

## **To Construct a Memory**

**Caroline Dranow, Class of 2020**

When I began my research this summer after being granted the honor of the Robert and Blythe Edwards Fund for the Arts, I was ecstatic to begin my research. My intent for my project was to create a series of oil paintings that, when viewed collectively, attempt to deconstruct the concept of a memory. In crafting a collective memory through the medium of oil paintings, I hope that my work challenges our shared perceptions of time. The concept of memory compels my imagination. It is the faculty of the mind that informs our identities through the documentation of our senses. Analyzing memory creates a point of reflection, while creating paintings provides a point of introspection. For me, the work I conducted this summer enables me to contemplate the past and thoroughly process feelings, sensations, and emotions.

I began this summer with a two week period of research. In this time period, I sketched everyone and everything around me. These initial sets of drawings captured the fluidity of experience. Drawing everything from people to landscapes, this period of my research gave me the freedom I needed to explore. From that point, I was able to refine my process into transforming many of those drawings into oil paintings on paper. While this was a type of painting that I had never tried before, I relished the opportunity to experiment. I learned to love the fast drying quality of this mini-series, and came to realize that exploring the temporality of these paintings spoke to the ephemeral qualities of memory itself. Wanting to push the added concept of time further, I decided to break my next series of paintings into timed sessions of three hours each. By limiting the time spent on these portraits of the people and places I loved, I captured the transitive nature of remembrance. This step in my process was a true time of experimentation. Because of the structured time limit, I felt free to explore the medium. My brush strokes became more bold, and in limiting my palette to five colors, I challenged myself to get the most out of fewer pigments. Finding the liberty in limitations, I intend on consistently incorporating these strategies in my artistic practice going forward.

The final stage of my project this summer, came in the form of large scale portraits. Using the same limited palette as in my earlier pieces, but with no self imposed time restrictions, I was able to dive into this series of three. While darker and more expressive than all the earlier works, these three stand alone in their ability to capture the subjects with both intimacy and specificity. When viewed together, the pieces from this summer join to create an immersive environment that feels distinctly Maine. They engage each viewer in a distinct way that responds to their memories and connection to place. Just as the portraits interact with each other, they respond to the viewer's impressions of them.

I feel immensely grateful to the grant which enabled me to conduct my research this summer. Not only was it extremely meaningful and cathartic for me, but also immensely informative to my artistic practice. The opportunity to explore Maine in the summer, and capture it in my art, was a life changing experience that deeply enriched my connection to place and my love of the Bowdoin community.

**Faculty Mentor:** James Mullen

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