singularity, authenticity, uniqueness, and originality of culture rests on the redundant condition of a reified signifier.¹⁷

In essence, Rowlands makes the argument that all acts are a product of repetition, creating cultural, and in my case, familial memory. *Actions Repeated* relates to Rowlands theoretical structure by considering an original object and interpreting what it means as a replication, both as the object itself and of the repeated pattern present on the couch (Fig. 9). The viewer is confronted with the dizzying effect of pattern overwhelming the picture plane. The couch in the painting is one that has been at my grandparent's home for decades, certainly my entire life. *Actions Repeated* does not represent a person in the way of the former object-driven paintings; rather, the couch symbolizes the acts of repetition in relation to memory itself. What is identifiable about the couch is the ornate and undeniably kitschy pattern that overwhelms what would otherwise be an ordinary piece of furniture. The pattern is mostly a dulled salmon pink and navy blue with pheasants, flowers, and feathers vertically engulfing the cushions and folds. In the painting the repetition of form and pattern continue beyond the couch itself, flooding the background as it consumes the entirety of the picture plane. The couch continues in space as an ode to returning over and over to a place, mimicking the way one might get lost in thought as a memory repeats itself. As an object, the couch has become personified within the act of visiting my grandparents. It is laced into my memories of holiday meals, birthdays and family gatherings.

¹⁶ Rowlands, Michael. "The Role of Memory in the Transmission of Culture." *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993), 146.

¹⁷ Rowlands, "The Role of Memory in the Transmission of Culture," 146.

This pattern becomes a constant in these memories, even if it is just taking up space in the background.

Actions Repeated confounds the space in which the pattern exists, while the chair in *Sit* becomes obscured by the pattern overlaid on the object itself (Fig. 10). *Sit* verges on being life-sized with the intent to both invite and block the viewer from engaging in the act of sitting. The chair is a stand-in for the human presence, simultaneously empty and inviting while being blocked off by the obscuring layer of a simple pattern overlaid across the panel. This layer creates a barrier between object and person to examine the frailty of memory. We possess the ability to conjure memories of people and artifacts, but without the aid of a photograph or objects in front of us it becomes difficult to reimagine moments and things with full clarity. *Sit* is a testament to comfort in the representation of an object, while the distorting veil placed over top alludes to our minds inability to form a salient memory without a visual cue.

In the drawing *Hold On*, figures again become present in the work but are overtaken by the patterns surrounding them (Fig. 11). Central to the drawing we see a boy holding a baby, both obscured by the vibrant marks of analogous oil pastel. They sit on a couch overtaken by a garish pattern, existing somewhere between delicate and heavy. The verticality present in the pattern is continued in the wood paneled wall of my grandparent's living room. This piece, like *Actions Repeated* and *Sit*, uses pattern as a narrative tool. Though the pattern does not overlap onto the children, the tonality of the graphite pencil causes the pattern to leech hierarchy from all the adjacent elements in the image. Memory can exist in this same way by dulling our ability to differentiate between what we remember most clearly of an object, person, or place.

Place

As we organize memory, place becomes a central facet of one's identity. Place intersects with time and exists as an event as well as a collection of tangible materials. In *Themes of Contemporary Art*, Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel assert that a place is overlaid with multiple histories and in that space a disjuncture is created between the present and past identity of a place.¹⁸ In the oil pastel drawing, *Elaine*, the person represented retreats into a grounded and identifiable place (Fig. 12). The room presented is in another area of my grandparent's home; the woman depicted is my grandmother. Her presence is concrete, solid and sturdy- heavy feeling. The colors vibrate against one another as clumsy bricks and chunky plaid claim hierarchy, and the presence of the room fights with the figure for attention. *Elaine* is meant to teeter on the unreal. As mundane as the scene presented is, it can never exist in the present again. Place in turn becomes a function of perception and cognition. As Robertson and McDaniel allude, the symbolic value of a place reflects an accumulation of psychic meanings.¹⁹ Like the value of objects, the meaning of a particular place is heightened by its oral history and symbolic value.

The painting, *See My Boots and Barrel Legs?* depicts an overlapping history of place. This work references a photograph of my aunt taken forty years ago. The tunnel that she stands in front of is one that I have driven through countless times. Through coincidental circumstances, she lived for five months in the town I now live in. I found the photo amid hundreds of unrelated images and recognized the place from which it originated immediately. There was a beauty and a quiet oddness about finding this image and seeing the overlap of our two histories in a singular place. In the image she was around the age I am now. On the back there is a simple, humorous,

¹⁸ Robertson, Jean, and Craig McDaniel. *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art after 1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 195.

¹⁹ Rose, "Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study," 15.

self-conscious statement that reads, “This is a stone tunnel-we’re in a canyon right now. See my boots and barrel legs?” She is present in the photo itself but I have allowed the statement as a title to represent her presence in these images (Fig. 13). The three studies that form a triptych were created prior to the larger painting. They are quick and fleeting, like the moment in which the photo was taken. They are each monochromatic, chaotic renderings in watercolor and oil pastels. They highlight the jagged, unpredictable edges of rock (Fig. 14). The larger painting created from these studies is layered with oil and pastels, and is both ethereal and solid as the build up of mediums move between soft hazy detail and abrupt shifts in marks made (Fig. 15). Through the cove of the tunnel we see a car retreating. The white wash of the blinding exterior space gives no answers as to where the car is going or where the road leads. As I resolved the smaller and larger works, I viewed the process of layering the paint as the layering of our two histories together. The softer details represent my aunt’s experience; her memory of living here is romantic, as many memories become over time. My memories of the canyon are closer and identifiable, thusly taking the more solid forms.

Artist Karin “Mamma” Andersson works with place to expose moments that linger between memory and hallucination as she creates an allusive narrative. Andersson dictates,

In the paintings, time flows together. It is at the same moment both now and then and in the future... When I’m working, I am everything and everyone at the same time, just as when I was a child playing by myself, I played the parts of all the dolls and their mothers at the same time...If someone tells a good story, I start fantasizing and find myself right in the middle of it.²⁰

The fluidity of time that Andersson addresses is certainly present in *See My Boots and Barrel Legs?*, as well as in many other works throughout my thesis. Her compositions are somewhat dreamlike and expressive, often dealing with melancholic landscapes and private interiors. She

²⁰ Hawkey, Christian. "Mamma Andersson." *Bomb*, (accessed February 20, 2017) <<http://bombmagazine.org/article/2905/mamma-andersson>>

uses stylistic references that include Nordic figurative painting, folk art, and a local vernacular to where she grew up near the Arctic Circle in Sweden.²¹ *Dead End* depicts a transitional space: a turn-around area on a snowy dirt road flanked by woods (Fig. 16). The composition's symmetry is broken only by looping tire tracks in mud and snow, evidence of a series of wrong turns, changed minds, backtracking. A certain discomfort exists in her work that can be inexplicably unsettling.

There are parallels in the way Andersson and I deal with materials. In both our work, it is the qualities of the paint that beg the viewer to linger in the uneasiness of an unidentified yet portentous event. My painting, *Lake George*, possesses a similar air of discomfort to Andersson's *Dead End* through its use of garish colors set against an otherwise muted palette (Fig. 17). It becomes unclear if we are viewing a place of refuge or signs of abandonment. The empty chairs and open windows can easily be interpreted as either inviting or disquieting and the sky looms with the possibility of a storm beginning or ending. The painting exists in an in-between space, evoking an individualized narrative that becomes dependent on the viewer. Personal experience and personal history determines whether the viewer is comforted by the familiarity of the scene or if certain components stir feelings of anxiety. Looking back to concepts discussed earlier in this paper, this uncertainty relates to Barthes' belief that understanding a photograph is subjective and unique to the individual; just as deriving an individualized narrative becomes dependent on the viewer.

Display

As with the paintings of Rauch, Lovell, and Andersson, my paintings contain elements that are highly personal. Though these works do not require an in-depth explanation to

²¹ Anderson Godfrey, Tony. *Painting Today* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2009), 260.

experience them visually, a full understanding may illuminate a deeper connection to the work itself. The culmination of the themes discussed throughout this paper are evident in my painting *Bound* (Fig. 18). This piece is comprised of 476, four-inch triangular wooden tiles, each with a distinct pattern painted atop the tile itself, pieced together to form a large rectangle. The patterns used for this “crazy quilt” have been extracted from textiles and objects present in my life and in the lives of my family members. Some of the patterns only exist in photographs, as the objects and places from which they came no longer exist. The patterns represent people, places, and objects, pointing to the fleeting presence and fragility of the collective memory. I chose the format of the quilt to reference the history of quilting among the women in my family. It is a personal adaptation of a crazy quilt that attempts to capture time in a way that is non-linear, but constant in who and what it represents.

This format of collaging a string of moments together occurs in other aspects of my work. Much like a photo album, together my paintings and drawings create a narrative that informs a collective memory. For my thesis exhibition I am displaying many of the works I have discussed in this paper as an installation (Fig. 19). This approach correlates to the way we view photos within a family album or the framed photo groupings that many families display in their homes. Sociologist David Halle explores the nature of photographs within American homes. His research involves speaking with participants that range in age and class from a sample group derived from him visiting over 100 homes in the state of New York.²²

There is continuity in all aspects of his research. Pervasive in each home are the numbers of pictures displayed, the focus on the nuclear family, and the tendency for the pictures to depict

²² Halle, David. "Displaying the Dream: The Visual Presentation of Family and Self in the Modern American Household." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 22, no. 2, (1991), 217.

the nuclear family at leisure rather than in formal dress on formal occasions.²³ He also finds that there are almost obsessive, repeating motifs. In each home there are casts of characters replicating the same acts. These family photographs reveal a modern notion about the collective American dream: that a crucial goal of life is to spend pleasurable moments with family.²⁴ He ends this paper with an observation about the photo album. As he looked through collections he found that they all display sentimentality. Lingering beyond the displayed sentiment, we are confronted with the dimensions of reality that occur alongside the fixed moment. Halle states that the fictional characters in the pose make the photo no less valuable, but that the picture may not present the family as it was, but rather as a version of how they would like to have been perceived.²⁵

We can relate the conglomeration of family photos in homes to the arrangement of art within a gallery space as well. Writer Ivan Gaskell hypothesizes that meaning is constructed by the juxtaposition of works of art. He believes that no object is perceived in isolation and that our understanding of a piece is dependent upon what other works occupy the same room.²⁶ There is evidence of this type of decision-making in the curation of any art exhibit. The meticulously curated Barnes Foundation Collection entails careful arrangements that challenge how the viewer forges associations among the works. The organization of the Barnes Collection does not happen chronologically. Additionally, it forgoes arrangements by subjects, artists, styles, and dates.²⁷

²³ Halle, "Displaying the Dream: The Visual Presentation of Family and Self in the Modern American Household," 217.

²⁴ Halle, "Displaying the Dream: The Visual Presentation of Family and Self in the Modern American Household," 226

²⁵ Halle, "Displaying the Dream: The Visual Presentation of Family and Self in the Modern American Household," 228

²⁶Carrier, David. "Remembering the Past: Art Museums as Memory Theaters." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61, no. 1 (2003), 61.

²⁷ McWhinnie, "Some Reflections on the Barnes Collection," 31.

Associations occur by organizing artists by their stylistic approaches rather than a historic connection.

Though my works can exist individually and tell a portion of a narrative on their own, they all form a larger network that together supports the theories of collective memory I have discussed. They are migratory, moving between paper and canvas, wood and prints. These paintings exist similarly to the way a photo album functions by reiterating closeness and distance, presence and absence; yet they ascribe agency to the viewer to question what may be occurring outside of the moment captured in the photographs. My aim is not to show the photo as it is, but to consider all of the moments in between—the triumphs and the failures. I want to implicate memory in its allusiveness while simultaneously challenging, celebrating, and questioning captured moments.

FIGURES



Fig. 1, Katie Gabriel, *Root*, 2016, oil and oil pastel on wooden panel, 24" x 24"



Fig. 2, Neo Rauch, *Konvoi*, 2003, oil on canvas, 118" x 82"

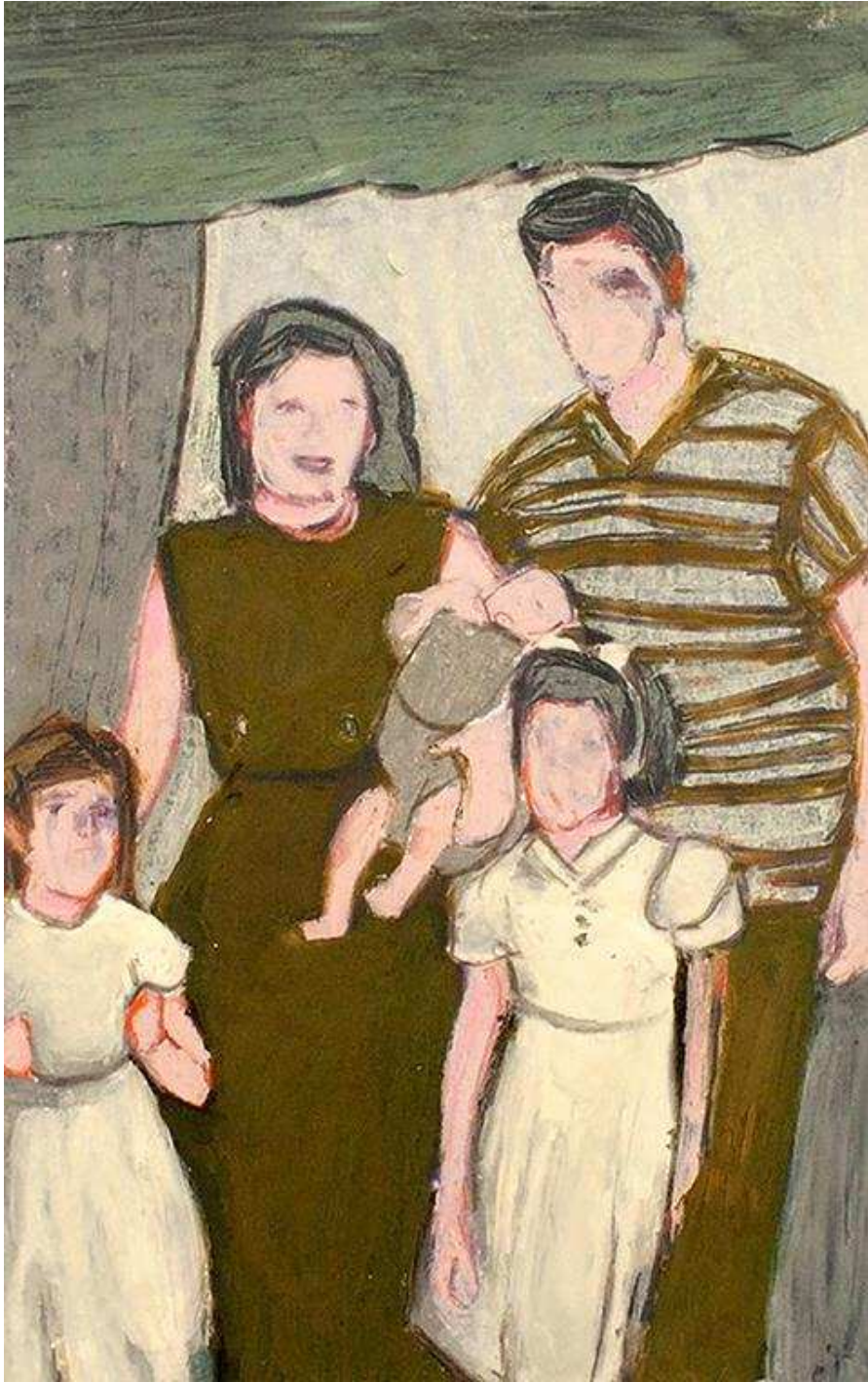


Fig. 3, Katie Gabriel, *After Laughter Comes Tears*, oil pastel on paper, 6.5" x 10.5"



Fig. 4, Katie Gabriel, *Nearing Novelty*, 2016, oil pastel on paper, 8" x 10"

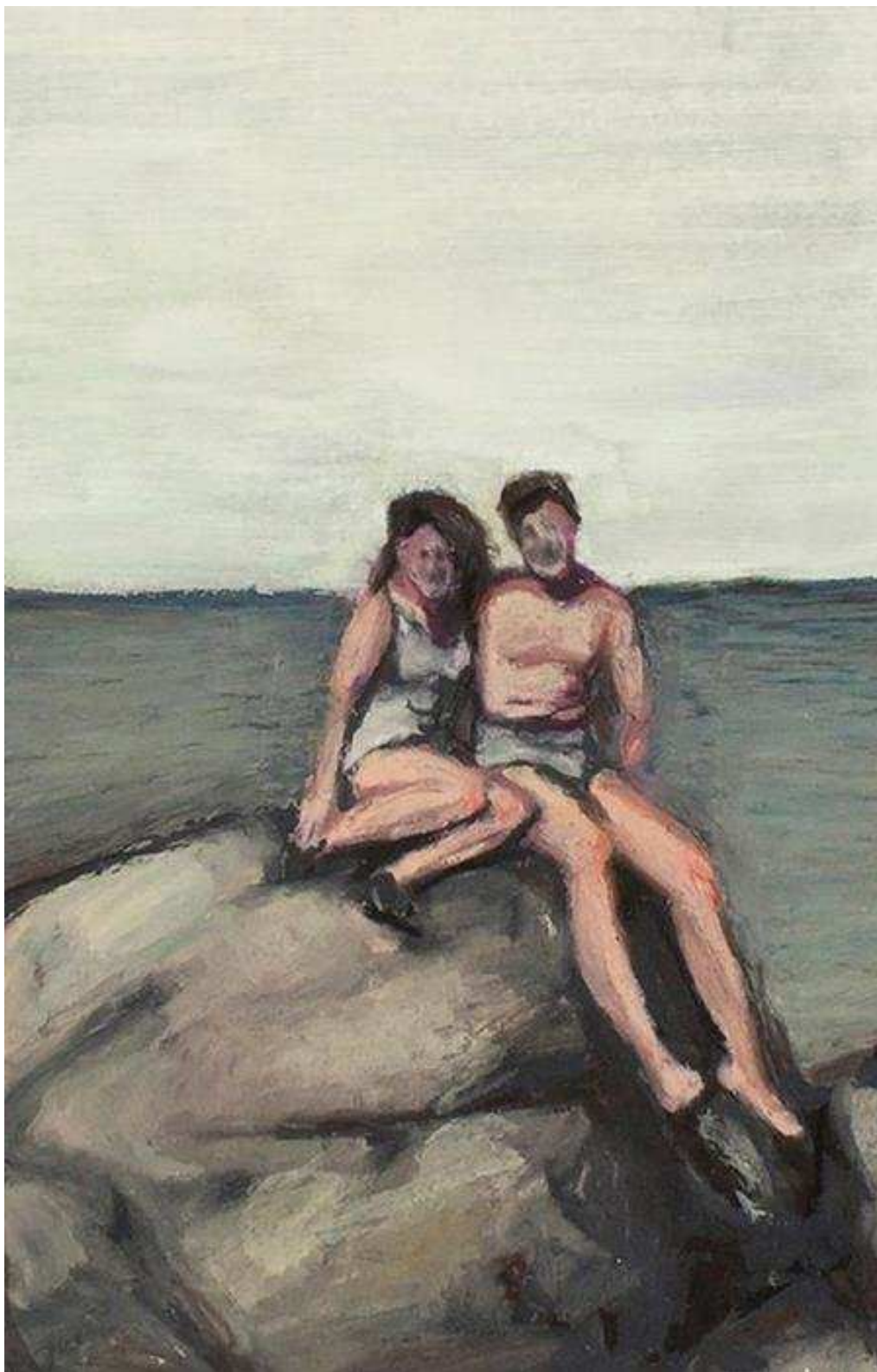


Fig. 5, Katie Gabriel, *Never Rocky, Not Once*, 2016 oil pastel on paper, 6" x 10"

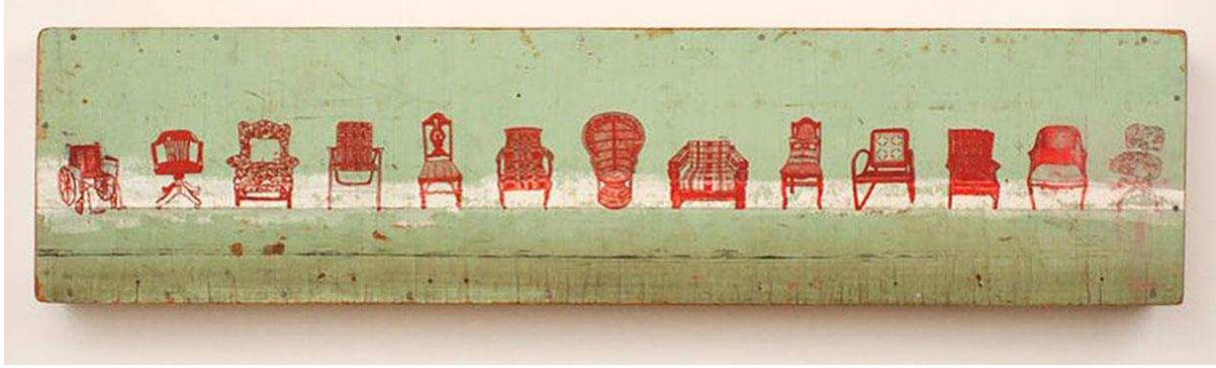


Fig. 6, Katie Gabriel, *The Lineup*, 2016, watercolor and graphite on found wooden panel, 12" x 36"



Fig. 7, Katie Gabriel, *The Breakdown*, 2016, watercolor and graphite on found wooden panel, 12" x 36"

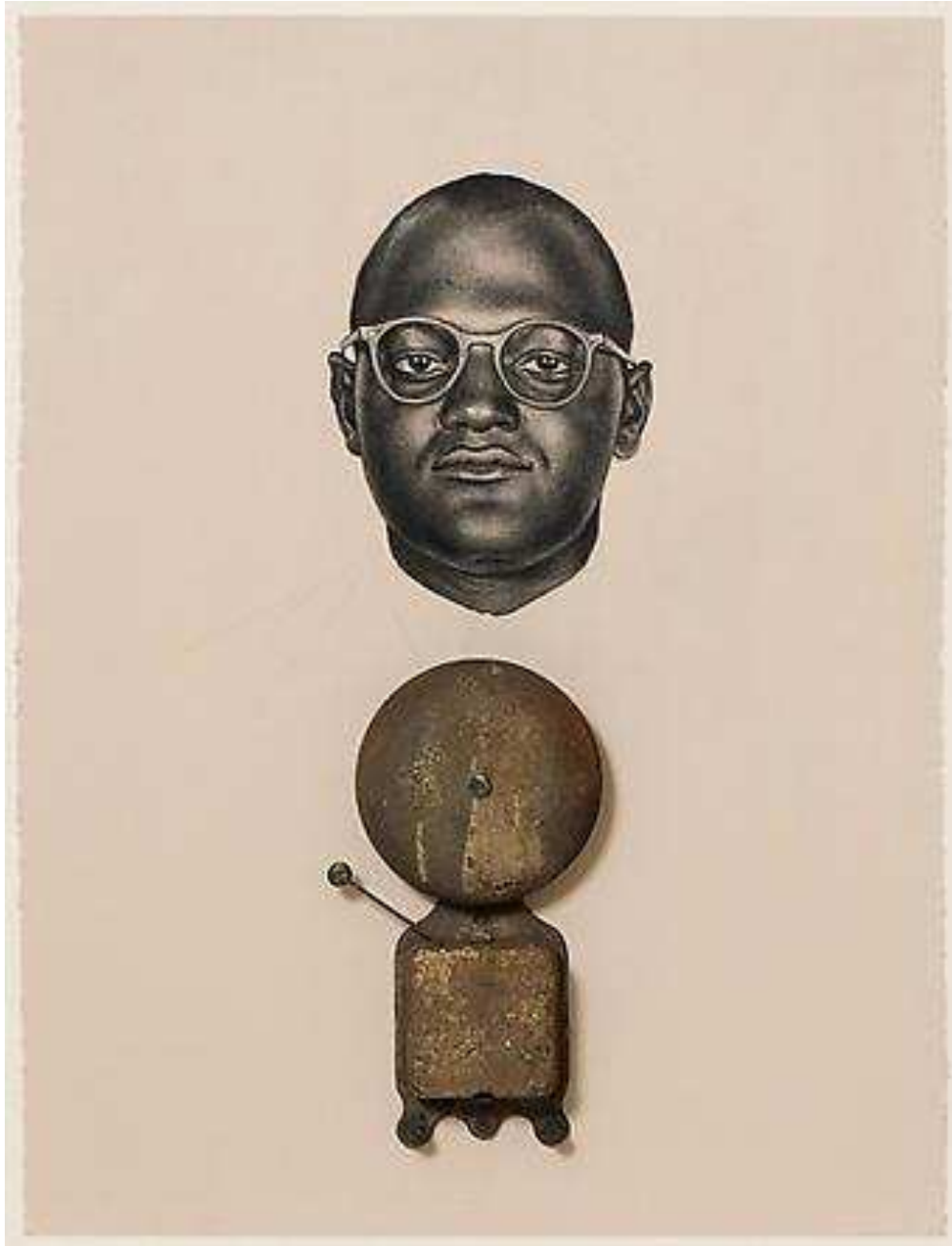


Fig. 8, Whitfield Lovell, *Kin XXXVII (Cancion de Cuna)*, 2011
conté on paper and fire alarm bell, 30" x 22 3/4" x 3 3/4"



Fig. 9, Katie Gabriel, 2016, *Actions Repeated*, oil on wood panel, 12"x24"



Fig. 10, Katie Gabriel, *Sit*, oil and oil pastel on wooden panel, 40" x 48"



Fig. 11, Katie Gabriel, *Hold On*, 2016, graphite and oil pastel on paper, 11" x 15"

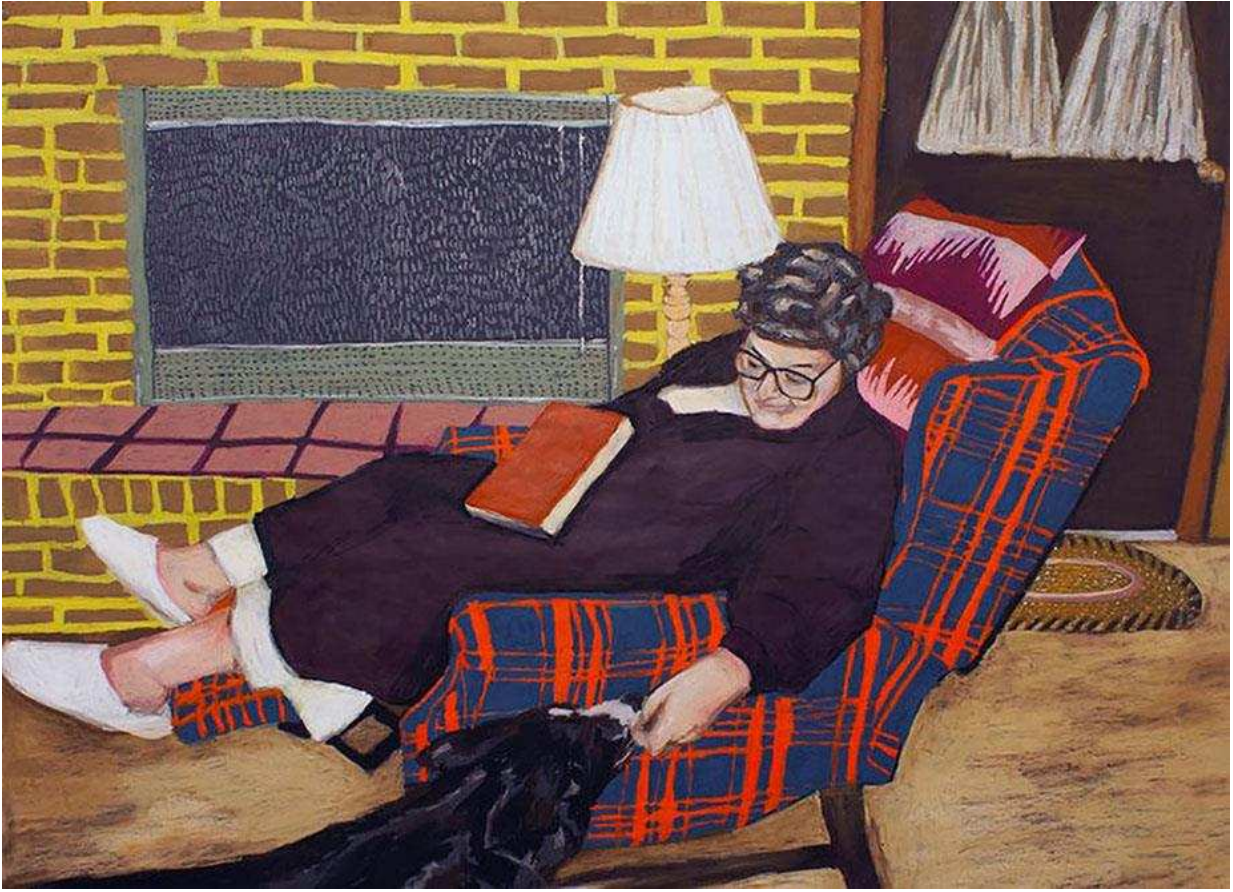


Fig. 12, Katie Gabriel, *Elaine*, 2016, oil pastel on paper, 36" x 48"



Fig. 13, Katie Gabriel, Original photograph referenced in *See My Boots and Barrel Legs?*, 3.5" x 3.5"

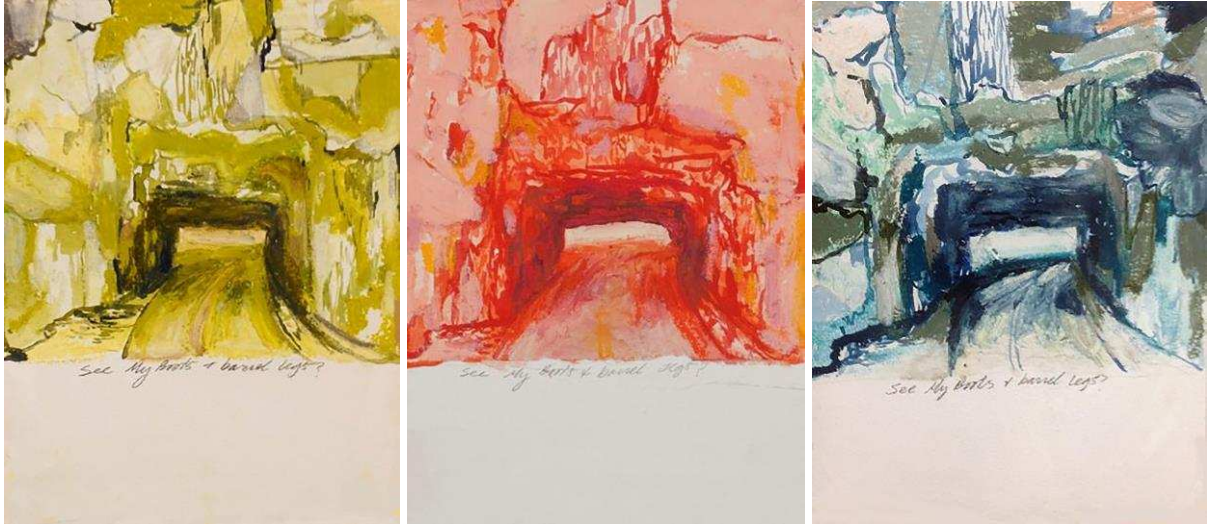


Fig. 14, Katie Gabriel, *See My Boots and Barrel Legs?* (Triptych), 2016, watercolor and oil pastel on paper, 15" x 21"

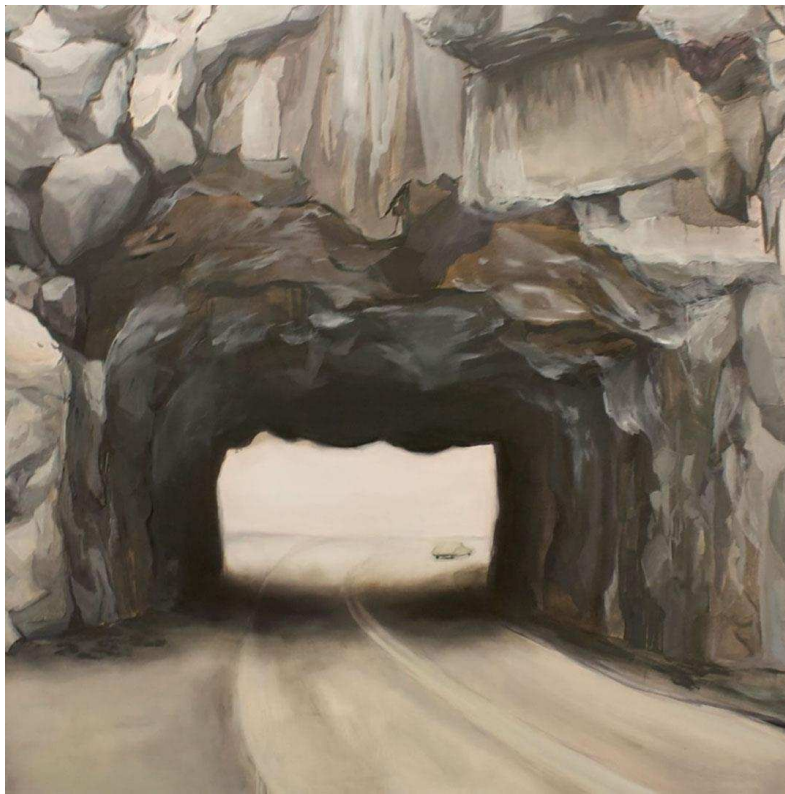


Fig. 15, Katie Gabriel, *See My Boots and Barrel Legs?*, 2016, oil and oil pastel on canvas, 60" x 60"



Fig. 16, Mamma Andersson, *Dead End*, 2010, acrylic and oil on panel, 48" x 59"



Fig. 17, Katie Gabriel, *Lake George*, 2016, watercolor and oil pastel on paper, 22" x 22"



Fig. 18, Katie Gabriel, *Bound*, 2016-2017, oil, watercolor, prisma color, prisma maker, wood and canvas, 48" x 72"



Fig. 19, Katie Gabriel, *Installation*, 2017, mixed media, 48" x 96"

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