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**Delving into Shadow: A Study of Reflective Photographic Image-Making**

**Julie Greto**

**A Thesis**

**in**

**The Department**

**of**

**Art Education**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Magisteriate in Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

**March 1999**

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## ABSTRACT

### Delving into Shadow: A Study of Reflective Photographic Image-Making

Julie Greto

This study unravels specific elements that, in part, comprise the reflective process that has allowed me to initiate and sustain the production of photographic work. These are: the Self as an exploratory vehicle and producer of art work; the veil of memory utilized in producing such work; and aspects of the myth of Narcissus as it pertains to the creation of art work that embodies the reflective stance.

In conjunction with the autobiographical-narrative approach to the topics above, Marcel Proust's process [used to produce *A la recherche du temps perdu*, (1913- 1922)] is explored through Julia Kristeva's insight. In such, aspects of Proust's process and reflective memory as a creative vehicle are discussed as they inform my process. In addition, initiating and maintaining a personal, reflective process for the student in the adult classroom is addressed.

An installation consisting of four, polytych works encompassing the reflective stance delineated in this thesis was exhibited at the Belgo Art Center Building, Montreal, Quebec, from Nov. 2 to the 29, 1998.

## **Acknowledgments**

I thank my thesis committee members for their work toward the final writing of the thesis: Elizabeth Sacca for being there in a pinch; Penny Cousineau-Levine for her direction; Paul Langdon for his support; and Lorrie Blair, my supervisor, for keeping the flame alive.

I thank the Graduate Student Association whose contribution helped to defray the large expense in mounting the exhibition.

I thank my mother for her encouragement and support throughout this endeavour.

I dedicate this thesis to Eli Mandel in memory of the grand, trickster-illusionist he was. While writing this thesis I've grown to see him again ~ he who touched many with his literary insights or with his kind effulgent soul.

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## FORWARD.

### THE REMEMBERED SELF: REGARDING FORMATION AND HOME.

*To understand the beginning, one must return to it, after having reached the end.*<sup>1</sup>

In Italy, in my mother's house, traces of coloured thread and ready-to-be-transformed cloth were constantly around. Threads fell to the floor. White cloth was stretched taut between circular rings ready to receive swirls of coloured stitches. To keep up with the demand for her embroidery, my mother often worked into the night. I was under five years old, but I stayed up with her. I watched entranced as she stopped the rhythmic movement of her hand, lifted up the piece of material that she had been working on from her lap into the air and let the needle dangle on its thread. Pointing downward, the small plumb lengthened the thread. The reason my mother had stopped working was revealed: wrapped about itself, the thread was difficult to pull through the cloth. I watched as the twist unwound. It spun and twirled forming a magical and mesmerizing cascade. My mother was ready to rescue the needle before the thread had completely undone itself and discarded the weight to the floor where it might be lost in the mound of coloured clippings. It is a simple scene, but it seemed magical to the little girl who watched.

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *What Philosophy Is: A Guide to the Elements* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), preface, xvi.

Many years later, in a different country, after completing a degree in English literature, the scene's import was borne out when I gingerly waded into visual expression by taking evening courses in OCA's<sup>2</sup> weaving department. There I found that building tiny lots of colour into textured mass delighted me. I enjoyed paying meticulous attention to detail when working up a piece, and was especially attracted to the fused nuance of colour when two threads, slightly different in shade, were juxtaposed, or intertwined.

While on a trip to Europe, photography became a pursuit when a friend insisted I take her camera to "record memories." At first, I was obstinate that no photograph could equal the vividness of the memories which I played over in my mind like film strips. I could retrace a scene, slow it down or stop it at any point to revel in a detail. How could a snapshot equal this? She was equally obstinate, so I took the camera. I was surprised that I enjoyed still-piece framing from what would have been film-loop memories. As I continued with the medium, I found it afforded me many constituents of fiber work as well as others not yet explored.

It was during this trip that my photographic process was instilled. This thesis is about that process which has developed through the years and which has found a place in my teaching practice. Delving into this process has been a personal journey winded by time. This thesis is grounded in this aspect through its methodology, one akin to the methodology that grounds my photographic process. Therefore, in the following pages I have relied on intuitive reflection to tease personal truths from everyday experience. I

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<sup>2</sup> Now the Ontario College of Art and Design, (Toronto).

have delved into my memory and into my photographic process to consciously illuminate some buried ideas and to incorporate into the whole some straggly, tangential thoughts.

Through this endeavour, I discovered that the structural base for my photographic process comes to me through the mentorship and teaching of the poet, Eli Mandel. It was during the 70s, some very formative years for me while at York University, that Mandel explained that poetry is created on two levels, the conscious and the unconscious. From the unconscious, words spill out in an almost automatic fashion and constitute the deep content of the poem. From the conscious, the poet crafts and reworks the poem to its final form. Within the initial spillage of the poem, ideas and relationships may be incised that may be deciphered by the insightful reader but may elude the poet, at times even for many years. This idea is relevant to my photographic process and to this writing process.

In this thesis I juxtapose the manner in which memory works in my photographic practice with Marcel Proust's intratextual focus on memory. Proust's process, (which includes life experience and memory as creative elements) informs my process in a meaningful way. This discussion is enriched through Julia Kristeva's insight into Proust's process.

The site where the myth of Narcissus takes place is significant in this thesis for it is this site that propelled me to begin writing and it is this site that I connect with the darkroom.

Eli Mandel asks, "What is it that causes the writing to take place? Place. Take place. The place we are talking about is the writing scene, that awful and terrible thing that causes the writing."<sup>3</sup> Marcel Proust calls it "the abyss." It is where the creative springs forth. Eli Mandel associated the place of creativity with a place called Estevan, Saskatchewan. I associate it with the reflecting pool at whose edge Narcissus bends to reflect. This conjunction between place and writing reinforces my insistence on the relevance of the writing process *within* my photographic process. In it lies the very force and authority for the meanderings in this thesis.

Writing this thesis, showing my work in a solo show where the parts contributed to the whole, has been a journey of self-discovery on one level. On an other, this thesis has been a story-telling vehicle. It is fiction-cum-fact, fact-cum-fiction, "essay as a poem, or a poem as an essay."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Eli Mandel, "The Place Where the Writing Takes Place": An Interview with Eli Mandel", interview by Winfried Siemerling, *Essays on Canadian Writing: Eli Mandel Issue*, Guest Ed., Julie Beddoes, Eds. Jack David, Robert Lecker, Numbers 45-46 (Winter-Spring 1991-92), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 16.

## THROUGH THE LABYRINTH: MEMORY, NARCISSUS, AND REFLECTIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE-MAKING.

*I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how?  
What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the  
seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking? Seek?  
More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, which it  
alone can make actual. which it alone can bring into the light of day.*<sup>5</sup>

Looking into one's psyche reveals more than the unique which one is; it reveals the universal self which one contains. To create from this is to truly find a rich source; it is to find the cooling pool which allows reflections to undulate, metamorphose, disclose that which is contained in the dark. The reflecting pool is where transformation takes place, where delving into self yields other. It is the site of autobiographical fiction ~ a place that yields the creation of my photographic work.

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<sup>5</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Vol. 1: Swann's Way*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff & Terence Kilmartin; rev. D. J. Enright (London: Vintage, 1992), 52.

In an interview, Winfried Siemerling asked Eli Mandel the significance of “place” and whether an opposition exists between geographical place and symbolic place:

EM It seems to me that place is the moment when one discovers oneself. ...

WS Autobiography, then, is a rereading of symbolic places?

EM Yes. What we can say, it seems to me then, is that we reconstruct a historical self. The place of writing is the place at which you reconstruct yourself, historically and psychologically. ...<sup>6</sup>

When delved into, this site unfolds a narcissistic stance.

The idea of Narcissus/ism as presented in this thesis is a confluence of Thomas Moore's perspective on the myth as a transformative locus, and of Steven Z. Levine's explication of the Narcissistic posture as manifested in Claude Monet's work.<sup>7</sup>

I have taken two relevant elements from Moore's concept: the first is the transcending possibility embodied in the myth ~ Narcissus is able to go beyond Self to Other, and the second is the actual site where the transformation takes place ~ the reflecting pool. Levine's treatise substantiates these particular points as relevant to a certain creative sensibility. It also explicates a direct connection between poetry and art ~ a connection in my background that has eluded surfacing until now.

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<sup>6</sup> Mandel, “The Place Where the Writing Takes Place”: An Interview with Eli Mandel”, 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to: Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), Chapter 2, “Care of the Soul in Everyday Life: Self-love and Its Myth: Narcissus and Narcissism”, 55-76. Also to: Steven Z. Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-reflection: The Modernist Myth of the Self* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Through a hybrid perspective that intertwines Renaissance mysticism, classical literature and Jungian psychology, Moore uses the classical myth of Narcissus to reveal the notion of a personal, secular transcendence through reflection. Moore writes:

As the story continues, ... Narcissus puts his head to the water to get a drink, he sees his image in the water and his attention is frozen. ... Narcissus feels a great yearning to possess this form. He reaches into the water, but he can't hold it. ...

Here we see the beginning of the symptom's fulfillment. Narcissism, that absorption in oneself that is soulless and loveless, turns gradually into a deeper version of itself. It becomes true stillness, a wonder about oneself, a meditation on one's nature. ... [T]he narcissist *reflects* ~ a major image in the story ~ on himself. ... [I]t stirs wonder. ... [A]s it undergoes transformation into a deeper version of itself, the narcissism takes on more substance[,] ... a deeper, inner reflection. ...<sup>8</sup> (my italics)

Through the vehicles of memory and imagination, this transformative nature of Narcissus/ism achieves an "interface of the world and the self."<sup>9</sup> In so doing, this delving into shadow, allows me the emergence of a self, a transformed "I", a character/narrator to moderate the creation of my photographic work.

Moore describes the site as "a pool of water, so still and smooth that it has never been disturbed by either human or animal. It is surrounded by a cool, dark grove of trees."<sup>10</sup> In the process of reading through this reference, it is made significant. It leads me to

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<sup>8</sup> Moore, *Care of the Soul*, 59-60.

<sup>9</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, trans. and with an intro. by Stephen Bann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, *Care of the Soul*, 60.

recall one of those lucid-thought instants or flash-understandings: While crossing the street on a hot, humid day several years ago, I envisioned entitling myself 'a seeker of shade'. Instantaneously, as this phrase crossed my mind, my consistent penchant to look for 'a shady spot' revealed an illuminating metaphor. Associative words such as 'stillness', 'coolness' and 'shadygroveness' garnered psychologically significant ideas related to personality and desire. Reading Moore's Narcissus chapter and recovering this incident allowed me to subsequently fuse darkroom and reflecting pool. The semi-dark atmosphere and perpetually running water of the site envelops. Time becomes lost, only to be found again when ephemeral connections and mental meanderings link images.

Delving into my memory, once again, I am transported to the Narcissus site. I am looking at a somewhat smallish painting hung in a corridor of the Jeu de Paume Museum in the Tuileries, Paris. The sizzling heat and high humidity of a Paris summer persist inside the gallery. The painting before me is located in a small corridor leading from one gallery room to the next. The image entices, so I move closer until it claims my field of vision. Memory insists that this painting is reminiscent of Monet's Japanese bridge series, but the painting technique is not impressionistic, and the point of view is more elongated than is usual in Monet's garden series.

I note a cool wisp-of breeze sweep by me and I remain feeling cool. The painting reveals a green, languid river with hardly a ripple as it flows. There is a small, arched bridge in the centre of the painting. Dark-green trees line the river. An encircling arc is



created by these elements that does not allow me to travel beyond the bridge. I rest in the deep, green shade where I can smell the freshness.

People passing by bring me back again to the actual surroundings. I look around. Behind me is a half-opened window. I immediately attribute the slight breeze and coolness I felt to its proximity. But as I continue to look at an adjacent painting, the coolness disappears and the cloying, hot air that previously dominated the small corridor returns.

It was a magical moment. I believe I stepped into a state of reverie, into a psychic chimera that was excited by and manifested through the image before me. Now, this rather ephemeral, unidentified painting has become emblematic ~ a locus of self-recreated identity, the emotional attachment to the site which becomes overlaid onto the darkroom.

Following this path, then, it was with delight that I discovered Steven Z. Levine's book, *Monet, Narcissus and Self-reflection: The Modernist Myth of the Self*, part way through this writing process. As the enticing image that drew Narcissus to gaze and be dazzled by the reflection he saw, I was drawn to this book. However, as I read deeper into the text, I saw that a simple syllogism between the myth of Narcissus, Monet and my practice is somewhat problematic. While there are intersecting points, there are also disjunctures.

Levine thoroughly traces the development of the Narcissus myth as it was shaped and amended until it came to embody a modernist stance in the arts: the Self as subject and object. It was during Monet's time that the allegorical use of the Narcissus myth underwent a maturation. Levine puts this into contemporary parlance: "Psychology thus subsume[d] physiology, and the prime faculty of this process [became] 'reflection'."<sup>11</sup> Monet was not only cognizant of the current literary art scene, he corresponded with (was even closely related to) members of the Symbolist movement: the Narcissus stance was a mutually-influenced interchange. Since his early works, Monet gradually displaced the solitary observer-figure, a narrative representation common at the time, from within the frame to beyond the frame. In so doing, it was "the artist-spectator['s] ... self-reflective presence ... [that was] implicitly mirrored...".<sup>12</sup> "[O]ffer[ed] in the surfaces of [the] art [was] the materialization of Narcissus' gaze[.]"<sup>13</sup>

From the group of Symbolist Poets cited in Levine's text, of particular interest to me are Paul Valéry and André Gide's perspectives on Narcissus. Levine states,

For Valéry, Narcissus figures the cleavage between subject and object, possibility and contingency, the universal and the particular. In his daily *cahiers* he notes the implications of the myth:

*Narcissus* ~ The confrontation of the self and the Person. The conflict of memory, the *name*, of the habits, of the penchants, of the reflected form, of the distant, fixed, inscribed creature ~ of the history, of the *particular*, with ~ the universal center, the capacity for change, the eternal youthfulness of *forgetting*, ... the renascent function, the self that may be

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<sup>11</sup> Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-reflection*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

entirely new even multiple ~ with several existences ~ with several dimensions ~ with several histories ~ ."<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, as Levine points out,

... Valéry consigns Narcissus to a watery death, but Gide transforms the familiar plot: "Then he lifts himself up. a bit; ~ the face draws away. ... [Narcissus realizes] [h]e is alone. ~ What to do?" [is the question asked. The answer is,] "~ Contemplate."<sup>15</sup>

Monet's attachment to *p*lace holds "the conditions for the fantasy of autonomy."<sup>16</sup>

Levine traces this physical/psychical locus needed to create through the frequent letters Monet wrote to Mme Hoschede (his common-law spouse) while travelling.

... I am enjoying the most perfect tranquillity since I am relieved of worries, and my desire would always be to remain like this, in a really tranquil corner of nature such as here.<sup>17</sup>

It is the fact that Monet is alone, far from the worries of family life, that allows the artist to proclaim as he does, for Monet would linger at this 'site of tranquillity' even if there were raging storms. Virginia Woolf has called this locus "a room of one's own". It is a place of retreat, a "shady spot" (for me), where the mind is free to wander through imagination.

Levine refers to Gaston Bachelard's book *L'eau et les rêves: Essai sur l'Imagination de la matière*, which contains reference to Narcissus, as bringing Monet and Narcissus "tantalizingly close together." In a general context Levine credits Bachelard's

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<sup>14</sup> Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-reflection*, 138.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

"idiosyncratic blend of phenomenology, iconography, and psychoanalysis" as having "made a strong impression on [him] when [he] first read Bachelard's work in the late 1970s ... [and as giving his own work] much initial stimulus." <sup>18</sup>

I have been similarly influenced since reading Bachelard's work during those formative years in the late 1970s. Although somewhat aware that Bachelard's philosophy influenced me, as such with those things that lie latent in the recesses of the mind, I was not wholly conscious of the how and the why of this influence until I started reflecting on my working process. I welcomed Levine's connection to Bachelard: it added another layer to his text for me.

Bachelard's writing is as complex and difficult in its own poetic renderings as it is inspirational. What I extract from his work, and what is relevant to my photographic process is the effect of reverie. He states,

[Through an] imaginary voyage [that constructs] the *continuous* passage from the real to the imaginary[,] ... <sup>19</sup> [reverie] ... *conducts* a dynamic psyche ... into the land of the infinite. In the realm of the imagination, every immanence takes on a transcendence. The very law of poetic expression is to go beyond thought. Undoubtedly, this transcendence often seems coarse, artificial, broken. At other times it works too quickly, it is illusory, ephemeral, dispersive; for the reflective being, it is a mirage. But this mirage is fascinating. It produces a special dynamism that is an undeniable psychological reality. ... The infinite is the realm in which imagination is affirmed as pure imagination, in which

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<sup>18</sup> Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-reflection*, 287, Notes, # 1.

<sup>19</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie: Selections from the Works of Gaston Bachelard*, trans. and intro. Collette Gaudin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Meril, 1971), 22.

it is free and alone, vanquished and victorious, proud and trembling. ... There the realism of unreality asserts itself. We understand figures by their transfiguration. ... The imagination is thus a psychological world beyond. It becomes a psychic forerunner which *projects its being*. In my book *L'eau et les rêves*, I have collected many images in which the imagination projects inner impressions onto the external world. ...<sup>20</sup>

Bachelard's identifies the four alchemical *elements* as delimiters of poetic meaning and imagination. One of these is water, Narcissus' site, where, through the fluid force of reflection, the inner psyche is projected onto the external world.

Memory plays strongly in reflection. Marcel Proust's work is quintessential and paradigmatic in revealing that very process. *Remembrance of Things Past*, newly translated and entitled, *In Search of Lost Time*, is a six-volume, 3,000-paged novel whose narrator, Marcel, retells how he discovers the inspiration to actuate his childhood ambition of becoming a writer. It comes to him in the last moments of the last volume. It "was lying there at his feet,"<sup>21</sup> literally, because Marcel experiences a memory trigger as he stumbles on an uneven paving stone in the Guermante's courtyard. Through this trigger he is transported back to Venice where he travelled with his mother. Marcel suddenly understands that such memories hold his future, so he decides to "mine his own past for the truth it contains."<sup>22</sup> Proust's novel is about process, that of becoming an artist/writer on one level and the act of creation on another. Memory and reflection

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<sup>20</sup> Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> CBC Radio Works, "In Search of Lost Time: Marcel Proust and His Book", Transcript of three-part programme of *Ideas*. Aired, June 12, 19, and 26, 1995. ID 9539 (Toronto: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1995), Roger Shattuck, 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Barbara Nichol, 24.

inscribe and delineate both levels. Ultimately, what is illustrated in Proust's work, and what holds significance for me is that reflection through memory leads to creation.

Rene Girard states that Marcel comes to recognize that giving up "desire in the present makes it possible to recapture past desires."<sup>23</sup> Marcel, Kristeva iterates, is seeking, that "invisible temple,"<sup>24</sup> that "cathedral,"<sup>25</sup> which he ultimately discovers within. This idea is not unlike ones proposed in many eastern philosophies which state that by "cultivat[ing] a state of 'distraction': ... [by] 'clear[ing] an empty space' ... [where] [d]istance and resistance are overcome,"<sup>26</sup> we come face to face with the creative. In this instance the metaphysical connotation of the Narcissus metamorphosis is revealed. In this, Proust's "circular story ... has the same shape as the cosmos, or the same idea as Monet's 'Water Lilies' which just keep going on in this long, circular expansion."<sup>27</sup>

*Time Regained* is the last volume of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. In it, Girard explains:

Proust emphasizes that *self-centeredness* is a barrier to novelistic creation. Proustian self-centeredness [however,] gives rise to *imitation* and makes us live *outside ourselves*. This self-centeredness is other-centeredness as well; it is not one-sided egotism; it is an impulse in two contradictory directions which always ends by tearing the individual apart. To triumph over self-centeredness is to get away from oneself

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<sup>23</sup> Rene Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965), 298.

<sup>24</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>27</sup> CBC Radio Works, William C. Carter, 26. Carter is referring to Monet's mural-painting installations in two oval rooms in the Musee de l'Orangerie, Paris, completed between 1916-23.

and make contact with others but in another sense it also implies a greater intimacy with oneself and a withdrawal from others. ... Victory over self-centeredness allows us to probe deeply into the Self and at the same time yields a better knowledge of Others. ...<sup>28</sup>

This probing is made possible to the novelist "*through the voice of [one's] hero.*"<sup>29</sup> For me it is made possible through the attachment/projection of the persona overseeing the creation of the photographic work. The use of a persona or voice overlaid onto images when in the act of contemplation in my work parallels the narrator Marcel's position as at once the subject and the object of creation. It is in this dynamic that memory plays its most creative role.

Memory, is a web, a mesh, holding space, time and creation. For Marcel/Proust it is a conduit to buried parts of the self. Through the act of delving into self, memory, aided by imagination and the use of metaphor, can draw "forth from the shadow," "the abyss," impressions which go beyond one's egocentric exterior to touch an essential base, ultimately providing the author/artist, with material/momentum to create. This endeavour causes change and through it Narcissus/ism is metamorphosed. When connections are constructed between forgotten/revisited memories and juxtaposed to recent thoughts/experiences, a synthesizing shifting or layering occurs.<sup>30</sup> In this transposition all material relating to the synthesis is altered. In turn, the perceiver of the material is also altered.

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<sup>28</sup> Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, 298.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 299.

<sup>30</sup> Proust (1913-1927); Bolles (1988).

This idea is substantiated in Edmond Blair Bolles' text on memory. His theory is based on scientific and humanistic viewpoints. He states, "Remembering is an act of imagination[:] ... [I]t is a living product of desire, attention, insight, and consciousness."<sup>31</sup> His theory, in opposition to the scientific and historical thinking that insist on memory as a retrieval mechanism, maintains that memories are not stored as if in a computer and simply retrieved; they are constantly being re-created through and by the different experiences we undergo each day. "Remembering is a creative, constructive process. There is no storehouse of information about the past anywhere in the brain."<sup>32</sup> Bolles insists that all the seemingly disparate findings made by separate schools of thought on the subject can be unified when one concedes that memory works in different ways at different functioning *levels*. He identifies the one that concerns us here as "interpretive memory," the highest memory-function level.

Freud's surmise that memory has a personal reference initiated this line of thinking. Then, in the 1930s, Sir Frederick Bartlett showed that we do not simply forget memories, "[w]e distort, combine and reorganize"<sup>33</sup> them as well. Following this, "Piaget ... made the startling observation that children's memories for a particular event can improve over time."<sup>34</sup> Taken in combination, these findings lead us to say that a personal memory recalled today is imbued with all one's experience accumulated until today: "we automatically update memories to reflect our new understanding."<sup>35</sup> When

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<sup>31</sup> Edmond Blair Bolles, *Remembering and Forgetting: An Inquiry into the Nature of Memory* (New York: Walker and Company), xi. xiv.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* xi.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>35</sup> Bolles, *Remembering and Forgetting*, 17.



we add to this developing change, the idea that through reflection we are able to *construct* and suffuse memories with a different voice other than the self's "ordinary" one, then memory becomes a truly creative experience-channeler.

In contemporary writing, the dynamic way in which imaginative memory can be put to use in creating many works from a single source is well demonstrated in Italo Calvino's, *Invisible Cities*.<sup>36</sup> Coming to terms with this well-spun, opalescent web, one understands that we are caught in a totally created world. From the historic personages of Marco Polo and Kublai Khan who have become characters in Calvino's story, to the city vignettes that Polo vivifies for Khan, one discovers implicitly that all is an illusion. The many cities that Polo describes from his travels are in fact singular observations of his native city, Venice, that through recollection, reflection and storytelling have grown to become exotically new and 'discovered' cities. Here too is the idea that the same territory may be repeatedly mined yielding new points of view when reflective imagination is put into play. In the dark region we call memory lie the elements for realization and creation. This still pool does not yield lightly, but rewards those who venture there to delve and create.

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<sup>36</sup> Translated by William Weaver (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1974).

## EMBODIED IN THE POOL: REFLECTION ON PROCESS.

*[To] turn [something] into a memory [is] a time regained.*<sup>37</sup>

*There is no longer any 'self', just the I that speaks.*<sup>38</sup>

The meditative, reflective way in which I apply the medium of photography functions as a catalyst to, and a product of, an interior journey. I usually follow the same habitual procedure. I go into the darkroom with a binder of negatives ~ my 'album of recollection' ~ which I began to compile in 1981. It consists neither of a finite, nor of a circumscribed set of negatives. I add new images as time goes by, yet return again and again through the same material.

In creating photographic works, my process is not only meditative but also somewhat ritualistic. I am a thinker and a creator of mood, aiming to excite a subjectively-based, experiential response through photography not unlike that engendered when reading fiction or poetry. I need the solitude of the darkroom to entice this process. Mavis Gallant claims that engagement in process is "... long, slow, hard work; absorbing, exhausting. It took [her] three months, full time, to write the 11-page preface to *Selected Stories*."<sup>39</sup> I, too, snail-like move through my photographic process connecting

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<sup>37</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

<sup>39</sup> Marianne Ackerman, "In Short, the Best", *Montreal Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1996, J 3.

and juxtaposing images, and sometimes text, in an absorbed state. The place Mavis Gallant goes to when she writes is "in a glass house ... [where] the climate inside is completely different from the climate outside."<sup>40</sup> This interior space allows her to live the mood to be communicated in the work. Correspondingly, the darkroom, emblematic of the reflecting pool, allows me "to live the mood."

For a writer it is the character(s) that shape(s) the narrative structure and define(s) the sequence of action in the plot. Julia Kristeva defines the Proustian character as a "psychic contraction." These words, perhaps, are close to describing the "character(s)" that I create. When I delve into the file of negatives, I lift or isolate a certain nuance or aspect of self that could be called persona or trait. I let it emerge so that through its particular viewpoint, through its voice, I re-view the images and bring about a new work.

Gaston Bachelard's philosophy of the imaginative/poetic process informs this meditative perspective. Bachelard describes not only the process of the *production* of poetry as itself a poetic imagining state of reverie, but also the *reading* of a poem as one. I translate poem into image and equate this process that Bachelard expounds to the reading of pictures contained within my recollection album. Through reverie "(poetic) images [are] condens[ed into] infinite meanings in elliptic associations." Through reverie "the world and the subject, present and past, solitude and communication" are reconciled.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ackerman, *Montreal Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1996, J 3.

<sup>41</sup> Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, translator's intro. xiii.

Part of the ritualistic aspect in my process is manifest in the going over and over of the same material. This re-passing through the images ~ this beginning at the beginning and arriving at the end ~ does one of two things: it may create layers of subtlety, or it may proffer the opposite action, to gently strip away. In either case, impressions are built, connections are redefined, established or cut off as I look at the images before me. It is a very active endeavour that may seem repetitive but is not. An image that I have seen many times is revived, 're-impressioned'. I either accept it as a potential for that particular work and mark it to be printed, or I move on to the adjacent image subjecting it to the same scrutiny, though images that have been previously used are not considered. I may choose to add text to the set of images in a similar way. There is an interplay between image and text in my work, but neither a set of images nor a text is chosen before the other, nor does either, in itself, constitute the idea or is descriptive of the other. I aim to interlace one with the other to form an integrated whole. It is not unlike untangling a ball of thread; one looks for visible ends, pulls and tugs gently but firmly, manipulating the mass all the while to allow the end to be teased free. It is related to Proust's "language play" and to writing poetry, for the link between the images is worked in a visual rendition of assonance, rhythm and simile. A 'sotovoce' dialogue with the image can ensue causing an interplay between the visual stimulus and the created character.

The process of re-working and re-visiting was central to Proust. His first novella, greatly reworked and expanded became the base for the continuous novel, *A la recherche du*

*temps perdu*, which was begun in 1913 and ended in 1922<sup>42</sup> when Proust died. It demonstrates that initial material can become the basis for continued inspiration and growth.

Proust's novel functions in an inter/intra-referential way with its embedded material as with the stuff of life. This circularity and criss-crossing, which also includes Proust's plot, emulates the memory function; it is a re-thinking/re-coalescing process which gains with each new try. Proust uses memory to create a

... metonymic transfer which opens up the domain of the past [and] constructs a metaphor[.] ... [It is a] condensation which embraces two moments in time and two different spaces within the "vast structure of recollection".<sup>43</sup>

Kristeva states that in Proust's work, "[t]he analogical is the ontological: Proustian metaphor brings together appearances, but it also reveals the profundity of being. Analogy passes through the visible until it achieves a 'transparent unity'."<sup>44</sup>

The [creative] "connection" brings together different objects by virtue of their resemblance, as detected by the narrator. He superimposes, overprints one upon the other, squeezing out the differences; in place of discrete units, he establishes "links". As a continuous linking together of circular elements analogy has the effect of opening up the surface of signs in the direction of depth ...<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The final printing date for *A la recherche* is given as 1927. The last three volumes of the work were printed posthumously.

<sup>43</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 59.

Through "a succession of ... metaphors,"<sup>46</sup> through "the coincidence between the analogous and the contiguous," through "language play,"<sup>47</sup> "connections ... [are] built on the '*proximity* of two sensations' ... [and have a] *coexistence* within the same mental context. What is contiguous becomes metaphoric."<sup>48</sup> This *framework*

[i]n eliminating time, ... also establishes a space ... which can also turn into a *container of a plot*.

... [S]uccessive links ... endow the Proustian discourse with the pregnant, poetic quality of synaesthesia, and at the same time cause the intermittent effect of a multitude of still-frame presentations of the image. ...<sup>49</sup>

There are certain words in Kristeva's explanation of Proust's analogical system that seem to have bells attached to them and ring out to me. I have taken these words and put them together to achieve what they mean to me: When two or more images are juxtaposed, their proximity alludes to connection. In my work, this connection is constructed in the embedded structure that has been brought forward when the narrator/persona responds to the images in the recollection album and through a contiguous framework builds a 'plot', or narrative discourse. This narrative framework at the base of most of my works entertains a number of 'still-frame presentations' that aspire to 'cine'-materia. If Proust ends with "a multitude of still frame presentations" as Kristeva suggests, I, in part, begin there. My hope is that the leitmotiv created draws the viewer, tugs at his/her memory to egress a connotational connector that invokes

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<sup>46</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 60.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 64.

elements from her/his repertoire of desire and leads to unravelling that which has personal meaning for him/her.

Minor White, toward the end of his career, began to put together what he called "sequences." He presented a set of images that formed a whole under a single title, as for example, "Sequence 17." The idea in this was that if one image could contain a set of interior connections, then a multiple compilation of images would gain a myriad of interrelated connections/analogies, or for White, Equivalences. He referred to these works of sequences as "a cinema of stills." Paul Caponigro made the following comment regarding White's sequences. I would welcome the thought that it could equally be applicable to my work.

By arranging a dozen or more photographs in a specific sequence (obviously a meaning was intended), [White] aimed at borrowing elements from each of the photographs and lending each of the images in the sequence new ideas and possible interpretations. *A kind of storytelling emerged.* (my italics) <sup>50</sup>

Though my process differs from time to time, there is an essential element that remains. I do not go out into the world to record information; I travel inside my thoughts and feelings to extract information. The image in my work does not so much impart information in and of itself, but is imbued with information by its juxtaposition to other images, by its context, and more often than not, by its accompanying text.

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<sup>50</sup> Silver Mountain Foundation, *Minor White: A Living Remembrance*, (New York: Aperture 1984), Paul Caponigro, 57.

When photographing, I work intuitively and allow for the simple pleasure of framing a scene or an object to be the catalyst. I take only the number of frames necessary to cover what interests me at the moment. Sometimes I take one or two frames, other times I take many. This action forms the connection to what is exterior, what is in the world out there. Later, through reflection, these images become the material of an interior world that is in turn projected outward. It is a "kind of storytelling," a narrative structure that through the creative memory-mechanism elicits meaningful connections.



## NOT FOUND IN THE CUP: TOWARD CONTEXTUALITY.

*It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself.*<sup>51</sup>

*All our work is ever really about is the struggle to understand. It is a dialogue between what we know and what is about to be revealed.*<sup>52</sup>

Talking about oneself and one's work is a meta-endeavour that places one in a vulnerable place. In this section I imply where I position myself in the artistic milieu. I have discussed already are the work of Proust and that of Monet. Here I add the more contemporaneous work of Bill Viola, a video-installation artist, and the respective work of the photographers Raymond April and Michel Campeau.

An underlying common ground in this group's production is a phenomenologically-based regard found in the Schopenhauerian *Will* as manifest in the concept of the Self. This philosophical construct is displayed as a projection of the self that forms an armature or an architectural structure in the work. Associated with this is the use of the memory function as a materializing vehicle through which the projection occurs. In addition, the idea that the work does not necessarily infer sign-systems, but alludes to

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<sup>51</sup> Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, Vol. 1, 52.

<sup>52</sup> R. Holland Murray, *R. Holland Murray: Recent works/Oeuvres recentes*. Exhibition catalogue. Galerie Liane et Danny Taran: Centre des arts Saidye Bronfman, February 4 to March 7, 1999. Black History Month, 7.

an impressionistic stance that relates more to a subjective-emotive repertoire can also be found. On a different level, and specific to the contemporary photographic work, is a 'cinematic' quality that is essentially rendered through the insistence of the polytich.

Schopenhauer began *The World as Will and Idea*,<sup>53</sup> with, "The world is my idea." In other words, as Schopenhauer describes it, the entirety of experience is an object for the subject, and its reality consists in its appearing to or being perceived by a subject. In turn, the subject itself is such an object.

The introductory quotation from Proust beginning this thesis alludes to this concept. By going deeply inside oneself the universal and the creative is revealed. Frederick Copleston, elucidating on Schopenhauer's philosophy states:

The fourth class of objects contains only one member, namely "the subject of willing considered as object for the knowing subject." That is to say, the object is the self as source or subject of volition.<sup>54</sup>

Kristeva crystallizes this idea as it is delineated in Proust.

... [T]he omnipresence of Will as an effective and dynamic essence [is] inherent both in the cosmos and the individual. [It is] [i]ntuitive Ideas, as opposed to the concepts developed by the intelligence, [that] have direct access to this essential *Will*.<sup>55</sup>

... [T]hese Ideas of Schopenhauer have nothing whatever to do with the eternal and immutable essences of Plato[...] ... Schopenhauer's Ideas

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<sup>53</sup> First Edition printed in 1819, Second Edition in 1844 and the Third Edition in 1859.

<sup>54</sup> Frederick, S. J. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Volume 7, Modern Philosophy, Part II - Schopenhauer to Nietzsche*, (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1965), 30.

<sup>55</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 86.

are coincident with the universal Will, and, just like the dynamism and creativity inherent in Nature, they are active, restless and contradictory. ... [T]he artist, ... through intuition, by raising himself above individual awareness and so identifying himself with the motion of natural affectivity[, is able to gain access to them].<sup>56</sup>

Both of these aspects lend a seemingly solipsistic air to Schopenhauer's philosophy. But what is truly generating this stance is the philosopher's regard to Eastern religion: Kristeva states, "No one is more ready than the melancholy Schopenhauer to ... open himself up to the revelations of the Vedas and the Upanishad."<sup>57</sup>

Monet, the quintessential impressionist, through the symbolist poets, had recourse to Schopenhauerian philosophy. It was manifest in the concept of Narcissus as a 'persona-ic' projection. As Levine points out, Monet consciously made this point evident in his work. Levine states that "Narcissus is the fundamental Western myth of self-reflection."<sup>58</sup> So it could only be that when "Monet looks into the oceans and rivers of France ... what he sees there is always the same fact of his own looking."<sup>59</sup> Bill Viola makes this connecting statement:

Remember that although the camera is a nineteenth century instrument, it is not an objective eye, and the self-reflective dimension of human consciousness ~ the "I am thinking about myself while sitting here thinking of myself ..." phenomenon ~ is part of the nature not only of the camera but of seeing itself.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 87.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 88.

<sup>58</sup> Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-Reflection*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>60</sup> Lewis Hyde and Bill Viola, "Conversation", taped and transcribed conversation between L. H. and B. V., 143-165, in *Bill Viola*, exhibition catalogue, David A Ross and Peter Sellars,

Claude Monet projected Self onto the subject he was depicting so that the work reflect back the momentary phenomenological state he was experiencing. It is a projection that embodies the idea of Narcissus, but a metamorphosed narcissism that delivers the work from an indulgent or solipsistic stance.

In Bill Viola's 7-minute, colour videotape, *The Reflecting Pool*,

[a] man emerges from the forest and stands before a pool of water. [Narcissus, perhaps?] He leaps up and time suddenly stops. All movement and change in the otherwise still scene is limited to the reflections and undulations on the surface of the pond. Time becomes extended and punctuated by a series of events seen only as reflections in the water.<sup>61</sup>

Frozen in mid-air as he is jumping into the pool, the image of the 'real' person fades. Time lapses and the once-clothed man mysteriously emerges from the pool naked, inferring, for me at least, that one becomes naked through reflection and that something of the hidden self is revealed in that act.

The contemplation of self is evident in Raymonde April's earlier work and in Michel Campeau's *Les tremblements du coeur*. It is realized through the projected image of their actual person onto their prints, but this is not meant to be taken literally. April's created, emergent self is presented to the viewer as a point of interaction. But if the familiarity of a recognized character was what once tugged at memory in April's work,

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curators (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, in association with, Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 155.

<sup>61</sup> Bill Viola, *Bill Viola*, David R. Ross and Peter Sellars curators, 62.

what is more likely to excite this today is the "matter" of the photograph ~ its tonality and "how the masses, volumes, textures of the various realms around her are read [and] linked together."<sup>62</sup>

Memory forms the substructure in April's work. In a description of Raymonde April's process, Nicole Gingras in a chapter entitled "Sister-images" in the exhibition catalogue *Les Fleuves invisibles*, states that April re-visits her work and re-directs it through a dialogue with memory. I felt a strong empathy for Gingras' description of April's process. Gingras states:

The process of looking we refer to here is not just finding, rediscovering the photograph(s), but also recognizing that it, or they, can be associated with others. This works on a horizontal plane (memory, the chronology of a practice and an existence) and on a vertical plane (the construction of *ambiances*, unforeseen realms, the *oeuvre*). Through the slippage between temporalities, ... one grasps [the] ... gaze ... [which] becomes a shadow cast on the things and people she sees and photographs.

What is the role of memory in the identification of images? ... When or how does an image *appear* to the photographer? ... The image waits to be discovered, looked at, grasped anew. ...

... The photographer goes back to [these images] years later. ... The process of creation is made up of these constant, almost obligatory, hypnotic returns to what is already *there*. Vibrant *rapprochements* of

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<sup>62</sup> Nicole Gingras, *Raymonde April: Les Fleuves invisibles*, exhibition catalogue, (Musée D'Art de Joliette, 1997), 139.

*worlds* are created by these destabilizing spatiotemporal displacements, by this function of memory and gaze.<sup>63</sup>

Under the title "delayed memory", Gingras writes: "We know the images are amnesiac: we can rewrite or reformulate their temporality, and revisit the past to bring it up to date."<sup>64</sup> I felt my own process resonate in the following commentary:

Since the early 90's, the photographer has asserted her position vis-à-vis updating images taken more than fifteen years ago. She salvages filmy sheets of memory that make up her contact sheets, conserving images taken since the early 70s.<sup>65</sup>

Another commonality found in this group of artists is the idea that 'impression' eclipses 'sign'. Kristeva again:

Proust never stops 'deciphering', and yet his world is not made up of 'signs'. Or at any rate, it is not made up of word-signs, or idea-signs, and even less of signifiers and signifieds. ...<sup>66</sup>

So, in contrast to what has been alleged, it is not "signs" but "impressions" that Proust seeks out to decipher. These are to be found in "myself" and by illuminating them in "their depths" I can get away from the form[.] ... I can capture the perceptible only "after the event" ... . The obscure form of the impression has entered into me by way of my senses, and ... inscribes "under the signs" and "images" ... "something quite different" ... .<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Gingras, *Raymonde April: Les Fleuves invisibles*, 140-141.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 139.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 77.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 80-81.

Impressions are "resurrections of the memory." Their inscription has to do with the fact that "[t]hey are *associative and situationist*. [They blur] the borderlines of the felt and the thought ... confusing space and time."<sup>68</sup> Proust prefers "the fluidity and indecisiveness of an 'atmosphere', 'poetry before words'."<sup>69</sup>

Georges Jeanniot's 1888 article explicated, "that Monet manifests 'the ambition that his paintings speak not only to the eyes but also to the most delicate sensibilities and imaginations.'"<sup>70</sup> Jeanniot was only one of several contemporary critics who not only picked up on the literary connection in Monet's work, but as Levine states, the viewer's relative position:

In Monet's monumental series of water subjects the ostensible lack of narrative figuration comes to be compensated by the beholder's own appropriation of the agencies of vision, mediation and dream.<sup>71</sup>

The figurative presence was eliminated only to be implied in the shimmeric realization that Monet is bent over his work as Narcissus would be over the pool of water. In turn, the viewer is similarly placed, the canvas becoming the reflecting pool.

Juxtapositionally, for April,

[t]he image is not identified by the sublime aspect of its content, but by what Gilles Deleuze calls "internal tension," i.e., by its form, its capacity to empty itself[.] ... Photography is an affair of sustained looking ~ toward what will become, toward what becomes the image. This can never be overstated.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, 82.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>70</sup> Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-reflection*, 85.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Gingras, *Raymonde April: Les Fleuves invisibles*, 142-143.

Some will interpret the decisions associated with the photographer's *craft* as sight filters that momentarily slow down reading or bifurcate it. In this gap, in this *slowing down* of the mind in relation to the image, we see a period of contemplation offered to the observer. A precious instant in which to see.<sup>73</sup>

Richard Baillargeon states that Michel Campeau's work is "a photography which attempts to show that which cannot be seen[;] ... [that it is a] photography which resolutely deviates from the surface of things."<sup>74</sup>

Bill Viola's work, I believe, embodies and illuminates many of the ideas infused in this thesis. In the following passage, Barbara London, addresses the issue of self, memory and the impressionistic stance as it is manifest in Viola's work.

[Bill Viola pursues] an ancient theme: the revelation of layers of human consciousness. Although based on realistic images, his projects go beyond representation to challenge the viewer's preconditioned expectations and viewing patterns. ... Viola's primary subject is the physical and mental landscape, and the connections and interplay between the outer world and the inner realm. He is concerned with exploring the interaction of his images with the viewer's memory. ... He is particularly interested in that moment of exchange between viewer and the art work when energy is released and the viewer achieves a new awareness. 'In a way my work is very literal, but it has more to do with the after-experience than the actual experience itself[,] ... [a]s if memory were a sort of filter, another editing process. ... I'm interested in

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<sup>73</sup> Gingras, *Raymonde April: Les Fleuves invisibles*, 144.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Baillargeon, "The F(act) of Time", trans. Pierre Thievierge and Frank French. *Blackflash* (Saskatoon: Winter 1989. Vol. 7, No. 4), 17.



how thought is a function of time. There is a moment when the act of perception becomes conception, and that is thought.' For Viola the image is merely a schematic representation of a larger system, and the process of seeing is a complex process that involves far more than surface recognition.<sup>75</sup>

Respective to photography, another juncture can be found in this group's work: the idea that photographic narrative discourse relinquishes a cinematic quality. Through the insistence of a set of images in juxtaposition, a sustained narrative structure is implied.

[Because t]he images do not exist in themselves, i.e., they are not definitive, [because t]hey transform upon contact with other images, like juxtaposed colours do on canvas, ... [a] principal of association [is constructed that,] through succession and coexistence, [allows] the photographs [to] exchange and oppose their respective intensity and drama.<sup>76</sup>

Gingras continues:

Like a number of her contemporaries, Raymonde April has developed an approach to narrative, ... primarily by forging links between images that are along the lines of poetry. [April] creates a space that is difficult to label and which rivals the off-screen space, the place *par excellence* of the Imaginary in cinema. Added to the rapport developed with narrative, ... is an entirely personal investigation of the concept of montage *between* images. The link that the photographer maintains with film goes beyond ... traits from the cinematographic lexicon ... . The photographer relies rather on the strength of one image overflowing into

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<sup>75</sup> Barbara London, "Bill Viola: The Poetics of Light and Time", 9-22, in *Bill Viola: Installations and Videotapes* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1987), 9. Internal quote from, Raymond Bellour, "An Interview with Bill Viola", *October*, 34 (Fall 1985), 101.

<sup>76</sup> Gingras, *Raymonde April: Les Fleuves invisibles*, 136.

another ... and [on] interventions [that] are meant to displace the image's primary meaning (its indexical strength) ... .<sup>77</sup>

... The photographer thus recognizes the *motion* of the image ~ the ultimate paradox of photography, i.e., the internal movement that gives life to still images. These various *apparitions* then appeal to the careful observer.<sup>78</sup>

Richard Baillargeon discussing Michel Campeau's work, *Les tremblements du coeur*, corroborates Gingras' point respective to the cinematic quality of the photography under discussion. Further, he connects photography and writing.

The mechanics associated with the work, the organization of the materials, could be considered a process similar to writing, in which the images would act as words, when juxtaposed, would form sentences, paragraphs, a text. ...

... [T]his kind of photography, ... manifest[s] time and duration, and consequently puts into action ... the circuits of the experience of reminiscence.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately what is before one is a work of fiction.

... A loop is thus created, propelling the work toward less defined zones where the viewer will have the possibility of playing a role. ...

Reality and fiction, two poles between which everything is made to oscillate[,] ... [produces] a precarious equilibrium, where the more we

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<sup>77</sup> Gingras, *Raymonde April: Les Fleuves invisibles*, 143-144.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 142.

<sup>79</sup> Baillargeon, "The F(act) of Time", 11-12.

advance, the more difficult it seems to decide between what exists and what we have invented ...<sup>80</sup>

I leave the last word to Michel Campeau, who after considering the stuff of life and the stuff of the photographic medium says:

... [A]s we develop the narrative sequence[,] [t]here begins the interior voyage in a metaphysical reality. ... Such is the essence of our work, where the photographs are but frameworks to the meanderings of our souls.<sup>81</sup>

To delve and revel in a memory-evoked emotion/stance and infuse this into the work is a uniting and distinguishing feature of the artists discussed here. Obviously there are dissimilarities, and individual modes of expression differ, but my main attempt has been to look for associations of confluence rather than disparity.

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<sup>80</sup> Baillargeon, "The F(act) of Time", 16.

<sup>81</sup> Michel Campeau, *Les tremblements du coeur*, exhibition catalogue, trans. Mark Rowley, Collection Equivalences (Quebec: Vu and Montreal: Editions St-Martin, 1988), 8 & 12.

## 2

### A SEEKER OF SHADE: THE EXHIBITED WORKS.

Four polytichs form the exhibition entitled *A Seeker of Shade*. They are:

*Cloistered:Inside* (1983-5), *house hold articles* (1994-6), *foliated in* (1994-6) and *DESIRS DE LA MEMOIRE* (1992/1998). Together, as installed in the gallery space, they form a unit descriptive of the process discussed in the preceding pages.

Essential to the exhibition are two panels fit into the large windows to diffuse further the northern light entering the room. They form a skin-like barrier between the harsh, noisy world outside the downtown window and the space inside the room. The spotlighting illuminating the works and the room is also diffused. The refracted light eliminates harsh shadows and allows the caramel colour of the wood floor to glow. Even the water radiator unit beneath the windows seems to comply with the linear display. A Japanese-like space for contemplation is inferred.

The framed images of each work are mounted no more than three inches apart to address the interrelatedness of the images. The length along the wall that each work occupies (ten feet or more) necessitates the viewer to travel *along* the work to read it. These aspects of the installation imply motion and address the filmic idea. The works are mounted so that more traditional and less traditional photographic techniques are mirrored on opposite walls.

In the following pages, I present visual details from the installation as a document of the actual exhibition. To indicate the strong, positive response from the gallery visitors to the works, I have included excerpts from the guest book. These are placed in the appendix of this thesis. There, I have also included an exhibition record of the works in *A Seeker of Shade* shown previously.

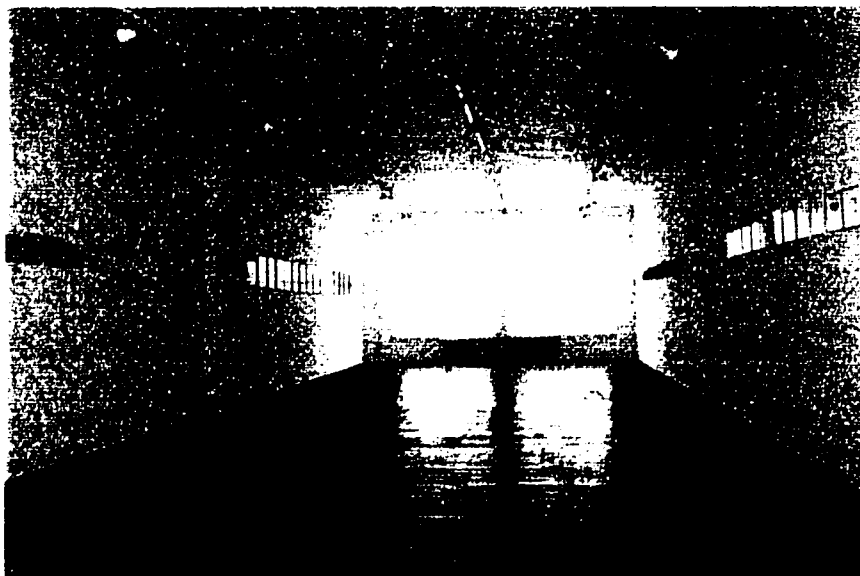


Figure 1. View of Exhibition Installation from entrance.



Figure 2. *foliated in*, installation detail.  
Hand applied emulsion on matte board, frame.



Figure 3. *foliated in*, detail.



Figure 4. *foliated in*, detail.

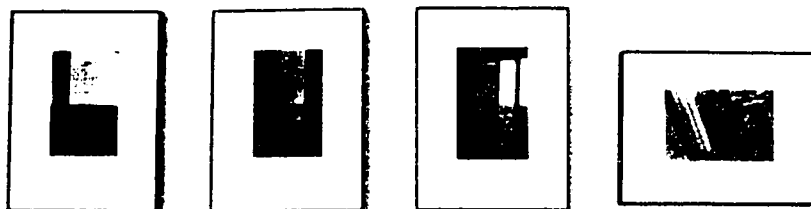
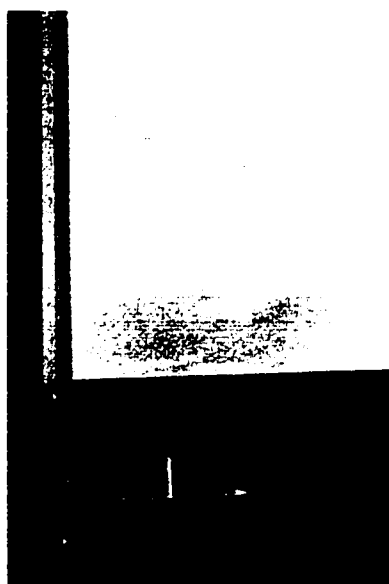


Figure 5. *Cloistered:Inside*, installation detail.



And then, a stillness outside

Figure 6. *Cloistered Inside*, detail  
Selenium-toned, silver print, silk-screened text, frame.





Figure 7. Installation detail, *house hold articles*.  
Hand-applied emulsion on cardboard, frame.

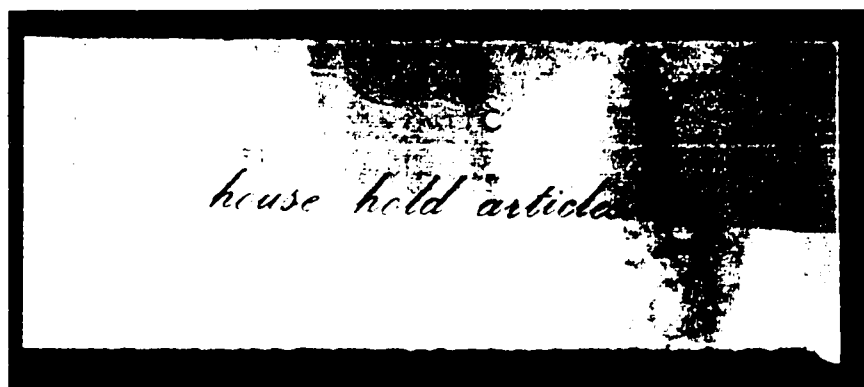


Figure 8. Detail, title piece (*house hold articles*).



Figure 9. Detail, *house hold articles*.

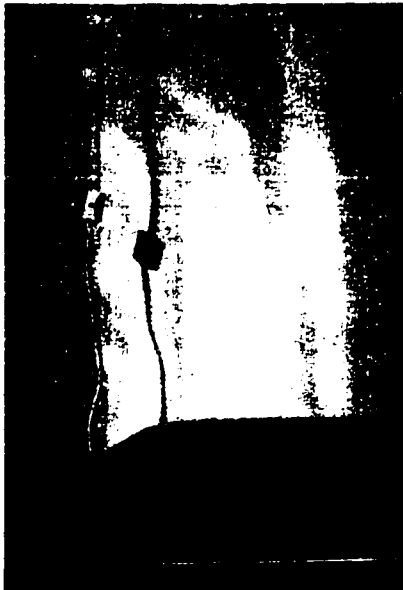


Figure 10. Detail, *house hold articles*.

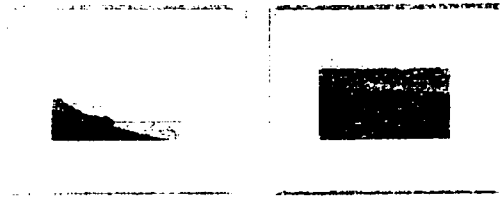


Figure 11. Installation detail, DESIRS DE LA MEMOIRE.

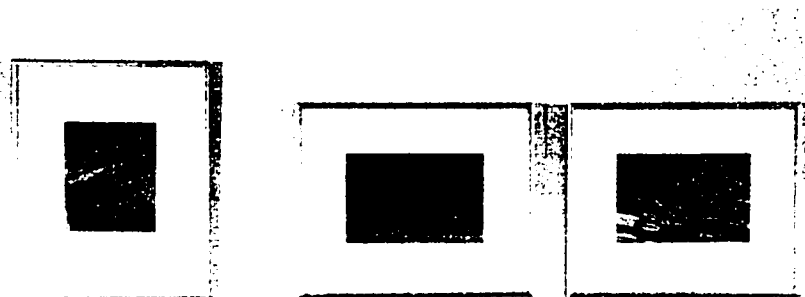


Figure 12. Installation detail, DESIRS DE LA MEMOIRE.

Silver print, frame, text penciled on the wall.



Figure 13. Detail, DESIRS DE LA MEMOIRE.



Figure 14. Detail, DESIRS DE LA MEMOIRE.

### 3

CONCLUDING ... :

INSTANCES OF FORMATION IN THE CLASSROOM.

*The process of spiraling through memory to weave connection out of incident is basic to learning ... .<sup>82</sup>*

***The first instance: Regarding Formation and Institution.***

When I returned from the Europe trip, I studied photography formally. The classroom environment allowed me to learn technique, but very little more. The words, "Take more pictures!" china-markered in large, yellow letters across the bottom of a contact sheet remain imbedded in my mind, haunting me from time to time. These words have become emblematic of a journalistic "edit-for-the-supreme-single-shot" approach to photography, an idea which, from the beginning, I have not been able to conform to. In the classes I attended, my teachers promoted a formalistic aesthetic: I did not have the

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<sup>82</sup> Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 11.

opportunity to discuss the personal motivating voice that was already beginning to emerge in my work.

Since I had completed one BA, I took photography courses through continuing education classes. Sadly, in these classes, our rich, adult, life experiences and our previous educational backgrounds were not addressed. The classes were set-up hierarchically: the teacher was positioned at the top and lateral discussion between students was not encouraged. We were there to simply "take in" the technical and the formal qualities of the photograph. When a fellow student, in his early fifties, demonstrated a very distinct personal process, one which he consistently used to inspire him, he was shunned and told that he needed to go beyond what he was doing and experiment. But "experiment" simply meant to follow the style that the teacher favoured. These and other experiences left me with a resolve to make a conscious effort to allow lateral discussion in my classes and to promote individual process; it led me to reposition my role as a teacher.

Once outside these classrooms, the process I had garnered through writing poetry and through Eli Mandel's mentorship grew as I pursued photography on my own. I continued to take only as many pictures as I desired and continued to compose work by re-visiting negatives and relating to them in a different way. I do deviate from this particular process, but through it an essential perspective has been instilled.

***The Second Instance: Regarding Process and Reflective Formation in the Adult Classroom.***

Photography students sought Minor White to teach them, but he left a problematic legacy to which they attest. It warns that taking personal process as a basis for a total pedagogy can be taken too far. Edward Ranney believes that we can learn from White's "inherent limitations of teaching only a self-referential kind of art, as for its searching quality."<sup>83</sup> Although Minor White believed that mastering craft and understanding formal qualities formed an important base in one's ability to communicate photographically, what was paramount for him was the communicability of the photograph's *content*. Therefore, addressing only technique and reading a print solely through its formal relationships could not bring about a conceptual review of the content. Only a conceptual way of looking, through emotional and symbolic attachment to photographs, could reveal what was there and could lead to creating prints with stronger content. So, White taught photography through "experience and ideas rather than materials and information."<sup>84</sup> However, underlying this seemingly sound approach was his belief that photography is a means toward religious fulfillment. So, placing himself in a priest-like position and treating his students much like disciples, he attempted to proffer this idea through "ritual and the model of the master-teacher."<sup>85</sup>

White's teaching philosophy was initially based in Stieglitz's idea of *Equivalence*. Then, aspects of Taoism, ideas from the I Ching and Zen Buddhism ~ concepts introduced to

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<sup>83</sup> Silver Mountain Foundation, *Minor White: A Living Remembrance*, Edward Ranney, 55.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Eugene Richards, 51.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Arthur Freed, 44.

him when he was on the West Coast of the United States ~ were added. Finally, towards the latter part of his teaching and photography career, he incorporated ideas from the Gurdjieffian work and hypnotic techniques. While many of his students appreciated White's approach, many thought that his techniques into process were "very specific and at times overwhelming."<sup>86</sup> For Paul Caponigro,

[t]he multitude of methods put forth ~ Gurdjieff dances, 'six lessons in acting' [from Boleslovsky], hypnosis, Zen teachings ~ ... reshaped and partially understood was vague and nebulous, not unlike attending a seance.<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, Peter Laytin thought that the "ambiguous atmosphere" "and constantly questioning ideas and responses" allowed students to "judge ... the decision process [for them]selves"<sup>88</sup> and thereby gain an autonomous, self-critical ability that could be carried into the field. While I can concur with White's desire and achievement in his practice to move the teaching of and response to photography away from its formal and technical aspects alone, I believe he went too far. Personal process is not pedagogy.

Interestingly, there is an uncanny connection to White which was revealed to me when I read about him. I have pursued similar philosophical/religious notions. But, Taoism, or the I Ching, or the ideas of Zen, or for that matter Gurdjieffian work are *background* for me. They are a part of my personal life-experience that *could* surface in the classroom during a discussion, but they do not constitute a material base from which my teaching practice springs. The goal that predominates my pedagogy is to help the student arrive

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<sup>86</sup> Silver Mountain Foundation, *Minor White: A Living Remembrance*, Frederick Sommer, 52.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Paul Caponigro, 58.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Peter Laytin, 71.



at a personal process derived from his or her own experience and desire. For me, the adult classroom is a learning site that through oneself, in relation to the greater community and through the medium(s) that one is studying yields personal meaning and growth. Learning photography's technical aspects as well as initiating a strong personal process are of equal importance in this endeavour. This is accomplished through a teacher who reflects both the needs and the strengths of her students, and chameleon-like, constructively projects them back into the classroom so they can be consciously explored. It is, after all, through the individual teacher that educational institutions yield a positive or negative formative experience for the student.

As an educator of adults working within a reflective praxis, I muddle along ascertaining what does and what does not work for me. I am mindful of response given me by adult students who have had years of life-experience, if not art experience. As such they have much to offer in the classroom.

A reflective practice is not a static practice, nor is what works for me necessarily a dictum for others to uphold, so I offer the following with this proviso in mind. In the adult/community, college or university teaching environment, I believe that an enriched learning experience is created when the individual student is allowed to direct his or her exploration toward the development of a personal process. In this environment the teacher becomes a resource, a guide. Progress becomes an individual concern judged and measured by the student, in conjunction with the teacher, and based on criteria that the student and teacher shape together. It is a collaborative interaction that allows

the student to become self-critical in a positive way. I believe, as it was true for me and I have seen borne true in my classes, that work which is derived, first and foremost, from the self satisfies one's creativity and helps to generate a momentum that allows growth to occur, not only in the classroom but also in the field. Knowing what and how motivates one creatively and acquiring disciplined, distanced critical analysis enables sustained creativity. This is best acquired through constructive, supportive and individual dialogue between the student and teacher, and student and student.

***The Third Instance: Regarding Responding/Critiquing.***

At viewing sessions of his work, Minor White incorporated silence to promote a meditative/contemplative response in the viewer. Forgoing verbal exposition of what was on the screen, at the end of the session, he would say simply, "Thank you very much."<sup>89</sup> In the classroom, in the "listening" sessions with his students, a similar transpiration occurred. The student presenting a photographic print did not speak her or his intent. She or he listened to responses to hear whether what was being received by the viewers was indeed what he or she was trying to communicate, or if, as White puts it, the work departed "in amazing directions." As an important component of his pedagogy, White states:

... [T]his is the activity that brings the creative state of mind near the boiling point: [it is a] conscious criticism of new prints, digestion of what

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<sup>89</sup> Silver Mountain Foundation, *Minor White: A Living Remembrance*, Ansel Adams, 30.

the prints do, as compared to what [the photographer] wanted them to do.<sup>90</sup>

For White, a critique held in such a manner would lend a photographer/artist the knowledge that could "sustain a continued recurrence of creativity."<sup>91</sup>

It is in the responding technique that I most ally with Minor White's classroom pedagogy. My use of a similar approach comes to me through the positive experiences in Eli Mandel's classes and through other classes experienced while at OCA. In the response sessions I hold, the photographer/artist does not begin by expounding intent and by giving a statement. If one were to do so, in my mind, it would pre-empt the viewer's response or direct it willfully. So, the print, the piece, in whatever form the work exists in at that moment is presented. The presenter actively listens to the viewer-responses and only once this is completed responds to them. The teacher is only one member of the group and does not hold a weighted position. It is her or his responsibility, though, to keep the process on track through relevant questions and comments when necessary. The teacher's role is not to intercede on behalf of the presenter, or on anyone's behalf. It is a time when teacher and students come together in a respectful environment, where the rightful autonomy of each participant is allowed. In such an open and vulnerable forum, participants must be mindful that the work placed before them has been produced in a sincere fashion and needs to have a response equal in kind. In my teaching experience, it has been in these kinds of sessions where I have seen the most growth occur in students.

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<sup>90</sup> Minor White, "The Camera Mind and Eye", originally published in *Magazine of Art*, vol. 45, No. 1, 1952. Reprinted in *Photographers on Photography; a Critical Anthology*, ed. Nathan Lyons (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 1966): 168.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

## *TO CLOSE ...*

What I have attempted to do in this text is to pull at threads of a tangled ball ~ my photographic process ~ in a desire to find a single thread that would release the mass. I have addressed the interrelation of creative memory and the idea of the Narcissus site as the locus of creation as it applies to my photographic process. I have related the experience of my personal process as it influences my teaching practice. Perhaps, I have only managed to fray the ball rather than untangle it, but it has been an exercise worth engaging in.

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## APPENDIX.

Excerpts from exhibition guest book.


Very touching work  
Thank you for letting  
the light in  
J. J. J. J. J.  
G. N. S. S.

Poétique - H. S. Storm

Thank you for sharing your world  
cut out & framed.

Joyce Westrop.

Congratulations, very sensitive & poetic  
Cinzia Kline

Original interesting. Unique language &  
unique poetic! 

In your restrained manner  
you present a unique way of looking  
— quite beautiful. congratulations

12-11-98

1Djr

Thank you for this exhibition, so much of shade  
it's very interesting & looks great in  
the space  
Elizabeth Williams

Thank you

Elizabeth TSUK.

12/11/98 intimate/beautiful/universal.

subtle shades, beautiful framing of  
person/images, & evocative words  
SUSAN DAWBER

Très beau et intéressant  
M.

Étonnant par sa délicatesse et la recherche  
de la subtilité du quotidien; un peu comme  
si l'on voulait cerner ce qui ne se ~~cerne~~ pas  
Gérard Lefebvre 14/13/98

Le pose de vos présents  
épure et charme nos instants

Sabine Monnin

Bravo Touché Denise Guay

Très Beau Gros Saxon

Très intéressant! Plu de l'élite

La fide seule, sans le Juelin... Prissimant  
André H.

La transposition par de subtils pour de qui...  
merci! EZB...

Nov 28/98

J'aime cet atmosphère de  
calme, et alignement géométrique si j'ai  
même document que le radiateur répondait à  
l'alignement des photos à droite  
Elizabeth Reel

Genevieve Rocher.

Congratulations job - again! I am touched by  
your work and I will keep remembering your  
sensitive, precise pictures! Julia

Karen Callaghan, Boston MA.


A great contemplative experience -  
Thank you.

ALAIN BOUTIER  
not quite peaceful but touching  
and sensitive. Thank you

Merci pour la poésie  
M.L.

Univers personnel et fascinant où il fait  
bien circuler et voyager Merci

Sylvie Gosselin

Dans de la mémoire, un parcours en nuances qui en  
suit en face à face avec une lumière mouvante.  
Ben. 

The combination of "old" frames and  
"old" pictures into a type of installation  
is a really fresh and unique approach  
to photography.

Jörgen Jansen.

## Exhibition Record for Works in *A Seeker of Shade*.

*Cloistered: Inside* was first exhibited at Espace Ovo, Montreal, during April, 1986, in a juried group exhibition entitled, *L'EFFETVISUEL/TITLESEARCH, femmes photographes/women photographers*. It was the only work of thirty photographers to be mounted in its entirety. In the current exhibition, due to lack of space, two frames, (the title frame and the last frame), were not hung. *Cloistered: Inside* was exhibited subsequently through a juried group show entitled *Another Focus*, an exhibition focusing on women's issues through women's eyes. Sponsored by The Photographers Gallery, Saskatoon, it was exhibited there during March, 1988, then travelled to the Rosemont Art Gallery, Regina where it was shown during April, 1988. *Another Focus* was widely reviewed with articles in *Blackflash*, Spring 1988, Vol. 6. No. 1 and in the various newspapers of Saskatoon and Regina. *Cloistered:Inside* was exhibited again during March-April, 1989 at the Maison de la Culture de Cote-des-Nieges. L'Association Photographique de Montreal mounted the two-person show.

*house hold articles* was shown at the UNB Art Centre, Fredericton during October, 1996, in an invitational exhibit entitled, *Photography as Inquiry*. Three diverse photographic works by three photographers comprised this exhibit.