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Uncanny Home

by
Sloan Brunner

A thesis presented to the
Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts
Washington University in St. Louis

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

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Abstract

In my work, I create objects and installations that incite both the feelings of comfort and discomfort of home. They function as displays that mirror the décor of domestic spaces from my memories. These installations take the form of adorned walls between eight to ten feet high. Their scale spurs a feeling of familiarity. While large enough to create an immersive experience that the viewer can explore, they are kept to a scale that is emblematic of a familiar, domestic space. I curate these displays with uncanny objects to examine the blindness to dysfunction that closeness in relationships can breed.

I implement the uncanny as I examine my own nostalgic impulses. Recognizing the inherent absurdity of this pursuit, I create obsessively rendered drawings and objects that portray something fleeting. This presents the viewer with questions of what is worthy of remembrance and elevation. Influenced by the femmage works of Miriam Schapiro, I hope to question what is considered trivial. I draw inspiration from my grandmother's home and the kitsch aesthetic as I adorn objects and over-adorn my installations. This horror vacui presents cultural questions of class and taste.

I explore both a celebration and critical examination of notions of familial bonds. Autobiography serves as the catalyst, as I create physical manifestations of memory. These memories made tangible play with notions of the familiar. By creating spaces that juxtapose familiar objects with the uncanny, I present the viewer with a realm that exists between the hidden and recognizable. My intention as an artist is not to reveal exactly where my relationships have broken down, rather, to generate spaces that are open to the viewer to find their own questions.

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Introduction

I am drawn to chosen families. Much of my work in previous years examined tight-knit communities. I created works that explored kinship bonds formed between a group of metalheads in Lafayette, Indiana. These pieces celebrated their closeness, and examined juxtapositions that were inherent to the group. The most pivotal juxtaposition was in the venue that they hosted shows: a home. The basement was set for music and mosh pits, the main floor for gathering and drinking, and the second floor open only to the residents. As I created work that drew from this space, I began to compose objects and installations that referenced the domestic. Inspired by familial bonds, I intuitively created works that referenced the home of my grandmother – her collected objects, her décor.

The visual language of a domestic space is first implemented through scale. I create curated walls that typically stand between eight and ten feet in height. They function to create a familiar space – a scale that our bodies typically encounter in a home. The scale of the installations is also large enough to immerse the viewer as they explore the objects held within. I curate the arrangement with objects that could typically be found in a domestic display – a framed image, a knick-knack, a candle. But these familiar objects are altered to send them into a realm of the uncanny – open to the viewer to search for questions underneath their recognizable forms.

In my work, I draw inspiration from my family and its diverse structure. As I acknowledged the ways in which my own background is composed of a chosen family – with stepparents and stepchildren, adoption, and unconventional parental figures – I began to apply the visual language of my grandmother’s house to examine familial relationships. In the first

chapter, I expand on my dispersed family structure, and explore the ways in which domestic spaces may provide metaphors for the familial. It begins the discussion of how the idea of home can incite both comfort and discomfort.

In the second chapter, “Nostalgic Impulse” I explore how my work engages with a nostalgic tendency to hoard keepsakes. I trace the origin of nostalgia – first coined as a term to describe the disease of homesickness. In this section, I assert that nostalgic homesickness may be a symptomatic grasp for stability that stems from a dispersed identity. I present the element of the absurd in nostalgia, as it is a form of longing that is inherently inextinguishable

Chapter three, “The Collected,” is an exploration of how my process of collecting objects relates to my art. I gather found materials that are reminiscent of my grandmother’s home. These manifestations of the familiar are manipulated to reveal both the stability and dysfunction found in familial bonds. This leads to an examination of the compulsory nature of collecting in the following chapter, which identifies this compulsion as one that I have inherited.

In “Compulsion” there is a recognition of the sentimental objects that appear in my work and their questionable value. This is expanded upon in the fifth chapter, “Kitsch and Allegory.” Here, I engage with the significance of the kitsch aesthetic. I propose that metaphorical power can be materialized with kitsch objects through a self-awareness of decay. A decay of memory and of cultural relevance. I continue the discussion of kitsch’s worth as it relates to taste and its reflection of class status. I propose that kitsch can be implemented to make visible an intangible shame of class background. The discussion of how visual language is an indicator of value continues into “Homage to Femmage.” Here, I explore the femmage works of Miriam Schapiro, whose references to the domestic elevated the private lives of women into the public sphere.

Finally, in chapter eight, “Installations of Memory,” I illustrate how elements discussed in previous chapters are represented in my objects and installations. Memories are made tangible through collected and created objects. These objects are then reconfigured to juxtapose the familiar with the uncanny. I create compositions to present a new narrative with a metaphorical power, left open to the viewer to consider their own notions of family, and what is worthy of remembrance.

Familial Spaces

I want my work to create a generous space that reflects the beauty that can be found in my family's unexpected structure. My grandmother's home personifies my family's ability to create bonds of unconditional love. I see our bric-a-brac of kindred connections mirrored in the trinkets on her shelves. At first glance, I cannot find a connecting thread between the blue glassware, miniature wooden clogs, antique sewing scissors, clown doll, smiling ghost, and Velvet cigar box that exist together in her display case. But through her arrangement they come together to become something coherent. I channel her caring hand when I create displays of complex arrangements – mirroring the complex arrangements of my family.

I see my grandmother's family room as a sanctuary – a museum that displays an archive of her life. She adorns her home with devotion. (Fig. 1) Her inner self and familial life are projected on every surface. The family room has a girlishness – with its light pink walls, wallpaper border of flowers and butterflies, burgundy



Figure 1

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Grandma's series, Untitled (Family Room)*, 2018, Digital photograph, variable dimensions

upholstered chairs, floral sofa, and lace curtains. She hangs paintings by her children and grandchildren with pride. On a small table she displays black and white photographs from her childhood. I can recognize my grandmother in her youth, and am curious about the other faces that are less familiar. As the composition of our family has changed, so too has this room been transformed. The children are now grown; many relatives have moved away. Us grandchildren are grown as well – many with children of their own. She is still the host of family gatherings,

but they have become smaller in attendance. And she still babysits, but no longer at least six children at a time – as she did during my childhood. The floral couch and burgundy chairs are more feminine, formal replacements for the couches that were once in their place. The old couches were meant for company, but these furnishings are meant for her. And although this room has changed, she has kept objects that are nestled in my memory. The watercolor my mother painted as a teenager, the bronze owl wall hangings, the ceramic Praying Hands, the gold roosters, the pendulum clock that hangs above the record player. I wonder where those faux oil lamps went, though.

The family room is where relatives would dwell; where she now dwells; where I dwell upon. It has been obsessively arranged with care – as is every space in her home. Her compulsion has become my obsession. I channel my grandmother in my work. She is a matriarch in a blended family – with adoption, stepchildren/parents, and interchanging parental figures.

The following is a list of my family structure, as concise as I can recount it:

My grandmother has three biological children and two adopted children. In her early teen years, my mother was adopted by my grandmother. My mother knew her biological parents, and each remarried. Together her biological parents had eight children. Her father had a son with his second wife, and her mother bore a son and daughter with her second husband. This blended structure continues with my other parental figures. The man I call dad is technically my stepfather. He and my mother separated during my childhood, but I was raised knowing him as dad. He has continued to be the central father figure in my life. Dad was also adopted. His parents adopted him and one of his sisters; his other sister is their biological child. Later in life, I met my biological father. I discovered that he, too, was adopted. Like dad, he was adopted as a baby. As an adult he was contacted by his biological aunt, who told him the story of his birth.

She told him of his mother's death and helped him contact his biological father. He has a sister. This blended structure continues into my generation. I have four biological half siblings. My mother had a son when I was 11-years-old, and I have always known him. My biological father had a daughter when I was 2-years-old. I didn't know of her existence until I was 8. I met her when I was 19. He had two sons with his second wife, whose existence I didn't know of until I found him. Dad has a biological daughter, who I also hold as a half sibling. She was born soon after he and my mother separated. Dad also has a wife now. She has two sons. One of her sons passed away two years ago. He was a young man when he died.

The description of the family tree could continue with further complexities and blurred lines – half siblings of half siblings, adoptive cousins, adoptive cousins' half siblings, step siblings of biological siblings, temporary step siblings. This structure has created a sense of dispersed identity. I grasp for stability. I go to my grandmother to find solid ground. Her home is the structure that I know I can return to when I feel displaced. And I embody her and her compulsions. I collect, and collect, and collect. I curate careful arrangements to create spaces that are my own – like the family room that has become her sanctuary. These spaces I create feel both real and unreal. They are manifestations of the blurred boundaries of my family structure – pulling from objects, artifacts, and narratives that are unfamiliar and familial. And I look to the matriarch – my grandmother – who has furnished the foundation of home. Her home that is a physical space of comfort, with its displays that reflect her devotion to be the foundation of this complex configuration.

The spaces I create house elements of the uncanny. There are unfamiliar objects in displays that feel familial. These breaks from comfort point to the aspects of unconditional love



Figure 2

Sloan Brunner, *Moms*, 2017, Mixed media installation, 8 ft x 12 ft

that can be damaging. In my installation piece *Moms* (2017) (Fig. 2) there are two found portraits of women. They are photographs that have had color painted on their surface. One woman is older than the other. Both wear pink blouses and white, beaded necklaces. The women have an upward gaze. The younger woman

smiles; the older woman does not. The portraits are the same size and placed in identical frames. As I observe these portraits and their visual connections, I want them to be mother and daughter. I realize I cannot be sure, but I have projected these labels onto them. I want the viewer to consider familial bonds when they view these two women. To ask themselves questions: Are they related? Is the younger woman adopted? Are they mother- and daughter-in-law? And as they contemplate these questions, the viewer is open to consider the further hidden ways these two relate to each other. To consider the dysfunctions, mysteries, secrets, and denials that may exist beneath the surface of these related portraits. I invite the viewer to project their own assumptions and understanding of familial bonds. And they may consider when the bond of unconditional love can become unhealthy. My installations are meant to incite both the comfort and discomfort of home. I create physical manifestations that reflect the realm that exists in between what is recognizable and what is hidden. My intention as an artist is not to reveal exactly where my relationships have broken down. I invite you into an uncanny space you can enter to find your own questions.

Nostalgic Impulse

I am drawn to the sentimental. With a compulsion to collect keepsakes, I find myself unable to let go of objects that have become nestled into my memory. This compulsion is nostalgic. This term – nostalgia – carries a heavy history. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym illustrates the concept of nostalgia's origin. It was identified in the 17th century as an illness. Boym describes, "Nostalgia was diagnosed at a time when art and science had not yet entirely severed their umbilical ties...This was a diagnosis of a poetic science."¹ I feel the weight of this poetic diagnosis. My keepsakes take hold of me. They are tumors in my mind, breaking away to enter my bloodstream and fill my being with nostalgia.

In 1688, Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer coined the term nostalgia.² He combined the Greek *nostos* and *algos*, which, according to the *OED*, translate to *return home* and *pain*.³ Hofer found that his nostalgic patients would "lose touch with the present. Longing for their native land became their single-minded obsession...confusing past and present, real and imaginary."⁴ An early symptom of nostalgia was a haunting. The patient would hear voices, and see ghosts of their loves ones from their native home. Phantoms would appear to them in dreams. Patients would speak to family members in their minds.⁵ I have been stricken with nostalgia. I feel the absence and presence of family. I am possessed by my grandmother. I channel her in my artwork as I collect. I embody her tenderness as I curate my collections into installations, while in mental conversations with the absent family members. I long for a foundation of a home, so I speak to the phantoms – my mental representations of what family is.

Hofer believed that nostalgia was "the disease of an afflicted imagination," that would present itself as a mental affliction and proceed to manifest with physical symptoms.⁶ Nostalgia

treatment was bodily: “Leeches, warm hypnotic emulsions, opium...usually soothed the symptoms. Purging of the stomach was also recommended, but nothing compared to the return to the motherland believed to be the best remedy.”⁷ I treat my nostalgia with my possessions – keepsakes that have become possessed by the phantoms of my family, which in turn possess me. The keepsakes are physical manifestations of those who are absent. I return home by creating spaces that are real and unreal. They are imagined interpretations of home. My installations grasp for a comfort that a decorated wall can provide. It is familiar and familial. I invite the viewer to be gripped by nostalgia and enter the space that is a manifestation of the imagination.

Soon after Hofer’s identification of nostalgia, the disease spread. It became resistant to treatment. Longing mutated until it became a new disease, one that the antidote of a return home could no longer cure. Boym illustrates, “As a public epidemic, nostalgia was based on a sense of loss not limited to personal history. Such a sense of loss does not necessarily suggest that what is lost is properly remembered and that one still knows where to look for it.”⁸ By the beginning of the 19th-century, the scope of the world became larger. This led to a home that was less easily defined, so patients were gripped with longing, but they didn’t know what they longed for.

I find myself in a search for what is unanswerable. I long for a stability and comfort that is unattainable. I present the viewer with spaces that allow them to identify their own unresolvable questions. A disease that is incurable. It is an absurd pursuit. In 19th century America, those afflicted with homesickness were seen as daydreamers. They were idle and inefficient.⁹ Perhaps that is a true assessment. I am following a treatment plan that won’t provide a concrete result. But perhaps that is the point. My desire is insurmountable. I hope to connect with the viewer by enveloping them in a space where they can project their own desire – their

homesickness that has no cure. In my installation *Moms* (2017) there is a drawing of a deer that hangs in the center. (Fig. 3) The deer is in an awkward stance, folding her body over itself as she outstretches her tongue to clean herself. This deer is drawn with care, with an obsessive attention to detail. She is on light pink paper; held by a mat that is lined with light pink, crushed velvet; and placed inside a bubble gum pink frame that has been adorned with faux flowers in various shades of pink. She is immersed in field



Figure 3

Sloan Brunner, *Are You My Mama?*, 2017, Mixed media assemblage, 44 in x 32 in

of pink. She is adorned with girlish beauty. It provides an element of absurdity to juxtapose the other elements of the curation – two found portraits of women in matching pink blouses, an almost baroque wallpaper of an evergreen tree that references the outdoors, and my childhood keepsake (my pink baby blanket) that sits on a pedestal. These elements the deer juxtaposes have some familiarity. She is familiar, too, as a framed object on a wall. But placed in this installation, she adds a layer of absurdity that brings it into an uncanny realm. I apply elements of the absurd to create works that are self-deprecating of my nostalgia. They provide a signifier to nostalgia's unattainable cure.

The Collected

My installations are composed of collections of keepsakes. I am drawn to objects that remind me of home. These objects are reexamined through manipulation. They are curated into displays to find further metaphorical power. These reminders of home are used to confront my memories and ideas of family. They celebrate familial relationships, while acknowledging the discomfort and dysfunction – or at the very least oddities – that keepsakes can hold beneath their comforting outer layer.

Many times, my process of collection begins in a thrift store. I set out on an aimless journey, anticipating inspiration to be spurred by the discarded objects of strangers. There are articles in second-hand stores that seem more thrown out than donated. Those pieces that are covered in grime and dust with a stale smell of abandonment. There are also the objects that feel like they have been cherished at least once – items like photo albums. Photo albums that have been curated by theme, and perhaps include newspaper clippings and small souvenirs – a leaf, a coin, a postcard.

I gather objects that catch my attention – whether I can already see the role they will play in a new installation, or they simply have some idiosyncratic quality that lets me know I might have a use for them later. I can't always identify what it is about an object that entices me to possess it. Many times, it is compulsive – spurred out of a chance opportunity. For instance, the day I found two vessels as I wandered through an antique mall. A glass cake stand with a glass dome called out to me. I had no plans for the object, but I was drawn to its quality of being completely transparent, yet guarded and protective. As I was on my way out of the store, I saw another vessel. A much smaller one. It was hexagonal, bronze box that I could fit in my palm. It



Figure 4
Sloan Brunner, *Keepsake of Wisdom*, 2017, Wisdom
tooth in found box, 3 in x 3.75 in

had four little feet at the bottom and a piece of glass affixed at the top of the lid. There were small openings carved into the sides, and its bottom was lined with red velvet. (Fig.4) It was beautiful. I compared it to my cake stand. The small box also felt protective, but only gave its viewer a hint of what would be placed inside. I enjoyed how these two vessels spoke to one another. The small box has now found a place in an installation (*Home Is Where Your Teeth Are*, 2017), placed on a small table,

holding my wisdom tooth. The cake stand hasn't found its new purpose yet, but I keep it in view until it finds the parcel it will protect. There are also objects for which I am searching for. I've hunted and gathered photos of strangers their homes, frames adorned with carved designs, buttons, reprints of paintings featuring domestic spaces. What connects this collection is that the objects take me to a space that reminds me of my grandmother's home.

I use this process when I dig through my own family relics. When I return to my small hometown in Indiana, I hope to take parcels back with me. I collect all family photographs I can get my hands on – ones that my grandmother is willing to part with and allow me to reconfigure. I've also taken images of home back with me, collecting a mass of photographs of my family's houses. In capturing these images, I focus on objects and decorative arrangements that I feel are representative of their owners. As they open their homes to me, I follow a process that is similar to my search in a thrift store. There is décor I am drawn to that isn't immediately apparent to me why – the candle that hangs in a glass container from a gold chain on the ceiling in my aunt's

home. And there are objects I know I need to photograph, such as my aunt's white porcelain cat (Fig. 5) that has become so attached to my memory of her and her family. Together, these images create something tangible out of my memories. I want to give the viewer the ability to connect to these people through their objects, and search for stories and mysteries in their possessions.



Figure 5
Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Aunt Ruth's* series, *That Cat*, 2018,
Digital photograph, variable dimensions

With my parcels amassed in the studio, I begin an excavation. My process is both physical and psychological. As I search and sort through the collection, I delve into my memories. I consider my relationships with my family and how my keepsakes represent them. I think of my mother – a continual source of love and support. She has been a constant as I feel my family structure unravel and reconfigure. She is the person to whom I have always been closest. But I must also enter an uncomfortable space of confrontation. As I contemplate our relationship, I must acknowledge that we became too close. Our relationship became that of codependency. She is flawed like anyone else, but also has deep-seated darkness and melancholy. In her need for connection, I have been supporter and witness of her affectual vulnerabilities. And I continue this rhythm. I think of my grandmother. I adore her strength and seemingly infinite pool of nurturing care, but I have to admit to myself that her care is not infinite. She, too, helps create relationships of codependency. At times, she takes the role of caregiver to the realm of martyrdom. I consider what the word “father” means to me. Who is my father? What does that

role even mean? With a childhood pervaded by men that would cycle through my life, they have ranged from protective to absent to abusive. Is a father a guardian or force of disaster?

I look to my collected objects. I contemplate the archive of history that I have collected in physical form, while acknowledging the holes that have been left in our stories. The holes that we tend to ignore. I contend with the reality that unconditional love can breed a blindness to dysfunction and oddity. Many times, objects are reconfigured with an over-the-top adornment. This allows me to incorporate an absurdity that may even be read as humorous. But the incorporation of an absurd self-deprecation is not to amuse or to mock, rather to open a door to find further metaphors for the familial bond. I combine and reconfigure my objects to search for the new meaning they can reveal by being juxtaposed with each other in the same space.

When I collect I feel longing. I feel a longing for the absent. An absent people; an absent sense of identity in a dispersed familial structure. I hold onto my keepsakes to maintain a grasp on decaying memories, and confront trauma that has been ignored. I take you into a mental space that is in conversation with the people these objects represent, and their absence. I collect objects in order to fill a void. I see the act of collecting and the way I arrange those parcels as representative of a horror vacui. The studio fills, as does the wall of the installation. My work offers an overload of visual information and a space to decrypt familial relationships, mine and yours.

Compulsion



Figure 6
Sloan Brunner, *Moms* (detail), 2017, Mixed
media installation, 8 ft x 12 ft

In my work, I find myself having love for that which is unlovable. I consider my baby blanket in *Moms* (2018). (Fig. 6) It is faded and tattered and no longer holds utility. But there it is, on a pedestal in my studio. It continues to hold me as I held it. I feel there is metaphorical power weaved throughout it. As a child, it was a source of comfort – an object that I could hold in the absence of my mother. I would take it with me when away from home, returning to it to smell the scents of my house and feel like my mother was with me. The baby blanket became a personification of a maternal relationship. It functioned as such in childhood through its comfort. Now I am able to see how the metaphor has followed me as I have developed, and my relationship with my mother has changed. I now see the holes in the blanket as representative of how our enduring closeness has led to dysfunction. Dysfunction that I could only see with age, just as the holes accumulated and became more visible as I progressed through childhood. But it remains on a pedestal. The blanket still holds me, as I still hold my relationship with my mother. And it is on a pedestal, out of my hands, there to examine, as I have a growing distance with my mother and examine who we are. Its value is not at first apparent, but I find something in it.

William Davies King is an obsessive collector of the discarded. In *Collections of Nothing*, he examines the value of the objects he collects:

I respond to the mute, meager, practically valueless object, like a sea-washed spigot, its mouth stoppered by a stone. My collecting is perverse and paradoxical. It is still collecting, especially as it corresponds to the compensatory pattern of widely observed among collectors, the making up for love lost, but my collecting answers to a different god within the object. In a sense, I'd call it the god Not-There, the absence of immanence. What I like is the potency of the impotent thing, the renewed and adorable life I find in the dead and despised object, something in nothing.¹⁰

As the title of the book describes, he refers to his collections as “collections of nothing.” He sees value in his compulsively collected objects, but they don't necessarily hold that value in the eyes of more “traditional” collectors. King is drawn to the discarded. Objects that hold some idiosyncratic quality. There is a value to him that comes from having no discernable value.¹¹ His collections can only be made sense of in a mass together, and with the recognition of the psyche of the collector that has gathered them. I see an undeniable value in my baby blanket as King finds worth in a discarded, stoppered up spigot.¹²

As an artist, I collect objects to draw connections between the notion of the self and the idea of family. The objects collected become stories of relationships. As I embody my grandmother, I wonder what is it that she is seeking when she gathers her objects – animal figurines, religious portraits, candles, plates, ceramic souvenirs from family trips, porcelain dolls adorned in Native American garments, artwork given to her by children and grandchildren, a multitude of frames filled with family photographs. She has amassed a collection of objects that are thoroughly exhibited in her home – covering her walls and filling her display cabinets. Each piece has a place that has been carefully selected, with each room having a theme. There is the farm theme of the kitchen, the “Southwestern room” (Fig. 7) (as she has named the guest bedroom), and the fantastically feminine floral family room. These rooms feel complete; at least,

I cannot imagine where she would find room to fit in more objects. But is she still in a search to fill a void? What is the inner monologue that drives her to purchase another doll for the guest bedroom? Another portrait of her Lord and Savior? She is creating a



Figure 7

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Grandma's series, Untitled (Southwestern Room)*, 2018, Digital photograph, variable dimensions

representation of herself with these objects, of course, but why are there so many? Further, why am I so fascinated with this tendency? Why is it that her compulsion has been imprinted onto me, giving me the compulsion to collect objects in my work?

I consider my inherited compulsion to collect. King outlines how collecting has persisted throughout his life as he searches for the root of his obsession. He identifies a constant need for fulfillment as one of its sources:

Why? The answer lies in the basic quest for fulfillment. “Fulfill,” a transitive verb of Old English heritage, originally meant to fill to the full. You could fulfill a material container, and later any void at all, however abstract, if only need or desire attended, and eventually the word came to stand for filling full of need or desire itself. The longing-for makes possible the fulfillment...bringing the magical potency of the desired object within one’s grasp.

Every collector is always waiting. Attain fulfillment and the collection ends. But fulfillment is never attained because the effect of acquisition constantly drains away in ownership, and so the hunt goes on. Always there is one more possibly graspable object of still higher longing. A kiss answers a desire, but it also stirs a desire, for another and another, until the mythical ultimate kiss. For most, the kiss is selective. For hoarders, it is everything. For me, the kiss is of nothing.¹³

In this passage, King describes continual search to fill a void. But this search in itself is flawed, because as the vacuum fills want is strengthened. He is left needing more. I think King feels that collecting objects is a way to fill a material void, but also is a placeholder for an inner void – a physical manifestation of seeking. I am drawn to this sentiment when considering my similar yearning to gather keepsakes.

This void may relate to a longing for connection. His metaphor that longing is “the kiss.”¹⁴ A kiss creates a longing for another kiss, as the collected object creates longing for another object. A connection with a person leads to longing for further connection, as a connection found with an object leads to a longing to relive that moment with another object. This idea he presents – “the effect of acquisition constantly drains away in ownership”¹⁵ – may relate to the fact that we can never fully “have” someone, just as we may be left feeling that the collection is never complete. I feel this as I work in my studio, and realize I can never fully know people – even the ones I feel closest to. In my work, I contend with this absence.

The compulsion to make use of the found object is intrinsically entangled with the context of the Duchampian readymade. Duchamp has been identified as the father figure of postmodernism, “with his ironic readymade gesture...seen as having inspired younger artists in their critique of Greenbergian modernism and the modernist institutions of art.”¹⁶ It has been accepted in art history discourse that the Duchampian gesture of placing the signature on the found object was the catalyst of postmodernism, breaking down the hierarchy of high and low, and blurring the line between everyday objects and art objects.¹⁷ Duchamp illustrated that all objects are already embedded with meaning.

In recognition of this context, I have also identified my initial inspiration to incorporate the found object through Robert Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg – whose motivation has been ascribed to “fuse art and life in events that resemble theater”¹⁸ – is an artist that has lingered in my mind. His influence persists today as I collect the discarded, the found, the keepsake. In her essay *Before Bed*, Helen Molesworth writes about Rauschenberg’s *Red Paintings*: “...their incorporation of found objects blurs any clear distinction of interior-exterior, found object/painting...The struggle over boundaries is what is continued so persuasively in the Combines, and perhaps *Bed* (1955) is the ultimate moment of blissful and terrifying confusion.”¹⁹ When I first saw *Bed* (1955) (Fig. 8), it burned into my memory. Its layers of juxtapositions and its emotive power was a catalyst of my incorporation of the familiar object to find new metaphors hidden within its interiors.



Figure 8
Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955, Oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports, 75 ¼ in x 31 ½ in

Kitsch and Allegory

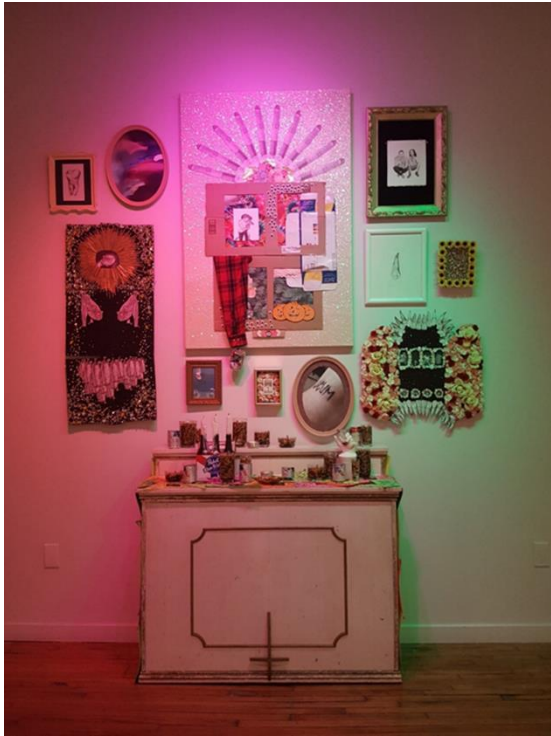


Figure 9

Sloan Brunner, *Carnal Crock Pot*, 2017, Mixed media installation, 10 ft x 8 ft

I integrate a kitsch aesthetic when creating simulations of domestic spaces. *Kitsch* translates to trash.²⁰ *Carnal Crock Pot* (2017) (Fig. 9) is an example of one of my works that celebrates the element of detritus that is intrinsic to kitsch. There are objects in *Carnal Crock Pot* that are adorned with literal trash – cigarette butts, beer cans, flattened cardboard boxes, pieces of beer cartons, a discarded sleeve of a flannel shirt. The literal detritus accompanies objects that together create a collection of debris of memory.

In *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience*, Celeste Olalquiaga

describes “melancholic kitsch” as the following:

...Allegorical and fragmentary, glorifies the perishable aspect of events, seeking in their partial and decaying memory the confirmation of its own temporal dislocation. Melancholic kitsch is a unique experience contingent on its very absence, the ongoing flight of those moments that memories forever ardently recall.²¹

Olalquiaga poses *melancholic* kitsch against *nostalgic* kitsch. For her, the nostalgic kitsch is perhaps more closely related to the commonly accepted definition. She posits that objects of nostalgic kitsch reflect a stubbornness in their possessor. Such objects are held as a reflex against decaying memory, and come to represent a memory that is idealized – a false representation.²²

Nostalgic kitsch as an artifice coincides with *The Oxford Companion to Western Art* definition: “creations whose artistic content is considered false, pretentious, or vulgarized, lacking in profundity and designed expressly to please”²³ Melancholic kitsch, however, is a kitsch that is self-aware, recognizing its own decay. The person who cherishes a kitsch object with an appreciation of its ephemerality allows it to be a mirror of vanishing memory.²⁴

In *Carnal Crock Pot*, I draw from decaying memories. This installation is a representation of experiences with a group from which I was feeling a distance. The group is a community of metalheads in Lafayette, Indiana that hold shows in the basement of a home. Once I left that town, I became acutely aware of my physical



Figure 10
Sloan Brunner, *Carnal Crock Pot* (detail), 2017, Mixed media installation, 10 ft x 8 ft

distance from that place and those people. I also felt a distance from the youthful rebellion that this community fostered, and had to recognize its evanescence. As I reflected on this feeling of loss for a chapter in my life, I became fascinated with juxtapositions that were inherent in this group. Their domestic space as a music venue is a portrait of blurred private and public space. They are a supportive community that was formed around an aggressive music scene. They are a group that found each other because of a specific interest (their preferred music genre), that then created bonds resembling the closeness of familial relationships. I create objects with visual elements of kitsch in order to provide a metaphor for fleeting memories. With this piece, I pulled from those inherent juxtapositions within the group that compelled me to cherish them. In the installation, there are cigarette butts and beer cans – the literal detritus of these gatherings, and



Figure 11
Sloan Brunner, *Most Pit in Pink Frame*, 2017,
Inkjet printed photo in found frame, 17 in x 13 in

representations of decay. I create candles from the butts and cans, which are placed atop a found altar (Fig. 10). They evoke a shrine to memory, while pointing to the feeling of worship and community that is displayed during performances. I place a blurred image of a mosh pit into a dusty pink frame. The kitschy frame holds onto a passing moment, as the blur reflects the frenzy of the experience captured. (Fig. 11) The central image of the installation is a canvas coated with a thick layer of glitter. (Fig. 12) A simplified house structure is cut from

a piece of cardboard and adhered to the canvas. Throughout the collage are elements that echo the space of a home that plays between private and public. Atop the house is a crown-like arrangement. Fingers and cigarette butts are fused together and radiate from a base of flowers and paper doilies. Borrowing from recognizable religious iconography, it elevates the canvas as an icon of my creation. With the finger-cigarettes and doilies, there is an element of the repulsive. The viewer may feel repelled by the tip of the finger that becomes burning ash. I hope to incite another layer of aversion as the factor of taste comes into question. The seemingly decorative doilies that help shape a crown form the kitsch topper of the cake.



Figure 12
Sloan Brunner, *House Show Shrine*, 2017,
Mixed media collage, 48 in x 32 in



Figure 13

Sloan Brunner, *Cave of Wonders*, 2017, Mixed media collage, 36 in x 15 in

Carnal Crock Pot plays with the ideas of kitsch that are described by Olalquiaga. It relates to nostalgic kitsch with its play on the sentimental, and the attempt to grasp the ungraspable with a memory that is decaying.²⁵

However, I attempt to push this kitsch creation into that which is “melancholic.” “Melancholic kitsch revels in memories because their feeling of loss nurtures its underlying rootlessness”²⁶ It is a self-deprecating use of the nostalgic, as I recognize an experience that ultimately cannot be restored. There is also a visual self-deprecation, for instance, with my use of an almost over-adornment. The glitter coated collage *Cave of Wonders* (2017) (Fig. 13) –

with its additions of plastic jewels, slivers of metallic beer cartons, and printed copies of my drawings – declares its importance and beauty as it presents a question of taste and what is worthy of remembrance and elevation. I create these works in a search for a metaphorical power through recognizable objects and accessible materials. Through this process of making, there is also the question of taste and class that is intrinsic to the kitsch aesthetic.

In *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art*, Denis Dutton authored the entry on kitsch. He states, “A major function of kitsch in the 20th century is to reassure its consumers of their social standing”²⁷ Kitsch is inexorably tangled with issues of class. With my grandmother’s house providing an inspiration and metaphorical form of home, using kitsch surfaces, materials, objects, and spaces was intuitive. Dutton’s examples of kitsch can be found in her home:

“Straightforward printed reproductions of famous paintings are not in themselves kitsch, but objects that adapt high-art images from one medium to another are paradigmatically kitsch”²⁸ The photograph *Untitled (Dining Room)* (2018) from *Grandma’s* series (Fig. 14) flaunts her *Praying Hands* mirrored by the poem



Figure 14

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Grandma’s* series, *Untitled (Dining Room)*, 2018, Digital photograph, variable dimensions

Footprints, and a portrait of Jesus that shares space in a frame with a clock. I am drawn to my grandmother’s attachment to her objects, and her careful arrangements. It feels almost inevitable that this aesthetic would permeate into my making, as I draw from these conceptions of the familiar. I associate this type of decoration with home. It is in the home of my grandmother. It is the décor I’ve become accustomed to in my Midwestern, working class background. I recollect this style repeating in the homes I’ve encountered through everyday life. To me, kitsch is familial.

I use kitsch to find metaphorical power. It can also serve to evoke a visual representation the socio-economic background of working class people. It is a way to question what is worthy of remembrance, as well as what is worthy of being considered beautiful. In her book *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*, Nancy Isenberg outlines a history of class separation in the United States. Her objective is to dispel the political and cultural myth that the U.S. is a nation without a class system. She writes:

Americans lack any deeper appreciation of class. Beyond white anger and ignorance is a far more complicated history of class identity...In many ways, our class system has hinged on the evolving political rationales used

to dismiss or demonize (or occasionally reclaim) those white rural outcasts seemingly incapable of becoming part of the mainstream society.²⁹

She describes a history of mythmaking that traces back to the colonization of the United States in the seventeenth century that denied “privilege and subordination” as the base of its structure. This denial became doctrine in 1776, “and all subsequent generations took their cue from the nation’s founders.”³⁰ Mythmaking is essential to discussions of class, as it is to kitsch. While kitsch can serve as a personal myth – one that connects to an imagined history for an individual – it can also be propaganda for a larger, collective fiction. As Catherine Lugg illustrates: “Kitsch can simultaneously provide psychological comfort and reinforce a host of national mythologies”³¹

Rather than recognize class differences, Isenberg proposes that historically, economic status has been determined by heritage. Inherited wealth was regarded as inherited genetic traits, therefore, it was bad “breeding” that perpetuated poverty.³² This notion, of course, is in stark contrast to the ideals of democracy. In order to justify the continuation of the status quo, by the 1980s, “‘white trash’ was rebranded as an ethnic identity”³³ No longer able to rationalize the eugenic approach, “white trash” was redefined as cultural heritage. As such, it “could easily be shed and later recovered – a tradition, or identity.”³⁴ This, however, is just the cycle of poverty with new marketing. The notion of the need to shed cultural heritage brings into question the element of shame. Dolly Parton (Fig. 15) is a cultural figure Isenberg



Figure 15
Dolly Parton, *Love Is Like a Butterfly* album art, 1974

points to that lived in a space between embrace and degradation. In the height of “white trash” as an accepted cultural identity, Parton still faced contempt for her background.³⁵ Parton’s public persona embodies melancholic kitsch. She is described as “The country singer known for her ‘voluptuously overflowing body,’ garish outfits, big blonde wig – what one scholar has called ‘excessively womanliness’”³⁶ Like *Carnal Crock Pot*, she is overly adorned, yet self-aware and self-deprecating, famously stating “You have no idea how much it costs to make someone look this cheap”³⁷ She used her image to become a specific beauty icon. I see Parton’s style as kitschy, but not nostalgic kitsch. While her public persona is certainly over the top and plays to a specific audience, she refused to deny the trauma that exists as a woman with her socio-economic background. She hoped to use her kitsch icon status to give “poor white trash girls” a form of beauty with which they could identify.³⁸ Parton illustrated the experience of being a young woman in poverty that sees “magazine models” she can’t relate to:

They didn’t look like they had to work in the fields. They didn’t look like they had to take a spit bath in a dishpan. They didn’t look as if men and boys could just put their hands on them any time they felt like it, and with any degree of roughness they chose.³⁹

She acknowledges the anguish of her cultural background, rather than simply using it as a tool to gloss over reality and play to an audience. “It is shame that keeps the system in place.”⁴⁰ But Parton maintains a shamelessness with her big, blonde hair and acknowledgement of class in order to spark hope in others.

Isenberg speaks about an “internalized...white trash shame” in her discussions of Dolly Parton and other public figures that must navigate their public perception.⁴¹ I feel a similar internalized shame as I contemplate class status and dispersed identity. As an artist, I hope to confront this when creating uncanny, kitsch objects and installations. My grotesque

accoutrements – that may appear in poor taste – engage the viewer in a conversation of how objects may represent the self and a class history. The economic background of my family in its simplest definition is working class. Depending upon what point in time and which dispersed branch of the family tree is examined, our status has ranged from impoverished to middle class. Most of my childhood was spent in apartments. At high points we were in houses. I’ve also bared the label of “trailer trash.” As we moved from place to place, home was an idea as dispersed as my family tree. I’ve faced trauma that may be considered the problems “poor white trash girls.”⁴² And I’ve inherited an internalized shame from the anguish of the generation before me – my mother and her sibling’s history of poverty and abuse. It is not necessarily a unique story. It is because of its commonality that I feel compelled to make this history visible and tangible. I hope to connect with a viewer that can identify with a similar experience. Shame and trauma can also become familiar. By placing my manifestations of the private into a public realm, I can set “rural outcasts”⁴³ in a visible space. I engage in a melancholic kitsch to question what is worthy of remembrance and elevation.

Homage to Femmage

Femmeage is a term and practice coined by Miriam Schapiro. It is an embrace of creative outlets that, historically, women have engaged in. With femmage, Schapiro references craft practices typically utilized by women in the domestic space, such as quilting and scrapbooking. By adopting craft, Shapiro pays homage to those women who were denied recognition as creative beings and the ability to create in a public space. In my mixed media



Figure 16
Sloan Brunner, *Mosh Pit Reliquary*, 2017, Mixed media collage, 25 in x 25 in

collage *Mosh Pit Reliquary* (2017) (Fig. 16), I apply accessible craft materials – glitter, faux flowers, buttons – around photographs. The materials that frame the images resemble the adornments of a scrapbook. As I adorn photographs of a mosh pit, I hope to reframe the experience into one that can be cherished. The materials themselves are also reframed. The object becomes full, overflowing with beautification. In this way, I elevate the materials and the images they hold. This use of elevation is inspired by femmage.

I apply craft practices in my work, and many times this form of making stems from a sentimental place. The work of artists like Schapiro and Judy Chicago are an inspiration to my chosen visual language. In her femmages, Schapiro recontextualizes women's hidden treasures – handkerchiefs, buttons, thread – to explore their memories and fantasies.⁴⁴ I recontextualize my own personal keepsakes, as well as collected keepsakes from others – such as my grandmother's family photographs that she has allowed me to bring into my studio. My work presents a similar



Figure 17
Miriam Schapiro, *Heartfelt*, 1979, Acrylic and
fabric collage on canvas, 70 in x 40 in

visual language to femmage to celebrate imagery that is characteristically decorative and related to craft.

However, our intentions behind these visual cues are quite different.

Schapiro's *Heartfelt* (1979) (Fig. 17) is a mixed media collage on canvas. She utilizes acrylic paint and fabric in this large piece that resembles a quilt. It stands at nearly six feet tall, making me feel overwhelmed by its stature. The canvas is constructed into a simple house shape, with a rectangle as the base with a triangle atop it. At the center of the canvas is a large, bright red heart that takes up most of the space. It is surrounded by dark shades of navy and purple. A metallic floral pattern

crawls along the surface of the heart with another floral pattern surrounding it. I am warmed by the shades of gold, red, and pink that adorn the heart. There are geometric patterns through the canvas. Small squares come together to create intersecting lines across the image. I am attracted to the geometric forms that also have a metallic quality – in shades of blue and light purple. The piece is mostly symmetrical, both in the shape of the canvas and the imagery that fills its surface.

This work, like many of Schapiro's femmage works, embodies an intersection of contemporary art and the domestic space. She combines the realm of the domestic with modernist painting techniques – presenting the idea of a quilt itself while referencing geometric forms and the grid. Schapiro's femmages were feminist statements – confronting the lack of representation of women and the feminine in the realm of fine art. *Heartfelt* bursts forward to

express the creativity of women that has existed in their confinement to the traditional domestic space. As a young woman, she was plagued by the thought “that she was a woman’s body with a man’s concerns.”⁴⁵ In 1970, she met Judy Chicago at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. This marked the beginning of her celebration of the domestic lives of women and critique of their trivialization. “She transformed her private life into a public act, validating the traditional activities of women, which she had until then, dismissed.”⁴⁶ This transformation – within herself and upon her canvas – did not come easy for Schapiro. She describes her difficulty in adhering fabric to canvas: “But here in my studio where I was all alone with my canvas he appeared, the invisible man, the man of my entire life, the man whose critical judgments were correct. And that man lived within me, and was the one who was being critical about the painting.”⁴⁷

Heartfelt makes me feel overwhelmed with a feeling of love and sentiment. It feels like a maternal embrace. I see the symbol of the bright red heart as a straightforward signal of unconditional love. It embodies Schapiro’s longing for a maternal prototype in art.⁴⁸ Her work strikes me as very feminine, and associated with the domestic space. She pays homage to quilt making – which hadn’t been regarded as an art form – and uses her hand to elevate it to a new realm. It respects the women who create and have created in this form, and by placing it into a fine art context, confronts its viewers to pay the same respect. I feel a love that takes the form of maternal strength in *Heartfelt*. Its stature, standing so tall, and bold mark making creates a daring figure. It envelops my body in a warm embrace while simultaneously demanding my recognition and adoration. Schapiro’s patterning and color scheme causes me to imagine the strong women in my own life. They do not rest in the background, but burst forward, tall and courageous. *Heartfelt* is a personification of feminine strength and beauty.

For Schapiro, femmage was a way for her to embrace what was historically feminine, as well as confront an audience that had ignored women's voices. I find her pieces both show a love for the women she was referencing, while also engaging in an act of protest. She is one of artists who laid the groundwork for the domestic space to have representation in the public sphere. Because of the work of people like Schapiro, I am now able to cite private spaces for a different purpose. Schapiro has provided inspiration with femmage, as I use my own visual language to engage in recontextualization.

Installations of Memory

As I collect, configure, and re-configure objects into curated displays, I consider the nature of familial relationships. My compositions relate to memorial objects, such as those illustrated in *Forget Me Not: Photography & Remembrance* by Geoffrey Batchen. Throughout the text, Batchen



Figure 18
Maker unknown, *Anna Cora Mowatt*, c. 1855, Daguerreotype, lock of hair, sprig of rosemary

includes images of what he calls “hybrid objects” or “hybrid photographs.” These hybrids are memorials and keepsakes of framed photographs (in traditional frames, lockets, bracelets) that are combined with tangible objects to further evoke memory (fragrant herbs, a bridal veil, a uniform). The photographs are transformed into reliquaries of sentiment and remembrance. A

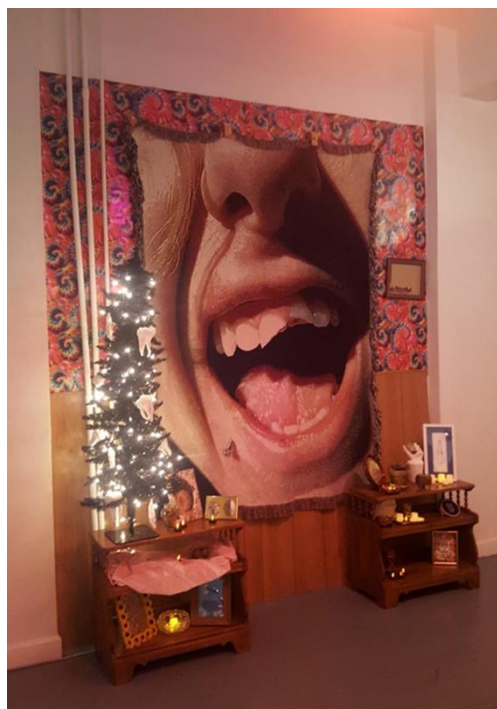


Figure 19
Sloan Brunner, *Home Is Where Your Teeth Are*, 2017, Mixed media installation, 10.5 ft x 7.5 ft

mode of memorialization popular in the 19th century was incorporating the hair of the photographed into the frame.⁴⁹ (Fig. 18) To quote Batchen: “The hair serves as a metonymic memorial function, standing in...for the body of the absent subject.”⁵⁰

Throughout my installation work *Home Is Where Your Teeth Are* (2017) (Fig.19), there are tangible proxies for someone/something absent – the woven blanket tapestry of an open mouth with broken teeth (removed of other identifying facial features), the bronze box holding a single tooth, the lid of a cookie jar, the

shadow boxes (one holding cigarette butts frozen in space and the other an empty cigarette box laid to rest in a bed of faux flowers). These tangible fragments are composed together in memorial for an absence – of a person, of stability, of identity. I am reconfiguring a familial relationship into a specific space. They are curated into a display that’s composition and materials evoke something both familiar and uncomfortable.



Figure 20

Mona Hatoum, *Recollection*, 1995, Installation, variable dimensions, Beguinage St. Elisabeth, Kortrijk, Belgium

I hope to leave this site to the viewer to find connections between these leftover pieces – the hairs – and weave them together into a narrative that connects with their own memories and conceptions of the familial/familiar.

In her site-specific installation *Recollection* (1995) (Fig. 20), Mona Hatoum uses strands of hair to evoke an absence. This work is housed in a benguinage in Kortrijk, Belgium. Hatoum evokes phantoms of the women who had occupied this space in the 13th century. In a lecture at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Hatoum describes the women who occupied the site: “a community of single women who lived in small houses around this meeting place, and they devoted their lives to welfare and lace making, in fact in this actual room.”⁵¹ Hatoum placed small hairballs across the floor of the room with long strands hanging from the ceiling, entangling the viewers “like cobwebs” – nearly invisible, delicate to the touch, and utterly engulfing. Like the hair adorned mementos of the 19th century, the hairs in *Recollection* serve as a tangible reminder of a lost presence. The shadow boxes of *Home Is Where Your Teeth Are* – individually titled *Ashtray for My Mother* (2017) (Fig. 21) and *Marlboro Laid to Rest* (2017)



Figure 21
Sloan Brunner, *Ashtray for My Mother*, 2017,
Mixed media assemblage, 9 in x 7 in

(Fig. 22) – serve a similar purpose. They house detritus.

Like fallen hairs, they could be discarded, but I collect them in order to create an object of remembrance – a manifestation of a reconstructed memory. They elicit senses of touch and smell. For me, these smells evoke specific memories, but are left to the viewer to unravel a meaning which they can decide for themselves.

In my installations, such as *Home Is Where Your Teeth Are*, I collect found objects and compose them into a display. The objects these installations consist of vary in

their initial significance. There are articles that began as my personal keepsakes. I also include evocative objects – furniture, wallpaper, frames, knick-knacks, portraits – that are reminiscent of a familiar, domestic space. Like the cigarette butts, they needn't belong to who they embody.

The discarded fragments are still able to become personifications of the absent. As I reconfigure my objects and my memories, the found objects become possessed by my memory.

In *Homebound* (2000) (Fig. 23), Mona Hatoum collects evocative objects associated with the domestic – dining chairs, kitchen utensils, a bed frame, side tables, a coat rack. They are connected with an electrical pulse. The objects connect a circuit system that powers lightbulbs, continuously dimming and brightening. As the bulbs



Figure 22
Sloan Brunner, *Marlboro Laid to Rest*, 2017,
Mixed media assemblage, 8 in x 6 in



Figure 23
Mona Hatoum, *Homebound*, 2000, Installation, variable dimensions, Tate Modern, London

illuminate, there is a sinister crackling and buzzing sound. The installation feels threatening, but also ambiguous and open to interpretation. She illustrates that *Homebound* could refer to, “the journey home; or the confinement of domesticity; or domestic entrapment; or even being under house arrest...(it) could also be seen as a reference to a denied homeland.”⁵²

As an artist, I hope to leave my installations open to interpretation. Unlike Hatoum, however, the threat in my works is not always so sinister. The curated displays reflect a grasp for stability and the absent. They also contend with a threat to memory. To quote Geoffrey Batchen:

For memory is always in a state of ruin; to remember something is already to have ruined it, to have displaced it from its moment of origin. Memory is caught in a conundrum – the passing of time that makes memory possible and necessary is also what makes memory fade and die.⁵³

As I compose my objects into displays, I excavate memories. The reconstruction of these memories leaves them tainted and damaged. Memories are further chipped by my nostalgic bias to construct a narrative that is stable – that provides a foundation for identity. I confront these breakdowns as I reconfigure objects. My memories can then serve as a catalyst for a new narrative. The new narrative is in the composition.

Conclusion

In my work, I create objects and installations that incite both the feelings of comfort and discomfort of home. I immerse myself in an obsession to collect objects as a search for stability in the face of dispersed identity. In my compulsion to collect keepsakes, I look for objects that evoke the familiar. For me, the familiar resembles the space of my grandmother's home. It is a specific space, but one that can speak to a collective notion of the familial. As I draw from personal history, I hope to create metaphors that can engage the viewer in a conversation of their own experience.

I apply a kitsch aesthetic to compose installations that may present discomfort. There is a repulsion as it poses a question of taste through my use of the sentimental. Repulsion is intensified as I apply discarded, trash objects. This may cultivate a conversation of class identity. I create spaces that materialize the shame that can accompany a family history. Discomfort is also manifested through the uncanny. I curate installations that juxtapose the familial with the unfamiliar to find an allegory that writes a new narrative. The uncanny manifests family histories that are recognizable, and the mysteries beneath their surface. I invite you into this space to consider your own notions of family, and what is worthy of remembrance and elevation. I welcome you to enter and search for questions.

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Illustrations



Figure 1

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Grandma's* series, *Untitled (Family Room)*, 2018, Digital photograph, variable dimensions



Figure 2

Sloan Brunner, *Moms*, 2017, Mixed media installation (framed drawing, faux flowers, found photographs, baby blanket, inkjet printed matte photo paper), 8 ft x 12 ft



Figure 3

Sloan Brunner, *Are You My Mama?*, 2017, Mixed media assemblage (ballpoint pen, colored pencil, cardstock paper, crushed velvet, mat board, wood frame, faux flowers, pink paint), 44 in x 32 in



Figure 4

Sloan Brunner, *Keepsake of Wisdom*, 2017, Wisdom tooth in found box, 3 in x 3.75 in



Figure 5

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Aunt Ruth's* series, *That Cat*, 2018, Digital photograph, variable dimensions



Figure 6

Sloan Brunner, *Moms* (detail), 2017, Mixed media installation (framed drawing, faux flowers, found photographs, baby blanket, inkjet printed matte photo paper), 8 ft x 12 ft



Figure 7

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Grandma's* series, *Untitled (Southwestern Room)*, 2018,
Digital photograph, variable dimensions

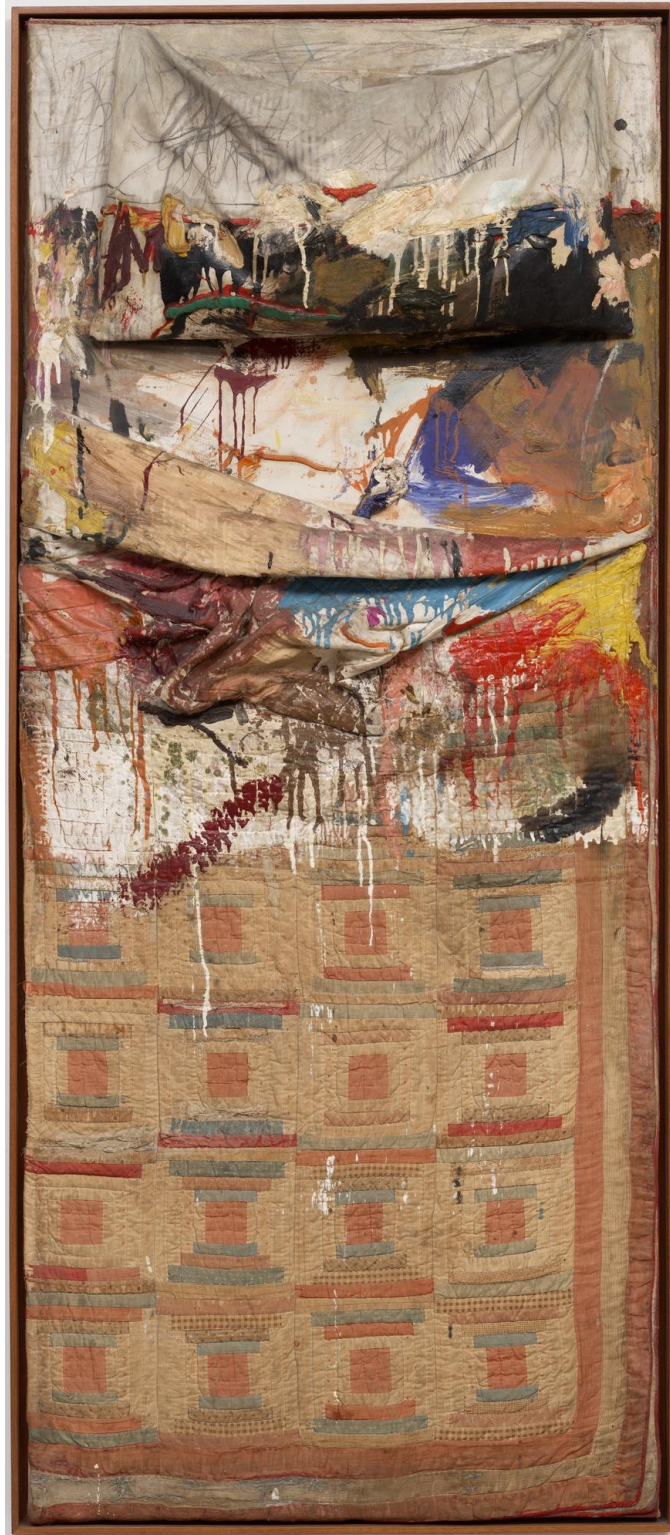


Figure 8

Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955, Oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports, 75 ¼ in x 31 ½ in

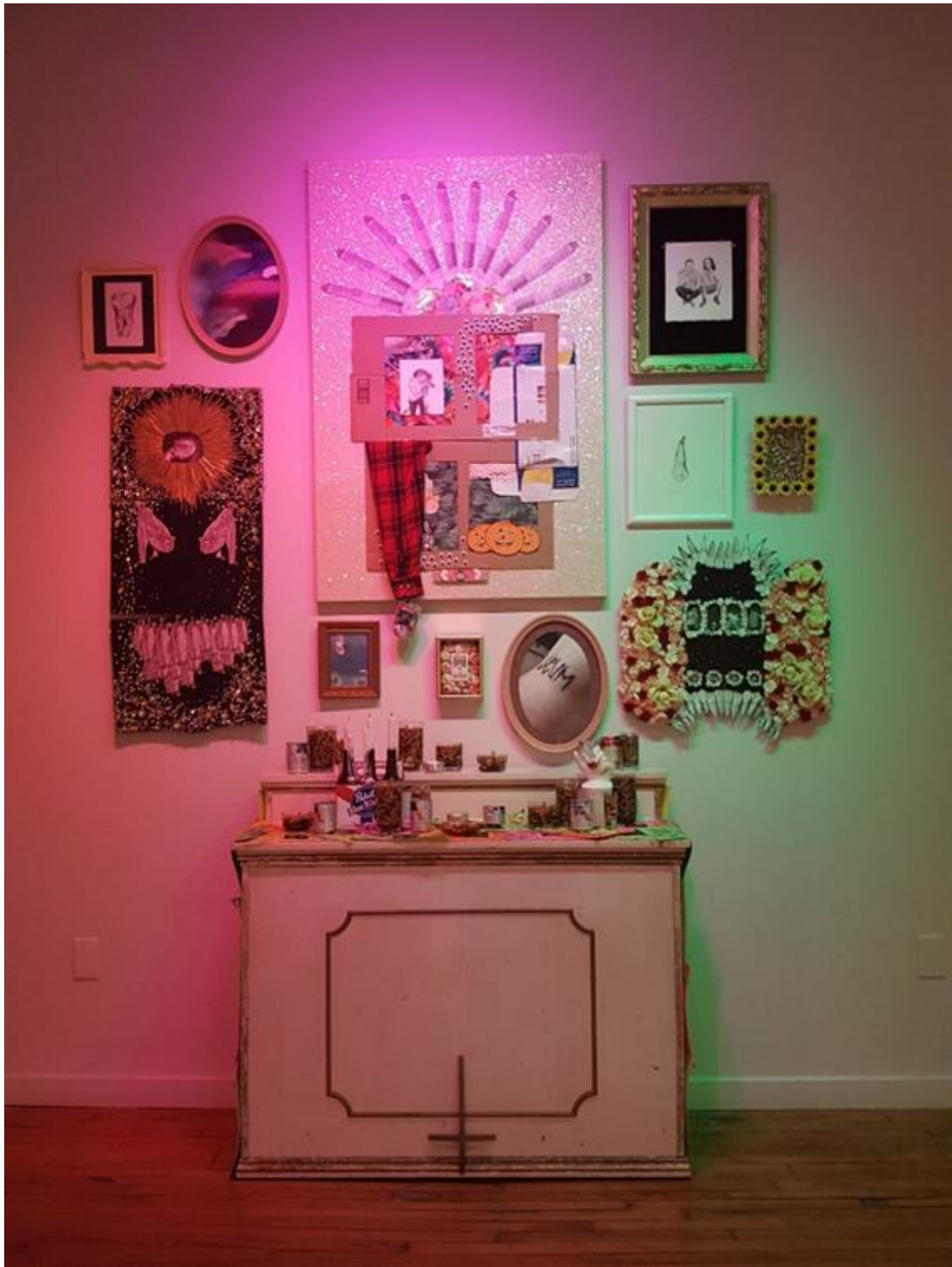


Figure 9

Sloan Brunner, *Carnal Crock Pot*, 2017, Mixed media installation (found altar, assembled shrines, candles, colored lighting) 10 ft x 8 ft



Figure 10

Sloan Brunner, *Carnal Crock Pot* (detail), 2017, Mixed media installation (found altar, assembled shrines, candles, colored lighting) 10 ft x 8 ft



Figure 11

Sloan Brunner, *Mosh Pit in Pink Frame*, 2017, Inkjet printed photo in found frame, 17 in x 13 in



Figure 12

Sloan Brunner, *House Show Shrine*, 2017, Mixed media collage (stretched canvas, glitter, scrapbook paper, ballpoint pen, discarded beer cartons, googly eyes, doilies, wrapping paper, drawings copied and inkjet printed onto matte photo paper, flannel, beer can), 48 in x 32 in



Figure 13

Sloan Brunner, *Cave of Wonders*, 2017, Mixed media collage (photograph, discarded cardboard, plastic gems, glitter, drawings copied and inkjet printed onto matte photo paper) 36 in x 15 in



Figure 14

Sloan Brunner, Selected image from *Grandma's* series, *Untitled (Dining Room)*, 2018, Digital photograph, variable dimensions



Figure 15

Dolly Parton, *Love Is Like a Butterfly* album art, 1974



Figure 16

Sloan Brunner, *Mosh Pit Reliquary*, 2017, Mixed media collage (photographs, discarded beer carton, faux flowers, found buttons, glitter, drawings copied and inkjet printed onto matte photo paper), 25 in x 25 in



Figure 17

Miriam Schapiro, *Heartfelt*, 1979, Acrylic and fabric collage on canvas, 70 in x 40 in



Figure 18

Maker unknown, *Anna Cora Mowatt*, c. 1855, Daguerreotype, lock of hair, sprig of rosemary

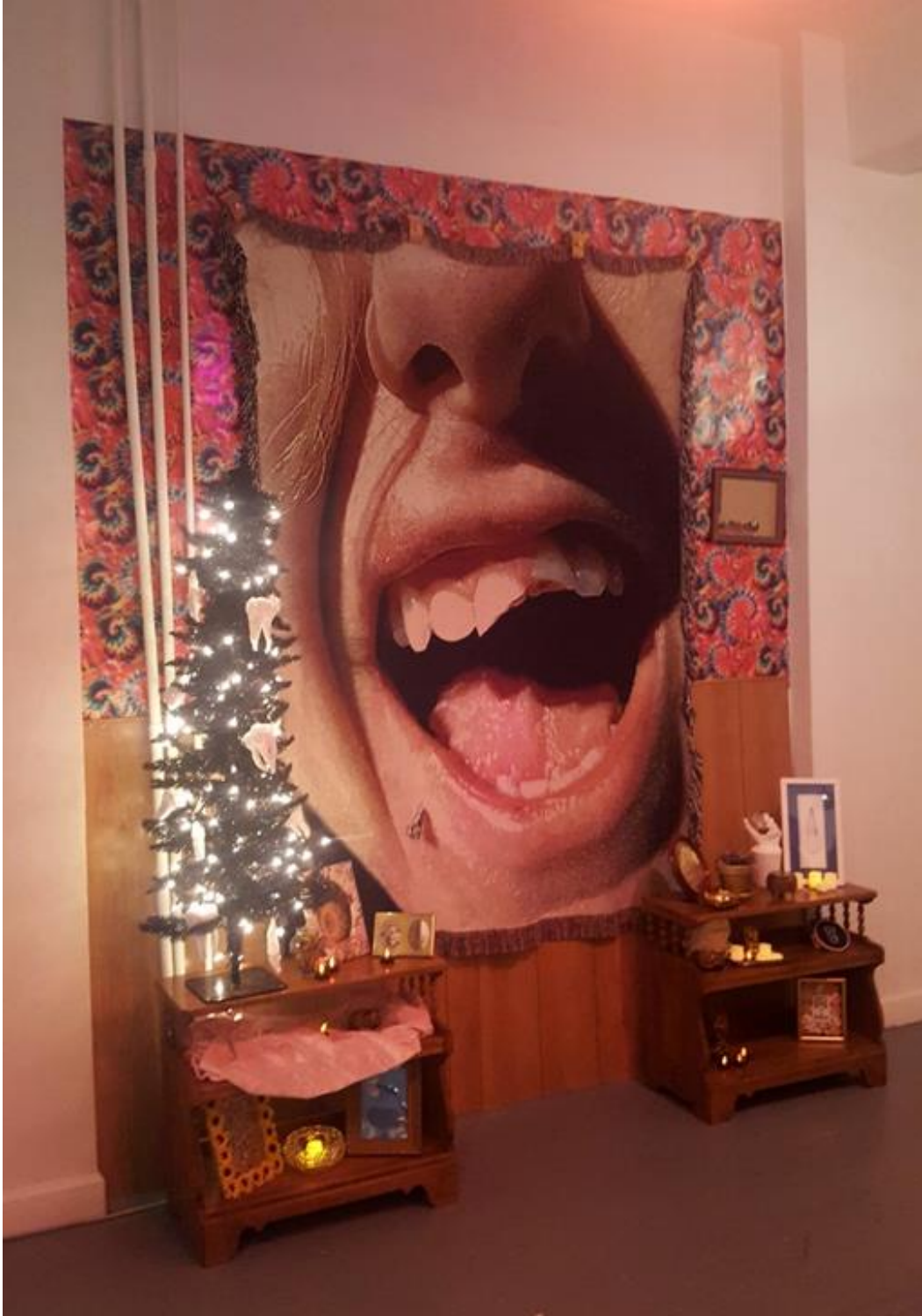


Figure 19

Sloan Brunner, *Home Is Where Your Teeth Are*, 2017, Mixed media installation (woven blanket, wrapping paper, wood paneling, found tables, electric candles, Christmas tree, mixed media assemblages, found décor), 10.5 ft x 7.5 ft



Figure 20

Mona Hatoum, *Recollection*, 1995, Installation (hair balls, strands of hair hung from ceiling, wooden loom with woven hair, table), variable dimensions, Beguinage St. Elisabeth, Kortrijk, Belgium



Figure 21

Sloan Brunner, *Ashtray for My Mother*, 2017, Mixed media assemblage (discarded cigarette butts, shadow box, faux flowers), 9 in x 7 in



Figure 22

Sloan Brunner, *Marlboro Laid to Rest*, 2017, Mixed media assemblage (discarded cigarette box, faux flowers, shadow box) 8 in x 6 in



Figure 23

Mona Hatoum, *Homebound*, 2000, Installation (kitchen utensils, furniture, electrical wire, light bulbs, dimmer unit, amplifier, two speakers), variable dimensions, Tate Modern, London