

*Pacing the House*

An Exhibition of Sculptures and Drawings

by

Carrie Perreault

A thesis exhibition

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Studio Art

University of Waterloo Art Gallery (UWAG), July 8 - 24, 2021

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2021

© Carrie Perreault 2021

## Author's Declaration

---

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

---

Surveying my work through a feminist approach to autotheory, *Pacing the House* is an exhibition that uses material inquiry to reframe personal trauma into a site of investigation. By creating systems of organization—categorizing, formatting, grouping—I work against dissociation to create meaningful connections in the physical world and use this process-based method as a form of knowledge gathering. By temporarily suspending external and dominant narratives that have upheld the stories I have repeatedly told myself, I recover and articulate my personal experiences through the creation of objects, installations and drawings that reflect these conceptual intensions. In my research, I seek ways to dismantle gendered and psychological abuse and to formulate those results in an experiential language while referencing residential architecture and childhood memories.

## Acknowledgments

---

I want to extend deep gratitude to many people who have helped me along in my studies. Lois Andison and Doug Kirton showed up time and again over the past year as my graduate committee and have helped me immensely with my work. Their insights and encouragement, I hope, are sentiments I can forever hold onto—they mean a great deal to me. I am also grateful to the artist Liz Deschenes who acted as my external examiner. She contributed meaningfully to the compassionate, thoughtful and exploratory conversation that was my defence—it was an absolute joy to spend the morning in her company. I must also thank Adam Glover, the studio labs manager, for being someone who wants and actively works to make things happen. Especially during the pandemic, his fortitude has made our time on campus possible. Thank you, Jessica Thompson, for providing writing tools that were instrumental in this paper's coming together.

Studying during a pandemic has been challenging in lots of ways. It has not been easy, but it has been made lighter with my classmates' bright spirits. Thank you, Dial-Up, Haircut, Hush Money and Birthday Suit, for being there. We would have all drunk a lot more at Molly's had we known how things were going play out. Let this be a fair warning to those who follow. I must also thank the cohort who came before us for their friendship and support and, particularly, Tyler Matheson, who helped me navigate academia in the first term when I felt lost and overwhelmed.

My sculptural work is often heavy and cumbersome to both make and move, and I will always be indebted to those who help me in the studio. In this realm, and especially during this year of lockdown, my neighbours Sekou Tebae and Amanda Schoppel have played the roles of supporters, cheerleaders and heavy lifters when needed—thank you.

And finally, I am blessed with friends near and far, and their love makes all of this effort and work feel validated. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!

## Land Acknowledgment

---

While I have been fortunate to study at the University of Waterloo, it hasn't been done blindly. The university sits on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabe and the nations of the Haudenosaunee, who are currently under colonial rule.

The land we study upon is situated on the Haldimand Tract, which was promised to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River. This land has never been delivered, and today only 4.8% of it is Indigenous.

In my research, I have learned first-hand how important it is to understand where you, and those around you, come from. In my education and as the public-school curriculum stands now, Indigenous peoples' existence and struggles have been intentionally left out of settler's consciousness for generations, and it is time for that to change. We all deserve to know where we come from and to be connected to our communities in culturally fulfilling ways. My being here is a direct benefit of the policies of expulsion and assimilation of Indigenous peoples' during the time of settlement and since. The harms from these policies and the ways in which we police Indigenous communities are still felt and perpetuated today.

While I study in the Waterloo region, I live in Tkaronto/ Toronto, the traditional territory of many nations, including the Huron-wendat and Mississaugas of the Credit in addition to the Anishinaabe and the nations of the Haudenosaunee. I am fortunate to live just one block east of the Humber River, where I spend a good deal of time. The Humber River is well documented archaeologically, with the first settlers being Palaeo-Indians, who lived in the area 10,000 - 7,000 BC and has for centuries been an inhabited and active trading route.

Until Indigenous peoples' who live in these territories, on Turtle Island, and around the world regain their sovereignty, self-government, and control over all their ancestral territories, we are all participating in and benefitting from colonial violence.

## Table of Contents

---

Author's Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Land Acknowledgment	v
List of Figures	vii
Image Descriptions	ix
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	3
Chapter Three	8
Bibliography	27

## List of Figures

---

- Fig. 1 Tracey Emin, *How It Feels*, video, 00:22:33, 1996.
- Fig. 2 Carrie Perreault, *drawings* and *Emovere*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.  
Photo credit: Scott Lee.
- Fig. 3 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #23*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 4 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #28*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 5 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #29*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 6 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #30*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 7 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #16*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 8 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #38*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 9 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #21*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 10 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #20*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 11 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #33*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 12 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #34*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 13 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #37*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 14 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #22*, mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 15 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (1, 2, 3)*, drystone, 4 x 4 x 4 in. (10 x 10 x 10 cm), 4.5 x 4.5 x 4 in. (11.5 x 11.5 x 10 cm), 5.5 x 5.5 x 4 in. (14 x 14 x 10 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 16 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (27)*, drystone, 11 x 4.5 x 10 in. (28 x 11.5 x 25.5 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 17 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (25)*, drystone, 7 x 7.5 x 10 in. (17.5 x 19 x 25.5 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 18 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (10, 11)*, drystone, 5 x 5 x 7.25 in. (12.5 x 12.5 x 18.5 cm), 4 x 4 x 6 in. (10 x 10 x 15 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 19 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (14)*, drystone, 8 x 4 x 10 in. (20 x 10 x 25.5 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 20 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (19)*, drystone, 11 x 4.5 x 10 in. (28 x 11.5 x 25.5 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 21 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (24)*, drystone, 13.5 x 7.5 x 5 in. (34 x 19 x 12.5 cm), 2020.

- Fig. 22 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere (8)*, drystone, 11 x 6 x 6 in. (28 x 15 x 15 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 23 Rachel Whiteread, *Step*, 2007 – 2008, plaster, pigment, resin, wood, metal—five units, one shelf, 5.5 x 15.75 x 8 in. (14 x 40 x 20 cm). Photo credit: Mike Bruce.
- Fig. 24 Carrie Perreault, *We won't ever feel the storm*, drystone, pigment, wood, 96 x 112 x 11 in. (244 x 2825 x 28 cm), 2021.
- Fig. 25 Carrie Perreault, *Tire*, drystone, powdered pigment, upholstery foam, (individual tires), 30 x 30 x 1 in. (76 x 76 x 2.5 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 26 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?*, asphalt, resin, paper, 12 x 12 x 6 in. (30 x 30 x 15 cm), 2020.
- Fig. 27 Carrie Perreault, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, rubber, black iron, black steel, 840 x 62 x 10 in. (2134 x 158 x 25 cm), 2021.
- Fig. 28 Carrie Perreault, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, (detail), rubber, black iron, black steel, 840 x 62 x 10 in. (2134 x 158 x 25 cm), 2021.
- Fig. 29 Carrie Perreault, *We won't ever feel the storm*, *Tire*, *Emovere*, and *drawings*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021. Photo credit: Scott Lee.
- Fig. 30 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?*, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, *We won't ever feel the storm*, and *Tire*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021. Photo credit: Scott Lee.
- Fig. 31 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?*, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, and *We won't ever feel the storm*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021. Photo credit: Scott Lee.
- Fig. 32 Carrie Perreault, Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?* and *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021. Photo credit: Scott Lee.
- Fig. 33 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?* and *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021. Photo credit: Scott Lee.



## Image Descriptions

---

Fig. 1 Colour image. This is a video still from Tracey Emin's, *How It Feels*. It is a tightly cropped photo with a white, middle-aged woman (Tracey Emin) in profile on the left side of the frame. She is wearing a blue and white pinstriped suit jacket and wears dark-rim glasses with a cigarette in her right hand. You can't tell from this image but would learn from the rest of the video that she is sitting on a set of stairs. In front of her is a white parked car, and behind it, a busy street with several cars, trucks and sets of traffic signals. There is a three (or more) storey building on the other side of the road and several large trees clustered together.

Fig. 2 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. On a white wall fourteen drawings, in thin wood frames are hung in two rows. They are the drawings that are detailed below. Below the drawings are the sculptures *Emovere*, which sit on an eight-inch riser that sits on a dark brown floor. The riser is made of light brown MDF, sits slightly off-centred from the drawings and extends on the floor to the right.

Fig. 3 Colour image. This is the first image of twelve individual drawings. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just below the middle of the page. The drawing is a horizontal irregular pink rectangle with horizontal red lines that run through half of it. There is a break in the solid pink rectangle where the red lines end and a yellow line runs vertically. On the right side of the yellow line, several very short red lines continue. There is a blue vertical rectangular shape at the end of the pink rectangle with a yellow and small pink rectangle vertically inserted. This blue section is outlined along the right and bottom with a dark green/ gray marking.

Fig. 4 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just above the centre of the page. The bottom of the image is a circle made out of various tones of black and gray with an undertone of yellow and orange. Balanced on top are three horizontally stacked rectangles. The bottom two rectangles are pink and red, and a larger one in mint green with yellow highlights sits above it.

Fig. 5 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats in the centre of the page. The overall shape of the drawing is horizontally rectangular. The bottom of the drawing is a mustard yellow colour and in the form of a single step. Above that is a white section with one small pink rectangle inset on the left side, and on the right side, a smaller rectangle in the same pink sits to the right of the image with a light pink rectangular smudge above it. A faded black line divides the white and mustard section and runs vertically between the overall picture.

Fig. 6 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly above the centre and a bit to the left of the page. This image is primarily composed of six small rectangles stacked in two rows. Each rectangle is well delineated. They are a blend of colours of grays and whites, and when the colours are mixed in some areas, they form a green. In the bottom row, the middle rectangle, two gray lines form a narrow sideways Y shape is drawn. In the fork of the shape, it is coloured bright yellow.

Fig. 7 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats centre on the page. This drawing is primarily composed of four rectangles stacked vertically in two rows. The upper left-side rectangle is a soft yellow with an orange/ pink line on the left. It also smudges away from the rectangle to extend the shape. The upper-right-side rectangle is well defined on the right, left and bottom with a dark gray line. The inside of the rectangle is a softer gray in several tones. The two rectangles on the bottom are arched. The bottom left shape is yellow with a strong gray and black outline on the bottom and left side. The remaining rectangle on the bottom right is a double line drawing with some gray smudged colour in the upper corner.

Fig. 8 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly below the centre of the page. On the left-hand side of the drawing are four irregular squares - two on the top, two on the bottom. The one furthest left is bright olive green with a smear of yellow in the middle and along the bottom. There is also an arched line of red across it. The square below it is smaller and is coloured with smudged gray lines. The square shape beside it (on the bottom) is a gray line with plain paper inside it. Above it is a green square in brighter green, and the bottom of it is a band of black. There is also a black rectangle that delineates the two green squares. Finally, there is a square—an orange outline and below it on the right side of the drawing- a much smaller a narrow rectangle that is the same width as the square. There is white space between these shapes and the double stacked squares. Between them is a black line drawing of a small rectangle and a comb shape.

Fig. 9 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly above the centre and a bit to the right of the page. The dominant shape of the drawing is a black rectangle at a forty-five-degree angle. There are rows of mark-making that make up the entire shape. Below the black rectangle's bottom is a smudge of pink, buttercream, yellow and gray. Above the black rectangle, a line also has some smudging, primarily pink with a bit grayer on the lefthanded side. Rising from the upper corner of the black rectangle is a pink vertical line, and extended from it is a slight yellow horizontal smudge.

Fig. 10 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly below the centre of the page. The drawing is made primarily by two squares pressed against each other. They are a mix of mustard yellow, green and pink. Parts of it are outlined in a black line. The side of the bottom left square's side is filled in with a blue underlayer wash of paint. Connecting these two squares/ rectangles is a long blue and green rectangle that sits on top of it and wraps around the side of the right square. It is also outlined in a black line.

Fig. 11 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly below the centre of the page. The image is of a large oblong mass with colour blocks of dark green, gray/ blue, yellow/green and pink. Extruding from the centre of this shape is a bright pink bent oval shape that resembles a tongue. There is a wash behind the intense colours in shades of gray and a subtle line of fluctuating pinks and yellows at the wash base.

Fig. 12 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly above the centre and a bit to the left of the page. The dominant shape of the drawing is a fairly flat rectangle outlined in pink lines and filled in with oranges, mauves, dark mustards. On the

bottom left side of the primary shape, many very close bright yellow lines come down vertically and follow along the rectangle's base for almost half its length.

Fig. 13 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly above the centre of the page. There are two soft yellow rectangular shapes that side beside each other in the background with gray lowlights. Above the one on the left-hand side of the page is a thin dark pink rectangle, and on the one on the right, two shorter but still narrow pink rectangles are stacked. In the foreground, there are two bright green semi-circles with a cutaway in the centre. They are outlined with a dark blue/ green. A jagged gray/ dark blue line moves from vertically on the lower left side to horizontally in the centre and then descends vertically again towards the lower righthand corner of the drawing.

Fig. 14 Colour image. A white box is outlined by a thin grey line delineating the paper. The drawing floats just slightly below the centre of the page. The drawing is formed by two large dominant black shapes that overlap. The shape on the right is that of a lemon, and it is overlapped ever so slightly by a bean shape. Each form consists of several black tones; above the figures, there is a soft faded yellow and gray markings streak. Below the bean shape is a gray smudge with a bright yellow line that runs beneath the two figures.

Fig. 15 Colour image. This is the first of eight images of sculptures from the series *Emovere*. On a white background and a grey floor sits three plaster sculptures in varying widths. Each sculpture is a short cylinder with lined ridges around its top and bottom and a line that runs through its centre. From right to left, the sculptures are brown, peach, and grey.

Fig. 16 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits a mustard-coloured plaster sculpture. The sculpture has a round-rimmed top that is bent towards a brick-like bottom.

Fig. 17 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits a side profile of light grey plaster sculpture. The sculpture has a brick-like base connected to a wide form that ends with a round rim. There is a line that marks the connection of the middle form to the rim.

Fig. 18 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits two plaster sculptures. On the right is a taller brown sculpture and on the left is a shorter blue sculpture. Both sculptures have rimmed round bases and tops with cylinders connecting the top and bottom forms. The cylinders narrow from the bottom to the top.

Fig. 19 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits a burnt orange plaster sculpture. The sculpture has a triangular form that leads to a rectangular base. The top of the sculpture is a round form with a subtle line connecting it to the triangular form.

Fig. 20 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits a side profile of a grey plaster sculpture. The sculpture is bent to the right side as it leans to the floor. It has a rim that surrounds its top. Its bottom takes a brick-like form.

Fig. 21 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits a side profile of a yellow plaster sculpture. The sculpture has a round-rimmed top that is halfway bent. The bottom half is almost crushed flat underneath the top half.

Fig. 22 Colour image. On a white background and a grey floor sits a grey plaster sculpture. The sculpture takes the form of a pipe-like fixture with lined ridges and a slight bend on the top round rim.

Fig. 23 Colour image. This image is of Rachel Whiteread's sculptural project called *Ghost*. The artwork is a large white piece constructed by several sizeable plaster panels used as building blocks. The artwork is the cast of a sitting room with a fireplace, window and door. Only the fireplace opening is visible in this image. The sculpture sits in a gallery space on a dark gray floor, and it reaches almost the height of the ceiling. In the background, there are floor-to-ceiling glass windows that look out onto a courtyard with trees and another building present behind them.

Fig. 24 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. A large light-coloured unpainted wooden rectangular box sits on the gallery floor. Resting on the box are five long pink plaster sculptures that extend out into the open floor at an acute angle. The central part of the pink sections is long and ribbed, with the end that sits on the box bending sideways at a 45-degree angle. The other end bends downwards and sits flat on the floor. In this image, the artwork titled *Tire* is in the top left of the image, which sits on the floor. There is also in the upper right side of the image, the sculptures *Emovere* on the light brown MDF riser and above them, you can see the very bottom of the picture frames that are hung above them.

Fig. 25 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. This sculptural artwork consists of several round black and various shades of gray plaster tubes in the shape of bicycle tires. These tire shapes are stacked in eight piles, each with pile containing two to five elements. Between the tires, there are cubes of bright yellow-orange upholstery foam that helps to support the pieces. The work sits on a dark brown floor, and you can see the white gallery walls along the top of the image.

Fig. 26 Colour image. In this image, there are ten low brown paper bags with the tops folded around the rim. This is a tightly cropped image with two of the paper bags in the very front of the frame and the others spaced out in the background. Inside each of the bags are mounds of black asphalt. It shimmers with white reflections.

Fig. 27 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. This image primarily shows one long white gallery wall, although you can see another wall along the far-left side. Above the wall is a black ceiling, and the floor is dark brown. The artwork is made from many repeating components of the same thing—old black bicycle tubes that hang on steel posts that come out from the wall by eight inches. There are about 17 units though they fade into the peripheral. The clusters of hung bicycle tubes are reflected in the sheen of the floor.

Fig. 28 Colour image. This is a detailed shot of two of the old black bicycle tubes units. There are tubes against tubes, against tubes—and they look intestine-like.

Fig. 29 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. In this image, you can see four artworks together in the gallery space, which has white walls and a dark brown floor. *We won't ever feel the storm* (Fig. 24), is centred in the foreground and the background on the left side is *Tire* (Fig. 25) and centred in the background are the *drawings* (Fig. 3-14) and *Emovere* (Fig. 15-22).

Fig. 30 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. In this image, you can see four artworks together in the gallery space: two white walls, a dark brown floor, and two dark gray support beams between the ceiling and the floor. In the centre of the image, in the foreground, is *Tire* (Fig. 25); along the wall which takes up the background of the image is *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too* (Fig. 27). Off-centred and to the left is the backside of *We won't ever feel the storm* (Fig. 24) which presents as a light-coloured wood box, and in the far-left upper corner of the image is *How many times did you give all your love?* (Fig. 26).

Fig. 31 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. In this image, you can see three artworks together in the gallery space: two white walls, a dark brown floor, and two dark gray support beams between the ceiling and the floor. To the left of the centre in the image is, *How many times did you give all your love?* (Fig. 26). On the opposite side of the image, also in the foreground, is a side profile of *We won't ever feel the storm* (Fig. 24). In a horizontal line, along the two walls is the artwork *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too* (Fig. 27).

Fig. 32 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. In this image, you can see two of the artworks together in the gallery space: two white walls, a dark brown floor, and one of the dark gray support beams between the ceiling and the floor are visible along the right edge of the picture. In the centre foreground is *How many times did you give all your love?* (Fig. 26). The dominant white wall begins on the left side of the image and runs diagonally towards the right. Long that wall and a bit of the wall in the background hangs in a horizontal line, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too* (Fig. 27).

Fig. 33 Colour image. This is an installation image of the gallery. In this image, you can see two of the artworks together in the corner. There are two gallery walls, on one of which sits *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too* (Fig. 27) in the centre of the image and towards the right. On the dark brown floor sits *How many times did you give all your love?* (Fig. 26).

**grief, letting go, violence, trauma, neglect  
abandonment, illness, shame, domestic abuse  
death, forgiveness, feminism, sick parents  
emotional, distress, tolerance, loss of  
relationships, intergenerational, house  
systems, control, interconnected, process  
behaviour, family, labour, poetics, resistance  
protection, function, psychology, hospital  
stays, fights, unsettled, scared, making sense  
histories, activism, inheritance, struggle  
memory, feelings, apology, forgotten  
remembering, topoanalysis, experiences  
account, reproduce, materials, killjoy, being  
wrong, anger, silence, refusing, we did not  
realize, risky, beating, disobedience  
persistence, politics, resilience, resistant, every  
day, organize, unknowable, self-censorship  
dignity, safety, empathy, responsibility, courage  
you could taste the dust.**

"For those of you who wish to leave politics out of dealing with trauma, I wish to remind you that trauma is all about living under social conditions where terrible things are allowed to happen and the truth cannot be told." —Dr. Bessel A. van der Kolk

## Chapter One

---

"There are heroes in the seaweed, there are children in the morning  
They are leaning out for love and they will lean that way forever"<sup>1</sup>

I remember the accordion closet door, the pink insulation in the attic, the kitchen stool with the vinyl seat and fold-down steps. I remember cardboard boxes left on the front porch with childhood keepsakes. I remember that something was always wrong, and as would be expected, it has only compounded in its continuation. It does now, as it did then, leave me to carry an unpronounced fear of the admitted and the unknown.

Growing up, we lived in a black and white house on Meredith Drive— #103, to be exact. I have very few memories, and the ones I do have are fragmented. They don't show the full picture, but there are objects, textures, sounds, feelings, and specific moments that stand alone. When those memories come through, they are almost too much. And by almost, I mean that they are. I can see my 6-year-old self sitting in my room with my back against the door. I am terrified by my parents' shouting. My mom did something wrong, and she is being scolded. My dad is upset by whatever has been said or done that he announces to me, my sister, and my mom that he's leaving to kill himself and then drives off. He makes it clear that this is our fault. Sometime between the beginning of the attack and my scream-crying, the TV has been shut off. I'm not sure who did this or when, but as I stand with my face pressed against the screen door, I know that Alex Trebek is no longer part of our debacle.

I want to make it clear from the beginning that it is difficult for me to talk about complex trauma and grief from the inside out. It weaves itself in patterns that at times feel obvious and invisible and embarrassingly naïve. Shame is thicker than tractor oil, and although I will share things, I can already tell you that it is not without some level of regret. *I ask that you carry this understanding with you and that you tread lightly.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Cohen, "Suzanne", recorded 1967, Columbia Records, track 1 on *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, 1967, vinyl record.

I anticipate that you will come back to my work over time, and your understanding of it will change. I hope for you there are swerves and detours that ask you to address your own senses of loss, though I hope they're not as ubiquitous as my own. At the core, I have learned that complex trauma or C-PTSD describes, ad nauseam, where I am, so we should begin with this same central understanding.

Complex trauma is a disorder that can develop in response to prolonged, repeated experiences of relational trauma in a context in which the individual has little or no chance of escape. It describes exposure to multiple traumatic events to children, which are "often of an invasive, interpersonal nature—and the wide-ranging, long-term effects of this exposure. These events are severe and pervasive, such as abuse or profound neglect."<sup>2</sup> These experiences typically happen early in a child's development with a caregiver and impacts the child's formation of self, and disrupts their ability to form stable attachments. My experiences growing up and the negative reverberations align with empirical descriptions like the one below:

Children whose families and homes do not provide consistent safety, comfort, and protection [who] may develop ways of coping that allow them to survive and function day to day. For instance, they may be overly sensitive to the moods of others, always watching to figure out what the adults around them are feeling and how they will behave. They may withhold their own emotions from others, never letting them see when they are afraid, sad, or angry. These kinds of learned adaptations make sense when physical and/or emotional threats are ever-present. As a child grows up and encounters situations and relationships that are safe, these adaptations are no longer helpful, and may in fact be counterproductive and interfere with the capacity to live, love, and be loved.<sup>3</sup>

And it would prove to be true that these adaptations to abuse, neglect and abandonment have become detrimental and no longer offer protection but act as barriers to living with love. *This is a lot to reconcile, and my process-based practice has provided and continues to provide space for me to learn and unlearn the ways in which I am in the world.*

---

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Peterson, "Complex Trauma." The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, May 25, 2018. <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma>.

<sup>3</sup> ————. "Effects," The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, June 11, 2018, <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma/effects>.



## Chapter Two

---

"And she said, losing love  
Is like a window in your heart  
Everybody sees you're blown apart  
Everybody sees the wind blow"<sup>4</sup>

I have a lot of questions about Tracey Emin and how she seems to have found her way through art. I'm less interested in the autobiographic content her work often splays, but rather my curiosity is directed towards how she's been able to navigate and make a visual understanding out of trauma. This speaks something to me about the courage one could and perhaps should have in their work. Of her 2019 exhibition, *A Fortnight of Tears* at White Cube, she says that the "whole show is about releasing myself from shame. I've killed my shame, I've hung it on the walls",<sup>5</sup> which is unexpected because she exudes the strength of someone who's shed all of this years ago.



Fig. 1 Tracey Emin, *How It Feels*, video, 00:22:33, 1996.

---

<sup>4</sup> Paul Simon, "Graceland", recorded October 1985 – June 1986, Warner Bros, track 2 on *Graceland*, 1986, compact disc.

<sup>5</sup> Harriet Lloyd-Smith, "Tracey Emin Lays Bare Her Own Traumas in Piercing New Show." *Wallpaper\**. *Wallpaper\**, February 9, 2019. <https://www.wallpaper.com/art/tracey-emin-a-fortnight-of-tears-white-cube-bermondsey>.

It surprises me to think that she has to surrender and find this courage each time. Thinking back even twenty-five years to 1996 and her 22-minute video *How It Feels* (in which she talks to the viewer about how it feels to have an abortion), she provides a practical, instructional, procedural understanding about her experience. One of the differences between Emin and I is that she does remember her history, though, and a clear, albeit, anguished chronological order to her life. In *Living a Feminist Life*, theorist Sara Ahmed describes the act of remembering as a process of waiting:

I have been remembering; trying to put the pieces together. I have been putting a sponge to the past. When I think of my method, I think of a sponge: a material that can absorb things. We hold it out and wait to see what gets mopped up. It is not that memory work is necessarily about recalling what has been forgotten: rather, you allow a memory to become distinct, to acquire a certain crispness or even clarity; you can gather memories like things, so they become more than half glimpsed, so that we can see a fuller picture; so you can make sense of how different experiences connect.<sup>6</sup>

For Ahmed, remembering requires concerted effort, and even before we find seemingly lost memories, we already know we would like some of them to abate. My artmaking process mirrors this effort, and the pursuit of remembering is an embodied act. I work intuitively with a gut-based understanding—the materials always link back to memory remnants that reveal themselves like a slow developing Polaroid picture.

In *Writing Hard Stories*, the author Joan Wickerham describes an interview she had with a police sketch artist. In relaying the conversation, she says, “one of the things she liked about her job was that before meeting her, these people had to carry the memory of that face, but that once they gave it to her, she was hoping that maybe they could start to forget a little bit.”<sup>7</sup> Drawing from my own childhood experiences of emotional and physical isolation, the work I make is like giving myself a visual representation of what my body has been grasping onto for so long. When the work comes into being, it feels like part of me is able to

---

<sup>6</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Brooks, Melanie, and Joan Wickersham. Essay. In *Writing Hard Stories: Celebrated Memoirists Who Shaped Art from Trauma*, 45–55. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017, 54.

let go of something previously unseen—it's like finding something you always knew existed. In between Emin's ever-present memory and her hanging of shame (I mean, don't I just wish!), and Ahmed's gathering of the long lost, there is disassociation<sup>8</sup>, and it is here that I find myself. My creative practice involves a mode of *embodied dissociation* that sits between the emotional immediacy of Emin's work and Ahmed's process of gathering what has been lost.

I have struggled with periods of flashbacks, and while they have felt all-encompassing at the time, they have made only an incremental difference to my narrative. I am looking for Ahmed's sponges and I am looking for Emin's absoluteness of experience. In *Bridging the Black Hole of Trauma*, psychiatrist Sandra Bloom states that after some terrible or tragic occurrence it is:

common to recognize that people are 'in shock' – that is, they are acutely dissociated. As a result, they may not remember the terrible events that just occurred, or they may remember them but have no feeling about the events. [...] Until recently, however, we have thought little about what it means to be 'in shock' most of one's life – to suffer from chronic dissociation because of terrible things that have happened repeatedly.<sup>9</sup>

It is an odd sentiment when you recognize that you lack typical emotional responses to traumatic experiences—and to that end, to also be deficient in the dynamic scope that joyous occasions bring. As I continue to move ahead in my unpacking and unlearning, I also

---

<sup>8</sup> Dissociation is "a disconnection between a person's sensory experience, thoughts, sense of self, or personal history. People may feel a sense of unreality and lose their connection to time, place, and identity. Dissociation disrupts four areas of personal functioning that usually operate together smoothly, automatically, and with few or no problems:

- Consciousness
- Identity
- Memory
- Self-awareness and awareness of surroundings

Breaks in this system of automatic functions cause the symptoms of dissociation. Dissociation can range from a mild sense of detachment to a more severe disconnection from reality."

Matthew Tull, PhD, "What Does Dissociation Mean?," Verywell Mind, April 6, 2021, <https://www.verywellmind.com/dissociation-2797292>.

<sup>9</sup> Sandra L. Bloom, "Bridging the Black Hole of Trauma: the Evolutionary Significance of the Arts," *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 8, no. 3 (May 2010): pp. 198-212, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ppi.223>, 201.

perceive the social awkwardness of not having the fullness of these emotions and the need to present as though I do to maintain social cues. Bloom continues:

through dissociation, we can deny important aspects of reality that are too disorganizing, too threatening to our own internal stability either individually or as a group. And yet, survival demands that we keep both sides of the contradictory information available just in case we should need it. In that way we know without knowing.<sup>10</sup>

In my work I am continually creating systems of organization which encompasses categorizing, formatting with grids, stacking, finding likenesses and putting things together. Doing so is a way to help work against dissociation and the disruption or lack of connection between parts of myself and the physical world. Allowing myself to make intuitive systems of support provides manageable spaces for frightening experiences—both past and present—to reside. These systems of organization also act as part of the process of knowledge gathering. Over the past year and a half, I have been creating groups of sculptural forms that reference visible and invisible elements of residential architecture and remnants of childhood memories. Through the use of the multiple in works such as *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too* and *Emovere*, I am searching for systems of support, and with the use of repetition, trying to fend off ideas of scarcity and find a guarantee that there will be enough.

Writing about the relationship between phenomenology and architecture, Gaston Bachelard states that:

there is ground for taking the house as a *tool for analysis* of the human soul. [...] Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are “housed”. Our soul is an abode. And by remembering “houses” and “rooms,” we learn to “abide” within ourselves. Now everything becomes clear, the house images move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>11</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014, 21.

While I have always lived within myself, the disassociation I have experienced has certainly “closed doors” and concealed “rooms.” Having recently found and opened some of those doors, I can tell you that there is a lot of dust, but not all of it has settled.

## Chapter Three

"There are years that ask questions and years that answer."<sup>12</sup>

It was only during the pandemic, and perhaps because of it (restrictions on studio access and running out of space to keep making and storing sculptures in my small apartment), that I started drawing. In the drawings included in this exhibition, there is a playfulness in the shapes brought forward with the often-bright use of colour but not at a cost to their sensitivity. The floating forms that sit centred on the page conjure up almost recognizable architectural elements or FF&E.<sup>13</sup> The drawings are made with a mix of oil pastel, chalk pastel, graphite, watercolour, correction fluid, charcoal, pencil crayons and wax crayons—a thorough collection of odds and ends found in studio drawers. Because I'm not trained in drawing, the coming together of these images was an improvisational negotiation of mistakes—expecting the unexpected and having faith in maybe not the next mark made or the one after that but carrying on nonetheless.

Recently, I've started to think about how making the drawings is a sort of exercise of distress tolerance. They have given me space where I could quite immediately park half-remembered memories and flickering flashbacks without causing additional pain or making things worse for myself. Working responsively on similar size paper with materials I'm unfamiliar with and how my body needs to move through space to make these marks meant that I needed to accept the moment I was in without demanding that it be different.



Fig. 2 Carrie Perreault, *drawings and Emovere*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.

<sup>12</sup>Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: HarperLuxe, 2008), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment.

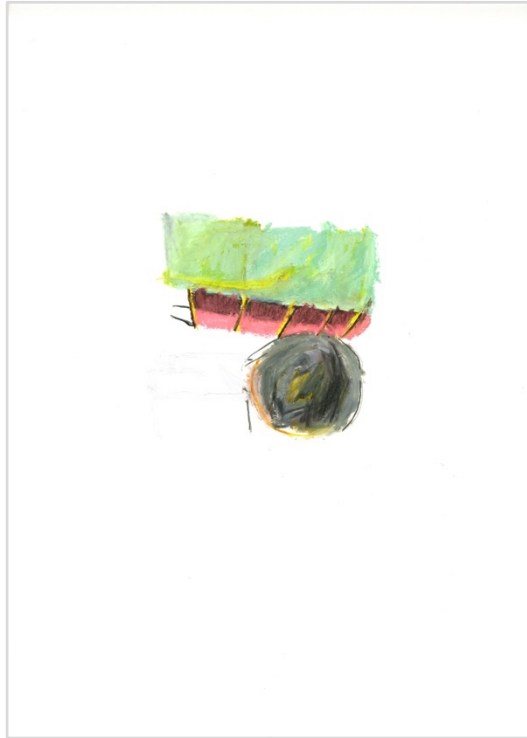
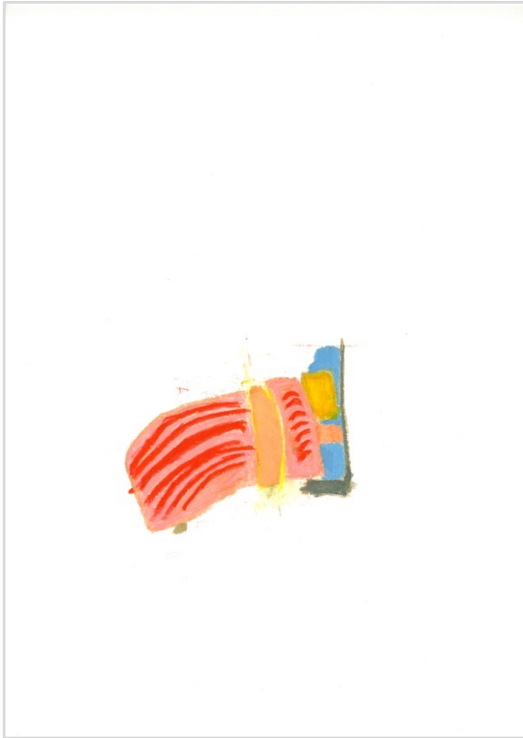


Fig. 3 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #23*, (left), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.  
Fig. 4 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #28*, (right), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.

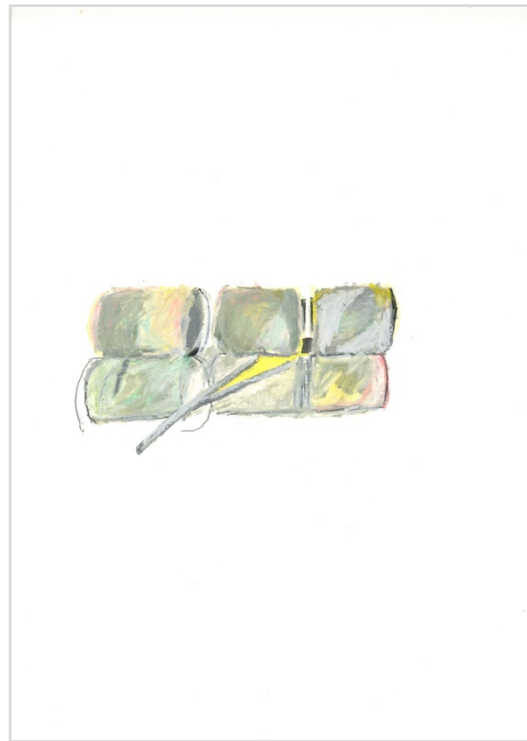
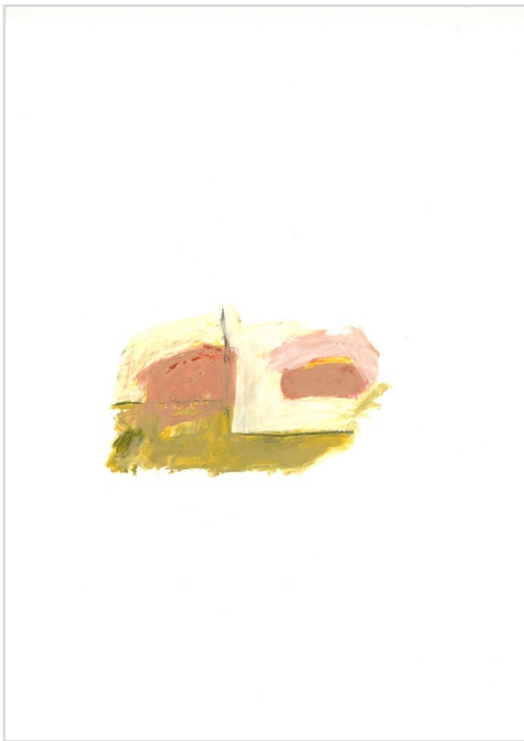


Fig. 5 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #29*, (left), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.  
Fig. 6 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #30*, (right), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.

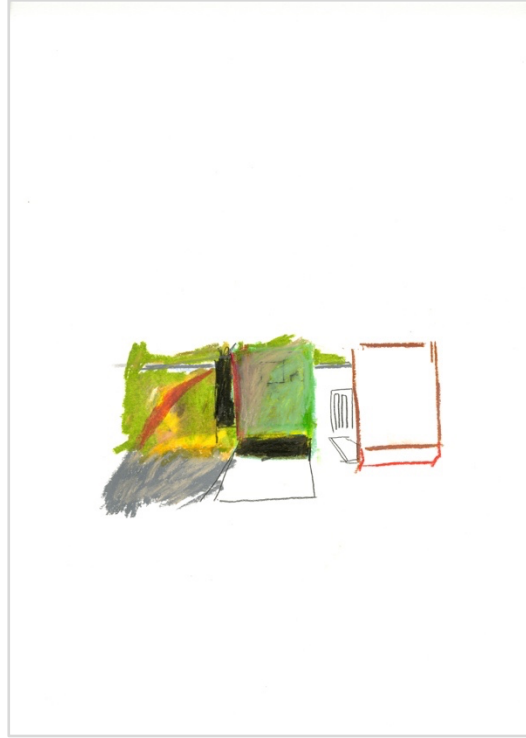


Fig. 7 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #16*, (left), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.  
Fig. 8 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #38*, (right), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.

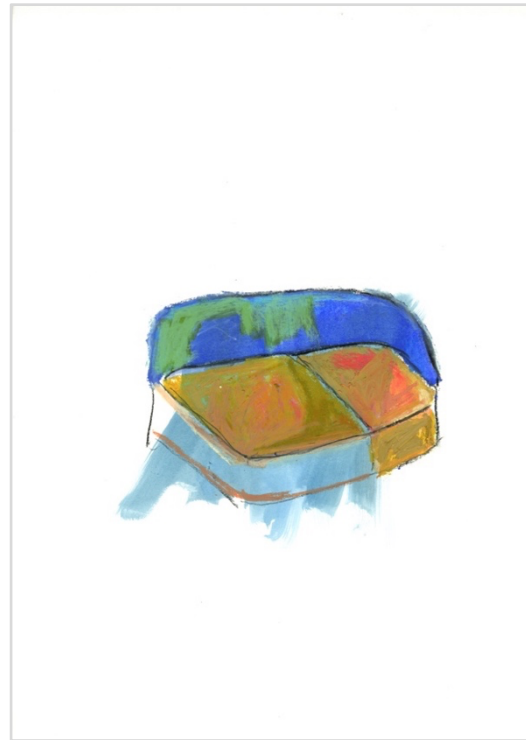


Fig. 9 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #21*, (left), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.  
Fig. 10 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #20*, (right), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.





Fig. 11 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #33*, (left), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.  
Fig. 12 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #34*, (right), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.

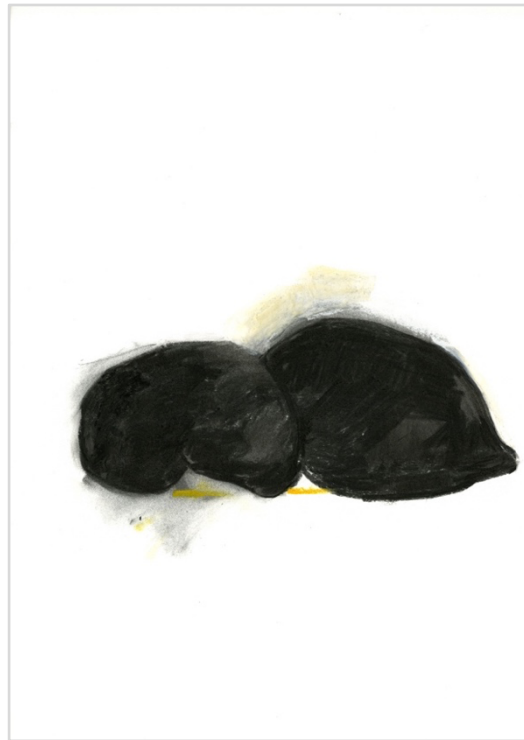


Fig. 13 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #37*, (left), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.  
Fig. 14 Carrie Perreault, *drawing #22*, (right), mixed media on Stonehenge paper, 15 x 22 in. (38 x 56 cm), 2020.

The word *emotion* comes from the Latin *emovere* which means to move out, or to move through. In the origins there isn't any trace of clinging to, or protesting passage, but instead allowing emotions to flow through. *Emovere* is a series of plaster sculptures that resemble archeological findings or plaque build-up. The twenty-four pieces that make up the work are plaster infills of HVAC duct registers, transitions and connectors. The casts are unpolished and imperfect—the rawness of the finishing and the softness of the muted colours allude to a space that is unbuilt.



Fig. 15 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (1, 2, 3), (left), drystone, 4 x 4 x 4 in. (10 x 10 x 10 cm), 4.5 x 4.5 x 4 in. (11.5 x 11.5 x 10 cm), 5.5 x 5.5 x 4 in. (14 x 14 x 10 cm), 2020.

Fig. 16 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (27), (right), drystone, 11 x 4.5 x 10 in. (28 x 11.5 x 25.5 cm), 2020.

I came to these forms when I was in a small hardware store and saw the ready-mades stacked on the shelves. I was immediately excited by the objects and initially wondered what they would look like if they were opened up to lay as flat pieces of sheet metal. As finished sculptures though, there is a sense of quiet and femininity in these almost pliable-looking solid forms which typically provide passage for the transfer of air—hot or cold—to provide comfort.



Fig. 17 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (25), drystone, 7 x 7.5 x 10 in. (17.5 x 19 x 25.5 cm), 2020.



Fig. 18 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (10, 11), (right), drystone, 5 x 5 x 7.25 in. (12.5 x 12.5 x 18.5 cm), 4 x 4 x 6 in. (10 x 10 x 15 cm), 2020.



Fig. 19 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (14), (left), drystone, 8 x 4 x 10 in. (20 x 10 x 25.5 cm), 2020.



Fig. 20 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (19), (right), drystone, 11 x 4.5 x 10 in. (28 x 11.5 x 25.5 cm), 2020.



Fig. 21 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (24), (left), drystone, 13.5 x 7.5 x 5 in. (34 x 19 x 12.5 cm), 2020.



Fig. 22 Carrie Perreault, *Emovere* (8), (right), drystone, 11 x 6 x 6 in. (28 x 15 x 15 cm), 2020.

The process used to create *Emovere* finds kinship with Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost*, a sculpture that has been described "as an attempt to 'mummify the air in the room'", making the invisible visible and brings forward memory.<sup>14</sup> Like much of Whiteread's plaster work, *Emovere* are humble objects and a recovering of vacant spaces entombed in plaster as though to preserve them forever.<sup>15</sup>



Fig. 23 Rachel Whiteread, *Ghost*, Plaster on steel frame, overall: 269 x 355.5 x 317.5 cm (105 7/8 x 139 15/16 x 125 in.), 1990.

When I think about how *Emovere* relates to a domestic space, I think about systems of support—plumbing, heating, sewage, the interiors of walls—are unseen but without any of them the structure would not be habitable. If the dismantling of systems makes a house futile then I wonder

---

<sup>14</sup> Fiona Carson, "Uneasy Spaces: The Domestic Uncanny in Contemporary Installation Art," in *Motherhood and Space* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2005), 247.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

what alternative possibilities might have existed for my family with the dismantling of gendered and psychological abuse. Sarah Ahmed talks about the structural as personal and that you can be:

hit by a structure; you can be bruised by a structure. An individual man who violates you is given permission: that is structure. His violence is justified as natural and inevitable: that is structure. A girl is made responsible for his violence: that is structure. A policeman who turns away because it is a domestic call: that is structure. A judge who talks about what she was wearing: that is structure. A structure is an arrangement, an order, a building; an assembly.<sup>16</sup>

And so, I ask myself, does this whole house need to be burnt to the ground? The response is yes of course, but barring that, what else can be done? My answer, in part, is to formulate an experiential language for communicating personal trauma. Although it is often cathartic, using my work as a means of autotheory provides a framework that reinforces that the personal is political. Lauren Fournier defines autotheory as artwork that “points to modes of working that integrate the personal and the conceptual, the theoretical and the autobiographical, the creative and the critical, in ways attuned to interdisciplinary, feminist histories.”<sup>17</sup> There is no shortage of women telling their stories and being unequivocal about their experiences.

So much of what I do is just *doing*,<sup>18</sup> which for me is a process of “using the body’s experience to develop knowledge”,<sup>19</sup> or what Jessica Stockholder refers to as a different kind of thinking:

Your hands learn to do things that you could spend a whole day trying to write about and articulate. What’s intuition? It’s a kind of thinking [...] and so I think there’s a discomfort associated with trying to put all those different ways the brain works together.<sup>20</sup>

Interconnected with this way of working one can often feel pressure to become an expert at whatever we attempt and to become one as quickly as possible, but I reject that expert positioning in

---

<sup>16</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017), 30.

<sup>17</sup> Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Thanks for your letter Sol!

Sol LeWitt, Letter to Dear Eva, April 14, 1965. <http://magazine.art21.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/sol-eva-letter.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Valeria Radchenko, “Valeria Radchenko,” *Valeria Radchenko* (blog), April 22, 2017, <http://vvval.wordpress.com/2017/04/22/autotheory>.

<sup>20</sup> Jessica Stockholder in “Play”, *Art21*, 2005, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s3/jessica-stockholder-in-play-segment/>.

the work I make. I'm not talking about imposter syndrome, but rather the reason 'amateur' comes from the Latin word for love. We need to do something for the simple love of the thing and making artwork is, in many ways, an exercise of the heart.

*We won't ever feel the storm* is a pause of sorts—a reminder that everything is in transition and that you're never long enough in one place not to be transitioning. To make this work, I gathered various components of eavestroughs and explored multiple configurations. Like *Emovere*, I used the readymade objects as molds and filled them with drystone plaster mixed with pink pigment to create the sculpture. I choose to use the colour pink as a reference to both the pink insulation in the attic of my childhood home and memories I have associated with that and as a reference to the interior of the body and, in particular, the stunting of neural pathways. This work consists of five very similar eavestrough arms. The main downspout connects to different elbows on each end—one lying horizontally and directed left and one that points down to the ground and bears diagonal weight. The ends with the flat elbows rest a few inches on a supportive riser made from plywood reclaimed from the interior of another artwork<sup>21</sup>. Lined up, the eavestroughs then extrude into space; I think of these extensions from the platform as prosthetics in a way, and like Leonard Cohen's *Suzanne*,<sup>22</sup> they are reaching out for love. If connected to gutters, these structures wouldn't function as the water flow would feedback into the foundation instead of escorting the water away from the home. What they do succeed in doing is transitioning exterior space into interior space while putting a cap on the flow of tears.

Taking mass-produced objects that are designed to help a building "function" and turning them into sensuous, animated and intimate objects also speaks to the way that sculptor Jill Downen's work functions alongside:

---

<sup>21</sup> The artwork that was dismantled was called *Inconsolable Loss*. It consisted of three standalone "walls" made of drywall, metal, wood and plaster they measure just slightly larger than the industry standard of 4 x 8 feet. They reflected Bachelard's assertion that we must "also give an exterior destiny to the interior being." <sup>21</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Leonard Cohen, "Suzanne", recorded 1967, Columbia Records, track 1 on *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, 1967, vinyl record.

architecture as a body with a life of its own. Making connections between the constructed environment and human forms, her work reveals unspoken notions about the self as a physical and cultural body. Downen asserts that both bodies and buildings possess strength and power, and both are at the same time vulnerable, reacting to the natural forces of decay and gravity. Her primary material, plaster of Paris or powdered gypsum— used in casts for mending broken bones and for making sculptures— refers to building, covering, and repairing.<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 24 Carrie Perreault, *We won't ever feel the storm*, drystone, pigment, wood, 96 x 112 x 11 in. (244 x 2825 x 28 cm), 2021.

The making of *Tire* happened like most of my work in an intuitive exploration of readily available materials. To create them I mixed small batches of drystone plaster, water, and black powdered pigment into a pancake batter-like consistency and then poured the mixture into a hole I

---

<sup>23</sup> Tracee W. Robertson, *Jill Downen: Dust and Distance*. Denton, Texas: UNT Art Gallery, 2012.

had cut out in an old bicycle tube. Once the tube is full, I use a funnel to top up the plaster where the insertion hole was made and then bandage the open gash with duct tape before it erupts like a volcano. Working fast with unfamiliar materials means that there's often an element of crisis



Fig. 25 Carrie Perreault, *Tire*, drystone, powdered pigment, upholstery foam, (individual units) 30 x 30 x 1 in. (76 x 76 x 2.5 cm), 2020.

management in the making. I then shift the tube into an irregular shape causing folds like creases you might find in a pant-leg. The type of plaster I use has a set time of about 8 minutes, so it's imperative that it comes together quickly. The plaster is sensitive and picks up small seam markings and the talc powder inside the tube, leaving the final results to look like ghostly echoes of a support system that no longer holds. The plaster tires are then stacked in groups of five or six and supported and cushioned with discarded and abandoned upholstery foam.

When I sit with the work, I remember the year I had learned to ride my bike without training wheels. I was coming back home, around the curved bend opposite the park, when a car cut the curb and jumped across the street, drove across driveways and lawns and smashed into the corner of the



brown brick house a few doors down from our own. I was startled and scared by the close call and cried the rest of the way home as neighbours stood outside barefoot in the grass. Inside the house, I sat on the third of the four steps that separated the living room and bedrooms and despairingly cried. Some of those big feelings became more pronounced that day, and some of them have never left. My chest cavity arches and aches with an understanding that death is on its way, and I hold hope and make a concerted effort that some of what I do matters and that in the end, I will be counted. These sculptures become (anti)“monuments to the loss of that place of safety”.<sup>24</sup> I inhale...exhale, and recall a poem by Adrienne Rich:

Merely a notion that the tape-recorder  
should have caught some ghost of us: that tape-recorder  
not merely played but should have listened to us,  
and could instruct those after us:  
this we were, this is how we tried to love,  
and these are the forces they had ranged against us  
and these are the forces we had ranged within us,  
within us and against us, against us and within us.<sup>25</sup>

*How many times did you give all your love?* emerged after more than a year of experimenting with asphalt. It's a compelling material that remains in a flexible state, which was problematic as I spent months trying to build up strata layers of it along with cotton balls, rubber latex, plywood and plexiglass. On a hot day last summer, just down the street, they were repairing the road with trucks of asphalt being shovelled off and a single drum roller. I stood and observed their technique for several minutes, trying to figure out exactly why my materials hadn't solidified even after sitting in forms for six months. One of the workers told me that my project would never dry to a solid standalone form. He said that if I came back to this patch job even two years later, I could easily enough dig a shovel into their repairs and the whole thing would come undone—the asphalt would lift and become a fluid-like material again. Surprised, I asked, “but then what's the point of doing all of this if it's not a definite fix?” He said it wasn't up to him to decide how the roads are repaired.

---

<sup>25</sup> Adrienne Rich, excerpt from “XVII,” in *The Dream of a Common Language, Poems 1974-1977*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.

Maybe the problem isn't with the asphalt, but with my own, and perhaps even our collective, expectations of its properties and function that aren't actually inherent. When I see potholes being filled in, I automatically assume that they're repaired and not just bandaged. There is a parallel here between this material expectation of strength and finite and how we're disciplined to think about trauma with the model of cure.



Fig. 26 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?*, asphalt, resin, paper, (individual units), 12 x 12 x 6 in. (30 x 30 x 15 cm), 2020.

In Griselda Pollock's *After-affects / After-images* the author explores whether artists make work that travels away from or towards trauma:

Bad things happen to individuals. We should try to get over them. Time will heal. They are in the past. We must move on and let go. [...] The problem is that trauma, as we now understand the wounding of the psyche by an extreme event or by accumulated suffering, is not like that. When we borrow trauma as a term for personally affecting psychological shocks or as a metaphor for historical events that exceed existing representational resources, we also confront a problem that will not sort itself out by itself. The point of trauma studies is the necessity for individuals and for cultures, in different ways, to confront the 'wounding' that, according to our theories of trauma, engenders

symptomologies such as the compulsion to repeat and act out. Trauma possesses and inhabits us.<sup>26</sup>

This artwork has now sat as is since December 2020, and when I moved the bags in the studio the other day, there was no shifting of materials. I dropped them from waist height, and the asphalt still did not move. It sat there pretending to be a solid but I now know from experience that with a probe, the material would come away from itself again.

*Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too* is a large-scale wall installation of discarded bicycle tubes. They are hung horizontally in single file along two gallery walls on black steel pipes attached to floor flanges and black iron fittings. The work feels emotionally weighty and is viscerally reminiscent of a feeling you can't quite place. There is a figurative and bodily way that the exhausted tubes hang like discarded body bags, and the multiple emphasizes something recurrent. This work is installed at 5 feet high, which aligns with the top of my shoulder and acts as a physical barrier—a protector, between me and the wall. The installation occupies most of the left-hand wall at 48 feet in length and continues across just over half of the back wall at 22 feet, where it ends mid-way. The height of the work also delineates the horizon line in the gallery, with all sculptural work sitting no higher and the drawings elevated above this point. Keeping the work physically low is an extension of my need to keep it close to me and protected—under the radar.

With *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, I am reminded of both the way that children use their whole bodies to sometimes exaggeratedly move through space and would play and find this work useful in breaking their falls, but also of the ships along the Welland Canal where I grew up being docked and their sometimes bouncing, and sometimes chaffing along the tyre fenders suspended along the wall. You speak quietly when you are near this work and for a good reason. Being here is a revisiting of the past which has been kept relevant because it's been kept secret.<sup>27</sup> I,

---

<sup>26</sup> Griselda Pollock, *After-affects | After-images: Trauma and aesthetic transformation in the virtual feminist museum* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>27</sup> *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, YouTube (CenterScene, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53RX2ESlqsM>.

too, am full of secrets that haunt and “if the past is something you were not allowed to talk about, it becomes terribly important.”<sup>28</sup>

The viewer in this exhibition is encouraged to make a material connection between this work and *Tire* which sits on the gallery floor near where the tubes on walls stop. These plaster renditions are more so a “ghostly double of something in the real world,”<sup>29</sup> whereas this piece, as it hangs on the wall, is a de-familiarization of a familiar object.



Fig. 27 Carrie Perreault, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, (left), rubber, black iron, black steel, 840 x 62 x 10 in. (2134 x 158 x 25 cm), 2021.

Fig. 28 Carrie Perreault, *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, (detail), (right), rubber, black iron, black steel, 840 x 62 x 10 in. (2134 x 158 x 25 cm), 2021.

In his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk researches connections between the brain and the body in relation to trauma and healing. After examining the root causes and the consequences of trauma he describes the physiological effects that continue to emerge after the fact:

Even years later traumatized people often have enormous difficulty telling other people what has happened to them. Their bodies reexperience terror, rage, and helplessness, as well as the impulse to fight or flee, but these feelings are almost impossible to articulate. Trauma by

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Fiona Carson, “Uneasy Spaces: The Domestic Uncanny in Contemporary Installation Art,” in *Motherhood and Space* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2005), 246.

nature drives us to the edge of comprehension, cutting us off from language based on common experience or an imaginable past.<sup>30</sup>

Studies have shown that the Broca area in the brain, which is responsible for the formation of spoken and written language, goes offline when flashbacks occur, and without it, one simply cannot put thoughts or feelings into words.<sup>31</sup> The brain's response to trauma is the same and can overlap with the effects of physical lesions caused by strokes.<sup>32</sup> In this way, "trauma colonizes its hosts by its persistent inhabitation of a subject who does not, and cannot, know *it*. *It* happened but *I* do not know *it* – that it happened or what it was that happened."<sup>33</sup> With more than half my life unremembered because of long bouts of chronic disassociation caused by abusive and neglectful actions that took place during childhood (and beyond), there were and continue to be "eventless event[s], unremembered because, being never known, [they] could not be forgotten."<sup>34</sup> And so why this need to make work—or find it? Why does my doing so feel like a survival mechanism at times?

Griselda Pollock also asks:

[...] how can a formal, intentional act of creation of knowledge address trauma: that which is unknown, unremembered and without time? Why would artists be inclined to do so? In an essay 'On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies', literary theorist, Geoffrey Hartman writes: Traumatic knowledge would seem to be a contradiction in terms. It is as close to nescience [unknowing] as to knowledge. Any description or modelling of trauma, therefore, risks being figurative itself, to the point of the mythic fantasmagoria.<sup>35</sup>

My practice is always searching (and wanting to harvest and make meaning) out of those ever-knowing and unknown experiences using physical objects to structure and create an experiential language that helps me uncover parts of myself. This current body of work uses the "trope of home as a fractured, fragile, or otherwise unsettled space of impossible inhabitation. [...]

---

<sup>30</sup> Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 43.

<sup>31</sup> "Neuroscientifically Challenged," *Neuroscientifically Challenged* (blog), January 30, 2017, <https://www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com/blog/know-your-brain-brocas-area>.

<sup>32</sup> Bessel van der Kolk, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Griselda Pollock, *After-affects | After-images: Trauma and aesthetic transformation in the virtual feminist museum* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Home figures as a silent, incomplete, and unstable witness to loss – a ‘mansion of sorrow’”.<sup>36</sup>

Through the act of creation, I am looking to reclaim myself, and in some ways, use what is always labour-intensive and process-driven work to fill a void. I am hoping my work reverberates like secret sound waves for those with experiences like myself—sharing what took me so long to understand.



Fig. 29 Carrie Perreault, *We won't ever feel the storm, Tire, Emovere, and drawings*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.

---

<sup>36</sup> Lauzon, Claudette, 4



Fig. 30 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?, Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too, We won't ever feel the storm, and Tire*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.



Fig. 31 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?, Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too, and We won't ever feel the storm*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.



Fig. 32 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?* and *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.



Fig. 33 Carrie Perreault, *How many times did you give all your love?* and *Sometimes I Think I Lost My Guts Too*, Installation of *Pacing the House*, Waterloo, ON., 2021.



## Bibliography

---

- Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014.
- Bloom, Sandra L. "Bridging the Black Hole of Trauma: the Evolutionary Significance of the Arts." *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 8, no. 3 (2010): 198–212. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ppi.223>.
- Brooks, Melanie, and Joan Wickersham. Essay. In *Writing Hard Stories: Celebrated Memoirists Who Shaped Art from Trauma*, 45–55. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017.
- Carson, Fiona. "Uneasy Spaces: The Domestic Uncanny in Contemporary Installation Art." Essay. In *Motherhood and Space*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
- Cohen, Leonard. "Suzanne", recorded 1967, Columbia Records, track 1 on *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, 1967, vinyl record.
- Fournier, Lauren. *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: HarperLuxe, 2008.
- Jessica Stockholder in "Play". *Art21*, 2005. <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s3/jessica-stockholder-in-play-segment>.
- "Know Your Brain: Broca's Area." Web log. *Neuroscientifically Challenged* (blog), January 30, 2017. <https://www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com/blog/know-your-brain-brocas-area>.
- Lauzon, Claudette. *The Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art*. University of Toronto Press, 2017.
- LeWitt, Sol. Letter to Dear Eva, April 14, 1965. <http://magazine.art21.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/sol-eva-letter.pdf>.
- Lloyd-Smith, Harriet. "Tracey Emin Lays Bare Her Own Traumas in Piercing New Show." *Wallpaper\**. *Wallpaper\**, February 9, 2019. <https://www.wallpaper.com/art/tracey-emin-a-fortnight-of-tears-white-cube-bermondsey>.
- Matthew Tull, PhD. "What Does Dissociation Mean?" *Verywell Mind*, April 6, 2021. <https://www.verywellmind.com/dissociation-2797292>.
- Peterson, Sarah. "Complex Trauma." *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*, May 25, 2018. <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma>.

- Peterson, Sarah. "Effects." *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*, June 11, 2018. <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma/effects>.
- Pollock, Griselda. *After-Affects, after-Images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation in the Virtual Feminist Museum*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2013.
- Radchenko, Valeria. "Autotheory." Web log. *Valeria Radchenko* (blog), April 22, 2017. <http://vvval.wordpress.com/2017/04/22/autotheory>.
- Rich, Adrienne. "XVII." In *The Dream of a Common Language, Poems 1974-1977*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.
- Robertson, Tracee W. *Jill Downen: Dust and Distance*. Denton, Texas: UNT Art Gallery, 2012.
- Simon, Paul. "Graceland", recorded October 1985 – June 1986, Warner Bros, track 2 on *Graceland*, 1986, compact disc.
- Stockholder, Jessica. "Play". *Art21*, 2005. <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s3/jessica-stockholder-in-play-segment>.
- The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. YouTube. CenterScene, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53RX2ESlqsM>.