

DAEMON & SAUDADE

An exhibition by
Colleen Schindler-Lynch





The work in this exhibition explores grief, loss and preservation through a series of photographs, sculptural garments and items of adornment as memento mori that reveal both the beauty and pain of emotion. The intangibility of stories and memories has been translated into objects and given a tactile presence that details intimate accounts and ephemeral events such as conversations and recollections.

Photographs recreate the look of historical tintype images and the distressed edges of glass negatives but at a scale impossible to achieve with the original techniques. They recall a time of slow documentation and close inspection — a time when images were precious objects.

A series of dress forms display a collection of worn sculptures that fuse textiles with art and use the body as a dimensional canvas. They speak about wearing your narrative and a daily routine of camouflage and façade while carrying on and coping with grief and trauma.

Collectively this work captures and preserves the marks left on us by the experiences we live. Whether the loss of a loved one or a relationship, grief is a condition, a state, and a process we all share.

Daemon indicates something going on behind the scenes; today, it typically refers to a computer program that is running in the background and is beyond the user's control. In language, we have many phrases that speak to the same idea. Expressions such as more than meets the eye or read between the lines allude to the same concept — a subtext that is meant to be understood but not stated.

Saudade is one of those words that is just missing from the English language — words that convey a complexity of meaning and sentiment. It refers to the love that remains after someone is gone. It encompasses feelings and experiences, emptiness and absence, nostalgia and melancholy. It is an emotional state that brings both sad and happy feelings together.

Main Gallery Clockwise starting at the title wall.



***When the Hen Sees the Snake's Feet*, 2018**

Archival digital print

Series of 4, each 20 x 40 inches

When the hen sees the snake's feet... presents the images of four women. A Thai idiom, which speaks to the idea of shared experiences and knowing each other's secrets, this group of the four photographs invites comparison. The individual images are distressed; both in and out of focus, indicating blurred realities. We are not told what these women have in common and there are no indicators or symbols to reveal their secret. Captured in relaxed, almost conversational poses, they are rendered mute as passive participants to the experience they share. The viewer is left to conjure a narrative based on past and lived experiences.

I never really knew Mary Margaret, 2022

Silk, human hair

16 x 20 inches

Referencing memorial keepsakes known as memento mori and the tradition of preserving the hair of a loved one, the artist's hair was woven into an embellished trim. Memorial adornments such as this contain the DNA of the owner - a single life lived, and memories associated with an individual identity. The object is indicative of care and preservation for a person either lost, departed or that may have simply grown up — the lock of hair preserving a moment in time.

I don't have many memories of my Aunt Mary Margaret except her bright, thoroughly white hair. She was deaf and so I have no memories of communication with her. My memories are only of her shimmering halo of white. My father also had bright silvery white hair and passed on through their DNA – so do I. I lost my hair during chemotherapy and when it grew back it was a similar shade cementing a connection to a forbearer I never really knew.



***Rooster Pooster*, 2018**

Acrylic

11 x 11 Inches

***Suppressed Histories*, 2017**

Acrylic

Various sizes 12 total

***Toska*, 2018**

Ceramic and gold paint

Various sizes

This collection of mourning jewellery speaks to the preciousness of memory through objects and keepsakes. As interpretations of this mode of adornment, they are fused with sentimentality for both the living and the departed and reveal details of lives through a symbolic language that expresses thoughts of death, the afterlife, and lessons for the living through the lens of contemporary art wear.

The black acrylic in *Suppressed Histories* and *Rooster Pooster* references the use of Jet in Victorian jewellery. The small ceramic series shown in *Toska*, represents small devotional items that a person would carry. These portable objects with images of loved ones impart messages of comfort and affection and are intended to remind the wearer of someone's absence. The wearer of remembrance jewelry connects to the intimate sphere of the body in a hidden intimate network from which other viewers are excluded. Mourning jewels are exhibited secrets.



***Mourning Glory*, 2022**

Archival digital prints

Series of 15 framed 18 x 28 inches

This series of photographs represent expressions of the tableau, artifice, and drama of grief. Alluding to early photography, Mourning Glory refers to cartes de visites, which were small portrait cards that could be gifted or left behind (like an early form of a business or trading card). The Victorians are known for grand mourning protocols and rituals. A trend in early photography was to document the act of mourning as evidenced in a number of photos of people looking at photos of departed loved ones. The Victorians wanted to record the act of grieving - to show the world, documented in images, that they fulfilled the role of a grieving person. What is interesting is that we (the viewer) do not get to see the picture of the departed person only the staged documentation of an act of remembrance.

*little adjustments and changes that were barely noticeable
until the old norm was completely forgotten
and a new norm had taken place*



This series of work uses the body as a dimensional canvas to relay a narrative that fuses textiles with art. It has long been established that fashion functions beyond the basic purpose of providing warmth for the wearer; whether printed, stitched, camouflaged, or blatantly plastered as slogans, dress as a vehicle for communication has the potential to speak in a multitude of ways.



***Black Heart Paillettes*, 2018**

Leather, acrylic, white metal

Approx. 20 x 48 inches

A paillette is a large sequin in fashion and can form an overlapping surface protecting the fabric below. In this garment, which talks about indecision, the paillettes are in the form of the human heart. It is laser-etched and cut from black acrylic which is hand stitched to the leather dress form. They indicate a choice; at what point do you close your heart off to someone? The paillettes resemble charms or military medals and are affixed in a regimented manner across the shoulder line. They run diagonally across the side of the chest where the heart is located either protecting it below the surface or slowly turning black as it dies off. As you move down the dress the regularity of the placement of the black hearts begins to break apart and by the bottom hemline, they take the form of bombs dropping indicating a sealed fate.



noticeable

***You can't unring the bell*, 2018**

Laser etched silk velvet, human hair

Approx. 20 x 48 inches

This dress represents different kinds of bereavement. Not the grief of someone's passing but the loss of a loved one through the changing state of a relationship and changing states of life. The front of the dress is adorned with numerous strands of a fictitious necklace, which are subtly laser-etched into the silk velvet. The words themselves indicate a previous emotionally abusive relationship, stating "Shut up" repeatedly. The many ascenders and descenders of the letterforms echo the visual texture of beading and components used in jewellery construction.

There are long strands of silver hair roughly stitched to the dress through incisions in the fabric. This element ties in with the sentiment expressed in the treatment of the back of the garment as well. Mourning the loss of a sense of self – who you are and who you were. The back of the dress reveals a spine constructed out of the handwritten words Me Too, which were digitized and then laser-etched into the fabric to make a permanent change to the fabric. The etched words were then distressed to the point disintegration. Through pulling and stretching the affected area, the yellow weft of the fabric is exposed, and the area takes on a smock-like texture transforming an element of pain into an element of beauty.



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XO Skeleton, 2017

Etched Acetate, Silk

Approx. 20 x 48 inches

Impressions of grief have been recorded through journaling and depicted as an exoskeleton—a metaphorical outer layer extended beyond the body to protect the emotional state of the wearer. An exoskeleton is usually a hard, outer shell intended to physically protect its host, but here it is flimsy and ineffective. The laser etched acetate is emblematic of protection while simultaneously revealing a struggle to camouflage emotion and maintain outward composure.



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***Xinteng*, 2018**

Dyed silk, embroidery, human hair

Approx. 20 x 48 inches

The title Xinteng, is derived from a Chinese word, which conveys physical, mental, and emotional empathy that speaks to the sentiment of sharing in someone's grief. The fabric dye was initially discharged and then re-dyed the colour of dried blood – the colour of healing. Words from my journal were manipulated and then embroidered onto a fabric that was dyed the opposite of the fabric used on the dress form itself. The embroidered words were roughly cut out and applied across the torso of the garment and talk about both physical and emotional wounds – the process of healing. The edges are frayed and curl and represent wounds in a half-state of healing. Scabs that start to lift and catch draw attention to the trauma area and are a constant irritant. The long strands of hair are healthy and have colour and are carefully stitched to the fabric with a blood red thread. This dress represents the state of flux.

***Hye Won Hye*, 2018**

Satin, Rayon

Approx. 20 x 48 inches

The embroidered badges in this piece proudly display a series of personal symbols. A bandage across the broken yet otherwise common symbol of a woman may at first seem easy to decode, but the significance of these badges is tied together in a more complex way. Collectively they represent physical, mental, and emotional endurance, and being tough in the face of hardship. Wearing them proudly equates with the ritual in Girl Guides and Boy Scouts of passing a series of tests and earning badges as an outward public symbol of something you have survived. Hye won hye is a West African term that speaks to tenacity and strength of an individual.



Set Aside, 2018

Archival digital print

Series of 3, Approx.

98 x 40 inches

A triptych of images shows an activity playing out - sequential in form, action, and time. A woman kneels and is carrying a box and while she twists side-to-side, she is never able to set the object down. The box is a metaphor for unaddressed issues. Through this humble gesture the viewer can feel the melancholic care with which she holds the box - sometimes resting on her legs but never being able to set it aside and let go. Reminiscent of an early Tintype, the photograph alludes to nostalgia and a possible reason for the woman's melancholy and her refusal or inability to Set Aside.





***Esprit d'Escalier*, 2022**

Archival digital print

Series of 6

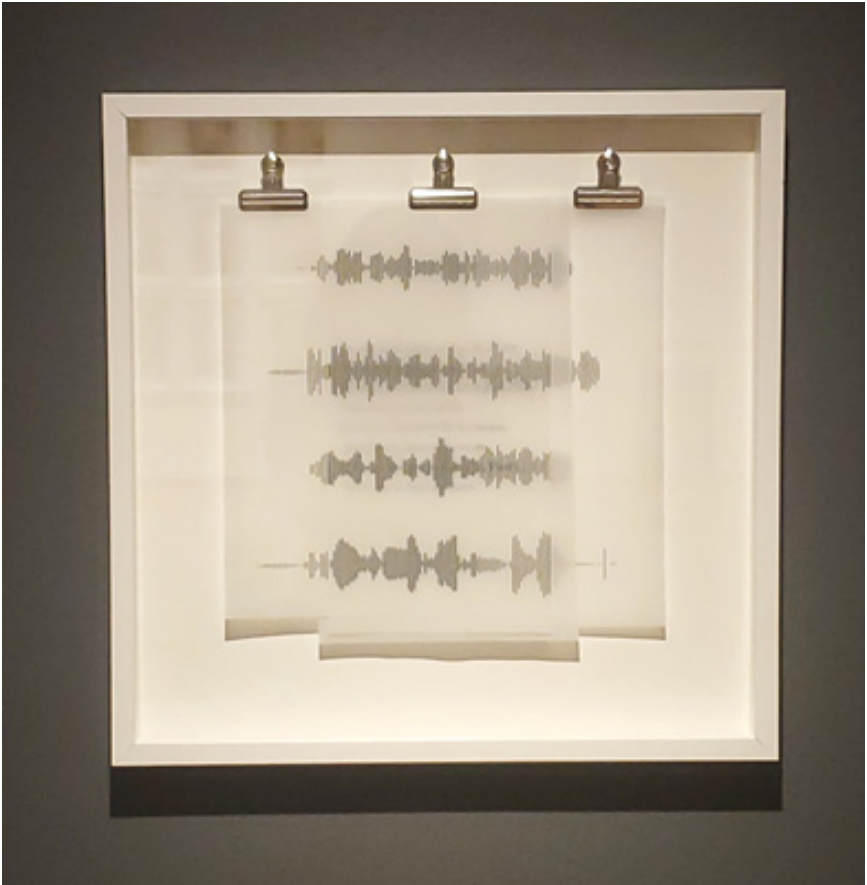
16" x 14"

L'Esprit de Escalier is an idiom that means “the inescapable feeling you get when you leave a conversation and then think of all of the things you should have said.” The phrase usually refers to thinking of something witty to say after you leave. Here it is used more broadly to consider having no unfinished conversations.

A series of six photographs of the stages of peeling a pomegranate, reflects the contents of the last email correspondence from my father. Our conversation was not one of great significance. There were no great words of wisdom or life lessons he wanted me to know. The final communication was a commercial about how to peel a pomegranate and yet, I cannot bring myself to delete the email. What was once an incredibly simple task now took enormous effort. Which begs some thought, how do we hold onto the ephemeral things like conversations – the intangibles impressed upon our memories. Watching it over and over doesn't make me think about pomegranates but how he fought through something difficult to send to me

“Nothing haunts us like the things we don't say.” Mitch Albom

Project Room Clockwise starting entrance



Hiraeth, 2022
Oxide print on layered mylar
20" x 20"

This piece represents a sound map of a poem. The Wreck of the Julie Plante was written by Henry Drummond and my father used to recite it to my sisters and I on occasion. It was many years later that I discovered that my father's poem was not the original. His version was written by Peter White and was slightly adapted for the area and landmarks around Lake St Clair. This piece is about ephemeral elements like memory and the sound of someone's voice which stays with us long after they have gone. The title Hiraeth is a Welsh word referring to a kind of romanticized homesickness. It is a melancholic feeling mixed with grief and sadness of someone or something that is missing. It represents a combination of longing, nostalgia, wistfulness, and yearning - similar to Saudade.



***All Your Labels Are by Choice*, 2018**

Archival digital print

Series of 3, each 24 x 36 Inches

The appearance and format of these images recall forms of government-sanctioned identity - official documents of physical attributes and facial recognition. The scale of the portraits invites closer inspection, and a detailed reading of the images implies a deeper understanding of the individuals pictured. The inclusion of coloured symbols (stripes and dots) plays on language and idioms such as, a leopard cannot change its spots, and speaks to the core of an individual beyond the usual means of summation - the ephemeral, one's true nature and character beyond physical manifestation. Who we are, our authentic selves, are paired here with one figure in camouflage alluding to carefully crafted identities- how we choose to camouflage the experiences and emotions of our daily lives even to those closest to us.

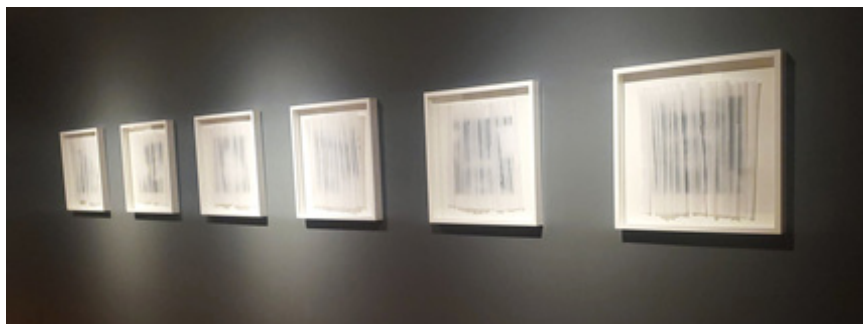
***Well Worn/Worn Well*, 2016**

Laser-cut acrylic and sterling silver

Approx. 20 x 48 inches

Stories are not things you can typically experience through touch, but by manipulating individual words to create lace-like motifs, my story has been given a tactile presence. The written material relays a personal narrative, derived from the practice of journaling, cataloguing a span of time along with the events and emotions that coincided.

Strung together, yet separate from the typical structure of sentences, these detached words collectively communicate emotion, time, place, and elements we associate with narrative structure. On one level, a 'narrative string' quietly relays its message but on the surface, the viewer may be unaware that the object in front of them is a physical story — they may think they are just looking at a lovely lace dress and then realize that there are messages hidden in plain sight. The form of the necklace recalls the shape of a priest's vestment and the acrylic and chosen typeface is thin and fragile and indicates a precarious yet beautiful nature.



***The Invisible Years*, 2018**

Archival digital print and velum

Series of 6, each 20 x 20 inches

Photos are masked behind a pleated layer of velum and are only faintly recognizable and visible. The uneven pleating alludes to the passage of time, ripples, folds, compression and expansion, time shifts for all of us. A moment can feel like a brief happening or it can be protracted into an exhaustive expanse. The piece speaks to issues of feeling unheard and invalid.

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