

2013

Your loss

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YOUR LOSS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by
Lauren Hegge
B.F.A., Colorado State University, 2008
May 2013

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ABSTRACT

Your Loss is an exhibition of drawings, photographs, intaglio prints, found objects and prose. Drawn from personal and anonymous archives, the works in the exhibition acknowledge various forms of breakdown, exploring individual reactions and attempts to rebuild from the fragments of loss. Inherent in the work are discussions of remembering and forgetting, finding and losing, building and destroying, growth and decay. This work is both recognition of the desire to hold on too tightly and an effort to learn to let go

YOUR LOSS

I am navigating my way through
the different types of loss.

Loss of something you loved -
Someone.
Because it died. Because you used them too much.
Because you threw it away,
because they threw you away.

Lost because you stuffed your face
full of it,
ate it all and there's no more in the pantry.
Because they won't return your calls,
and you decided it was over.

Because it cracked and yellowed
in that window in the sun.

Because things come apart.

I am making a display of my loss.

If we have loss,
then we have also found.

Everything I've found is lost
to someone else.
Everything I've discovered, inherited,
dug up or stumbled upon
once belonged elsewhere.

Lost lost lost, Perdu Perso Verloren
Found, found, Gefunden Encontrado.

Show me what's underneath.

Layer

Over

Layer over

Layer.....Underground.

Scratch it like skin that has lingered too long.

Flake it off and push it away.

off.

A part

from me.



Figure 1. Lauren Hegge, *Installation detail 1, (orange)*, 2013

I know you left long ago,
it just took me a while to admit it.
I clung to the traces you left behind
and pretended that you were still here.

But I can't do this forever
and you wouldn't want that -
not really.

I see how a trace
is just a trace-
Proof that you existed
not proof that you're ever coming back.

So I am letting you go now,
trying
to put you in a new place.
I have built you up and worn you down,
rearranged your pieces
among the other drifters in my life.

You can choose to stay,
or fall and leave

I know this is what you'd want.

Crawling vine,
cicada on a pin.

Pinned corsage,
smothered in moss the color of
the ground.

Grow.Grow.Grow.

Grow up.

Touch it all and push it ~~down~~.

Down.

An object breaks down every time you touch it.
(Just like you my dear)
Every fingerprint, every pocket,
every fold takes it further away.

The alternative
is a plastic couch cover -
Hideous with sweat,
sticking to your skin.

Refusing your contact
offering protection
against the wear.

I find you most beautiful with a thick layer of use.
All new and shiny -
the attraction would be gone.



Figure 2. Lauren Hegge, *With much love, Edgar*, 2012

Don't worry, I've found you.
Now you won't be forgotten.

You won't disintegrate, turn to mold,
tear up and fall apart.

Now someone else can see you
and pretend, like we all did,
that they know you

But I picked you up
out of the dirt
careful not to crush your parts
under the weight of my palms.

If others saw you, they walked right by.
leaving you there in the dust
for me

I knew you well.
I remember how we talked.

Except now,
It's not you and not me
acting as shells of what we once were.

Scavenger:

1. Someone who doesn't know when to call it quits.
2. A certain someone who can't keep her hands off the ground.
3. A possum, a rat.

You're perfect
You're perfect, you're special.

I'll save you.
~~I'll love you.~~

I'll carry you with me
from house to house;
Now I don't know when
to let you go.

You're done.
I've lost you
~~I can't remember why I loved you.~~
I can't recall where I put you.

You are nothing
but pinpricks on paper,
goose bumps on my skin.

You're going to be here.
I'll see you around.
Not you *exactly*,

but something.



Figure 3. Lauren Hegge, *Installation detail 2 (yellow portrait)*, 2012

I buried that bird
the day they wasted him.
Buried her here because he went without me there.
Because I couldn't be there
to make it all right,
did it, because I didn't get a say.

With a needle and a shovel,
we put them both down.
Back underground, coated full
of artificial time.

I buried my hands deep in the wax
(you squealed like a child
while I did it).

In the white cocoon, I pulled her out
(thinking of him while I did it)
What did you think? What did he?
before they made his eyes go close.

I can assure you
they just go to sleep.

I buried it all
under black inky fingerprints.
Slowly, blotting everything out.
I built it up,
smeared it down.
Ran my hands through,
until they were thick
with a new second skin.

Whoever said it's about death,
I think is wrong.

You don't have to die to be lost.

How to be here and not here

To look you in the face
while sliding under the covers,
slipping away, to some place that exists
outside of here.

To do these things
hiding
while never moving an inch.

And you? You left.
Yet here you are.
A trace, a shell, an impression.
Fragments to remind me
that I know you, yet I don't.

So I've found something new.

You look so nice in your portrait.

Your chestnut eyes
sink under my skin,
and I hesitate
to scratch out your features.

Now with each puncture
your appearance is changed.
Light shines through your features and your freckles appear like
braille to the blind.

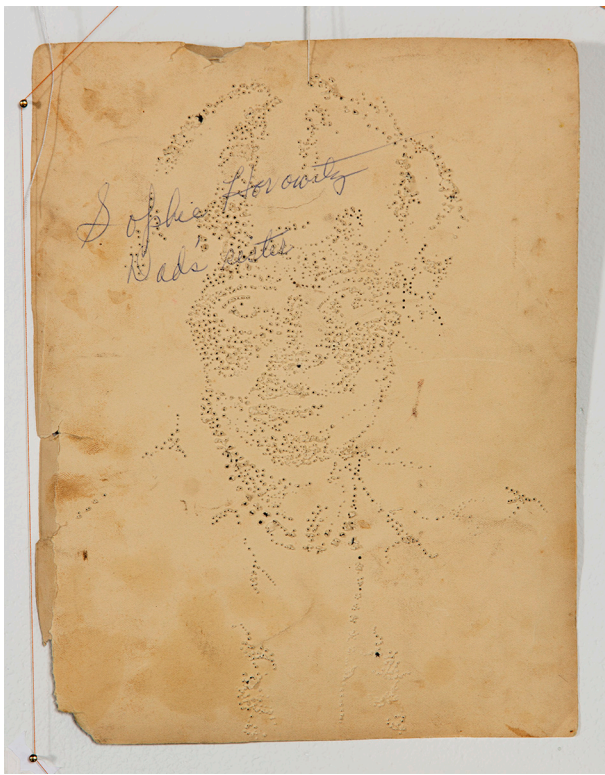


Figure 4. Lauren Hegge, *Your freckles read like braille to the blind*, 2012

I wonder what you're thinking
when you say you dream of me.
Dreaming your dreams of day-naps and stories

|
V

In these dreams, are we still tied together?

I no longer recall all the details
or how much we read
before falling asleep in that warm dripping grass.

...it had something to do with a mockingbird.

I want to think about those who touched you before.

Those who made you,
Those you thought you belonged to
and those who threw you away.

Don't tell me their names.
I want no allegiance to them.

I only want to see their marks,
adding mine,

one by one
to your skin.

As much as I tried
to keep it all here,
I was happy to let legs slowly fall into the snow.

Black oil, sweat,
a copper gleam and white tissue.

Long-distance faces bob up in the water,
waiting for the next process.
Each sandpapered layer becomes another coat, a veil.
Blanketing things I once knew.

I changed them, remade them.

Turned one into another,
Through heavy-handed use.

What happens when you are no longer interested in having all the information?
When your interest shifts .

What happens when all that extra falls away
and you're left with only fragments of what was once there?
Never quite knowing
where it came from or what it was.

I took my hands and rubbed the spots that needed to show through the most.
Trace-lines and shadows,
hints of their previous lives.

All white. Then, all black.

Start
Then break it down.



Figure 5. Lauren Hegge, *Installation detail 3 (pink)*, 2013

What's under, how many?
Exposed too much.
COVER UP.

Dear God,
Dear Something.

I've seen enough.

Cocoon:

1. To bind something together
that you hope to keep safe.
2. To hide under the covers until the sheets stick to your skin, waiting till someone notices and
calls you to rejoin the world.
3. To go in old and come out,
some new kind of young.

I want to cocoon, to smother,
to obliterate.
To take what's there and take it away.

Like something creeping slowly over your shoulder,
crystalizing your bones.
You never know it's happening until it's already begun.

Visualize the strings breaking;
run to shake them off.

Shattering on the ground
as foot hits pavement
and hords of imaginary foes shake their fists in defeat.



Figure 6. Lauren Hegge, *A slow web, weaving*. 1,2,3, 2012

I want to cocoon, to grow,
to transform.
To take what was there and make something new.

Like a slow web weaving a cushion
for your bones.

Take a rest, rest a while.

Wake up fresh and
changed.

I have grown quite fond of sandpaper,
It takes away everything I can stand
to lose.

In time stones will form on the tips of my fingers
and everything I touch will wear down.
Crisscrossed scratches
will linger on surfaces,
revealing all the places
I've been.

Dust rises with each swipe and I hold my breath,
excited to see what I've done.
Scraping

Until I get to the bottom of things.

Where is it?
 I don't know.
It's gone?
 That's true.
It's lost!
 I know.
Where could it be?
 Could be anywhere.

Maybe it will come back?

 Maybe, but not yet.¹

¹ Carlin, George. "On Losing Things." Performance. 1985. *Youtube*. 18 Dec. 2010. Web. Jan. 2013

I made myself a book of men.
A "swinger-size" photo book
-Paisley Heirloom. No. 504-

I carry them with me
and show them off to my friends.

You can hold them in your hands,
and run fingers on their faces.
Feel the holes they've left
and wonder where they've been.

Poke.Poke.Poke.Poke.Poke.Poke.
Poke.Poke. Poke. Poke. . Po.ke. .
. .Poke. Poke.Poke.Poke....Poke...
Poke . Poke . Poke . Poke . Poke .
Poke. Stitch..... - - - - -

I'm here.. . . .No. Not . Really.
No . Not . Really.. .
. . Not..Really.
.No. - - - - -

The hand touching the leaf
is the hand that stitches.
The hand alive/the hand dead.

Hands that once held. ((held) hands)

Hands love.
Hands move on.



Figure 7. Lauren Hegge, *Installation detail 4 (Held(Hands))*, 2013

How did this happen?
I wonder
He wonders
She wonders.

How did I get tethered, line-by-line
and trapped by my own hand?

Now we have to carry our nets
around us,
sticking hand, hand and feet
through its holes.

All legs and smiles
(I have some and none.)
Smiling back to you,
standing proud in cropped tops.
Next to a dog
that will eventually be buried.

But for now they have legs
and smiles and tops.

Posing in a spot I don't recognize,
one hiding her face
from my ever-prying eyes.

I can't decide if I've lost you
or never quite had you.

What you lost is less clear.

You were gone before it happened.
Before you were lost,
before found.
Gone when I pinned you,
sewed you, saved you.
Laid my fingers on your surface and changed you.

Maybe you're not lost at all,
still belonging
to somebody else.

Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony,
Please come down.
Something's lost and can't be found.

Saint Anthony,
Saint Anthony I pray,
Please bring it back

Without delay.



Figure 8. Lauren Hegge, *To fall and leave, 2*, 2012

Your loss.

You lost your postcard.

It's green with what appears
to be John Wayne on the cover.
The scalloped edges are torn -
it was yours a long time.

Upon closer inspection,
it's Ernest Tubb.

Summer's beautiful here and I hope all is well.

You lost your wristwatch,
maybe it pinched on your wrist.

Dropped on the ground, it was crushed.

Good riddance.
Get lost.

I found it,
but I won't keep it
long.

I'm afraid you lost your wedding photo

(One of them at least.)

A picture of you two
standing happy, in love.
Your veil clumsily blowing
in the wind of the orange afternoon.

It's under wax now

You lost your basketball game.

I assume,
I don't know.
Anyway,

you lost the proof

You lost the pages of your yellowing scrapbook.
Most lines are empty,
but a few spots remain

< triangle-cornered >

with bright squares
showing spaces
where your images used to sit.

I lost the skin of my oranges.
Lost them because
I had to get inside.

You lost your skeleton.
Dropped on the ground
on the sidewalks of my neighborhood.

I lost the friendship we used to have.
Once held together by circumstance
and crummy apartments.

I still have those pictures I took
(so do you, unless you've misplaced them).

I don't know you anymore.
Put my thumb over your face

and moved on.



Figure 9. Lauren Hegge, *A Mend*, 2013.

Gone is your blue velveteen autograph book -
The one painted with peacocks,
given to you
by your sister.

It's been some time since you've had it; the pages
are brittle
and green.

(in truth, most are brown - the green ones, I took for myself)

I won't tell her how you lost it

or that she gave it to you
on my birthday

Lost keys in Dutchtown.
Backpacks in Dayton station.
Lost black mittens on the ski slope
and a rabbit fur scarf.

Lost rings in Denver.
Lost brown wallet downtown.

Lost: Two cats
Both about 5 years old.
One is a solid black male,
with six toes on each paw,
answers to the name of "six."

The other's solid gray
and slightly overweight.

Answers to "Daisy."

I lost you there.

I tried to stop it, to keep you.
I carried you in my pocket,
but you turned into mold.

You're back now, altered;
A part of something new.

I won't forget you.
There are things that you left
still with me.

What's here after you've left.
What's left after you've gone?

What's left,
when you're not here.

Place holders & impressions,

Waiting to be found.



Figure 10. Lauren Hegge, *Take what you know I can lose, 1,2*, 2013

AFTERWORD

I am drawn to the remains of what has already past and what is fading away. I collect and preserve objects of personal significance - photographs, flowers, notes, clothing, odds and ends - anything that reminds me of loved ones or cherished places. These preserved objects become tokens, acting as stand-ins for what I cannot physically hold on to. Through these mementos, I can mentally revisit moments that time has taken away. If I can remember something, then it is never completely lost. In a sense, I collect to fight against the inevitability of losing the people and moments that are important to me.

Building my personal collection has led to a fascination with finding the tokens of others. I became interested in what these anonymous objects might mean to me - a spectator with no knowledge of what they represented to their original owner. At some point I realized the obvious but poignant truth that I am only able to find these tokens if someone else has lost them. My own treasured items await the same fate.

With this in mind, *Your Loss* is an acknowledgement of the cycles of loss involved in life and the reactions they provoke within us. Inherent in the work are discussions of remembering and forgetting, finding and losing, building and destroying, growth and decay.

Your Loss is also an attempt to create something new. I have accepted that these objects are destined to eventually disappear, as are the memories they try to represent. Because of this, it makes little sense to passively collect them, without a new purpose in mind. With this exhibition, I attempt to let go of my tokens and the tokens of others, to create work that allows these objects to exist in a new context. It is my hope that these new works somehow represent the act of collecting remembrances, as well as the changing of hands and meanings over time and the inevitability of everything eventually breaking down.

The bulk of the visual material involved in *Your Loss* has been used to create a large-scale collage, which exists as a precarious arrangement, appearing in-between states of coming-together and falling-apart. Fastened with tape and string, this combination of collected and newly generated photographs, drawings, and sculptures appears in-flux and unstable. As a reference to the overpowering experience of trying to resist loss and the small chosen moments we determine to be worth saving, the viewing experience of this arrangement is intended to shift back and forth between intimidating and intimate. Built from a large variety of separate components, the collage is overwhelming in its initial impact, both due to physical size and the amount of information it contains. However, once approached, small, individual pieces provide the viewer with opportunities for a closer relationship with the work and moments of personal reflection.

Also within the work is the contradiction of having an overwhelming amount of information, while never being able to know all the details. Connections and repetitions exist - lines leading from one image to another, string binding various elements, names and faces appearing in multiple places - all hinting at a greater whole, but keeping the meaning just out of grasp. This experience reflects both the mystery I've felt reflecting upon those found, anonymous tokens, as well as the frustration of not being able to keep a complete memory intact or to understand its full implication.

Alongside the mixed-media installation, *Your Loss* presents a series of photo intaglio prints whose imagery originates from pieces found within the collage, namely a selected grouping of personal and found photographs. These prints further emphasize these images from my collection, giving them prominence through exaggeration in scale and repetition. While providing a new incarnation for these photo mementos, these prints also seek to recognize an

inevitable path towards disintegration. The prints show the tears and folds of the original photographs, marks acquired through handling, and collecting. Through their translation into intaglio prints, these images pick up new damages as the copper plate interacts with the physicality of the printing process. They are blown up and re-printed until they lose information and fall apart; their original images are blotted out, sewn together or scraped away- further removed from their original meaning through time, repetition and use.

Your Loss is not solely visual. I have recorded my thoughts and reactions to everything made in this process. The writings reflect my investigations on what was collected, created or lost. I have transcribed my thoughts on the included tokens, the moments they may or may not represent, reflections on the physical process of making, and unearthed emotions.

Structured in a manner similar to the visual work, the writing in *Your Loss* is composed of fragments which add up to a feeling of the whole and presents a shifting range of perspectives - observational and subconscious, personal and general, direct and full of hidden meanings. The writing that surfaced became as important as any image on the wall. This written work stands alongside the visual components, reflecting the experience in another form.

INSTALLATION VIEWS



Figure 11. Lauren Hegge, *Installation view 1*, 2013



Figure 12. Lauren Hegge, *Installation view 2*, 2013



Figure 13. Lauren Hegge, *Installation view 3*, 2013



Figure 14. Lauren Hegge, *Carry our nets*, 2013

REFERENCE

Carlin, George. "On Losing Things." Performance. 1985. *Youtube*. 18 Dec. 2010. Web. Jan. 2013.

VITA

Lauren Hegge was born redheaded and small, at some point in the 1980s. At a midpoint in the 1990s she developed a fear of forgetting and became an avid collector of memories in the form of vernacular photographs. This hoarder's impulse extended into the 2000's and beyond, and she is just now getting around to fully admitting to the habit. She is still living, still red and is losing *something* every day. Lauren earned a B.F.A. in Photography from Colorado State University and is a 2013 M.F.A. candidate in Studio Arts at Louisiana State University.