

Prior to the advent of digital photography, a mirror was an essential part of a camera's anatomy. The mirror inside a camera's body enabled light to travel from the lens to the viewfinder so that the photographer could see what the mirror saw. Each pivot of that reflective surface would freeze an image on film, providing the potential for a moment to be reproduced *ad infinitum*.

For many of us, our first introduction to photography is grounded in the discovery of our own subjectivity. As children, we perform in front of the lens, acting out a narrative shaped by our parents and the manner in which they prefer to remember us. With adulthood comes the awareness that we are part of a continuum of physical likeness – a sense that we are catching up in some way or another with our own past.

This exhibition convenes the work of contemporary artists who enlist their parents in their practice. Working across various lens-based strategies to revisit found images and reflect on notions of inheritance, each artist proposes multiple ways of understanding familial intimacy. Some choose to engage their parents as performers in both absurd and poetic capacities, as a subject or a disembodied narrator. Others lean on their parents to provide a tether to the past, questioning the formation of identity while redressing invisibility. Tender and unflinchingly honest, these works spur us to think

about how expectation inevitably shapes
intergenerational relationships, often in ways that make
sense only when we are grown.



STEPHANIE COMILANG

Yesterday, In the Years 1886 and 2017, 2017

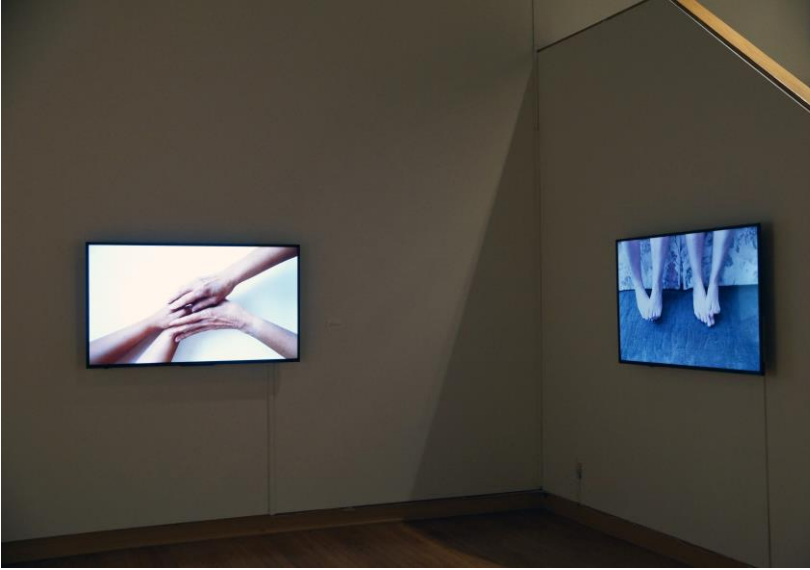
two-channel HD video with sound

Running time: 9 minutes 48 seconds, looped



In Stephanie Comilang's, *Yesterday, in the Years 1886 and 2017*, references to pineapple serve as points of reference for the Filipino diaspora. Recognized widely as a European symbol of hospitality, the pineapple has a troubled history that is synonymous with colonization. Favoured by the likes of Christopher Columbus and other colonists throughout Europe, the fruit was introduced to the Philippines by the Spanish during their occupation. Over centuries, pineapple would develop an unmistakable presence in national cuisine and its popularity as an international export would see tropical forests cleared to make room for industrial plantations.

Using strategies that combine elements of documentary film-making with science-fiction, Comilang crafts a narrative of connection between two notable Filipinos who began new lives in Germany: the nationalist intellectual José Rizal (1861-1896) and the archivist Lourdes Lareza Müller. With the aid of an algorithmic poem generator, Comilang folds the biographies of Rizal and Müller into that of a third character, a drone voiced in Tagalog by the artist's mother. With her allusions to migration and adaptation, Comilang's narrator might be seen as a retainer of collective memory, always aware of the dynamic between guests and hosts.



ERIKA DEFREITAS

the aura appeared a few minutes before,
2018

Series of five unglazed clay sculptures
Fabrication assisted by Adam Williams

an earnest weight in the crease, 2017

Single channel video, colour, no sound
Running time: 2 minutes, looped

real cadences and a quiet colour, 2017

Single channel video with sound
Running time: 5 minutes 13 seconds

a study for what was, 2018

Gouache on paper

Mourning and the abstract ways in which loss may be measured are recurring subjects for Scarborough-based multidisciplinary artist Erika DeFreitas. Over the course of the last decade, DeFreitas has translated anticipatory grief—a sense of impending loss—into a poetic series of performative studies wherein her mother serves as a collaborator.

The two video works seen here introduce notions of inheritance and attachment through close-cropped shots of bodily extremities. *real cadences and quiet colour* features the artist and her mother seated together in the

family home and can be seen as an unstructured document of restlessness. *an earnest weight in the crease*, on the other hand, demonstrates steadiness and emerges from the instruction to hold on until you are ready to let go. Seen together here, these works invite us to consider the different forms that reciprocity takes as familial relationships evolve.

The two accompanying works—*the aura appeared a few minutes before* and *a study for what was*—borrow their forms from the negative space that separated DeFreitas and her mother as seen in staged photographs. By translating this *lacuna*, or gap, into a series of planes and rendering it as a physical form, DeFreitas encourages us to see absence—to consider what is not present—with new eyes.



MILUTIN GUBASH

Annie, after an argument, taken on a roll of film I found in my father's desk after he died, 2012

Lambda print face mounted on Plexiglas

Born Rich, Getting Poorer, 2008-2012

episode 1: Jenkem?

episode 2: Let's Go to Kingston, ON!

episode 3: Dead Car

episode 4: Punked in Serbia

episode 5: Show Off

episode 6: Selimir

HD digital video in six episodes

Running time: approximately 15-22 minutes, each episode. Edition 1 of 3

Mom, thinking about her recent cancer scare, taken on a roll of film I found in my father's desk after he died, 2012

Lambda print face mounted on Plexiglas

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery Collection. Gift of the Artist, 2012.

The television genre that flourished during Milutin Gubash's youth—the sitcom—seems to have undergone an identity crisis. Family-themed narrative television popularized by programs such as *The Brady Bunch* (1969–1974) and *The Cosby Show* (1984–1992) has been supplanted by reality television's depictions of familial dysfunction. Rather than assume a nostalgic position in which the traditional sitcom genre is simply restaged with personalized narratives, Gubash synthesizes the influences of serial comedy strategies found in popular media to unpack the genre's baggage, tropes and all.

Born Rich, Getting Poorer (2008–2012) is an episodic narrative that stars the artist and his family members as themselves in believable, day-to-day situations. The earliest episodes of *Born Rich, Getting Poorer* are punctuated with canned laughter and a litany of recognizable narrative tropes: a mother unexpectedly pays a visit to her son, a central character returns from the dead, a case of mistaken identity. As the series

progresses, we encounter the life of the artist as a complicated—though comedic—site of converging roles: a son preoccupied with unfulfilled parental expectations, a clownish father, an anxiety-ridden friend. Through its unexpected arc, *Born Rich* unfolds as a foiled attempt to bury one aspect of the past (the ashes of the artist's father) while attempting to uncover it elsewhere (the truth about his family's history in Serbia). By Episode 6, the laugh track has all but disappeared and Gubash's cast of supporting characters are nearly silent – bringing us closer to the charged silence of his photographs. The conventions of the sitcom have been stripped away, leaving us with a double biography of the artist: the story told between the tropes and the story told through unanswered questions.

Produced in concert with the filming of the artist's six-part series *Born Rich, Getting Poorer*, these two photographs are from a series wherein family bonds are illuminated through a material backstory. Each of the images was photographed by Milutin Gubash using a roll of analog film that was found in the desk of his recently deceased father. Through this simple, yet poignant gesture, Gubash serves as a momentary host for the otherwise absent past.

Please be advised that this work contains the brief use of adult language

LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER

Mom Relaxing my Hair, 2004

Gelatin silver print

Special edition produced by the Aperture Foundation

Momme (Shadow), from the *Momme Portrait* series,
2008

Gelatin silver print

Special edition produced by the Aperture Foundation

Huxtables, Mom and Me, 2008

Gelatin silver print

Grandma Ruby and Me in Her Living Room,
2007

Archival inkjet print

Edition 3/50

Dr. Kenneth Montague | The Wedge Collection, Toronto.

LaToya Ruby Frazier's work incorporates the social, environmental, and economic realities that have affected her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania. While rooted firmly in photography's social documentary tradition, her work has been shaped by an African American working-class perspective that is rarely centred within Braddock's civic narrative.

Frazier was born in the aftermath of a collapsed steel industry and eroded public services. She took her first photograph of her mother at age 17 and in the years that would follow, Frazier would make matrilineal relationships the primary subject of her ground-breaking body of work, *The Notion of Family* (2001-2014).

Frazier's practice may be seen as a form of redress that continues an effort initiated by one of the most photographed people of the 19th century, abolitionist and intellectual Frederick Douglass (1818-1895). Douglass held firm to the notion that by adopting photographic technologies to share his own image—one that radically differed from the minstrel caricatures of African American subjects—he could mobilize emancipation and social reform. By documenting subjects that have cultivated her sense of value within their own domestic spaces and with their direction, Frazier creates a parallel history of resilience. Taking the form of a double portrait, each of these images reveals an intergenerational balance of vulnerability and empowerment, a form of labour that is often rendered invisible within a broader narrative of American industrial decline.



VIVEK SHRAYA

Trisha, 2016

Digital prints

Creative Direction: Vivek Shraya

Photography: Karen Campos Castillo

Makeup: Alanna Chelmick

Hair: Fabio Persico

Clothing in 4, 5 & 8: M. Orbe

Set and wardrobe assistants: Shemeena Shraya and Adam Holman

The works of Calgary-based artist Vivek Shraya combine the personal and the political in a range of media.

Whether it is literary, musical, or visual in nature, her work explores a contemporary queer experience, often through an autobiographical trans lens.

Shraya's *Trisha* series was inspired by the artist discovering a trove of photographs from her parents' honeymoon in Jasper, Alberta. Dating from the 70s, the photographs depict Shraya's mother in her early twenties, recently emigrated from India to begin a new life in Alberta. Each image presented Shraya with an exemplar for her own standards of femininity, while also prompting the artist to reflect on the power of seeing oneself in a distant version of the past.

All of the images that constitute this series were shot on March 5, 2016 at multiple Toronto locations and with a team of creative collaborators. Embarking on a profound exercise in re-enactment without the expectation of precise duplication, Shraya allows the nearly four decades that separate the two sets of images to speak of the time it sometimes takes for the body to catch up to the mind.



NEIL GOLDBERG

My Father's Camry Filled with Leaves, 2009

Inkjet print

My Father Breathing into a Mirror, 2005

Single channel video

Running time: 1 minute

Courtesy of the artist and Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York

Over the course of twenty years, two subjects have surfaced most consistently in the work of New York-based Neil Goldberg: the city in which he lives and his parents. The artist credits his father's tinkerer tendencies with informing his own interest in seeking out the poetry in what might otherwise read as commonplace. In fact, Goldberg senior participated frequently in his son's work.

The two works seen here constitute the last of the artist's works that involve his father's presence—each created with his father's mortality in mind. In one, his father appears as the willing participant; in the other, he is represented by proxy. In *My Father Breathing into a Mirror*, we see Goldberg senior performing a rudimentary test to demonstrate proof of life. By holding a mirror up to his own nose, Goldberg's father offers his breath to both the camera and his son in a quiet assertion

of his own existence. The gesture would accrue new meaning two years later, after his death.

Goldberg inherited his father's 2003 Toyota Camry after his death. Inheritance within Goldberg's practice is intrinsically bittersweet. For two years after Goldberg senior's death, the artist found himself unable to make work as he reckoned with the creative block that can come with such loss. At last, Goldberg decided to return to the park where he had filmed *My Father Breathing Into a Mirror*—the last time he had filmed his father. He brought the inherited Camry with him. Uncertain of what to do with this connection to his past, Goldberg documented the car filled with fallen leaves and broke his creative block before finally letting the inherited object go.





75 William Street North
Chatham, Ontario N7M 4L4
519.360.1998 | ckartgallery@chatham-kent.ca
www.chatham-kent.ca/TAG



@TAG_CK



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