

Don't be sad that I am gone.
I didn't go.
You are holding me.
I am these words and these pages.
And I am holding you too.
This is forever.
(Never) the end

“WE are saying: Why remember? Why remember the past? It is no longer here, is it? Why should we remember it? Why disturb the people? What do you mean: Why remember?

Tolstoy

My art practice is about the controversial relationship between memory and forgetting. I have constructed memory sculptures for instances of human suffering in need of the preservation of memory, but not in the contentious stereotypes of the monument or the memorial. My art lies in between the tensions of the binaries of absence/presence, power/powerlessness and memory/forgetting. Memory sculpture bears witness to individual instances of human suffering and the power constraints that are established that diminish ones experience of it. Huyssen (2003: 25) describes this method of divulging past experiences as a process excavated by a memorian as opposed to the dominant dialogue of the historian. I am a memorian. The powerful, in the past, have dictated the memory that is allowed to remain present in the minds of the public. This has brought about the failing of ‘history’ as a way to remember and has established the need for memory discourse, as opposed to history as we know it.

The foundation that has caused me to engage with the theme of loss and the problematic

representaion of memory, stems from personal experience. However hard to speak about, my personal relationships to the matters cannot be estranged from theorizing my practice, as they are fundamental. I shall therefore briefly elucidate the traumatic experiences I speak of.

In 2013 my family home in Zimbabwe burnt down due to the chimney melting and allowing the thatched roof to ignite. The whole house, along with all our possessions and financial stability were demolished in twenty minutes. The silver lining was unmistakably that no one was badly hurt, however, it uncovered the insecurity of the loss of a home and the emotional turmoil that it came to bring. Our families sense of history was lost, and that could not be replaced. The entire archive of my family, our childhood and the celebrations that were established within the home was gone. This stimulated my concern for how memories are preserved and how they are remembered. There was enormous social pressure placed upon my father to rebuild, buy more, reestablish, redo and remake the life he and my mother had built for their family.

Two years later, after copious amounts of stress, my father passed away at the age of 51 due to skin medication that his Zimbabwean doctor had wrongly been prescribing him, which diminished the functionality of his kidneys. His body weak from financial and social pressure, stress and medical negligence could not recover.

In the case of loss there are excessive stigmas attached to notions of sick, depressed, death, poor, destruction, powerlessness and absence that all sit on the negative side of their respective binaries. This stigma makes them essentially silenced, as it is indecent to discuss or appear affected by any of these descriptions. The social spaces through which we live do not only consist of physical things: of bricks and mortar, streets and bridges, mountains and sea-shore, and of what we make of these things. They consist also of those less tangible spaces we construct out of social interaction. This is what I am hoping to divulge in my prctice.

The potent use of material presence is how the weight of the artworks are established to express ideas of power and powerlessness, freedom and incarceration and the politics of memory. Materiality is fundamental. I have used materials that are indicative of the element fire as a language to speak on as a language to speak about the topics at hand. Elemental speech is a discursive strategy; which is melodic and mobile and includes the desire to meet the other by moving and carrying otherness along. A symptom of the materials I shall use will in turn be a manifestation of absence. I have used ash by means of collecting and generating individual burnings as a cathartic medium to work with, it is a suggestive substance for myself as my father was cremated and therefore the symbolic interaction with it is vast. I have also used porcelain, which is an organic substance with is taken from the ground and then fired

and turned into a fragile, breakable matter. I spend copious amounts of time sewing seed to the same endeavor, such as hand molding porcelain pieces as a way to make acts of recovery and reclamation. The time spent is a time of contemplation.

The recent burst of the commodification of memory through social media and digital platforms along with the need for 'self-musealization' has allowed the public to think that memory can be preserved this way. This is problematic as the self we put on social media is but a fragment of reality. It poses the threat of us forgetting ever more prominently. Therefore I have directed the dialogue of memory to belong to the natural and the organic as opposed to the digital realm we seem to be relying on.

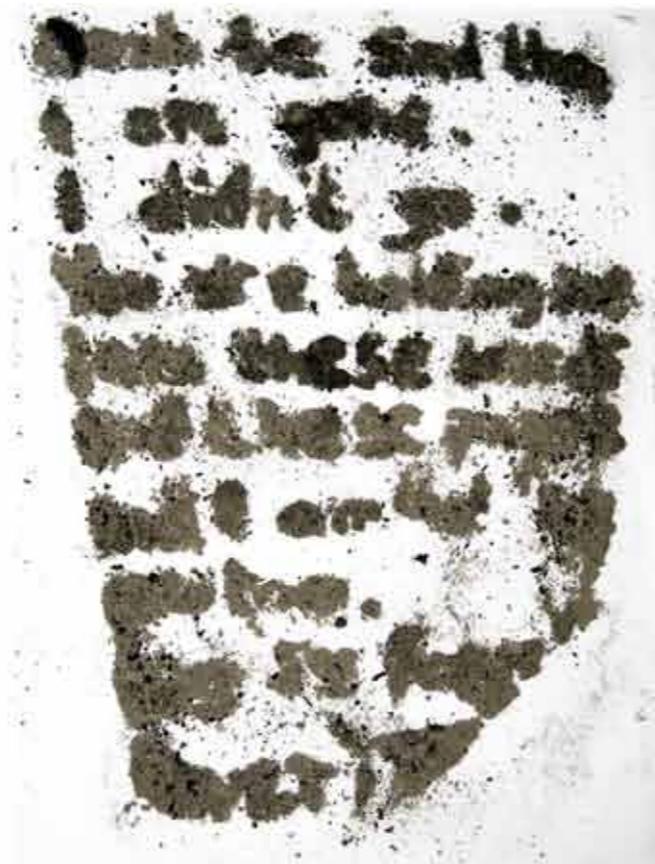
Through losing a home and our family achieve I understand that loss of history and memory can dramatically affect a person and their understanding of their sense of temporality. Your past is the instrument you use to construct your future and when the foundations of your past are stripped away or problematically silenced by the taboos of society there is a need to reimagine, retell and remake them in another way.

By making art about memory I do not imagine that I will transform how history is understood but I will simply be bringing the taboo topic of loss and absence out of the domestic, private realm and making it a public conversation and consideration.



Matches
digital image on fabriano
42 x60cm
2015

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Ash poem

ash on paper which has been left open to the wind, digital print on fabriano with charcoal

70 x 200cm

2015



The deepest shades of night. Hand moulded fired black clay, goldleaf, soot. 300 x 200cm. 2015.



Detail of "Porcelain Tears"
Porcelain and ash
2015

Between the devil and the deep blue sea
Digital print on fabriano, intervention of ash in the landscape
42 x 60cm
2015



Porcelain tears. Hand moulded and fired porcelain, ash, goldleaf. 244 x122cm. 2015.



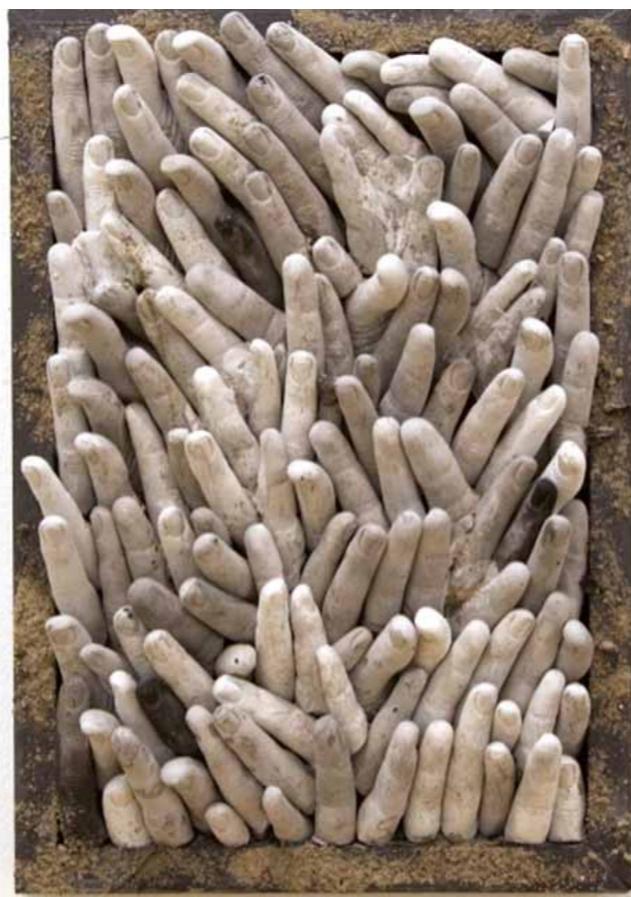
Far better to forget and smile (repression). Ash painting. 285 x 140cm. 2015.



From where I stand. Intervention in the landscape. Ash on wood. Digital print on fabriano.
42 x 60cm. 2015.



The man who turned into a tree. A tree found on table mountain national parks, removed with a wood removal permit. Tree trunk, ash fingers, clothes. 400 x 200cm. 2015.



Those that remain
Remainders from my house that burnt down.
30 x 42cm
2015

So many ways to point at you
Fingers cast out of ash
30 x 40cm
2015

284.5g
ash made from personal burnings, tin and paper
10 x 4cm
2015





Detail of "So many ways to point at you". Fingers moulded out of ash. 2015.



Fragility in white
Fired porcelain tree rings
40 x 25cm
2015

Fragility in black
Fired black clay tree rings
40 x 25cm
2015

A re-remembering (Wishbone)
A memorial for the everyday, the individual and the story that remains untold
11 found sticks and 1 reserected stick made form ash and cement
150 x 100cm
2015



A pound of flesh. mechanical scales, laser cut board, porcelain bowls, ash. 300 x 240cm 2015.

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