
Bridgewater Review

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Note: The editors would like to thank Robin Costa-Sullivan, who served as Administrative Assistant for Interdisciplinary Programs, for her years of extremely helpful assistance with *Bridgewater Review*. We wish her well with her new position on campus.

A Shot in the Dark

Douglas Breault

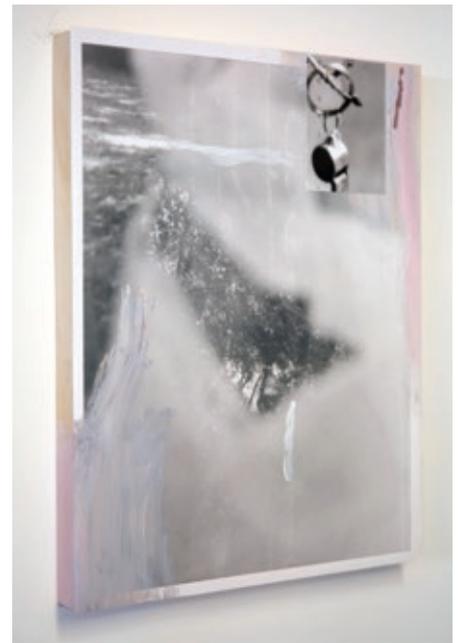
“A Shot in the Dark” is a solo exhibition of new work on view at Nearby Gallery, located in Newton, Massachusetts, that includes photographs, paintings, and sculptures that merge spaces both real and imagined. My creative practice involves layering different media and techniques, often haphazardly, to purposely misalign fragments and approaches to question the precarious nature of truth and transformation. I began making artwork as a student at BSU, enrolling in the darkroom photography course with professor Ivana George in my sophomore year. I never considered myself much of an artist or had much interest in art as a teenager, but immediately was enthralled by the process and output of making images. I enrolled in the photography course immediately after the untimely passing of my father, whose suicide ignited an approach to process grief and develop another method of communication.

While a student at BSU, I also fell into the rabbit hole of making paintings, and my last semester as a student I began to merge painting and photography to further coax out how an image can come to fruition. Since graduating from BSU with a BA in studio art in 2012, I am now an adjunct professor at BSU, teaching in the same darkroom I used as a student.

Materiality is essential to developing my ideas, subordinating form to process, and collecting images, materials, and objects that can be reassembled, and as a result, coalesce to reveal a new image. I often enlist obliterated images downloaded and printed from the internet, inherited objects, and embrace traditions of painting and photography to build connections between memory and imagination using mimicry and abstraction. When I began making



Recollection #1, silver gelatin print, digital print, acrylic paint.



Recollection #5, silver gelatin prints and acrylic paint.

work for this exhibition, I revisited my first rolls of film as a student with a new context and intention. The rolls of film contained settings and objects connected to my father, and I began to reconsider how time has affected how I perceive and understand the distance of the memory. I am interested in the limitations of a photograph itself, considering how an image can unfold and expand to describe a person or place paradoxically absent.

Since I began making artwork, I am continually revisiting symbols of clouds, candles, and wilting plants to reference ideas of heaven and mark passages of time. In *Recollection #1*, I contrast a fragmented self-portrait of my hand reflected in mirrors with a pixelated image of my father's hand that I found online. I use layers of paint to bind the photographs into a single picture plane. This use of paint creates slight variations on the surface of the work, disorienting the spatial perception of the viewer.

The title, “A Shot in the Dark,” accounts for the understanding of failure in the attempt to reach a point without the ability to see, or a last-ditch



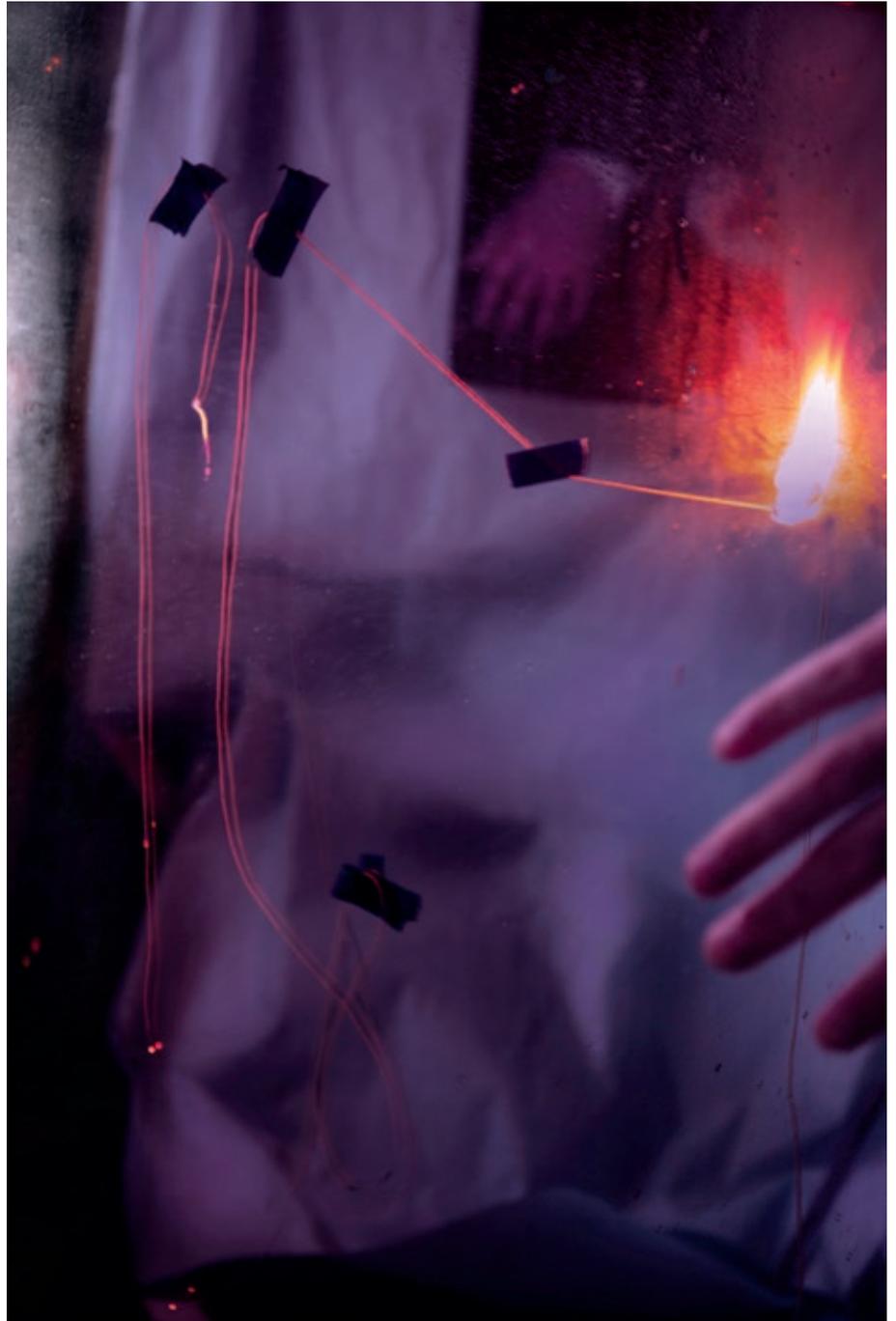
Recollection #10, 2022, silver gelatin print and acrylic paint.

effort when all other attempts have failed. This body of work will result in an editioned artist book for sale with the intention of raising money for the Rhode Island chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Kendall Reiss, the Sculpture Department chair at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University and mentor of mine, has generously written a foreword for the forthcoming book that speaks to her understanding of my approach as an artist:

Photography – both analog and digital – has since become a way for Breault to explore space between presence: being there, and absence: being gone. A tool to reckon with big questions like how to convey the essence of our loved ones after they’ve passed. The photographs themselves are slow and deliberate – hours in the darkroom, tinkering, experimenting, remembering and failing to remember, forgetting – shots in the dark. But they also have an air of urgency, an action or assertion, a pressing need for you to – look – they

call you into a specific moment, a feeling of nostalgia, a memory. To repeat in the space of absence that which is no longer possible, revisiting objects – or their simulacra in 35mm form, or by combing the internet for proof of a past since disassembled; the meanings and stories of these objects, their connections

to a life lived and gone too soon is what gives them urgency. An attempt at recollection – the challenges of memory and the pain it can inflict. Returning to the catharsis of repetition, sadness might feel more like an environment, or a process: shelter in place; remember, forget, repress, excavate, repeat.



Held By Hands, 2022, digital photography.



Magical Thinking, 2022, sculpture, silver gelatin prints, acrylic paint, wood.



Melancholy Minus Its Charms, 2022, detail, digital photography.



Recollection #4, 2022, silver gelatin photograph and acrylic paint.



Nightfall, 2022, sculpture, found wood fence post, silver gelatin prints, acrylic, metal wire, and whistle.



Recollection #6, 2022, silver gelatin prints and acrylic paint.

“The photographs themselves are slow and deliberate – hours in the darkroom, tinkering, experimenting, remembering and failing to remember, forgetting – shots in the dark.”



Recollection #12, 2022, Google street view download, silver gelatin prints, acrylic paint and ink.



Recollection #11 (Owen), 2022, digital photographs and acrylic paint.



Melancholy Minus Its Charms, 2022, digital photography.



Slow Swirl At The Edge Of The Sea, 2022, digital photography.



Interrupting A Blue Night, 2022, digital photography.



My Withering Window, 2022, digital photography.

Since I began making artwork, I am continually revisiting symbols of clouds, candles, and wilting plants to reference ideas of heaven and mark passages of time.



Douglas Breault is Part-Time Faculty in the Department of Art & Art History.