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## Creating Memories: Works by 14 artists comprise a wide-ranging and evocative examination of 'The Lining of Forgetting'



Photo Courtesy of P\*P\*O\*W, New York

Dinh Q. Le's work interweaves photos of the Vietnam War and clips from movies about it.

By Tom Patterson | Local Columnist

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GREENSBORO -- Our memories are essential to our identities, and yet they're unstable and ultimately unreliable. Advances in technology -- from recorded sound and film to digital file storage -- have enabled us to mechanically preserve key elements of memory. But the personal capacity to remember is no better (some would argue worse) than it was 500 years ago.

These circumstances are thematically central to "The Lining of Forgetting: Internal & External Memory in Art," a thought-provoking group exhibition at the Weatherspoon Art Museum through May 25. The show's works by 14 artists relate in one way or another to "the concept of memory as a process that is, first, mostly about forgetting, and, second, forever in editing mode," according to its curator, Xandra Eden. In these works the artists "highlight memory as a creative endeavor that involves as much fact as fiction," she wrote in an essay for the exhibition catalog.

Videos on miniature monitors, encased in heart-like pods, are the central components of Deborah Aschheim's three electrified, bright-green sculptures, suspended from the ceiling, from her "June 10"

series. Wires encased in plastic tubes with evenly spaced, illuminated nodes encircle and radiate out from the pods. Close-up views reveal the tiny monitors to be showing digital recordings of old home movies, which document three of Aschheim's childhood birthday parties. In her trio of drawings from the same series, she labels the corresponding nodes with the names of friends, family members, objects, places and historical events that are interrelated in her memories of these long-ago celebrations.

Emma Kay tried to recall all of Shakespeare's plays in her piece consisting of 26 standard letter-size sheets of paper. Most contain only a few lines of printed text, which was all Kay could remember from her earlier studies of the playwright.

Dinh Q. Le adapts a traditional Vietnamese grass-weaving technique to evenly cut strips from digital photographic prints in two pieces from his series "From Vietnam to Hollywood." His literal interweaving of historical photos of the Vietnam war, with stills from Hollywood films about the war, reflect something of the influence that mass-media generated "artificial memories" (Eden's term) can have on personal and historical memory.

Certain types of visual imagery can unconsciously trigger memories of particular moments in an individual's life, as exemplified by Louise Bourgeois' *Ode to Forgetfulness*. This book's 36 fabric pages, individually framed in the show, are based on fragments of old household linens and clothing that Bourgeois has collected since the 1920s. A few of these graphically patterned squares are imprinted with brief, thematically suggestive texts such as "The return of the repressed" and "I had a flashback of something that never existed."

Even objects as ordinary and visually plain as old cardboard boxes can bring to mind vivid memories of times, places and people we associate with those objects. This associative capacity is thematically integral to Rachel Whiteread's two pieces, which juxtapose items of ordinary furniture with plaster casts of cardboard boxes that were used to store the contents of her mother's home during a move.

Cody Trepte's *Photo Album* consists of 75 printed, black-bound books lined up on two wall-mounted shelves. An accompanying text explains that each book contains a printed description of a family photograph on the cover, followed by pages of computer-coded data into which the photo has been translated for digital storage and retrieval.

This is a show that emphasizes concept over artistic virtuosity and other traditional aesthetic considerations. Its appeal is far more cerebral than optical. Also represented are Edgar Arceneaux, Janice Caswell, John Coplans, Pablo Helguera, Scott Lyall, David Rokeby, Mungo Thomson and Kerry Tribe.

## **Solo at 5ive & 40rty**

A more straightforward, nostalgically tinged approach to the memory concept is central to "Saved," Jody Servon's solo exhibition at 5ive & 40rty in Winston-Salem's Downtown Arts District. Servon is an assistant professor at Appalachian State University, where she also coordinates the university's arts-management program and directs its art gallery.

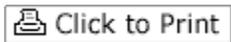
Each of her show's 23 pieces is a color photograph of a single object -- in most cases enlarged -- isolated against a white background. She borrowed these objects from friends and acquaintances who kept them as mementos of deceased loved ones. In that respect they stand as memorials to the objects' original owners and statements about the power of objects to serve as talismans of memory. Their significance in this regard is specified in titles such as *Mom's Wedding Ring*, *Dad's Boy Scout Shirt* and *Grandma's Necklace*. But the visual evidence of these objects' histories is in the scratches on *Great-Grandfather's Pocket Watch*, the worn black leather cover on *Pop Pop's Bible*, the deteriorating preservative coating on *Mom's Baby Shoe* and the obvious signs of wear and tear on the other talismanic objects.

The very simple concept works well as a gallery show and ought to be equally effective in a book format, with one photo per page and a related text or two to precede or follow the images.

■ "The Lining of Forgetting: Internal & External Memory in Art" is on view through May 25 at the Weatherspoon Art Museum, at Spring Garden and Tate streets, Greensboro. For more information, call 336-334-5770. Jody Servon's "Saved" series is up through May 31 at Five & 40rty, 541-A Trade St. For more information, call 336-724-2474.

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