

# Family Photographs

*The memory box*

By Cindy

## **Acknowledgements:**



# Abstract



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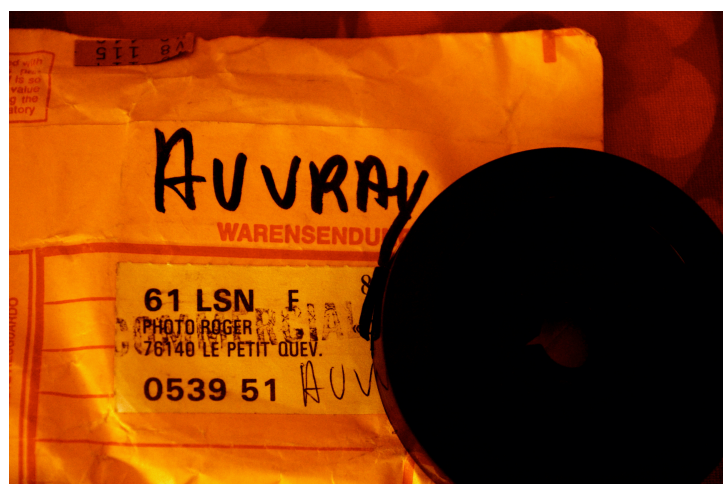
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## Introduction

The topic of memory is ubiquitous in contemporary art practice specifically in relation to photographic archives. Jo Spence, Christian Boltanski, Lorie Novak, Matthew Buckingham, Sophie Calle and Nan Goldin are some of the many artists to have used archives as support to memory matters<sup>2</sup>. Later, I will underline specific key issues related to memory by referring to some artists' works, echoing my own practice. Throughout this essay, I examine by means of my practice the framework of a number of theoretical propositions related to memory and photography. I found it useful to explore the particular narrative surrounding my own family's archive to address a number of questions related to memory and bring about new insights of the use of family snapshots in the process of recalling memory.

For a long time, I have nursed<sup>3</sup> the need to do a project related to my dead father, perhaps as a means for getting rid of the sorrow. This year, it has become an obsession and a visceral need. It is undoubtedly not a coincidence that this has occurred in my thirtieth year because he died at the age I am at now. I had the desire to open the Pandora's Box, which would give me access to my memory to create an intangible diary depicting visually the traces that he has left in my memory for these last 20 years. This essay therefore, traces this process of investigation and intervention with my own family albums, and how this has impacted not only on my own understanding of historical narratives and memory but also my mother's.



**Figure 1:** Video archive  
Cindy Auvray (Sept-2012)

The driving force behind my practice and theoretical investigations is that my own archives (*see figure 1*) allowed me to experience the process of destruction and reconstruction of the memory. I am fully aware that my family photographs can elicit different memories in other

people. However, the topic conveys universal ideas beyond the meaning of an individual's family album. In my making of a mixed media installation, which is composed of two videos, twenty-nine lockets that can be opened and closed, and a pendant clock, I aim to engage my audience physically in the process of remembering their own family history whilst also, through their reactions, turning my family memory into collective memory.

The creative process is composed of two main phases, deconstruction and reconstruction, indispensable for re-creating my memory and a fresh relationship to the past. At this point, it is important to define the theoretical framework of the memory and give the definitions that I will refer to throughout the essay.

The dominant model of human memory in OMS (Organizational Memory Studies) understands it as a "storage bin" (Walsh and Ungson) (1991)<sup>4</sup>. From the 1950's, the major model of memory related to viewing both amalgamated human memory and computer memory as a data storage process. (256: 2002) However, « psychologists have rejected this model because it overlooks the distinctly human subjective experience of remembering, i.e. episodic memory »<sup>5</sup>. In 1972<sup>6</sup>, Endel Tulving coined this term 'episodic memory' to refer to our ability to recall specific past events, also pointing out the difference between knowing (that is, something we have learned) and remembering (in other words, something we have experienced.) William James wrote that, "Memory requires more than the mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in my past." (1890: 650)<sup>7</sup>. Thus, it can be said that the action of remembering is a mental trip into the past: we reconstruct and re-experience past events all over again in present time.

In cognitive philosophy, Clark and Chalmers (1998) assert that technologies have become extensions of human memory;<sup>8</sup> by association an easy parallel can be drawn between photographs and memory. Memory has been defined in several ways, and these continue to proliferate. For the purpose of my investigation, I define memory as a dynamic spiritual active process of reinterpretation, which can be seen as a means for human beings to make sense of the past in present time. I will consider that human memory is not static like a computer's memory but is constantly in motion<sup>9</sup>.

This raises the questions: do we consider that photographs are material objects, and as such, do not change, but rather, is it us that changes in relation to them? I suggest that the way we perceive photographs through time is constantly in progress: this is not because pictures are lying to us, but rather a matter of memory alteration through reinterpretation. The essay will set out my practice as a case study to frame my work, drawing upon both deconstruction and reconstruction of memory through my family photographs as a form of art therapy for rebuilding identity.

### **Case study**

My installation forms the backbone of this essay, which attempts to challenge creatively the silences of family photographs. At this point, it is useful to present the case study succinctly. The creative process illustrates a concept, realized by a mixed media installation. From the corridor behind this installation, the audience can see a black curtain covering an entrance, with a black label beside it on the wall. On this label is inscribed: "the memory box". It is written by hand in white ink, like a bright trace in the darkness. The label invites the audience to come in, while the inscription asks the audience to open or close the lockets. Can the public really touch the art? What does that mean? This is probably the beginning of the experience. After pulling the curtain, members of the audience can be in the dark box where two videos are projected opposite each other. The videos create light, acting like flashes from a camera or rather flashbacks, illuminating objects. The first time, they can barely be seen. One's eyes are not used to this darkness. The violent of the jerky light is disturbing. After a few seconds, however, it is possible to see well. The audience can distinguish lockets: some are opened and others closed. Viewers head toward them. There is a picture inside. The one next to it is closed. They remember the inscription. They open it up: No picture. In the centre, one locket seems different. When spectators come closer to it, they realise that is not a locket. It is a clock pendant. The glass of the clock is broken. The time has stopped at 8.30.

In the first part of this essay, I will look at family photographs as material objects unchanging through time, aside from the ageing process that is exacerbated through their being handled. To do so, I will consider that still images follow the same process as a computer's memory if we consider that the printed object will never change on its own. This raises the questions: what is moving through time if images remain the same visually? Is it humans' projections

onto the photographs that give them meaning? I will focus on the narration created by our memories in perceiving family snapshots, whilst also considering the fact that the process of remembering has the potential to shift the photographs' meanings. In the second section of the essay, I will develop a critical perspective on death related to family photographs by referring to Barthes' "certificate of presence"<sup>10</sup>. I suggest that by disjunction they are also certificate of death<sup>11</sup>; I will also look at family albums as a testament towards eternity.

## **I- Family photographs: perception and narration**

The perception of family photographs is both an internal and external process. The former type of perception is related to what occurs in the body, in other words, how images touch us emotionally. The latter refers to the body's relationship with the outside world, the awakening of the senses, that is, sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, in order to perceive colours, sounds, textures, and so on.

## **A - Perceiving family photographs: a matter of senses**

To begin, I will briefly explore the importance that touch and vision have occupied in perceptual theory approaches. Berkeley's theory of vision underlines that individuals do not see an object in the same way that they feel it. Abbott, however, defined "touch" as a hardness of perception, a "feeling" and "seeing" as "knowledge pure and simple" (1864:3&4). In other words, individuals see only what they know and what they have learned to see, and then integrate this information into their memories. In "The man who mistook his wife for a hat",<sup>12</sup> Olivier Sacks demonstrated through a clinical case study that perception is a matter of the interaction of the senses: if one sense is deficient, perception is altered. Hence, what individuals learn to see has to be stored in the memory for future recognition; otherwise, they do not know that they have learned. In this respect, the senses and memory are closely related and essential to our perception of family photographs, for it is through them that we recognise people on pictures and our emotional attachment to them. The combination of internal and external perception recorded in the past by memory builds up through time to what we see now: a family history.

## **Tactility of family photographs**



Edwards argues that a photograph “is physically apprehendable, not only through vision but also through an embodied relation of smell, taste, touch and hearing” (2004:3). Similarly, Margaret Olin underlined that, “Touch conveys a sense of validation, evidence, proof”. In this sense, a photographic object connects us to the real through its tangible materiality, while the image transmits immaterial colour and light, thus referring to our sight, which, according to Berkley, is an illusion, unreal because of its intangibility. For Schwartz and James, “Through photographs, we see, we remember, we imagine: we ‘picture place’”. (2003:1)<sup>13</sup>. A family photograph by its materiality (object) and its immateriality (image: combination of light and colour) is a bridge between present time, real space, tangible object and past time; it is an illusionary space, an intangible image, an incessant coming and going between past, present, and future.

With this in mind, the first step was to classify family pictures (*see Figure 2,3,4,5 P-12*). The starting point was to open a plastic bag containing family photographs (*see Figure 2 p-12*); afterwards, I took a photographic object in my hand and I looked at it - or rather, my sight animated it. At this point, a shift occurred: the object in my hand suddenly became an image of my father (*see Figure 7 P-13*). From a present temporal reality, I shifted to an illusionary temporal reality (*see Figure 6,8 P-13*). My body was overwhelmed by emotions and my mind was travelling elsewhere; I realised that I had been conveyed to another spatio-temporal dimension. This photograph drove me to another place (*see Figure 8 P-13*), a place that had nothing to do with past, present, or future. Meanwhile, I had been conveyed in three different spatio-temporalities, which was a mental experience in an illusionary temporality and had nothing to do with the physical reality in which my body was located at this time - a time that was not, is not and will never be.

### **First step: classifying**



**Figure 2:** Abandoned objects in a plastic bag  
Cindy Auvray (Oct-2012)



**Figure 3:** Arranging objects in a box  
Cindy Auvray (Oct-2012)



**Figure 4:** looking at family pictures  
Nathalie Perrin (sept-2012)



**Figure 5:** arranging pictures  
Nathalie Perrin (sept-2012)

**Second step:** Remembering process





**Figure 6:** I am the shadow of my memory  
Nathalie Perrin (sept-2012)



**Figure 7:** Looking at the picture of my father  
Nathalie Perrin (sept-2012)



**Figure 8:** Illusion: a mental representation  
Cindy Auvray (Oct-2012)

This reflection highlights the time distortion stemming from the antonymic essence of the family photograph, due to the fact that they are both object and image. The tactility of photographs arises from the matter, which makes them tangible in space and time; in this

way, the photographic object attests to the reality of “the real”<sup>14</sup>. However, as I have already stated, photographs are not only tangible objects, they are also intangible images. The essence of the image matter constituted of light and colour cannot be touched. Therefore, according to Berkley’s hypothesis, the image is an illusion and does not belong to the real. Consequently, photography is the combination of an object, which is located in real present time, and an image, which is situated in an illusionary space-time. In this sense, photographs are antithetical by nature. In other words, the space within a photograph is represented in the mental space of the viewer, thus it belongs to another time space reality. By extension, photographs are somehow mental representations; therefore looking at a photograph could be considered as an illusion of the real.

### **Seeing family photographs: mental representations**

As previously mentioned, suspended lockets are located in the centre of the installation. (*Put a picture of suspended lockets?*) My intention is that they engage the body of the viewer as well as his or her sense of touch, thus emphasising that perception is not only a visual experience. They are identical and silent objects like the photographs inside them. The photograph inside can be only revealed when the locket is opened. Hidden pictures are silent due to the absence of a viewer; photographs do not speak on their own, they need the memory of a viewer to make them speak. In this sense, my personal archives do not speak about my own family history but trigger for each viewer the remembering of their own family history; their memories narrate my images.

*« We regard the objects that environ us, in proportion as they are adapted to benefit or injure our own bodies, and thereby produce in our minds the sensation of pleasure or pain.»*

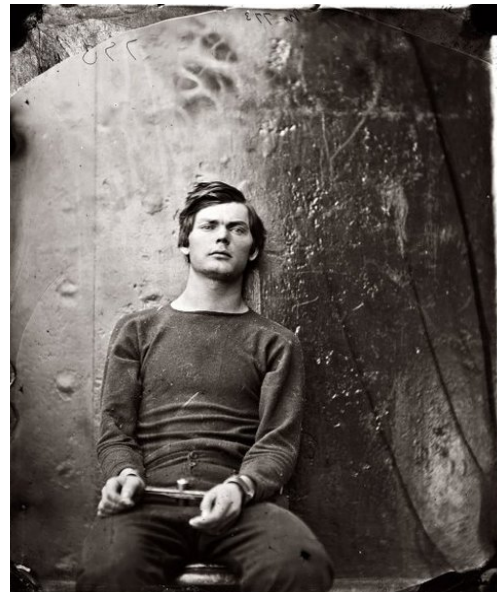
G. Berkley (1784(1969): 38))

Barthes maintains that, “The Photograph itself is in no way animated”; he talks here of the photographic object, which is cold and not subject to emotional changes. However, when he says, “it animates me”, he refers this time to the image, which triggers emotions and drives viewers to create “in (their) mind the sensation of pleasure or pain” and which created for Barthes “every adventure” (1980(2000: 20))<sup>15</sup>. When I regard a photograph of my father, I find that I cannot touch his image (by ‘image’, I refer here to colours and lights). However, this

same image touches me emotionally; suddenly, a painful feeling reaches me, my memory makes the image speak. However, I realise that what I see and what I feel is contradictory. What I see is an image of joy, while my feeling is painful. The contradiction is due to the fact that the image depicts a past moment, while my interpretation of the image is made in the present. I bring it back to life through a mental representation, carrying not only what the picture represents but also the suffering of its death. Looking at photographs is always a matter of perceiving images. The perception is the sum of an image depicting the past and a narration produced by a personal memory in the present time. Wright argues that, “the overlapping of accumulated impressions gives depth and mystery to our experience with time.”(1989:35) The voices I am hearing are not the voice of the photograph, but the voices of my memory. Pictures are in themselves always silent, they tell us nothing. They carry mystery, stemming from the fact they have different meanings for each viewer. In this sense, I suggest that images make nonsense of anything without a text anchor.

## **B- Family photographs: a matter of time relativity**

In *Camera Lucida*, the photograph of Lewis Payne by Alexander Gardner (*see figure 9*) is accompanied by the following text: “He is dead – and he is going to die”. This underlines how time is relative when we look at the picture and also how the text anchored to this picture can be interpreted in two different ways, according to knowledge of the historical context or lack of it.



**Figure 9: Lewis Payne**  
Alexander Gardner (1865)

It was Walter Benjamin who introduced the concept of, “the unconscious optics<sup>16</sup>” while Freud proposed “the hidden impulses of the mind”. Both terms assume that the photographic image’s status is one of an indexical sign, created by the combination of an image and the object of representation, such as a foot and its print in the sand.

## **Indexicality: the process of signification**



In other words, the indexical is the process of signification stemming from the fact that individuals see objects in their continuity or according to their connection to the world<sup>17</sup>. Likewise, people transform objects into signs quasi unconsciously by referring to their “systems of conventions”. However, perceiving images is also related to political orientation, emotional intensity, organisations we belong to, the familial context and so on. These beliefs and backgrounds shape individuals perception in terms of intensity, relevancy, legitimacy, space and time. In this sense, I would suggest that ethical decision-making is closely related to ‘systems of conventions’. For instance, my first idea was to erase the face of my father from the pictures, but I thought that it would be too violent. I could not do that to my mother. I could not use the original picture either. It was not just concerned with my memories, but with those of our whole family. I realised that these memories belong to each family member. Thus, I had no right to destroy them. The ethical questions that I raised emphasise how much individuals are attached to photograph-objects in contemporary society. They are clearly fetish objects<sup>18</sup>. Hence, I decided to take pictures of pictures so that I did not touch “the family memory”. *(I do not know if I can refer to our conversation and if I can quote you in my essay? But I think this idea is really interesting)* Moreover, through a discussion with *(my tutor or Corinne?)* an interesting point has been raised concerning the perception of my videos by someone external *(my memory)*. She shared with me her uncomfortable and violent feelings that she experienced when she watched the videos. *(I am not sure if it was exactly what you say - If you do not mind I would like to quote you)*. To be honest, I created these videos purely as an expression of my memory; I thought that they were reflecting my perception. However, I had never realised that the videos could trigger such violent feelings in someone who is not related to my family. It made me wonder how my mother would feel if knew about these reactions. Knowledge and life experiences constitute human memory and this functions as an intangible and muted narrative to perceive photographs. Human beings re-interpret their past in the present each time they refer to family photographs, even if members of their family are not depicted.

Marc Augé maintains that each existence has a narrative with a past and expectations for the future. As such, each person builds up life as a fiction<sup>19</sup>. The narrative I have created concerning my family photographs is unique and is different to the narratives of other members of my family. This confirms the idea that, “The photographic image always needs ‘a

reader' who remembers and narrates, who makes its muted story heard and felt". (????? L). In other words, an image is always a personal illusion, a reality belonging to someone's perception. Can we really talk about 'real' when reality is different for each of us<sup>20</sup>?

In "The search of lost time" (A la recherche du temps perdu)", Marcel Proust through his quest for authentic knowledge underscores that memory is both knowledge and imagination<sup>21</sup> when Walter Benjamin claims that "human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organised, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well"<sup>22</sup>. Consequently, the sense of perception changes through time because of what individuals have experienced at different points in their lives and nobody can reverse its process. For instance, I do not understand why I want to relive the purity of these lost moments through photographs, while also being fully aware that it does not make sense. Human beings cannot fight against time; living different temporal dimensions at the same time is metaphysically impossible. Time is like a river, which flows towards an end that it is impossible to reverse.

Einstein wrote, "(...) us physicists believe the separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, although a convincing one"<sup>23</sup>, while William Blake thought that past, present and future are concomitant time, "existing all at once"<sup>24</sup>. The relativity of time is also one of the paradoxes of photographs, formulated by Jussim as follows: "Photography has not stopped time. It has obliterated time" (1989:51). In the same vein, looking at my father's photographs seems to create an illusion of time in my memory due to the fact that the essence of past joys printed on silver paper are swept away by the mourning of my memory. The experience of looking at photographs seems to belong to another spatial-temporal dimension, as if the memory creates a suspended time in mental space, using past traces to narrate the past in the present yet moving toward future expectations. Time always works against memory by altering the essence of the past.

In his book 'Oblivion', Marc Augé highlighted that, "even when the narratives are not fabrications, products of the imagination or exaggerations", they still reflect, "the tension exerted by the expectation of the future on the interpretation of the past". It is clear that the

past is moving in the present through re-interpretations, while the present is suspended to make sense of the past. Remembering produces an abstract time, an involuntary memory characterised by the discontinuity of time operated by the unconscious. In fact, human perception is in conflict with time, with the different stages of our lives; individuals do not see life similarly as children, adolescents and adults. In this sense, time has an influence on photographic perception through experiences, which obviously shape the way we perceive the world and life.

This raises important questions: Do photographs lie to their viewers? Or is it instead all a matter of time and its impact on our memory to a certain extent, the narrative being incorporated into family pictures? Consequently, my practical work aims to raise awareness of the relativity of time that conveys images, converting photographic object to memory images. To do so, I made the room installation of suspended photographs in locket, which represent metaphorically frozen time, while I created moving images, which are a metaphor of the moving memory. This installation consists of two videos. The first one deals with the reconstruction of memory through the photographic image that is represented by the image of my deceased father. The second film underlines the alteration process (destruction) of the memory through time embodied by the theme of childhood. The videos are a series of photographs that decompose (video 2) and recompose (video 1) the image. The progression of the first video echoes the relationship between memory and time, while the second video highlights the impact of family photos on memory. Consequently, family photographs have become images of memory by alteration. In this way, the audience is able to see the relative notion of time that applies to both photographs and memory.

### **C- Duty of memory: time for narration, fiction & imagination**

Augé's hypothesis is that, "our relationship with time passes essentially through oblivion" (1998 (2004:25)). In fact, through my process of remembering, I had to face such an oblivion by going in search of my family memories. At first, it was disappointing and confusing, but then I realised that past traces have been reshaped step by step through my imagination, causing the overlapping of oblivion and imagination to give birth to a new intelligible story about my family history, thus demonstrating the narrative virtue of this oblivion. For instance images of the video are interspersed with black shots, which represent oblivion. The whole is



translated visually by flashbacks that mirror the impact of memory in the present. These flashbacks light up the suspended lockets, embodying the effect of the past on the present. The intangible nature of video symbolises the memory, the past and the illusion, in other words, the visual presence (illusion) of people who are physically absent. Consequently, when narratives are not fiction, they are always imagination, exaggeration or reinterpreted products of the past. To live the present through a reinvented past is to rewrite it as a "duty of memory"<sup>25</sup>, while altering the veracity of the past and family history. Memory and forgetting go hand in hand, one cannot be thought of without the other. Augé suggests, "a poor memory is cultivated" (1998:28), alternatively, people forget both what they do not need to remember and/ or do not want to remember. The fragmented nature of our remembering throws a veil over our memory, which is a jigsaw, while oblivion is the missing pieces. "Somewhere in the past, memory has done its work, recording details from a variety of sources. From that album of object and places, I selected the pieces appropriate to the fiction. Artefacts were jumbled with sensations." Wright. M (1989:34) Similarly, looking at a picture of my father and I, I feel that there is something quite difficult to describe in words: the remembering of a moment, a sensation, but not its total essence; there is something missing, but it is difficult for me to tell what it is. However, after two or three seconds, the image in my memory is clearer despite the fact that, seconds before, it was blurred. At this moment, I realise that my imagination has filled the black holes of my memory; my oblivion has been replaced in this present moment by my imagination. (*See video 1 - reconstruction of memory through photographs*). Hence, it is my understanding that looking at family pictures recalls both memories and oblivion at the level of consciousness in the present in order to maintain a sense of coherence and consistency

about family history; in effect, imagination works to fill the gaps of oblivion. So, the remembering is not only a matter of memory and this oblivion but also a matter of imagination. "The impression of childhood indelibly imprinted on a mind open and eager for sensation before it is cunningly attuned to ego satisfactions and evasions are the ideal circumstances for the nature destined to be an image maker." Wright. M (1989:35). Thus, remembering is an illusion; we use past traces and imagination to recompose history, which belongs to another time dimension; remembering is therefore a time distortion. In this way,

my souvenirs of my father attain the level of myth, encompassing Kuhn's argument about childhood stories, which connect to individual's past in a "way of reaching for myth, for the story that is deep enough to express the profound feelings we have in the present". (1995:1).

Viewers look at visual evidence<sup>26</sup> - in this case still and moving image - always after the fact; correspondingly, the analysis of experiences is always something emerging afterward. When viewers contemplate past images, they instinctively add a narrative to them, which is created by traces of memories combined with imagination. The videos in the installation stress visually the alteration of memory, revealing the effects of time on family memories. The lockets and photographs highlight the past conveyed by objects. Both tangible and intangible objects have been used to narrate the relativity of time. In so doing, my installation narrates fantasy, daydreaming, illusion and expectations.

The process of remembering takes place in the mental space where the past, present and future do not actually exist; rather, they occur "all at once". Locketts, tangible objects, occupy the physical space and contain photographs representing an invisible past, which can be made visible by opening the lockets. Metaphorically, the physical action required to open the lockets represents the opening of a door giving access to a mental trip into the familial past, just as the family album does. In this sense, family memory reaches into eternity, becoming a myth. My public installation shifts the meaning from my own family history to a collective family myth through the interaction of the audience and the installation.

## **II – Family photographs: from life to eternity**

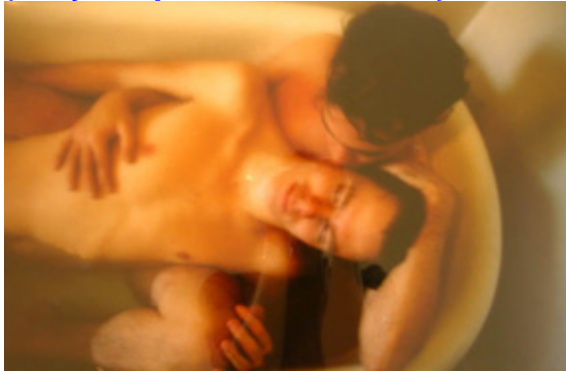
"Anyone can stop a man's life, but no one his death; a thousand doors open on to it."

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (Phoenissae)

I suggest that the making of family photographs is always concerned with the idea of preserving the past towards an unpredictable future, underneath which is contained the constant approach of death. Nan Goldin was obsessed with taking pictures. She recorded every aspect of her friend's life. When viewers look at her work, they see the dying process in life. "The ballad of sexual dependency"<sup>27</sup> depicts life and death. The condition of being human always involves the end because death inevitably wins out. "I thought if I

could photograph people enough, I could not lose them. When I look at pictures, I realise how much I lost". Nan Goldin's work is the visual diary of her life. Exhibiting her "family"<sup>28</sup> is a means for her to keep them alive. Somehow, they are still part of her life which emphasises that snapshots seem to be the perfect medium for reaching eternity, an elsewhere devoid of notions of time, thus turning family stories into history.

*(See if I keep this selection or not)*



**Figure 10:** Lewis and Matt in the tub  
Nan Goldin (1988)



**Figure 11:** Bruno's hand on Valerie's Shoulder  
Nan Goldin



**Figure 12 :** Cookie Muller in a restaurant in Positano  
Nan Goldin (1986)



**Figure13:** Gotscho kissing Gilles  
Nan Goldin (1993)

The unconscious desire to reach eternity is inherent in human nature whilst also reflecting the fear of the next ending<sup>29</sup>. With each second that passes, human beings are getting inescapably closer to the disappearance of their physical bodies. Photographs play the role of a mirror reflecting this reality, a reality that modern society denies, albeit unconsciously. In this section, I will consider how family photographs might mirror the dying process, evoking the camera as a mechanical time machine which records our path toward death. Photographs can thus be seen as a "certificate of death" to what has been but is no longer, and family albums as "testaments" towards eternity.

## **A – "Certificate of presence"<sup>30</sup> versus Certificate of death**

The mechanical time machine is a time killer: pressing the trigger to capture the moment also simultaneously kills it, while the result of the previous action gives birth to a photograph, triggering in human memory the process of resurrecting time. In the documentary 'Born into Brothels'<sup>31</sup>, Avijit expresses the eternal presence of photographic objects by saying that, "when a camera is in (his) hands, (he) can take a picture of someone, who has gone away, died or been lost. And have something (he) will be able to look at for the rest of (his) life". Morris compared photographs to "a brief immortality"<sup>32</sup>. Paradoxically, a photograph is the immortality of a dead moment, brought about by its tangible materiality and physical presence. Conversely, the "indexical power of presence" of the image printed on the object represents a death instant named by Barthes the "certificate of presence"<sup>33</sup>. In other words, snapshots are experiences, which have been captured; while this same picture can be seen as a testimony. Family photographs convey two antonymic notions: death and eternity, which create a temporal disjunction and paradoxical understanding of them. Family snapshots subsist after death. When I manipulate the photographs of my father, it is as if I was dancing with him. Somehow, his photographic representation attests of his presence. This dance makes me dizzy, as if the flow of time was too fast for me to remain totally conscious. This movement of coming and going between life and death and this contradictory feeling of his presence in his absence confronts me with my own future death<sup>34</sup>.

By nature, family photographs are proof, "certificates of presence"<sup>35</sup> of, "what has been"<sup>36</sup> while I suggest that they are also "certificates of death"<sup>37</sup>. "Certificate of presence" and "Certificate of death" are both antinomic terms revealing that, by their essence, photographs convey contradictory meanings. The presence of my father on photographs is tangible evidence that "he has been", while the absence of photographs after death is an invisible trace of "he is gone" since my mother has ceased to take family photographs, as if the whole family was dead. I will return to this later in the essay.

### **Time narration of family photographs – the present tense of eternity**

A month ago, I was looking at a picture and found myself describing it thus: "I am nine, and he is almost thirty. We are on holiday in a winter sport resort. Suddenly, I was surprised that my description of this picture involved use of the present tense as if I was still nine, he was

still thirty and he was still with me. I also noticed that my mother similarly uses the present tense to describe family pictures. In fact, when I am telling my friends or I recall to myself a family story through a photograph, I have this feeling of re-living this past moment in the present through the words I anchor to it. Do I talk about what I experienced in the past or rather about what I am living now at the time when I tell the story? I have the sensation that I am living the story about my past in the present by saying it. Using the present tense seems to shift a dead moment to an eternal one. Sandra Gilbert argues that using the present in the context of historical photographs "(...) helps (to) illuminate the aura of perceptual presentness that surrounds these ghostly presences"(2006:238). Also noteworthy here is Sontag's disassociation of the real world and image-world by making a time distinction between them both. The former is where things *are happening*, but nobody knows what *is going to happen* in the future. In the latter world, things *have happened*, and those things *will* occur in the same way eternally<sup>38</sup>. The confrontation between the real world and image-world causes time distortion. However, a contradiction resides in the fact that I know what is going to happen, but it is impossible to warn my father and the little girl I was; I am powerless in front of this impending situation. This ghost picture haunts my memory; I cannot go back in time, he is definitely going to die.

The photograph of my father and I confronted me with an incongruous relation to time. The fact that he was thirty then and that I am nearly that age now made me ponder on the fact that he could be my brother, my best friend, even my lover but certainly not my father; nonetheless, he is and is going to be forever. The photograph has locked his body in time. Eternity has reached him: he will never age. From now on, he will be eternally younger than me. The image-world has preserved intact his physical appearance, while the real world has made it inaccessible to me and to time passing. He has been stranded in time, while I am following its run, as he is dead. Gilbert insists that the confusion between life and death in photographs haunts us and complicates our grieving. (2006:222)<sup>39</sup>. Looking at this photograph confused me about who am I for him now. How are we now related as we are virtually the same age? Am I confused because I have confronted the eternal image-world as well as the real world where time matters? In fact, the root of my childhood trauma (after his death) was that one-day I would be older than him. This made no sense but still haunted me: how could

a daughter be older than her own father? It is not the normal order of life. To some extent, photographs do not follow the course of life. They stop it running.

## **B- Family album: Testament**

From birth, individuals head towards the farewell door behind which the body will disappear; it will remain only through the absence illustrated by the presence of snapshots in family albums, like eternal relics for religious remembering. My installation is a confrontation between life and death related to the following themes: presence, visibility and memory against absence, invisibility and oblivion. Presences are visible in the physical space through the immediate experience of the audience, who remember and narrate my family photographs through their own family history. Gibbons argues that Proust developed through his masterpiece the relationship between private understanding and its public expression, which has been used by many contemporary artists in their works related to memory<sup>40</sup>(2007:3). My creative process helped me to understand the relationship between memory and family photographs and my installation is the public expression of it. However, the installation temporary, designed to be disassembled and removed from the physical space, thus becoming both as absent and invisible as the loss in our family. Family snapshots do not narrate “death in the future” (2000: 96); instead, they reflect the constant death of human beings, something which advances with each passing second. The installation, through its ephemeral character, follows the same dying process. It is a testament composed of a “certificate of presence” and a “certificate of death”.

### **Family album: physical presence**

During one of our conversations, my mother confessed to me: “After someone dies, what you miss the most is the physical presence in your everyday life. The physical absence creates a physical tear. Looking at pictures, it is being amputated again”. From wife to widow, the physical absence is at the centre of her suffering. From my viewpoint, the family album works as a substitute for the physical presence of my deceased father. I enjoy going back to it because each time, I have the impression that I find something new about him and can know him better. While I cannot do this anymore in the real world, it is still possible in the image-world. This illusion comforts me time after time. Working on this project made it seem as if my father was with me permanently. In 30 years, it was the first time that I have spent so

much time with him. In an interview, the artist Sophie Calle evokes the presence of her mother through her work, saying that, "since she is dead. She has been with me all the time, I make shows for her, she travels with me, and we're talking about her right now. We're the closest we've ever been"<sup>41</sup>.

Conversely, for my mother, opening the family album is like opening an old wound, being confronted with his presence, a fake hope. Sometime after 27<sup>th</sup> March 1992, (the date of my father's death) my mother sold my father's "Nikon Minolta" and she has never taken family pictures since. My mother can no longer look through the camera; the frame has been reduced. The mirror of the camera has been broken; pieces have fallen apart, some are missing; Looking at the image reflected by the mirror depicts a broken family. Is it a suffering device? Does it personify death? Is it the illustration of an invisible trace of eternal mourning? From light printed on glossy paper to darkness as an invisible trace of nothingness: these bear witness to the passing of life.

On most occasions, if a relative stops appearing in a family album, it means that his/her body no longer exists, it has reached eternity where time does not matter anymore. Christian Metz underlines that, "Immobility and silence are not only two objective aspects of death, they are also its main symbols, they *figure* it"<sup>42</sup> (2003:140). In this sense, a lack of picture also involves a lack of narrative due to the fact that there is no support to trigger the memory. This lack of new pictures seems to be a way for my mother to freeze her memory; in so doing, the family history remains silent and immobile yet moving toward an eternal mourning. "No pictures" have stopped the process of physical aging for my father, my brother, my mother and I. There have been no photographic representations of any of us in the family album since then. Is this mirroring metaphorically the death of the whole family? All of us have been stranded in time.

### **Absence of picture: lover suffering**

From the viewpoint of a lover who has lost his or her other half, the meaning of "no picture" can be understood differently. Before the tragedy, my parents used to love each other in the same spacial-temporal dimension, which I will call "love together". The sudden loss of my father drove my mother to premature widowhood. However, the physical disappearance of my father did not remove her feelings of love but shifted this feeling into another spacial-

temporal time, which has become "a love alone". My family album is composed of multiple representations of my parents. What I see is almost just one person, reflecting them as two halves of a single self. Does the trauma of my mother concerning photographs come from that? "No pictures" mirror a deep trauma, an eternal mourning, which cannot be illustrated through pictures. Consequently, the loss for my mother was not only her husband but also the death of a couple and by extension, a part of herself. "No picture" denies the couple's death, to some extent, by being a metaphor for eternal love.

Funerals are not a place to take photographs; mourning is an internal process. Traces of suffering remain intangible in the photographic memory, where it can be hidden from the next generation. Hence, suffering is out of the frame, out of the family history. The reality of the family frame does not seem to be part of the duty of memory. The selection of taking or not taking photographs steers the discourse of family history. Thus, through time, eyes have dried and memories have become forgotten.

In the family album, life has disappeared to give way to death. On the glossy paper, our losses shape the images inside the album of eternity, but the eternity is in fact death and death is at the centre of each family history. Death reclaims the silence; the absence of pictures is a way of cutting out the narrative of family history. There is nothing else to say after passing through the farewell door.

## **C – Ghostly images**

The most disappointing thing about seeking for past traces is that I have not found what I was looking for. In fact, each time I look at my family album, I tend to resuscitate these lost moments. But conversely, the remembering confronts me with distortion, the oblivion driving me to face the failure of my own memory. The family album is an object to project fantasy and imagination through narration, which resurrects our loss through the phantasmagorical.



By means of conversations with my mother, I have discovered how much each of our memories tell us different stories about the same pictures, revealing distortion, and confusion in the chronological order of events, shaped by our individual emotions and sensations. Consequently, the memory of an image is never fixed. However, photographs shape our sense of reality because, in modern society, they are continually used to construct official histories. Indeed, families equally use their photographs to construct their own history, as if photographs and text were a model of accuracy, truth, and veracity.

### **The creative process: Deconstruction and reconstruction of the memory**

In this project, talk and correspondence with my mother took place in phase one of the artistic process. This was the deconstruction phase during which I confronted my mother's memories and mine by looking at family photographs. This brought about the deconstruction of the family myths that my memory had constructed over the last 20 years. There was no identity reconstruction or process of destruction before, but curiously I noticed during this process that both had been created almost simultaneously. Jo Spence balances both deconstruction and reconstruction in her work by saying that, "Basically you cannot deconstruct without a reconstruction process going on simultaneously as it does in photo therapy<sup>43</sup>, where each time you deconstruct you are already at the beginning of the next phase of putting things together again" (1988:186). Moreover, in their 'Photo-Therapy', Jo Spence and Rosy Martin consider that the needy child" within us all still needs to be seen and heard". This is what my project is really about: a way to speak loudly and be heard by my mother. I have always tried to speak to my mother about my father but this has always been difficult because I did not want to hurt her. So, I have remained silent for almost 20 years, waiting for her to be ready.

When I started to talk about my project, to my surprise, my mother was extremely enthusiastic and offered her help. I included her in my process and for the first time, we were talking about him. She shared her memories with me; by listening I was able to deconstruct my own memory by confronting both hers and mine. In so doing, I recreated my memory "by becoming the subject rather the object of my family history" (2006:403). In the end, I believe that my re-creating memory process was more a work of identity construction, identity which had been hidden by the cover of the family album. I became what Jo Spence has called, "the subject of my own dissonant history". (2006:403). My work mirrors the process of deconstruction and

reconstruction as an adolescent would have deconstructed the model given to her by her parents, building a new identity in order to exist on her own. The artistic process was a path towards a better understanding of myself. The creative process has many things in common with therapy, for example, it exorcizes childhood trauma. However, re-creating memory does not mean denying what happened in my past; rather, it involves adjusting memory in order to reduce the pain that goes along with it through an existence outside of the time/space of the trauma itself.

### **Haunted by photographs**

Photographs have a peculiar quality of haunting the memory, reminding the viewer of how much they have forgotten. For instance, in video: *Reconstruction* (*see video 2:*) the presence of my father is conveyed through the light and colour on photographs, while his physical absence has haunted my memory as a ghost image.



**Figure 14:** Image of the Video 2: *Reconstruction*

Cindy Auvray (Oct-2012)

In fact, through time, the physical image of my father has become blurred. Photographs are 'proof', attesting to his physical appearance, while the physical oblivion is ineluctable and irreversible. What I remember is a kind of bright soul that dazzles me. This mental image represents an unrecognizable white shadow. I suggest this may be the power of oblivion upon the memory.

While contemporary Western society in general seems to deny death, family photographs and videos bear witness to the fact that death is in fact an indisputable part of life. On pictures and in films, we see the process of ageing and its impact on the bodies of our relatives. Dying is a permanent state and life is its remission. What photographs and video share is their ability to record the process of dying and their power to watch over it. Video somehow resurrects my father. One of the videos in the installation shows blurred images becoming clearer, though never totally. These ghostly images, which gradually become come into focus, underline the fact that the event of our relatives' deaths tends to disappear from our

memories. The video reveals shadowy images that represent the physical appearance of my father, which has survived in my memory. Nevertheless, the process is reversed; an unrecognizable image becomes clearer, which is related to the remembering process that helped me to remember more clearly but never exactly or truthfully.

Transforming still images into moving images conveys the time effect upon memory and the impact of family photographs during the remembering process, which is at the centre of my project<sup>44</sup>. Using moving images allowed me to bring the dead into the space of the living and viewers into the space of the dead. Metaphorically, it is a dance between my father's ghostly images and me, one which suggests that when we are looking back, we are dancing with life and death in our memory. In a general sense, this ghostly presence in my installation aims to confront the viewer with death and encourages them to somehow engage in this dance.

The use of different media permits the conveying of different messages: contradictory as well as inextricably linked. It would hardly have been possible to express those messages inherent to memory and photography by using only one medium if we consider that "The medium is the message"<sup>45</sup>. In this sense, the installation appeared to be an appropriate medium to address issues related to memory and photography.

## **Conclusion:**

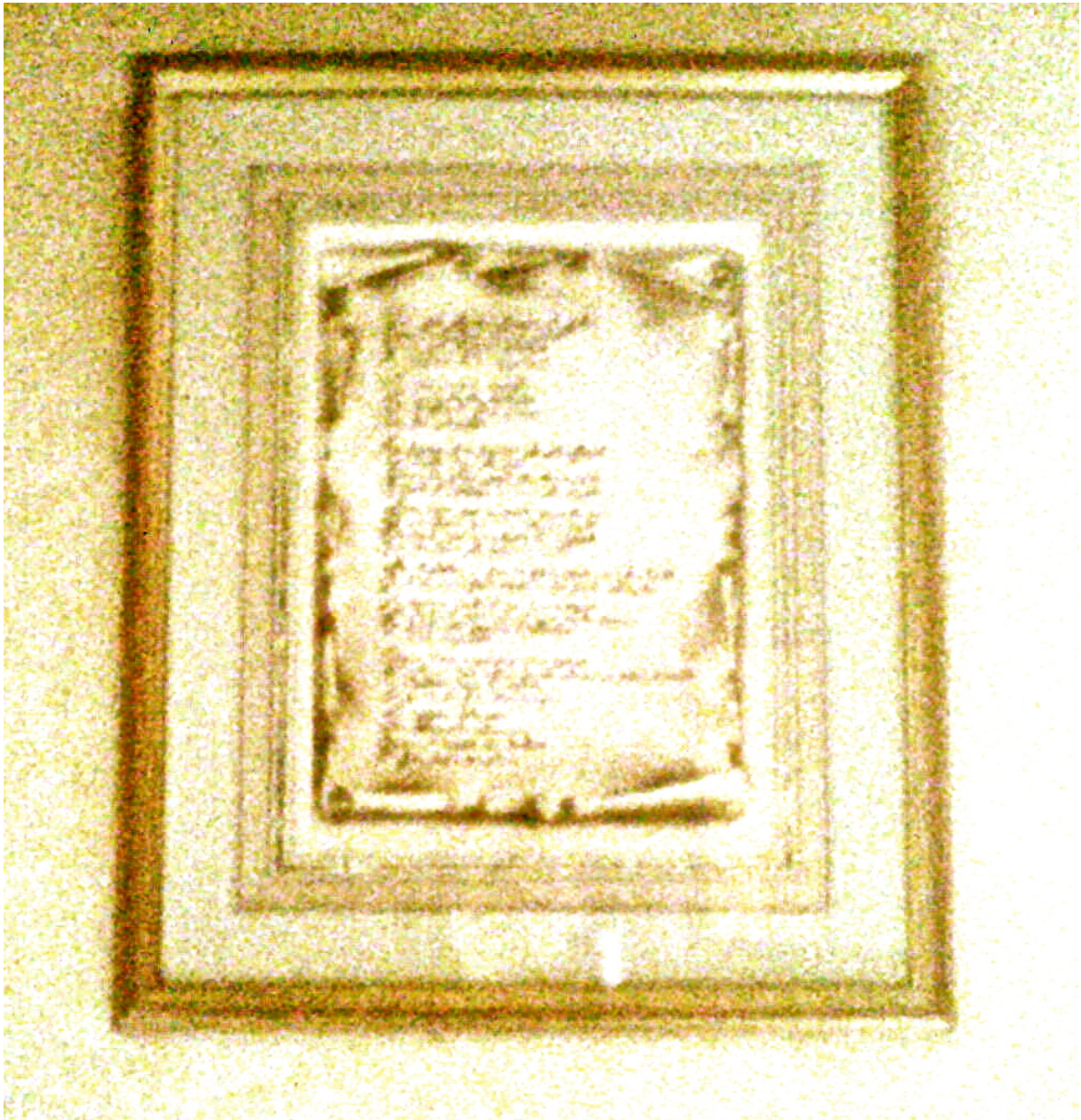
Through this essay, I have transfigured the abstract theme of memory by creating a concrete installation based on my personal experience. Family albums are composed of scattered stories; family members assemble them in a certain order to establish their own version of the family history. Decomposing my family albums facilitated the reconstruction of my family history by adding my own fictional narrative. The installation is called "the memory box". This name symbolizes picture boxes that are stored carefully and kept hidden in the corners of houses. I transposed my intimate picture boxes into an installation "The memory box" and simultaneously, my family memory became a collective family memory.

If pictures are silent and the memory is composed of knowledge, experience and imagination then, in this sense, the family memory can be considered as a fiction. This raises an important question concerning the history of humanity: can history be considered as a collective fiction? Is history re-narrated through time and perceived according to the dominant culture of a society?

Modern society uses photographs as never before: it is obsessed with memory as a ghost that haunts contemporary consciousness. This issue has never aroused so much passion. What does that mean? Is it an insidious way of expressing people's fears of losing their identity? What would a society look like without memory? Would it be like a nightmare? Would it mean that individuals would be devoid of their identity? In contrast, we can also see the memory as something troublesome, something that can prevent us from progressing. . A failure to remember may be one way to allow citizens to reinvent themselves on a daily basis. Lack of memory could be seen as a freedom opening a door all-possibility.

My next project will focus on photography as a medium for underlining multiple identities in one's self. Pictures freeze identities in time, but human identity is in constant motion, engaged in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the self. For instance, I was recently looking at snapshots of myself but I did not recognise myself. I knew it was me, but also it was not. Do pictures mirror a human's multiple self? As mentioned previously, my mother has not taken photos since the death of my father. Recently, I found photographs in a folder; at the back, it was written "Summer 1996". I am in practically all of the pictures. However, I do not recognise myself at all. Almost 14 years later, I realise how much my physical condition then was visually alarming. Why was she obsessed with taking pictures of me during this summer? Why did she decide to look through the lens again? When I asked my mother about it, she answered, " You were dying".

#### **Appendix 1: Poem in my mother's living room**



Poem to my mother in (1992)

Picture taken by my mother (Nov-2012)

This text shows that I had needed to talk for a long time – from this creation; it was the beginning of an eternal silence till now.

### **Appendix 3 poem: English translation**

#### **Pardon**

You are sweet, tender and pretty your face grows pale  
Because at this moment  
Misfortune has compromised you

Your life has been modified  
Because of your destiny  
of being the most loved  
of your thoughts

Lightning hit you with full force  
On a sad evening in May  
In deepest nudity  
When the clock stopped spinning

My heart is annihilated for life  
My soul has no respite  
And this feeling of contempt  
Continues to darken my life

My cowardice killed your cheerfulness and your kindness  
I have probably made you endure the worst atrocities

He left us with great regret  
He was not able to negotiate this unfortunate idea  
The gates of paradise waited for him  
With total impunity

Since we cannot love anymore  
A tiny part of us has ceased to exist

This misfortune will overwhelm us until the end of time.

Our hearts weep, our wounds remain  
The exhilaration of happiness will never silence our tears.



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#### **Artists**

Artist : Lorie Novak : <http://www.lorienovak.com>

Artist : Matthew Buckingham : <http://www.matthewbuckingham.net/index.htm>

Artist: Annette Messenger: [http://stephan.barron.free.fr/2/varela\\_messenger/profile.html](http://stephan.barron.free.fr/2/varela_messenger/profile.html)

#### **Museums and gallery**

Tate modern: [www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern](http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern)

Welcome Collection: [www.wellcomecollection.org/](http://www.wellcomecollection.org/)

Gallery Perrotin (gallery): [www.perrotin.com/](http://www.perrotin.com/)

Centre Georges Pompidou: [www.centrepompidou.fr/](http://www.centrepompidou.fr/)

MOMA: [www.moma.org/](http://www.moma.org/)

Whitechapel Gallery : [www.whitechapelgallery.org/](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/)

#### **Projects & Artists' work**

Dying Technologies: The end of 35 mm slide transparencies

[www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/dying-technologies-end-35-mm-slide-transparencies](http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/dying-technologies-end-35-mm-slide-transparencies)

“The Ballade of sexual dependency” diaporama + music (versions: Arles festival 2009)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIZJMS1wwsU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIZJMS1wwsU)

Arles festival 2009 – presentation of Nan Goldin Work - “Ballade of sexual dependency”

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxbxTRtiZlI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxbxTRtiZlI)

### **Web Articles:**

Nan Goldin “Rencontres d'Arles 2009 - Soirée de clôture Nan Goldin – « The Ballad Of Sexual Dependency » [www.photographie.com/archive/publication/105569](http://www.photographie.com/archive/publication/105569)

## **Exhibitions:**

Exhibition at WELCOME GALLERY- *Death: A self-portrait* (from 15/11/2012 to 24/02/2013): London.

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## **Artist interviews:**

Nan Goldin part 1: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ9-aSRvdf0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ9-aSRvdf0)

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Jonathan Caouette interview – Cannes festival 2011

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## **Filmography**

One-hour photo

Tarnation (2003)

Le plus beau jour du reste de ma vie “ the first day of the rest of my life (2008)

Looper (2012)

Vanilla sky (2001)

Walk away Renée

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<sup>1</sup> In Camera Lucida Roland Barthes used the term « Certificate of Presence ». « Every photograph is a certificate of presence » (2000 [1980]: 87).

<sup>2</sup> The topic of memory is ubiquitous in the works of contemporary artists. **Jo Spence, Christian Boltanski, Lorie Novak, Matthew Buckingham, Sophie Calle** and **Nan Goldin** have all explored the topic of memory in various different ways. **Jo Spence** was a British photographer. Her work plays with the personal, the political and the autobiographical. The exhibition “Beyond the family album “ at the Hayward Gallery in 1979 underlines how memory is related to identity. When she was diagnosed as having breast cancer, she decided to take photographs of the medical process she was going through. This visual diary highlights how she felt at that time. (See Spence, J. (1986) Putting myself into the picture: A political and photographic autobiography, Seattle: The Real Comet Press.)

**Christian Boltanski** is a French artist best known for his installations using archive photographs. A part of his work is related to the trauma of the Holocaust during the Second World War. Pervasive themes in his work are the memory, the unconscious, childhood and death. His work on memory focuses on historical memory, collective memory and post-memory. He questions the boundaries between absence and presence. According to him, photos and videos are presences and memories highlighting the disappearance of individuals instead of reviving them. See Grenier, C. (2011) *Christian Boltanski*, Paris: Flammarion.

**Lorie Novak** is an American artist who uses various media to explore key issues related to memory such as identity, loss, presence and absence. She also explores the relationship between the intimate and the public and the shift from personal memory to collective memory. See [www.lorienovak.com/](http://www.lorienovak.com/).

**Matthew Buckingham** is an American who utilises photography, film, video, audio, writing and drawing; his work questions the social memory in contemporary life. His projects create physical and social contexts in order to steer viewers towards questioning what is most familiar to them. See [www.matthewbuckingham.net/](http://www.matthewbuckingham.net/).

**Sophie Calle** is a French artist who uses different media such as photography, writing and cinema. For over thirty years, her artistic work has been closely related to her own life, which can be seen as a testimony of her life. Sophie Calle's work seeks to build bridges between art and life. The different media she uses allow her to build situations involving, in the words of Christine Macel, “*une image est une narration, autour d’un jeu ou d’un rituel autobiographique, qui tente de conjurer l’angoisse de l’absence, tout en créant une relation à l’autre contrôlée par l’artiste* » in the catalogue Marcel, C. (2003) *M’as-tu vue*, Centre Georges Pompidou Paris English translation "An image is a narrative around a play or autobiographical ritual, that tends to stave off the anguish of absence, while creating a relationship with the other controlled by the artist". (English translation.) Sophie Calle also discusses absence. Since the death of her mother, many of her projects are related to the death and absence of her mother.

**Nan Goldin** is an American who was the first photographer to use snapshots for artistic purpose. Her work is a visual diary that tells the viewer about every aspect of her life with her friends. Her work has been presented in different formats such as photographic exhibitions, books and slideshows with sound recordings. Her work is about the condition of being human, which can be viewed as a visual diary. It is a family album working as a testimony of a lost era. (See Goldin, N. and Heiferman, M. (1986) *The ballade of sexual dependency*, New York: Aperture.

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<sup>3</sup> Later in the essay, I will refer to a poem I wrote for my mother. I gave it to her as a Christmas gift in 1992. The weight of the words in this poem underlines clearly my need to talk about my deceased father with her to share the pain.

<sup>4</sup> Rowlinson, M.; Booth, C.; Clark, P.; Delahaye, A and Procter, S. Social (2009) remembering and organizational memory, *Organization Studies* 2010 31: 69 originally published online 12 November 2009, SAGE. <http://oss.sagepub.com/content/31/1/69>

<sup>5</sup> Rowlinson, M. ; Booth, C. ; Clark, P. ; Delahaye, A & Procter, S. Social remembering and organizational memory, *Organization Studies* 2010 31: 69 originally published online 12 November 2009, SAGE. <http://oss.sagepub.com/content/31/1/69>

<sup>6</sup> Tulving, E. (1984) Précis of elements of episodic memory in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* / Volume 7 / Issue 02 / June 1984, pp 249-250 : Cambridge University press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00044538> .Published online: 04 February 2010

<sup>7</sup> JAMES, W. (1890) *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vol.

<sup>8</sup> GARRY, M. & GERRIE, M.P. (2005) *When Photographs Create False Memories*, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2005 14: 321, SAGE. <http://cdp.sagepub.com/content/14/6/321>

<sup>9</sup> See BERGSON, H. (1939) *Matière et mémoire: essai sur la relation du corps et de l'esprit*, Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France, 1965, 72e édition, 282 pp. Collection: Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. See AUGÉ, M. (2001) *Les Formes de l'oubli*, Paris: Petite Bibliothèque, Rivages poche Payot. See RICOEUR, P. (2006) *Memory, history, forgetting*, Chicago : University of Chicago Press. See SALTZMAN, A. (2006) *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, London: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>10</sup> « Certificate of Present »: Roland Barthes' term in *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage (2000 [1980]).

<sup>11</sup> By disjunction I created the term "Certificate of death", referring to Roland Barthes' terms « Certificate of Present » in *Camera Lucida*. I will explain this term in the second part of my essay.

<sup>12</sup> In SACKS' book « *The man who mistook his wife for a hat* » London: Duckworth (1986) Sacks relates to a case study of his patient. The disease of this man was such that he could not identify facial expressions such as passion, surprise, disgust and so on. For instance: "*there were photographs of his family, his colleagues, his pupils, himself. (...) He recognised nobody*" *On the top of that he showed an indifference or blindness of perception. Visually, he was lost in a world of lifeless abstractions. The patient Mrs P did not have a real visual world, as he did not have real visual self, but he did not know. Although, he had no body image, he had body music. This man had wholly lost the world as representation but wholly preserved it as music or will.*"

<sup>13</sup> In SCHWARTZ, J. M. and RYAN, J. R. (2003) *Picturing photography and the geographical imagination place*, New-York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

<sup>14</sup> I explore the notion of the real later in this essay.

<sup>15</sup> In BARTHES, R. (2000 [1980]) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage. p-20

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<sup>16</sup> In Marianne Hirsh's book "*Family frames photography narrative and postmemory*" she explains that : "The camera is like psychoanalysis. There are optical processes that are invisible to the eye: they can be exposed by the mechanical process of photography. The camera can reveal what we see without realizing that we do, just as psychoanalysis can uncover what we know without knowing (?) that we do: what is stored in the unconscious." (1997:118)

<sup>17</sup> Christian Metz in his essay "photography and fetish" refer to Pierce's linguistic theory by saying: "Pierce called indexical the process of signification (semiosis) in which the signifier is bound to the referent not by a social convention (= 'symbol'), not necessarily by some similarity (=icon), but by an actual continuity or connection in the world: the lightning is the index of the storm. In this sense, film and photography are close to each other; both are prints of the real objects, prints left on a special surface by a combination of light and chemical action. This indexicality, of course, leaves room for iconic aspects, as the chemical action image often looks like the object (Pierce considered photography as an index and an icon).

<sup>18</sup> See Christian Metz's essay Photography and fetish in Wells, L. (2003) *The photographic reader*, London : Routledge. Chapter 16. P-139 – 145.

<sup>19</sup> In AUGÉ, M. (2001) *Les Formes de l'oubli*, Paris : Petite Bibliothèque, Rivages poche Payot. P-47.

<sup>20</sup> For the thematic of the real in photography see, Baudrillard, J. (2005(2007)) *the intelligence of evil or the lucidity pact*, Oxford; BERG. Grundberg, A. (2010) *crisis of the real: writings on photography*, New York: Aperture. See, Rosset, C. (1993) *Joyful cruelty: toward a philosophy of the real*, Oxford :oxford university press. Cowie, E. (2011) *Recording reality, desiring the real*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. BAUDRILLARD, J. and Guillaune, M. (1994(1998)) *Radical Alterity*, Los Angeles : Semiotext.

<sup>21</sup> In "The Senses of Consciousness: Swann's Way in Half". The idea is illustrated by the following quotation "It is the same in life; the heart changes and that is our worst misfortune; but we learn only from reading or by imagination; for in reality is alteration, like that of certain natural phenomena, is so gradual that, even if we are able to distinguish, successively, each of its different state, we are still spared the actual sensation of change" (Kindle book - emplacement- 1399) Kindle edition. Google book - P79

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin, W. ( ) *The work of art in the Age of mechanical reproduction*

<sup>23</sup> Einstein, Albert, Letter to Michele Besso's Family. Ref. Bernstein, Jeremy., *A Critic at Large: Besso*. The New Yorker (1989).

<sup>24</sup> Quotation in William Blake poème « Jérusalem » plate 15 « I see the Past, Present and Future existing all at once before me.

<sup>25</sup> In AUGÉ, M. (2001) *Les Formes de l'oubli*, Paris : Petite Bibliothèque, Rivages Poche Payot. The author refers to the duty of memory throughout his book.

<sup>26</sup> When I talk about visual evidence I refer to still images and moving images.

<sup>27</sup> In the documentary "In my life", the artist Nan Goldin explains that her work has always been misunderstood. Most people thought that it was about a certain milieu of drugs and underground parties. "The work is about the condition of being human and the pain".

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<sup>28</sup> Nan Goldin talks about her friends always as her family; in this sense her work is closely related a family album. She describes herself not as a fine art photographer, but rather as a portraitist and diarist. She refers to her work as a visual diary.

<sup>29</sup> In the article by COULEHAN, J. L. (2006) *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve*, some question about how people would prefer to die were asked. The answers given reflect clearly the fear of a painful death, while they underline that most people prefer to deny it rather than think about it. "If asked how they would prefer to die, most people would answer, "die in my sleep" or "drop dead suddenly." (...) "I'm not afraid of death," they are likely to say. "It's just the process of dying I dread." Recently, I overheard an acquaintance say, "I can't imagine how depressing it would be to know that you are actually going to die." But how can you not know? (...)". This book deals with death in the modern world. Modern human beings see death as an ending. However, in ancient Egypt, the afterlife was central to and embedded in their society. This led to their use of mummification. See Casson, L. (1975) *Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. In Buddhist philosophy, karma can span more than one lifetime. Rebirth is an important tenet. It is the process of being born over and over again in different times and different situations, possibly many thousands of times. Rinpoche, S. (2002) *The Tibetan book of living and dying*, San Francisco: Rider.

<sup>30</sup> In *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes used the term « Certificate of Presence ». « Every photograph is a certificate of presence » (2000 [1980]: 87).

<sup>31</sup> In the book of OLIN, M. (2012) *Touching photographs* (2012:61)

<sup>32</sup> MORRIS, W. (1999) *Timepieces: photographs, writing and memory*, New York: Aperture. p-7

<sup>33</sup> BARTHES, R. (2000 [1980]) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage. p- 87

<sup>34</sup> Barthes expressed the same feeling in his book *Camera Lucida*: "each photograph always contains this imperious sign of my future death" - BARTHES, R. (2000 [1980]) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage. p- 97

<sup>35</sup> BARTHES, R. (2000 [1980]) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage. p- 87

<sup>36</sup> BARTHES, R. (2000 [1980]) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage. p-100

<sup>37</sup> I used the term "Certificate of Death » as a logical disjunction from Roland Barthes' terms « Certificate of Presence » in *Camera Lucida*. A photograph reveals a death instant or moment, in so doing, the term "Certificate of death" seemed to me appropriated term to condense this definition. (2000 [1980] : 87)

<sup>38</sup> In SONTAG, S. (2008[1973]) *Sur la photographie*. Paris : Christian Bourgeois (2008 :228) and in the English version SONTAG, S. (1979[1977]) *On Photography*. New York: Penguin. (1979 :168) « In the real world, something *is* happening and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen in that way.

<sup>39</sup> Quotation "the confusion between live and death, with photographs haunts us, complicates grieving, and our strategies for denying our own mortality and those we love"

<sup>40</sup> In GIBBONS, J. (2007) *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance*, London: I.B.Tauris (2007:3).



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<sup>41</sup> In Pfeiffer, A. (2010) ALL about her mother : Sophie Calle, international review, art in america. 11/05/2010. <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2010-11-05/sophie-calle-palais-de-tokyo/>

<sup>42</sup> Christian Metz, *Photography and Fetish* (1985) in Wells, L. (2003) *The photographic Reader*, London : Routledge. P-140

<sup>43</sup> See Berman, L. (1993) *Beyond the smile: the therapeutic use of photograph*, London :Routledge. Case,C. and Dalley, T. (1992) *Working with children in art therapy*, New York : Routledge. Dalley, T (1984) *Art as therapy an introduction to the use of art as a therapeutic technique*, London: Routledge.

<sup>44</sup> The distinction between still images and moving images is beyond the scope of this essay, but for a discussion of still and moving images, see Christian Metz, Camapany, D. (2008) *Photography and cinema*, London: Reaktion. Berger, J. (2010) *ways of seeing* London: Penguin

<sup>45</sup> The medium is the message is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan meaning that the medium embeds itself in the message. Consequently the medium influences how the message is perceived. See *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964).