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Nowhere

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Nowhere

A thesis

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Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art

by

Danielle Winger

May 2015

Mira Gerard, Chair

Amanda Hood

Andrew Ross

Keywords: Painting, Memory, Home, Landscape, Time, Bed
The artist discusses her Masters of Fine Arts exhibition, Nowhere, held at the Tipton Gallery located in downtown Johnson City from March 30 through April 9, 2015. The works included in the exhibition consist of a collection of oil paintings on both canvas and panel, and a series of mixed media collage paintings that explore how time and memory affect her personal connection to spaces she has inhabited.

Ideas discussed include painting, process, cropping, memory, selective memory, forged memory, false memory, fragmenting, dreams, childhood, mnemonic image, time, simulacra, simulation, home, beds, bedrooms, bathrooms, abstracting imagery, landscape, Freud, Lacan, Gaston Bachelard, and the influences of illuminated manuscripts, Alexander Kanevsky and Adrian Ghenie.
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If any one faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient; at others, so bewildered and so weak; and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond control! We are, to be sure, a miracle every way; but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting do seem peculiarly past finding out.

JANE AUSTEN, Mansfield Park

I envision my mind as a filing cabinet. Each individual file is reserved for a home I once lived in. They are organized chronologically by the years in which I lived in them and some overlap in the cities that I moved to and from and back again. Somewhere along the way this filing cabinet was dropped, the contents of the files spilled out and intermingled with each other. The homes within them became hybrids, a long string of images that had no entrance or exit.

For as long as I can remember I have had a recurring series of dreams in which I walk in through my front door and I recognize the house as my own. Sometimes it is the foyer in New Orleans, other times it is the front room of Kansas City. I can't be sure which house this is, so I survey the room, searching the space for some shred of recognition. Once I have deciphered which residence this room belongs to, I step back outside to verify that the exterior matches the interior. It never matters, for when I walk back in, it is not always the same room I just left.

In the fall of 2013 I began to read Poetics of Space, by Gaston Bachelard. In it I found a short quote which contained two of the most relatable sentences I had ever read. It jumped off the page, and without any context, became the seedling in which a complete body of paintings emerged from. “It is not so much for you, my friend, who never saw this place, and had you visited it, could not now feel
the impressions and colors I feel, that I have gone over it in such detail, for which I must excuse myself. Nor should you try to see it as a result of what I have just said; let the image float inside you; pass lightly; the slightest idea of it will suffice for you.” This quote embodied such a strong poetic image, that I began to wonder how to create a visual language that could be as much, if not more, communicative of personal experience. From memory, I began to paint every home I had ever lived in, and every bed I had ever slept in. I began to build a relationship with the surface of the paintings. Each time I have returned to a painting, I would revisit the memory, but the internal visual resource for the memory slightly changed with each recount. Through this process, the paintings began to mimic the very nature of memories and their evasiveness. This resulted in an image that is consistently hovering between representation and abstraction, where the layers reveal the many attempts to depict a specific memory in time.

Throughout my three years in graduate school I had been working with ideas of home, geography, place and, more specifically, the designing of such places. Although I consistently approached these ideas through painting, I varied the approach categorically. I began with figurative painting, identifying with the figure as emblematic, representing ideas about human existence. These figures would interact with their surroundings, but they were non specific and I could never quite figure out how to fit them into these spaces. I found that I relied too much on the figure to carry a narrative, when really it was the space that I was interested in. I moved on from this to work primarily with architectural structure. These structures were inspired by artificial and manmade organizations. I attempted to create paintings that were considered abstract, using tape to create hard edges, but allowing those edges to intermingle with more organic shapes, such as in my early painting Extraction (Fig 1). I found that the superficial aspects of these paintings commented on the way that people possess a space or home, in that they decorate and design these spaces as a way of nesting, or turning a house into a home. The paintings in turn were decorative, elegant even, and marketable, which left me
feeling insincere about the work.

Although I eventually abandoned these paintings, they led me to reorient my direction and further my investigation of house and home. It intrigued me how people devote so much time to satisfy an animalistic urge to mark their territory and create a “home base”. Through these explorations I realized that my work has always been closely associated with space, and more specifically, how I occupy it. Around the same time that I abandoned these paintings I began taking portrait commissions. These portraits coincided with an Old Master's class I was taking that focused on teaching specific methods that were utilized by old master painters. Between harnessing the methodology taught in that class, and the speed in which I was producing commissioned portraits, I broadened my understanding of paint and the versatility of the medium, making my practice and process not only more intuitive, but
informed as well. My painting practice went full circle, from my entrance as a figurative painter, to the departure into abstract painting, and finally to my arrival at the meeting of the two in harmony (Fig 2). In hind sight, each new “style” of painting, like a series of hats to try on, became a metaphorical stand in for each of the houses in which I once lived.

(Fig. 2) Unmade Bed
CHAPTER 2

NOMAD

There is an urgency within me to define myself through place. This obsession stems from a displaced perception of home. I have been a transient individual since I was born. I moved with my family, on average, every two years. I lived in numerous homes and in several communities. Although individualistic, people tend to characterize themselves through their relationships and proximity to others. We can identify with specific terminology that is generally related to where we are geographically located; I.e “Southern”, “Northern”, Midwestern” etc. These words not only help us to find our identity but help us to relate to, and communicate with, others as well, especially those that are from places outside of our own. I have no such words to describe myself.

This urgency has led me to create paintings in hopes of understanding how time and memory (Fig 3) Three Doors
has shaped my relationship to the homes and places I once lived in. Each painting I create depicts a space that I once inhabited, be it a bed or a bathtub. I tend to be drawn towards the more intimate spaces in the home, specifically bedrooms and bathrooms. Some of these spaces are direct depictions of the room, with details of furniture and décor. Other paintings depict the general layout, some sans any furniture. The difference between these paintings can be time, or the actuality of the space, meaning whether this is a space I directly remember, or indirectly recall through dreams or influence. In my painting *Three Doors* (Fig 3), I try to depict my bedroom in Kansas City sans any of the furniture. At times when I painted I imaged it as being a move in day, at other times I was moving out. It made little difference, for my attachment to the room remained the same, with shreds of evidence on the floor of the room, or the rack of the closet hinting that I do, or had once inhabited the space. This same bedroom was the bedroom in which my canopy bed had existed. The bed being such a prominent part of this series, I wanted to challenge myself to expand the memory and visualize the space around the bed. When I began this painting I was remembering what it felt like to look at potential houses with my parents. My siblings and I would race through the house and claim the room that would be our bedroom. This activity always gave me such anxiety, because although I knew the bedroom would inevitably be impermanent, I understood the importance of choosing a space that would be my own, for however short that might be.
In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Beaudrillard explains that a simulacrum is an image or representation of someone or something that depicts a certain thing on the surface level, but does not claim to be that thing, while a simulation is the act of simulating with the intent to deceive. It is a surface resemblance or imitation of the thing which becomes impossible to distinguish from the thing itself. Upon face value, the two things can be misconstrued as the same.

It is important to note that simulacra in painting is not necessarily a new endeavor, in that every image that has ever been created to represent a thing is arguably a simulacrum of that thing. For me, the notion of simulacrum is interesting in contrast with iconoclasm, the assertion that by endeavoring to create the image of God, or a thing that can not be described visually because it has no reference, results in the death of the thing itself. By representing God, or Christ as a man and defining the human features of these beings, the image has been replaced by the figure, therefore God ceases to exist. The image of God came to be known as the “graven image”.

The idea of the “graven image” as related to representational painting can be applied by arguing that the “thing” and the image of the “thing” cannot exist at the same time. Then how does this apply to memory? Memory is an abstract thing, it cannot be proven nor disproven. It is subjective in nature, and impressionable by time. By visually describing a memory, or creating an actual image of the memory, the image has the power to dethrone the memory, possibly rendering it obsolete. Once the representation of the memory is created, or exists, the memory can no longer be all the things that it was before, it can only exist as this one version of itself and is left to be interpreted in this one way by those who view it.

I arrived at this conclusion after much deliberation and critical thinking about historical
portraiture. Prior to photography, portraiture was the primary way of capturing the unique attributes of a person, creating a kind of immortalization, memorializing the powerful, royal and rich. Before there was photography, drawing and painting were some of the only ways to document anything pictorial. Portraits such as Gilbert Stuart's *George Washington* (Fig 4) are of great value and importance because

![George Washington portrait](image)

(Fig. 4) Gilbert Stuart. George Washington, 1796

portraits such as this are our only means of knowing what Washington actually looked like.

George Washington's likeness is used on numerous objects such as the dollar bill and Mount Rushmore, two objects that Americans have daily and casual interaction with. We the people have full and complete trust that we know what this man looked like, from head to toe, because we have documentation through painting and drawing. But what if the painter did not truly capture his likeness? The portraits of Washington have replaced his actual being, they are the thing that has replaced the original, our only true connection to a great man of history. Washington has become an object, a relic, we can no longer assume him to look any other way than the way in which he has been documented. In
this way, memories are the same. Regardless of whether our descriptions of our memories are accurate, once they are put to paper and viewed by others, they cannot be anything other than the way we have described them.

I have reoccurring dreams, that when I wake I cannot tell the difference between the dream and reality. This is what I consider to be Beaudrillard's simulation. I can remember my former residences so intimately that they begin to transform and morph into hybrids of themselves in my mind, producing moments when I cannot tell whether those things are really happening to me or if they are merely happening in a dream. My paintings that depict such spaces, through memories and dream states, shift and jitter as if they cannot sit still, like a child awaiting the verdict of punishment. The anxiety that the painting exudes stems directly from these experiences. Part of my studio process to tame this anxiety has been to paint these experiences (spaces), in an attempt to replace them, to take back some ownership and control over the memory.
Nicholas Dames, author of *Amnesiac Selves*, explains that nostalgia is a form of “retrospect that remembers only what is pleasant and only what the self can employ in the present; … [it is] an absence; what it lacks is what… has come to be regarded as memory in its purest form” Etymologically, *nostalgia* is broken down into 'nostos' which means to return home, and 'algos' which means pain. Nostalgia is a unifying theme throughout this body of paintings. Nostalgia, ironically, has a positive connotation that is associated with longing and wistfulness. But in its true form it creates a painful homesickness. To me, nostalgia has a fantastical side. In regards to the bedroom, my nostalgia is strongest in a tangle of sheets, plaster walls and real wooden blinds. These things may or may not have existed in each of my homes, but they do exist in my romantic fantasies, the secret things in which we desire to fulfill our urge to feel “at home”. In this way I can rewrite my own history through forged memories. Although each memory I have is based in truth, some are more so than others. I can not explain why I have a nostalgic feeling for claw foot tubs, for I have never had one before, but I can conjure the feeling of cold ceramic against my flesh as if I had spent countless evenings in one. It maybe in the way they have entered me through literature, or through others retelling of their love of them, but somewhere along the way a claw foot tub forged itself as memory in my mind.
When I began *An ideal bathroom* (Fig 5) and *Claw foot in Gold Green* (Fig 6), it was with these thoughts in mind. In my ideal bathroom, I would include a claw foot tub. The “ideal” has played a big part in my work and, I believe, plays a big part in the experience of nostalgia. For me, although I never experienced a claw foot tub in one of my own homes, I experienced it through literature and cinema, in
which the ideal staging of a bathroom included the tub and I was able to role play and imagine myself as inhabiting the space. Through such experiences, the claw foot tub forged itself as a memory of space that brings direct pleasure to me. When I painted these two paintings, I incorporated such radical color schemes to push the idea of the fantastical side of nostalgia, paying close attention the the dream veils that separated me from the object itself.

With each of the homes I have lived in and recreated through these paintings, I relive my personal history in those spaces. They are not just spaces filled with furniture I remember, but the experiences I had with in them as well. Each of the paintings, in the end, create new truths. With each move I experienced a sense of loss. Nostalgia has become a useful compensatory tool enabling me to create an ideal history, or quite possibly a 'golden age' history. Although the truth lies within the illusion, I can recreate, or relive, each history separately, albeit delusionally. Atilla Silkü wrote about memory and nostalgia having both spatial and territorial connotations, either idea or real, positive or negative (Silku, 1). The way a space imprints on our memory is directly connected to the emotional state in which the occupant was. This can be summed up by majority as well, if a space is inhabited for an extended period of time and the majority of the time spent there was happy, then the memory of that space will have a positive connotation.
The ways in which memory is linked to space affects the way in which I approach the painting. The decisions on scale, color scheme, temperature and mood all depend on the way I “feel” about the memory. When I began painting Mother's Vanity (Fig. 7), I conjured up an image of my mother's old vanity, that traveled from house to house with us, but that she set up identically at each house. I always stayed a healthy distance away from her vanity, it was covered in breakables and filled with accessories I couldn't even begin to understand as a little girl. The safe distance that I kept really determined the perspective in which I painted this vanity, from a distance and short stature. The color scheme a soft pink, a little girl's dream. The drawing wrong and skewed, affected by time and subjectiveness. Attaching nostalgia to this and other memories allows me to create an ideal space that is both real and ideal, it becomes Zizek's “third pill”, the truth within the illusion.
CHAPTER 5
PINK CANOPY AND OTHER BEDS

(Fig. 8) Pink Canopy

The way my paintings are structured, in the way that they lack the structure, is a nod to the acknowledgement of the impossibility of a definitiveness of paintings by making non definitive paintings. The construction of such spaces is directly related to the way I remember the space depicted, this can be manipulated by time and the age in which I was while I inhabited said space. When I began the painting Pink Canopy, I chose this particular bed because the image had imprinted itself clearly in my mind as a central figure in my childhood landscape. I recognize this particular painting as being centrally focused for how this whole body of work came to be. The bed spans a time from which I cannot tell whether recollections are my own or told to me through family. It is the first bed I can remember completely, from the first bedrooms I recognize through my own reflection. Although it is significant that the bed is from childhood, it is not as important for me that the image comes from a specific day or time, for Bachelard points out that “for a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates (Bachelard).”
*Pink Canopy* (Fig 8) conjures an image from memory of my childhood bed. My memories of the bed straddle my life in two different houses, one in Las Vegas and one in Kansas City. The bed was a twin size, the frame had four posters made of a cold white metal that connected to an arched canopy on top. At the time, I was consumed with pink. Pink everything. My mother handmade a ruffle that hung from the four exterior bars of the canopy. The ruffle was made of the same pink and white striped material from the bedspread, sheets, pillow cases and bedskirt. The fabric was double sided, with varying widths of stripes, bold and wide on one side and narrow on the other. I have few images of the actual bed, at least nothing significant enough to reference for painting but, I have an acute memory of all the beds I have ever slept in and I can recall this bed in its most intimate details.

This painting is cropped almost as if the viewer exists in an ethereal space, somewhere between floating and resting on the bed, as if the space is devoid of gravity. The space is lacking of a horizon line or ground creating an atmosphere that suggests a delicate balance of emptiness and presence. The drawing of the space, and particularly the bed, is “wrong” in a way, but although the information there isn't all completely correct, it still “sort of” tells the truth. The entirety of the painting is created in a dull and dirty pink, not unlike the color of Pepto-bismol; the value range is narrow with no deciphering light source. The gestured approach of brushstrokes blurs and interrupts the edges, creating an uncertainty of placement. This culmination was a mixture of intentional and unintentional marks and resulted from the exploration of painting from memory. The space that the bed exists in is bereft of any other items, which begins to illustrate the selective aspects of memory. Bachelard writes that “the abnormal nature of the image does not mean that it is artificially produced, for the imagination is the most natural of faculties (Bachelard, 225).” I believe that this extends to images that are based in memory, there will always be a sense of fraudulence to these images, but they are based in truths. They are the reality within the illusion.

*Pink Canopy* is completely painted from a monochromatic pink, the implications being that this
bed belonged to a little girl. Although it is true that this pink bed came from a pink room with a pink
dresser accented in pink hearts, I was not a typical little girl, and I recognize the pink I chose as being
flat and dreary. I may have owned a doll and doll houses, barbies and stuffed animals, but I was an
athlete, a gymnast, a book nerd and a tomboy. Being surrounded by these things never bothered me, in
actuality I used them as an escape mechanism. I was always enthralled with the idea of being more than
one kind of person, these yearnings came from the fictional books I read and the characters I fell in
love with. I often had a hard time deciphering the parts of me that were inherently mine, and the parts
that I stole from my beloved characters. Although there was a disingeniousness to the bedroom, it was
mine and the things within the room traveled from house to house with me.

“A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We are
constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the
house (Bachelard, 17).” If the illusion of stability rests solely in the house, then what of the transient
person who is moving from home to home? The conclusion I have come to here is that the objects
within the house, particularly the inanimate objects become a source of stability for the traveling
nomad. As a child, the bedroom can be seen as a source sanctuary in which the bed becomes of central
importance. This same statement can be true at any stage in life, but a special kind of innocence is
implied when it is a childhood bedroom. If the house is the protector, but the house is not constant, then
the bed can become the stand in for protection: a basic need for a child. This could explain the nostalgia
for my childhood bed, for even when the bed is lost and gone, the fact remains that I once loved a Pink
Canopy bed (Bachelard, 10). In a series of paintings embarked on for my thesis, the bed is now a stand
in for self, an extension of the idea for identity. I have endeavored to create my childhood bed in more
than one painting (Fig 9). Each time the image shifts as the memory shifts. Each time I paint the image,
my ownership of that space is reinforced. If I cannot define myself by one single home, I can create a
ledger of each home and bed I have slept in. The pink canopy is the first of my memories, and therefore profound in its own right. But the subsequent beds I slept in and rooms I inhabited I have also recorded for “each one of us should make a surveyor’s map of his lost fields and meadows (Bachelard, 11)” so that, like Thoreau, I can say “I have a map of my fields engraved on my soul (Bachelard, 11).”

Although each space I have encountered has been temporary, some are more so than others. When I began painting Toronto Twin Beds (Fig 10), I had the specific memory of my honeymoon in mind. Through a series of comedic errors, we found ourselves tense and frazzled in a hotel room with two very small twin beds, on the first night of our honeymoon.

Toronto Twin Beds began as a documentation of one of many rooms I have slept in. I started this painting with the interest of the potential of an image to convey a specific experience. I spent only one night in this room, therefore I did not have time to experience a myriad of emotions in it. The night I spent in this room I was exhausted, deflated and flustered. I explain all of this in hopes to describe the
psychology behind the aesthetic of this particular painting.

The painting is made up entirely of a few concise and decisive marks. The simplicity of the composition mimics my own detachment to this space that I never knew intimately. The left bed, the one that I slept in, seems to be melting off of the canvas into a metaphorical puddle on the ground. The red used for the bedding is primal and angry. The image is cropped in the same way *Pink Canopy* is, where I alternate between depicting the imagery and interrupting it. The painting has evidence of my attempts to draw the beds as I remember them, with a distinct drawn line that overlaps from the multiple perspectives in which I observed them. The headboards were decorated in a garish green, which shifts and spreads from the headboards onto the walls as if the beds dissolve into the walls, in a translucent state like the beds exist as only a veil in the room.
My process is essentially a balance between addition and subtraction. The additive process consists of rendering the same image over and over as I try to recreate a memory through multiple retellings. The end result of this is a narrative one, in which the skeletons of earlier attempts, like manic pencil scratches, exist concurrently with the finished image. Because of this, the result can appear incomplete, but this incompleteness depicts not only the reflection but the means in which to reflect as well.

The subtractive process is an attempt to dispense of the trivial aspects and leave only the intrinsic details. This most commonly manifests itself as an atmospheric quality, in which a dream like state is evoked in the painting, subtly creating a focal point of the most urgent objects within the space, while muting the things that are of less importance. The objects that are left in the room act as

(Fig. 11) Parade of the Ottoman guild of potters. Source: from the Surama (Book of Circumcision Festival) of Murad III, c 1582. Illuminated manuscript, Topkapi Saray Library, Istanbul
vernacular symbols of experience from the different homes I have lived in.

I spend a significant amount of time in the studio looking at artists that I find to be in sync with my practice. Historically, I am interested in illuminated manuscripts. When I first began to think about depicting space, I wanted to find a way in which I could ignore the laws of perspective so that I could reveal the intimate details of each room, each nook and cranny (Fig 11).

Illuminated manuscripts would illustrate a landscape or space in the same way a map of the world can be flattened to see each continent side by side, by ignoring the actual placement and instead drawing it so that the space can be understood through it being juxtaposed against the objection is relation around it. I have translated this method into my paintings and it is evident in the lack of structure that each piece encapsulates. With each painting I try to completely navigate the space or the object within the space. Visiting it from each perspective, which becomes evident when the perspective of the painting shifts.

Alexander Kanevsky is an American painter that I have followed closely for years and who works with figures and landscapes. His methodology and aesthetic is one that I have translated into my own approach towards painting. Although Kanevsky is traditionally a figure painter, his work has the potential to expand to correlate with works such as mine, where no figure is present, but where human experience is still explored. When asked what he feels is the difference between landscape and figure, Kanevsky answered “you see a figure from the outside. A landscape is one you experience, and paint from within. It is like eating soup verses swimming in it.” If for a second, we replace the word landscape with space, I can begin to draw parallels between his view and purpose of painting with my own. The act of figure painting is in essence the act of first hand experience, especially in the case of painting from life. First hand experience can be perceived as a present moment, or something that has/had been experienced. These experiences are altered through our own perceptions of them. The memory of an intimate space is a tangible experience. Through it I have combined Kanevsky's ideas of
figure vs. landscape, through it I have fused the spectator and participant.

Kanevsky's deeply layered paintings are self described as “like swiss cheese”, each layer slowly built up into passages defined by motion. His technique is to build up layers of paint, recreating the same image over and over, but through a slightly different perspective each time. This process results in an image that is in constant motion. It's shiftiness begins to mimic a glitch, a paused film still, ready to move onto it's next scene. Kanevsky describes his process as “walking in the dark with uncertain goals, not aimless, but not exactly purposeful.” Working this way allows him to fully experience his figures, their spaces and the interactions within. Kanevsky's paintings capture a figure, a living moving thing that is meant for motion. Capturing such an image alters it's reality. The resolved image is his perception of that figure, filtered through his own mind.

Quite simply, Kanevsky gave me the confidence and means in which to paint “incorrectly”. Through studying his practice I embraced things such as a limited palette, painting without pretensions, straying outside the lines and navigating through the paint without the rigidity of correct drawing and strict realism. Like Kanevsky, Adrian Ghenie is a painter who investigates personal and collective memory through figurative, abstract and narrative means. Ghenie became a great influence to me when I first stumbled upon his Pie Fight series.

Although Ghenie's work is historically and politically charged, I am particularly interested in the way he walks the fine line between fact and subjective memory . Ghenie's work revolves around historical figures, such as Charles Darwin and Adolf Hitler. The work exudes a “dreamlike veil to the historical figures and events. Faces are fuzzy; moods are grim; and surroundings are abstract, surreal, and otherwise off (Wolff).” Although Ghenie's work may not line up conceptually with mine, our approach to painting is similar. When Ghenie speaks of his influences he claims that he is inspired by cinema, that he directly pulls color, composition and atmosphere from them. I find this particularly interesting in terms of my own studio practice, because I too am deeply inspired by cinema and the
staging within. I believe this is because I endeavor to create the ideal, even if my paintings are inspired by the memory of a space I actually experienced, the space I end up depicting is the ideal version of the space. This ties in nicely with Ghenie's paintings, as he is depicting a the history of a nation (majorly Germany) but within his compositions I read the ideal history, ironically the world Hitler was trying to create would have been his own version of an ideal society. My painting *Blue Bedroom* (Fig 14) is a direct influence of these two artists.

(Fig. 14) *Blue Bedroom*
In Gaston Bachelard's book *The Poetics of Space*, the “poetic image” is used to describe the house/home as an intimate space. Bachelard takes us through the different rooms of the house, pointing out various furniture within these rooms that arouse different emotions that would be attached therein. The home is made up of two parts, experience and memory. The different rooms awaken different feelings and sensations.

The author explains his belief of memory as a present experience, transcending time altogether. Within this belief is the home, which is made out to be the ultimate personal experience. Moving chronologically, Bachelard starts with infancy and childhood, explaining that as a child our home is our “initial universe”. The memories of our “initial universe” and any subsequent home that follows can be depicted in the “poetic image”, which Bachelard further explains that the poetic image is a product of our heart and soul, and does not need knowledge to be understood. Bachelard dives into the study of inner mental space, using the home through poetic terms because poetry allows us to experience, to see, and not just to verbalize. Bachelard's writings has helped me to interpret the home and memory as not only a verbal experience, but an aesthetic one as well. Poetry bridges the gap of verbalization and experience in the same way that the painted image does.

Yi-Fu Tuan is another philosophical writer that studies the human response to environment. In Tuan's book *Space and Place*, a major point is made right off the bat: place is security, space is freedom; we are attached to one and yearn for the other (Tuan). As humans, we use space and place as a context in which everything else is explained. We are oriented in space, time and place. Like Bachelard, Tuan works chronologically through the spaces we inhabit. I have recently read the chapters on childhood and infancy, in which large objects (rooms) mean less to the child/infant as small things
do. At this stage our attachment to intimate objects such as high chairs, cribs and beds far exceed our
attachment to the actual room. Within this attachment is our need to name these things, as if ownership
secures our bond to the object in question. These chapters have inspired my small paintings of intimate
objects experienced during this stage, such as *Mothers Vanity* (Fig 7). The book itself has a central
theme of “how the human person, who is animal, fantasist, and computer combined, experiences and
understands the world (Tuan).”

Bachelard refers to our first home, our childhood home, as “more than an embodiment of home,
it is also an embodiment of dreams (Bachelard, 15).” He claims that “the house we were born in has
engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting.... and all the other houses are
but variations on a fundamental theme. (Bachelard, 15)”. This same philosophy can be found in
Lacan's ideas of the mnemic image of desire and need for a child in so far that the mnemic image
functions as a representation or model of the object of desire, but not the desire itself. Lacan explains
that when a child is in infancy, it experiences a need that requires a satisfaction, that the child does not
yet know visually what that need is. Lacan calls this process “essentially organic”. Without a mental
representation of this object, the child is then given the object that satisfies the need, thus creating a
memory trace and a desire for said object each time the need arises. When this connection is created,
the desire is no longer out of pure need, but out of search for the satisfaction. Dorr explains in his book
*Introduction to Reading Lacan*, that “we must therefore conclude that there is no satisfaction of desire
in reality...the only real desire is a psychic one. (Dor, 181-184)”

In the same way that the childhood home is now the mold in which the dream house is created,
it becomes the object that satisfies the primal need for home. The childhood home is in this way
Lacan's mnemic image. According to Lacan, a good example of this would be breastfeeding an infant.
The breast is the stand in for the object of desire, and once this object has been identified the baby then
searches for the object, in replacement for the desire, to fulfill the need. Freud uses this same example
when he speaks of dreams, for the baby at the breast is too young to know the difference between the real breast and the dream breast and therefore gets intense satisfaction from dream breast feeding. In our older years, the years in which we speak and can read, Freud's theories that pertain to the interpretations of dreams that can be associated with Lacan's theory of the mnemonic image. Freud argues that through language, the actual memory of something can be altered or completely replaced (Lear, 88-113). He claims that the “memory of the description has taken the place of the memory of the scene itself (Dorr, 92).” These theories helped me to develop my own language about my paintings in that I have attempted to replace memories through visual representations of the scenes themselves. Harkening back to the idea of the childhood home being the desired object, and recognizing that the childhood home (in my case) occurred at such an early stage that I could not possibly remember but through outside verbal description, I argue through Lacan and Freud's theories that it is possible to believe that a memory of a space exists the way it does if it has been represented in such a way to alter the memory.
Much of my understanding of the paintings included in this thesis exhibition came after partial of full completion of the paintings. One of the more important revelations came when I recognized that many of the works were structured compositionally as a landscape. I came to call this result “accidental landscapes”. I first recognized this through my series of *Dreamscapes* (Fig 15-19) painting/collages, in which I combined the actual image of my bed in a series of close cropped photographs applied through photo transfer, and then painted into in the final layer. I chose to keep the color scheme light and airy, which resulted in an image that mimicked a snowy landscape. The close cropped of images included shots of my sheets in different tangled stages. In choosing the photographs to be transferred onto the canvas, I would pick images, that were taken at different times and sometimes on different days, and string them together in ways that contour lines would meet. This created a horizon line that would flow continuously throughout the composition. What I found appealing about these compositions was that they seemed to appropriately communicate the view I would experience upon wakening, with the sheets tangled around me, and morning light reflecting off the surfaces. These works capture the
vulnerability and nostalgic aspects of those first waking moments.

(Fig. 16) Dreamscape 2

(Fig. 17) Dreamscape 3
In my painting *Lavender Fields* (Fig. 20), I set out to capture the setting of my honeymoon bed in France, where the bed was structured outdoors, surrounded by greenery. This painting is the culmination of all I endeavored to create for this show, encompassing a dreamlike state where the bed both exists and does not exist. Being a honeymoon bed, I allowed the romanticism and nostalgia of the moment to drive my choice in color, choosing lavenders, blues and warm greens. The composition is actually a hybrid of both the exterior bed and the interior bed from the cottage in which we stayed. Using both of those beds accents well to the conversation about why these composition manifest themselves as landscapes. The climaxing point of this revelation was in realizing that memory is a subtle balance of interior and exterior. The spaces that I have tried to capture exist both outside of me and within me. As I try to externalize these spaces and form them through my paintings, I am visualizing internally how and what I remember about these places. In *Lavender Fields*, this manifested itself in the structures that dissolve into each other, the walls to the sky, the pillows to the walls, the large wedge in the front that both has and does not have the definition of a bed. The interior/exterior relationship helped me to create a space that is both enclosed and ever expanding.
CHAPTER 9  

NOW HERE  

I chose to title this exhibit Nowhere, as a way to illustrate the beginning and end of this exploration as two bookends. When I began these paintings I felt overwhelmed by the task of documenting my history of homes. I truly felt as if I was from nowhere. I intended to end this journey by stating that I am now here, here being time relative. I have always loved the quote “It matters not, for wherever I go, there I am”, for it has never been more true than to the nomad, the drifter, the wanderer.

I do not think here is an end place anymore. Here, as it turns out, is another starting point. I have traveled through my homes, created a ledger of their most intimate details and put back in order that disheveled filing cabinet. Yet, as my mind continues to absorb my day to day surroundings, these new places and things invade my dreams and create new memories. Here has become the beginning of a deeper investigation into capturing memory, of not only space but of place. As I leave the bedroom, and exit the front door I will continue to document, to navigate my past and recent travels and to translate them through the painted image.
1. Toronto Twin Beds  
   Oil on Panel, 2014

2. Clawfoot in Gold Green  
   Oil on Panel, 2015
3. Del Rio, Del Rio
   Oil on Panel, 2015

4. Lavender Field
   Oil on Canvas, 2015
5. Three Doors
   Oil on Panel, 2015

6. An Ideal Bathroom
   Oil on Canvas, 2015
7. Blue Bedroom
Oil on Canvas, 2015

8. Study for Blue Bedroom
Oil on Paper, 2014
9. Dreamscape 1  
Mixed Media on Canvas, 2014

10. Dreamscape 2  
Mixed Media on Canvas, 2015
11. Dreamscape 3  
Mixed Media on Canvas, 2015

12. Dreamscape 4  
Mixed Media on Canvas, 2014
13. Dreamscape 5  
Mixed Media on Canvas, 2015

14. Pink Canopy  
Oil on Panel, 2014
15. Mother's Vanity
Oil on Panel, 2014

16. Made Bed, Franklin
Oil on Canvas Wrapped Panel, 2015
17. Hotel Twin Beds
   Oil on Panel, 2014

18. Unmade Bed
   Oil on Panel, 2014
19. Nomad
   Oil on Panel, 2013
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