

The background of the cover is an abstract, fluid pattern of red and black. The red is a deep, vibrant shade, while the black is a dark, almost charcoal tone. The patterns are wavy and organic, resembling liquid or smoke in motion, creating a sense of constant flux and movement. The overall effect is both dramatic and mysterious.

L SYLVESTER

FLUCTUATING

Long Live Mar and Reed.

It wasn't and isn't your fault.

This is for you,

this is for them,

this is for us.

Love,

L

"Red is the colour of blood
Red is the colour of pain
Red is the colour of violence
Red is the colour of danger
Red is the colour of shame
Red is the colour of jealousy
Red is the colour of grudges
Red is the colour of blame."

- Louise Bourgeois

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ARTIST STATEMENT

As an artist, my work explores themes of grief and memory, drawing upon the rich emotional depth within these human experiences. I am interested in art and its relationship with trauma, race, and mortality. Through painting and time-based media I explore ways to memorialize friends who have passed away, depicting a fluctuation of processes, time, and states of being. All this while grappling with significant social issues related to gun violence, race, and mortality, as well as my own positionality.

I want to promote a more inclusive and ethical approach to grieving. I believe that the arts can play a vital role in providing support and care for those experiencing loss. Grief memorials and other forms of life writing can serve as powerful tools for healing and understanding.

Overall, my art seeks to create a deeper understanding of the complex and often difficult emotions that accompany grief and loss and to provide a space for reflection and healing. With this exhibition, I hope to contribute to a more compassionate and empathetic society, one that values the power of art and creativity in helping us to navigate the challenges of the human experience.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Through memorializing my friends and roommates in painted portraits, how do I effectively depict my grief visually? Can video recording the process of painting help translate a grieving process of fluctuation? How can the way the edited video is presented along with the physical final memorial paintings, further articulate a fluctuating cycle of grief?

My idea of fluctuating begins with a practice that focuses on creating the meaning of the experience, like a dual-process model based on the idea that grief is a lifelong process of fluctuations between loss and restoration (Iype, Nalini.). This is the starting point from which my title and process originate.

The project is a combination of two paintings and two videos/time-based works. Work #1 is memorializing Marcus and work #2 memorializes Reed. The two videos/time-based works will be projected, superimposed over the two final memorial paintings, contrasting themes of dry and wet grief. The two videos/time-based works are wet and in motion, as they are records of the process. Whereas the two final paintings are still and dried out. With that physical symbolism, grief can fluctuate between loss and restoration, the wet process, and the finished painting.

The exhibition space is to be interacted with in the way of processing. The audience can have the choice to view both at the same time or singularly, non-linearly, and process what they're seeing. The projections are in a way filling the space visually but not physically, creating an illusion of space and a sense of presence but also a lack thereof. Evoking emotions of longing, like Fred Sandbanks' minimalist structures, or James Turrell's light and how they occupy exhibition spaces.

This whole thesis may be a selfish endeavor of attempting to further process the complex context of their deaths and grieve. However, the purpose of my work is to have a tangible memorial, for those of us that lost them but had nowhere to look to or go to, in our grief. This is for them, and this is for us, as we fluctuate.

EXHIBITION MATERIAL







LONG LIVE MAR



Gouache paint, spray paint, on wood block, and gouache paint
on canvas wrapped over mattboard
Second-hand frame, attached to block

MAR'S PROJECTION

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RYRpA5Qq6fS8g5lYnt3TVVEsjzGslSrX/view?usp=share_link

42 min. 50 sec.

LONG LIVE REED



Gouache paint, spray paint, on wood block, and gouche paint
on canvas wrapped over mattboard

Second-hand frame, gold metal leaf, attached to block

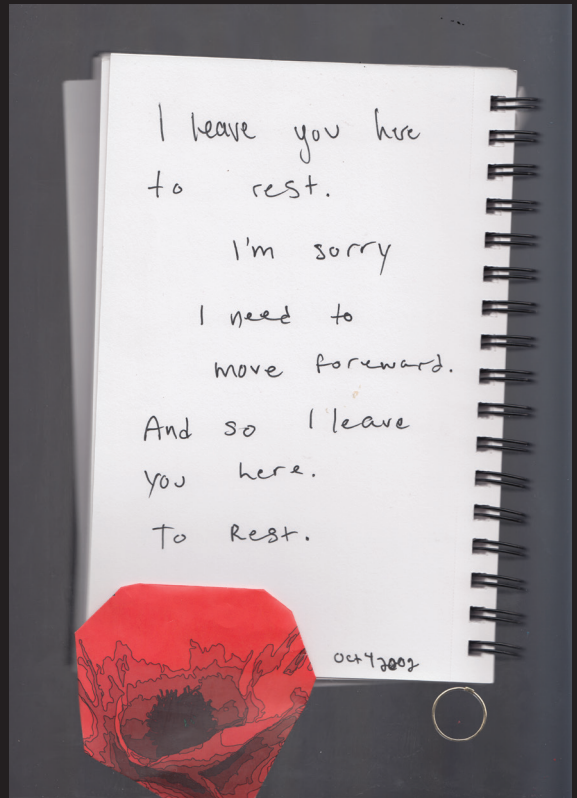
REED's PROJECTION

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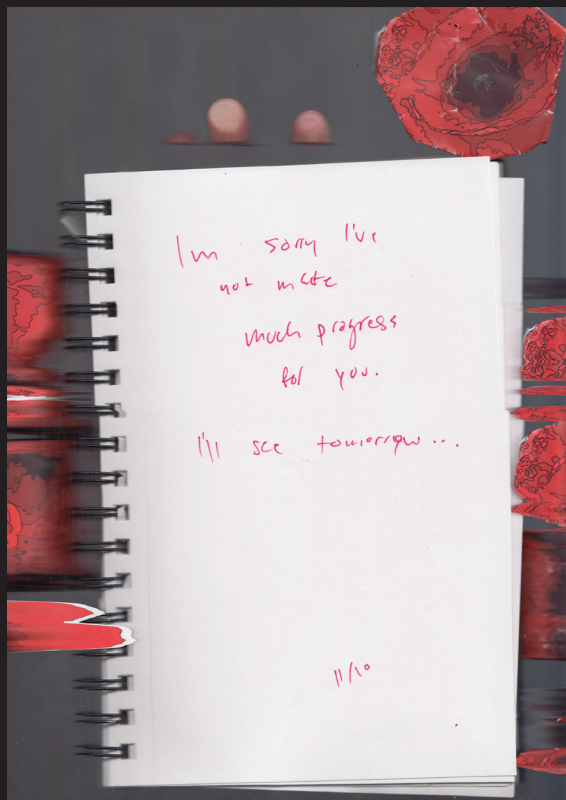
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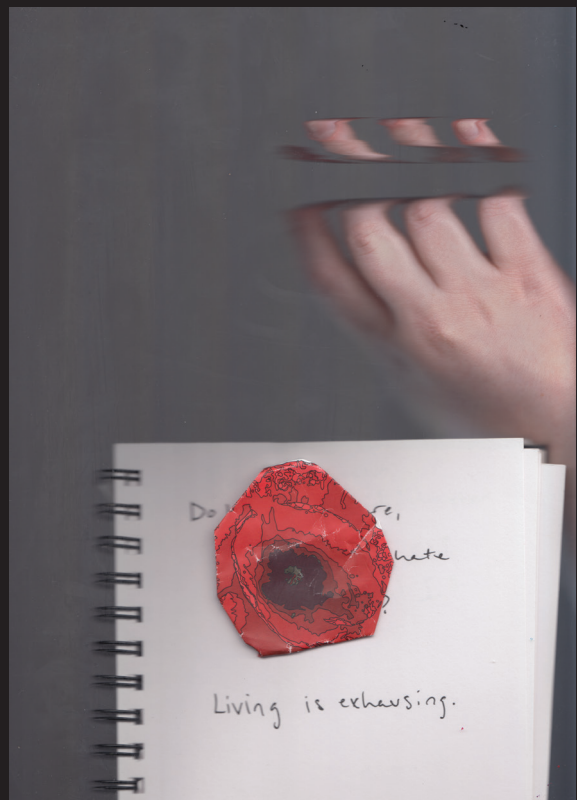
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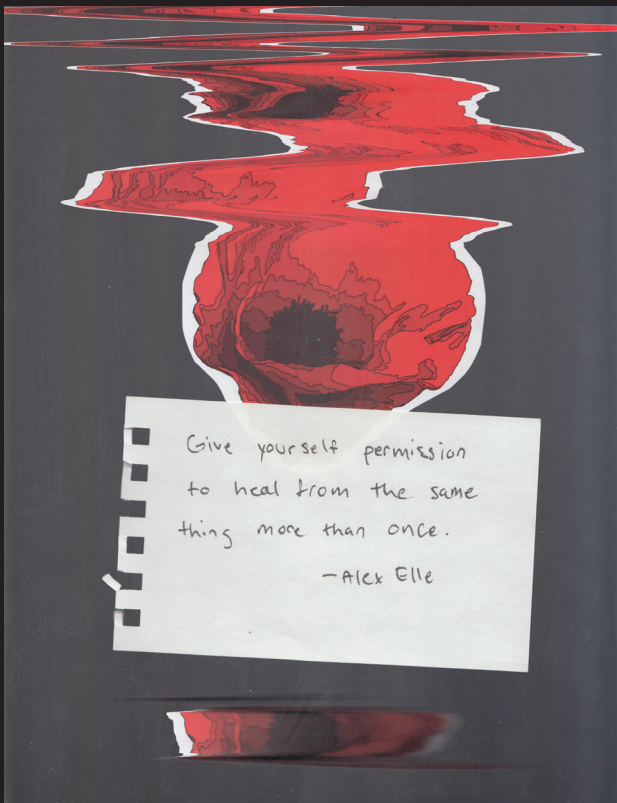
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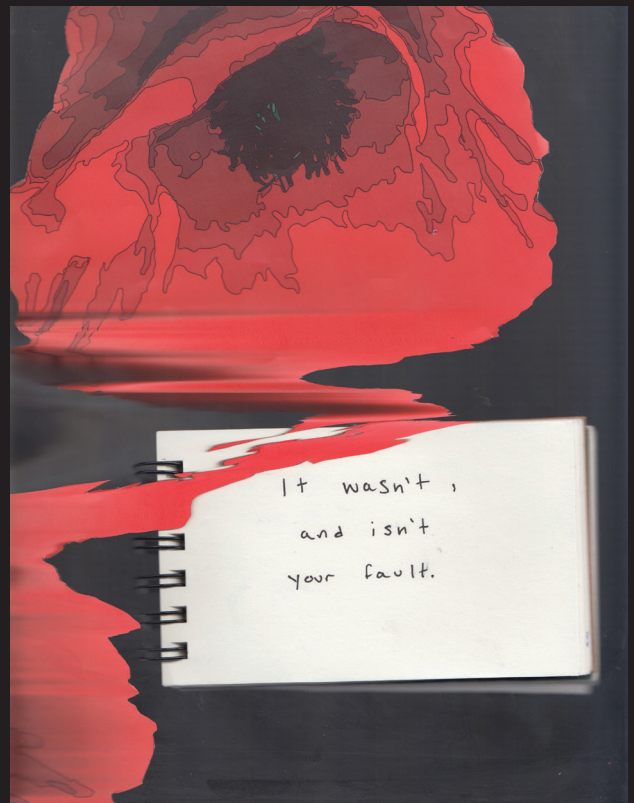
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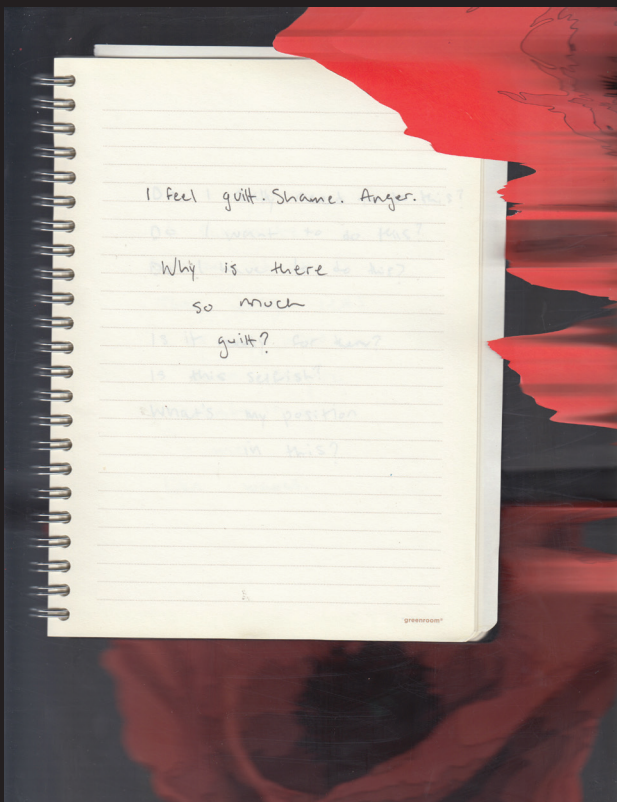
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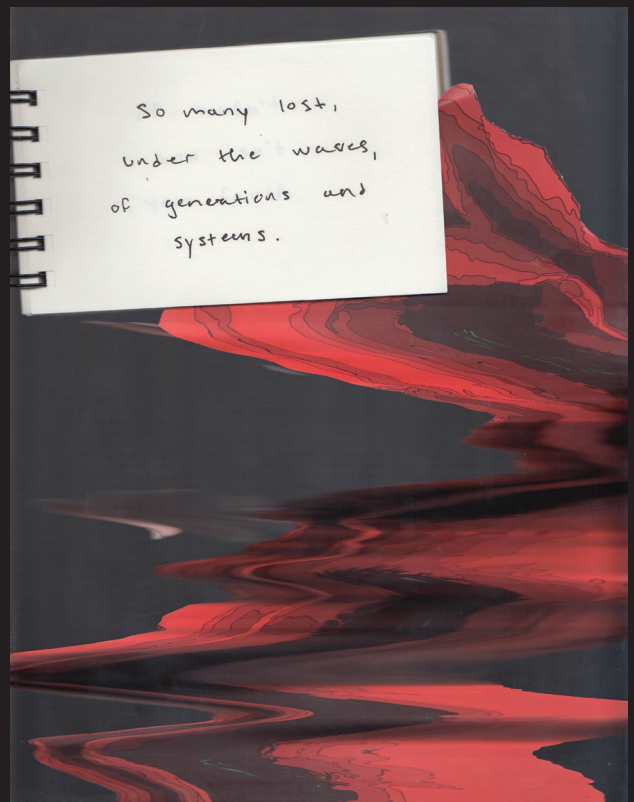
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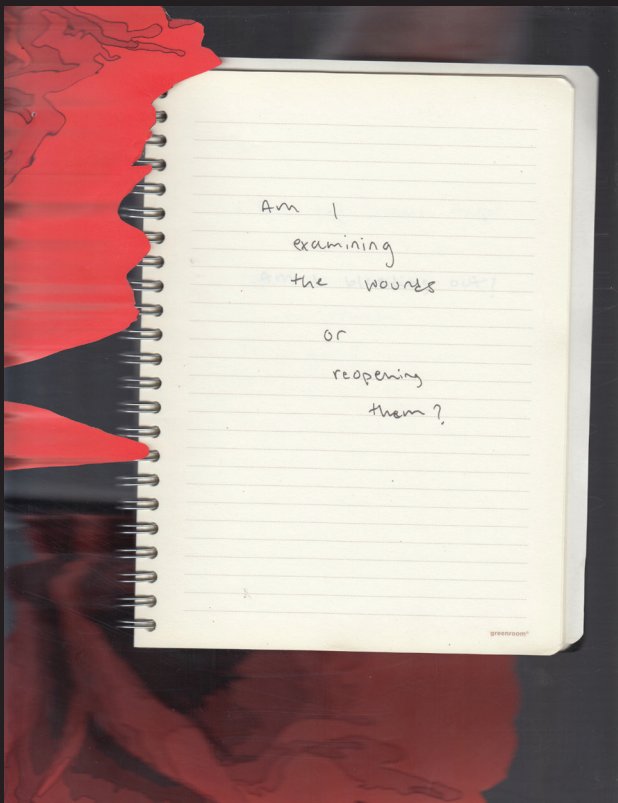
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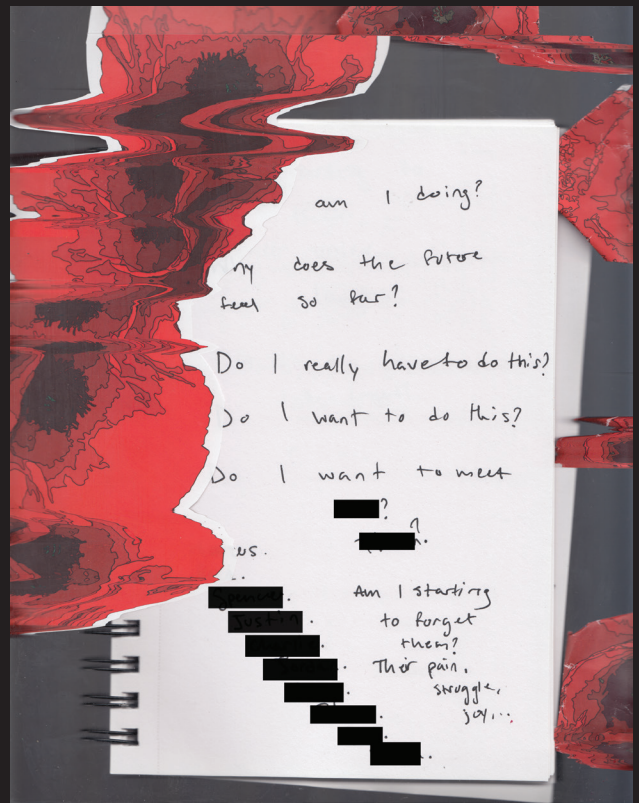
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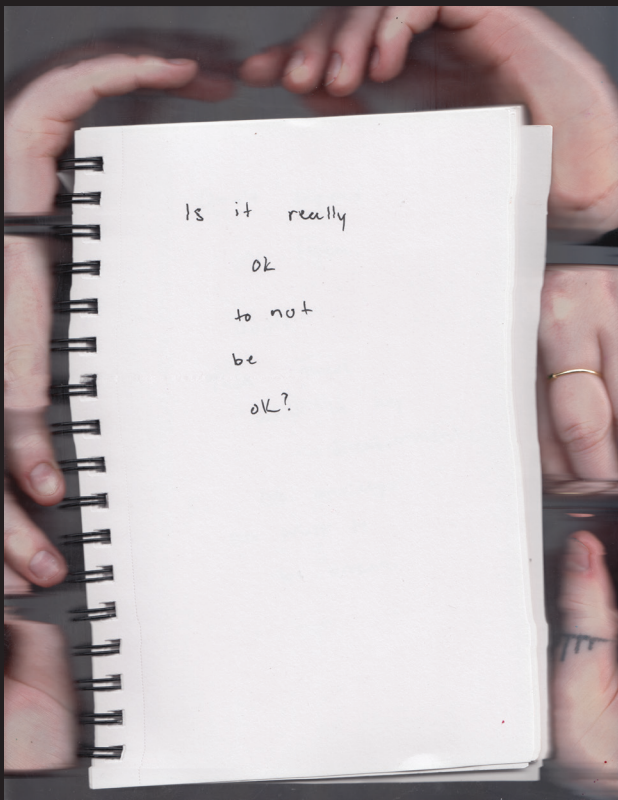
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NOTE 9



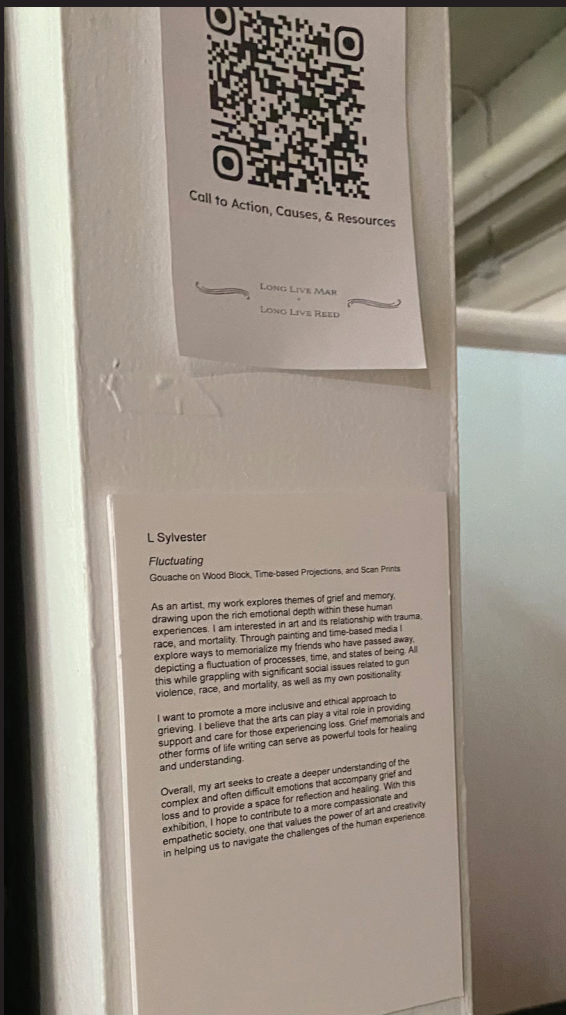
NOTE 10



NOTE 11



NOTE 12



QR Code to a Call of Action, which can be seen on page 31.

Additionally I added an edited version of the problem statement for the exhibition. I felt that the artist statement alone was insufficient for the context of the work.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WALL: WALL STATEMENT

Through memorializing my friends and roommates in painted portraits, how do I effectively depict my grief visually? Can video recording the process of painting help translate a grieving process of fluctuation? How can the way the edited video is presented along with the physical final memorial paintings, further articulate a fluctuating cycle of grief?

My use of 'fluctuating' begins with a practice that focuses on creating meaning from the experience. It's a dual-process model based on the idea that grief fluctuates over a lifetime as loss and restoration (lype, 2010). This is the starting point from which my title and process originate.

The project is a combination of two paintings and two videos. The work on the left memorializes Mar and the one on the right memorializes Reed. The two videos project from the two final memorial paintings, contrasting themes of dry and wet grief. The projections are wet and in motion, as they are records of the process. Whereas the two final paintings are static and dried out. With that physical symbolism, grief can fluctuate between loss and restoration, the wet process, and the finished painting. The projections fill the space visually but not physically, reflecting their absence.

This thesis feels in part selfish to further process the complex context of their deaths and grieve. However, the purpose of my work is to have a tangible memorial, for those of us that lost them but had nowhere to look to or go to, in our grief. This is for them, and this is for us, as we fluctuate.

Long Live Mar & Long Live Reed

CONTEXT

VISUAL &

INTERDISCIPLINARY

RESEARCH



**Black Madonna of
Vilnius,**
Vilnius, Lithuania,
1630.

Sakuhin (Work),
Saburo Murakami,
Synthetic-resin paint, wood, plaster,
and adhesive on cotton and board
63 3/4 x 51 3/8 inches,
The Rachofsky Collection, 1966.



Pullen (White),
James Turrell,
1967.

Iconic, The Archangel Gabriel,
Kehinde Wiley,
22k Gold Leaf and Oil on Wood
Panel 40 x 24 x 2 inches, 2014.



Passing / Posing Go
Kehinde Wiley,
oil on panel 48 x 120 x 2.5 inches
(Ceiling Painting),
2003.





Vertical Constructions Series,
Fred Sandback.

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Delahunty, Gavin, editor, curator, writer of introduction., et al. 'Psychic Wounds, On Art & Trauma'. New York City : MW Editions ; Dallas, TX : The Warehouse, 2021.

Over sixty international artists whose memories of historical trauma have given them the unique ability to create art are examined in *Psychic Wounds*. Even though there have been significant instances of craftsmanship that address wounds, scarring, and mending all through the 20th century, the expansion of vicious symbolism since WWII has prompted new sorts of works of art that contain awareness of horrendous mishaps and their social handling. The emergence of "trauma studies," which examine the effects of psychoanalysis, the Holocaust, global conflict, sexual violence, and discrimination based on race and gender, coincides with these changes in art practice.

Psych Wounds: On Art & Trauma is an insightful and thought-provoking book that explores the complex relationship between art and trauma. With its multidisciplinary approach, the book provides an in-depth examination of the ways in which traumatic experiences can be expressed and represented in art. Through a series of essays, interviews, and case studies, the book offers a nuanced and wide-ranging understanding of the role of art in processing, representing, and healing from trauma. This book is not only a valuable resource for students and scholars of art, psychology, and trauma, but also for anyone interested in the power of art to transform and heal. This source contains a vast amount of work that I pulled from. Including a chapter by Beatriz Colominia on Louise Bourgeois. Writing that Bourgeois constructs spaces of trauma in order to recreate the trauma, to make the trauma 'tangible' and to figuratively defeat them thus forgetting them. Also includes what the color red means to Bourgeois and that red is the color of blood, pain, violence, danger, shame, jealousy, grudges, and blame. All themes that almost everyone can relate to. As for myself, I have a recurring use of red in previous work, all with similar meanings. I usually utilize red as a way to translate pain in the subject as the color can easily be related to pain as a viewer, since all humans bleed red. The way I chose to utilize the color now in the thesis is as a representation of my anger at society and myself in the context of my friend's passing. Not necessarily in a violent way but in an attempt to be visceral.

Farr, Ragnar. 'Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire! London : Institute of Contemporary Art : Institute of International Visual Arts, 1995.

As part of the ICA's season, an exhibition of multi-media works by eight artists focused on the writings and theories of Frantz Fanon. "Black Skin, White Masks," one of Fanon's most important works, served as the foundation for the exhibition. Artists: Lyle Ashton Harris, Dark Sound Film Aggregate, Sonia Boyce, Renée Green, Isaac Julien, Glenn Ligon, Marc Latamie, Steve McQueen. In conjunction with the exhibition, this publication of the same name explores the ideas and recent history of the relationship between contemporary art and culture. The book examines the intersections of race, difference, and desire in contemporary art. Providing a critical and insightful analysis of the ways in which these themes are represented in art and their impact on both the art world and broader cultural discourse. The book is not only a valuable resource for students and scholars of contemporary art and cultural studies, but also for anyone interested in the complex relationship between identity, representation, and desire in art. Through its detailed exploration of these themes, *Mirage* offers a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the role of art in shaping our understanding of race, difference, and desire. I utilize this book as a creative exploration of how other artists created works within the lens of the mythologies of race, in America. Although I have not directly utilized the information in my work, it is a significant source of information. In order to not polarize my depictions of my passed friends in my memorialization work, as they were young black men who passed tragically, I blame American systems based on these race mythologies.

lype, Nalini. 'The Experience of Grief: An Art Therapist's Exploration.' Canadian Art Therapy Association/ Routledge, vol. 23, no. 2, 2010.

This article is lype's master's degree dissertation, covering how making art is an effective way to help deal with the many different emotions that come with grief. It explores the role of art therapy in helping individuals process and cope with grief. The author draws on her own clinical experience to offer a nuanced and compassionate understanding of the challenges and opportunities of working with individuals in grief. Art therapists who are going through personal grief while practicing therapy can benefit from this approach in the dissertation as well. The effects of countertransference and a therapist's self-awareness may have implications for both personal and professional life. The following are the subjects of this inquiry: What does an art therapist's grief experience look like? What connection does that grief experience have to

my work as an art therapist? Self-awareness, countertransference, and grief and art therapy are all examined in the literature review. As an art therapist, the author presents a heuristic inquiry into her own personal grief, including literature and art. The repercussions and potential directions for future study are discussed throughout the dissertation.

I utilize this dissertation in how I came to my working title *Fluctuating*. The dissertation begins with the foundations of theories and practices in grief. What I take from this is the practice that focuses on creating the meaning of the experience, like the dual-process model based on the idea that grief is a lifelong process of fluctuations between loss and restoration. This is the starting point from which my title and process originate.

Lang, Lori Ann. 'Expressions of Grief: Art Therapy Used as an Intervention in the Treatment of Bereaved Adolescents'. Ursuline College, May 1992.

Lori Ann Lang provides a comprehensive examination of the use of art therapy as an intervention in the treatment of grieving adolescents. This work, submitted to Ursuline College in May 1992, offers a valuable contribution to the field of art therapy and grief studies. The author draws on her clinical experience to provide a detailed exploration of the benefits and limitations of using art therapy with bereaved adolescents. Through its case studies and analysis, this work provides a rich and insightful understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities of using art therapy with this population. In this master's dissertation, Lang defines key terms. One of these is "Unresolved Grief." It's defined as a disruption in the normal course of grief and a lack of a typical grief response, longer than a typical grief response, and any distortion of a typical grief response (Rando, 1984). Unresolved grief can appear as many things including overactivity or developing phantom symptoms associated with the deceased person's final illness. The emergence of a psychological medical condition. Relationships change with friends and family. Hostility toward particular individuals who are somehow connected to death. Formal and stiff behavior that covers up hostile feelings and persistent loss of social patterns. Even engaging in irrational financial spending, and other acts that harm one's own social and economic existence. There can be 'tension, agitation, insomnia, worthlessness, bitter self-accusation, a need for punishment, and even suicidal thoughts,' With the definition of "Unresolved Grief", I can explain what the implications and consequences can be, and how I then believe it is also a form of trauma.

Wilson, Laura C., editor. 'The Wiley Handbook of the Psychology of Mass Shootings! 1st ed., John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2017.

The most recent findings from theory and practice are compiled in the Wiley Handbook of the Psychology of Mass Shootings. A psychological study of mass shootings for academic purposes. An international team of experts wrote essays on a wide range of subjects, focusing on the media's role and perpetrator psychology. Advising clinicians, academics, and policy-makers on the most effective ways to stop gun violence and deal with it. Because they define and shape issues and events rather than simply reflecting what is taking place in society, the mass media play an important role in society. The manner in which the news media gather, categorize, and contextualize crime reports contributes to the formation of public consciousness regarding the conditions that ought to be considered urgent issues, the kinds of issues they represent, and, implicitly, the means by which they ought to be resolved. The manner in which the news media gather, categorize, and contextualize crime reports contributes to the formation of public consciousness regarding the conditions that ought to be considered urgent issues, the kinds of issues they represent, and, implicitly, the means by which they ought to be resolved. The significance of this text for my project is the information is the media's role in mass shootings and the aftermath of mass shootings for survivors and families. I utilize this information as context to what happened to my friends. The way local media portrayed the case was biased and polarizing. The local media like MLive and Detroit 7, published news stories about my friends' deaths hours after they occurred. They didn't name my friends at first but instantly labeled their death as a Homicide. Although that could have been what police told them, using the term homicide polarized the case and the apartment complex it occurred at. The police soon after closed my friends' cases once forensics were completed, concluding it as a tragic suicide and accidental death. It wasn't until two months after, when friends and loved ones pushed the news outlets to do so, that they made an update on the case, humanizing my friends. Hence the use of the chapter covering how media stimulate stigma and notions by not reflecting on the underlying causes of these tragedies. The media shapes our understanding of events and issues, particularly in the aftermath of gun violence. The umbrella term 'gun violence' includes homicides, suicides, and accidental deaths. I am interested in the ways in which news outlets gather, categorize, and contextualize crime reports, and the impact this has on public consciousness.

Worden, J. William. "Grieving Special Types of Losses" in *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 4th ed. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2009, p.179-183.

"Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner" is a comprehensive resource for mental health professionals working with individuals in grief. This fourth edition provides an up-to-date and in-depth analysis of the latest theories, models, and techniques used in grief counseling and therapy. The handbook features contributions from leading experts in the field and covers a wide range of topics, including the grieving process, working with different types of loss, and the use of art and play therapy with grieving individuals. With its practical guidance and insightful analysis, "Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner" is an essential resource for anyone looking to deepen their understanding of the complexities of grief and bereavement. The chapter 'Grieving Special Types of Losses' covers, "Losses from suicide, sudden death, sudden infant death, miscarriage and stillbirth, abortion, anticipated death," and how each presents different needs in clinical treatment(179). Specifically, those who mourn a deceased loved one who committed suicide leaving behind a sense of loss but also shame anger, and guilt. Grief in suicide bereavement can be more intense and longer than other types of losses. The guilt is especially hard when the suicide occurred in a context of conflict. Sometimes, guilt shows itself as blame. Some people deal with their guilt by putting it on other people. Finding someone to blame can be an attempt to have control and find meaning.

I will primarily be referencing the section in the chapter "Grieving Special Types of Losses" that explores suicide bereavement, as it is relevant to my project and the context in which my mourning is.

Robert Storr. Louise Bourgeois: 'A Prisoner of My Memories.' Video, 2018,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ifn0qwTbgcA>.

HENI Talks presents a short documentary narrated and guided by artist Robert Storr, recalling his experience and friendship with Louise Bourgeois. In this video, Storr provides a comprehensive overview of Bourgeois's art and the themes that recur throughout her work, including childhood memories, family relationships, and the body.

CREATIVE PROCESS

Fall of 2022 I started the project thinking I would be combining time-based media and painting through stop motion painted animation. I began the portrait of Mar, deciding that either way he as the center figure would be static. As I got to December 2022 I received feedback that my hand in the time-lapsed portion of what I had already recorded, is more compelling and intimate, than a miraculous stop-motion video. So I kept the portion I did in stop motion in the final video, where I carved lyrics Mar wrote into the wood canvas, all around. They are his words, not mine, so the instance of miraculous writing made sense. I continued recording the rest of the process thereafter with the intent of time lapsing it.

WORDS:

The carvings are from songs that Mar wrote and rapped.

Song Title: Scars — Too many scars on my heart — Tryna Heal the pain

Song Title: Wiser — Crack a smile on 'em

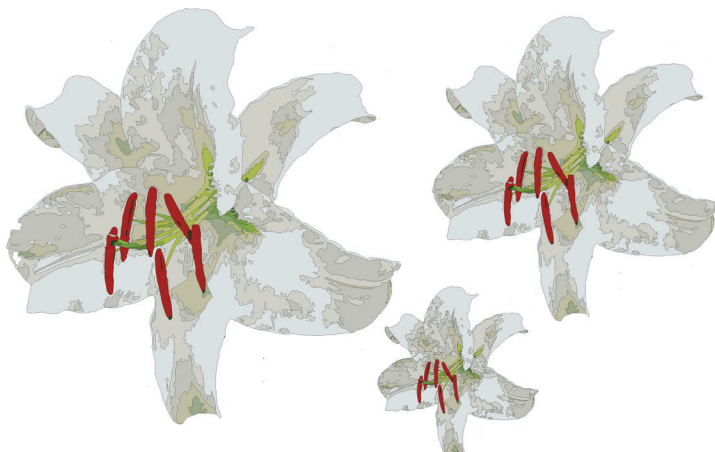
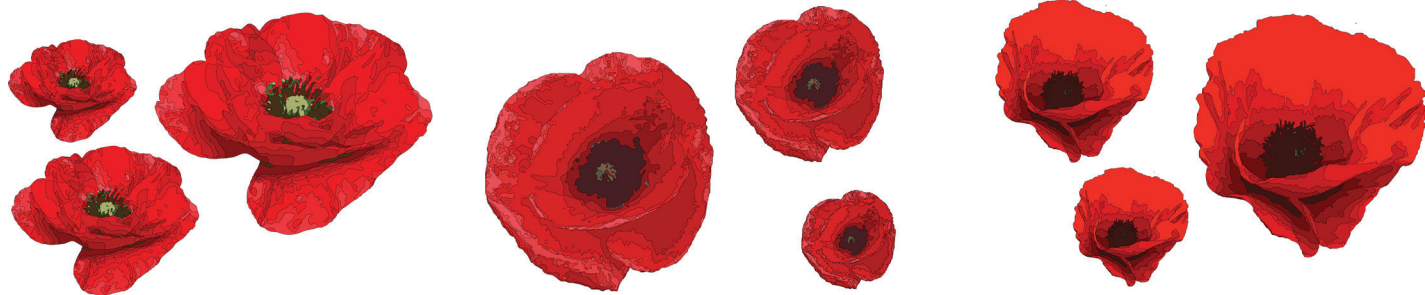
Song Title: Depressed — Goin through this shit alone, nobody feels this shit — street sober — curled up like a fetus — the old me dead, wish I could bring him back

Song Title: Veracity — Paranoid, I can't sleep unless I'm with the Wesson
(Smith and Wesson is a gun "brand")



HOW:

As I had never painted seriously before this—loose and abstract stop-motion painting was the majority of my painting experience—I decided I needed a template of sorts. Using Adobe Illustrator I image-traced photos of Mar and Reed and traced the outlines onto the wood block. I did the same for the flowers.



FLOWERS:

Two kinds of flowers; Casa Blanca and Poppy. Firstly, the flowers fit with my red color palette. Casa Blancas are used as the symbol for a nonprofit organization, made up of volunteers, the National Gun Violence Memorial. Their website says "AMERICANS KILLED WITH GUNS. Real people, not just statistics." This is for all forms of gun violence including suicide and accidents. Mar and Reed are both on the website.

Poppy flowers are important for me personally as a Canadian, we use poppies as a symbol of remembrance and for memorializing, beginning after World War I, but it's mostly used specifically to remember "Canada's Fallen" soldiers. From the Last Friday of October to November 11th we wear poppy pins.

SAINTS:

The moment I decide to sanctify the portraits was when Saba Taj experimental painter, visited our IP section. They spoke about the usage of religious renaissance imagery to give power to modern figures, friends, peers, and their community members. I seek to give power to my friends in these images by sanctifying them. For both portraits, I carved disks around and behind them to add texture and depth. Mar's began as solely a disk, as most famous halo imagery uses, however, I felt the need to smudge the edges, breaking this religious imagery boundary. As for Reed, his halo imagery stems from works depicting Black Maddona in the 1600s. The piercing crown, reaching out felt fitting. Ultimately, the golden "disks" could be crowns, suns, or halos, as I am agnostic and indecisive, I leave the interpretation of the symbol up to the viewer.





THE SCANS:

At some point in the Fall 2022 term Kate Rubin my IP instructor suggested to me to leave notes in the studio. A diary of sorts, but for the studio work. To compartmentalize and leave as much as I can in the studio. The scans are the few those entries and notes. Notes I left for Reed and Mar. Entries expressing and venting anything I was feeling about the work, myself, and my overall unresolved grief.

CONTEXT:

The context is complex. The context of their deaths, the situations that occurred leading up, there lives, stories, strifes, and joy. I don't owe, this audience, this context. Not directly or in written word at least. The context is in there. The visual work contains it all.

INSTALLATION:

The red walls are me. My anger, shame, blame, and guilt are all heavily apart of my grief. They are common emotions for those with complex or unresolved grief (Worden, 2009). The use of red is a theme, inspired by Lousie Bourgeois's quote; "Red is the colour of blood, red is the colour of pain, red is the colour of violence, red is the colour of danger, red is the colour of shame, red is the colour of jealousy, red is the colour of grudges, red is the colour of blame." (sourced, Psychic Wounds, 2021).

The method of install for the projections however derives from the works of James Turrell and Fred Sandback. James Turrell is known for his use of space to project or distort light, while Fred Sandback utilizes space in combination with the lack of form in sculpture to evoke emotions of longing. By studying their works, aimed to gain insight into how to utilize space vs. lack of space in parallel with projecting presence vs. the lack of presence. The projections fill the space visually but not physically, reflecting their absence. As a result, I decided the walls that the paintings and projections would occupy would be white, and the flooring black. I trimmed and sanded the walls to smooth them, and painted them over white. The flooring is a vinyl "car garage" roll, thin and durable, good for foot traffic and absorbing light.

REFLECTION

I don't know that anyone could feel "satisfied" with this theme of work and making. However, there are two technical aspects I would change in future work; size and install. Firstly, making memorial portraits and even frames has piqued my interest in static painting. I'd like to attempt larger-scale paintings and portraits and also celebrate and immortalize loved ones that are alive. Secondly, the installation process has furthered my curiosity about how light and space in an exhibit or installation can be art. Personally, I wish install was longer, as I felt that everything I wanted to be done was too much for me to do alone in 6 days. Monday, April 11th at 4:00 or 5:00 pm, when overwhelmed by the heaviness and labor in mounting the projectors, I just gave up and took a quick way out, mini projectors, something I could finish by Tuesday evening when installation needed to be complete. Trust, that the facilities were very helpful in explaining the options I had and offered to help, but one of my downfalls is when there are so many words and options my ADHD shuts me down. In hindsight, I could have repositioned the mounting area, have the throw superimposed over everything, and accept the help I was offered, and this could have been even more impactful. Hindsight is twenty-twenty, it was an insightful experience in multiple ways. Realistically, I may not have an opportunity to exhibit like this again. I am grateful. Thank you.

Call to Action

Although the reference to any gun violence and mental health disparities in the visual work is essentially subtextual, it is still important to provide a statement and resources.

Gun Violence: includes the use of firearms in suicide, accidents, and more.

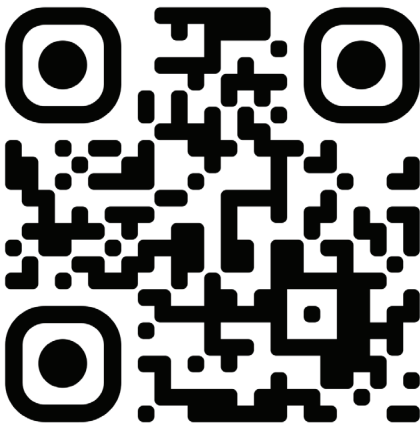
In the US especially, one can feel powerless against gun violence and mental health disparities. Often the best agency or resource one can have is knowledge. Learn about local and state-level gun control policies, and then learn more about the federal level. Research local or global campaigns. Find resources and supports, and then volunteer to work with those groups, to aid in healing your community. Gun violence and stigmas of mental health in the US disproportionately impact marginalized and minoritized communities. This issue lies at the intersection with many policy and social issues but is ultimately a matter of human rights and the fundamental right to life.

National and Global Campaigns:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline;

Dial 988;

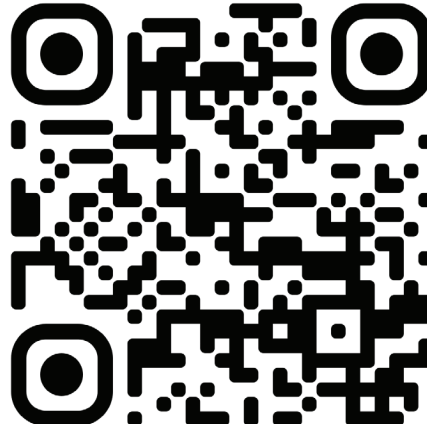
<https://988lifeline.org/>



National Gun Violence Memorial;

Non-profit virtual memorial;

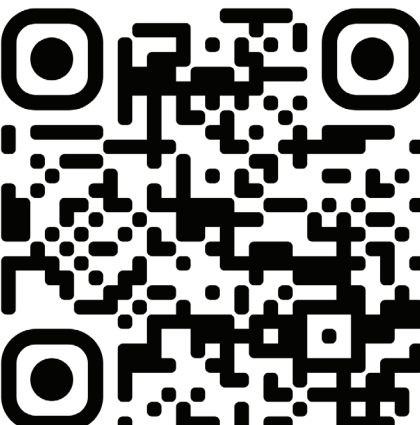
<https://gunmemorial.org/about>



Grief Share;

Find grief groups or events near you;

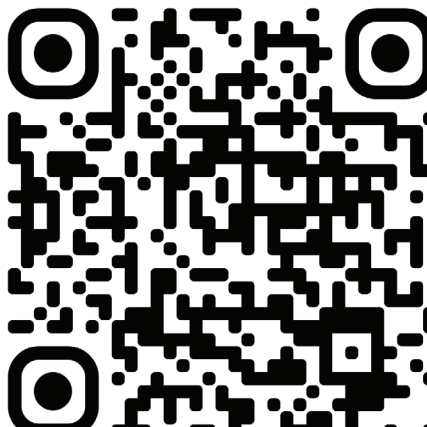
<https://www.griefshare.org/>



Amnesty International;

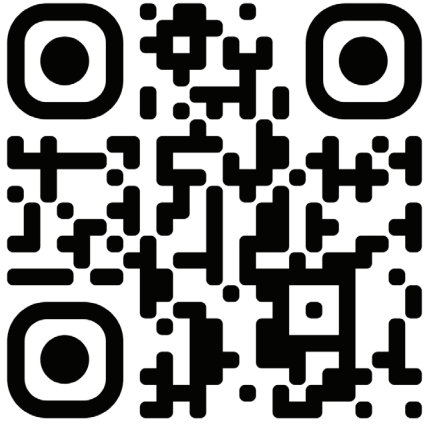
“Explore research and insights on human rights in countries across the world”;

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/home-amnesty-international/>

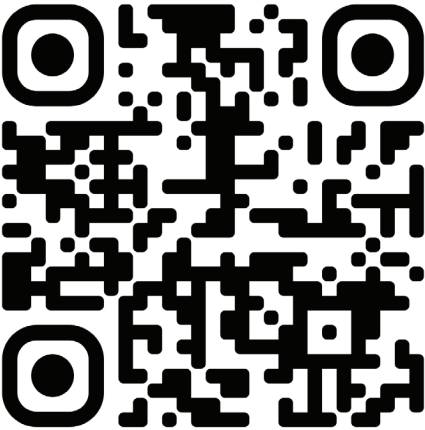


Michigan Supports and Campaigns:

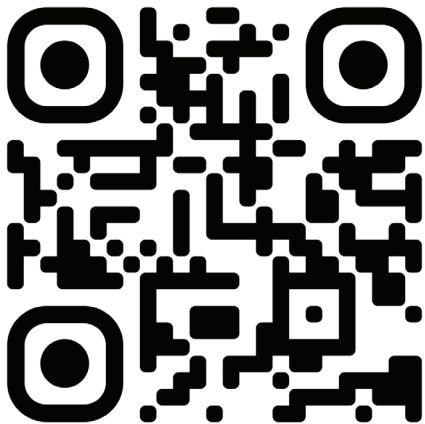
Hope Clinic;
Integrated Care, Medical, Behavioral, Food & Basic
Needs (Ypsilanti and Wayne Clinics);
<https://thehopeclinic.org>



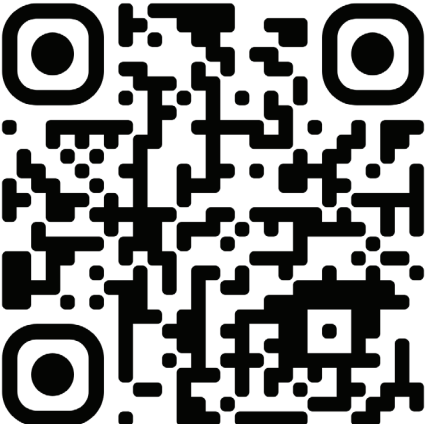
Coalition for Re-envisioning our Safety (CROS);
Washtenaw County Coalition for an unarmed
non-police response for public safety;
<https://www.reenvisionoursafety.org/our-plan.html>



The Detroit Justice Center (DJC);
*“A non-profit law firm working alongside
communities to create economic opportunities,
transform the justice system, and promote equitable
and just cities.”;*
<https://detroitjustice.org>



End Gun Violence Michigan;
*“The goal of End Gun Violence Michigan is to
consider passing common-sense gun violence
prevention laws in Michigan that will save lives.”;*
<https://www.migunsafety.org>



How can you serve these causes and in your community?
We can always do more, and even a little can make an impact.

What will you do?

All the best,
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