Myah Martinez
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Creative Essay
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*The involuntary relationship with grief embodied objects: **Bed***

Preamble

Deconstruction of subjectivity to expose objectivity allows an audience to sit, engage, and argue with a body of work. Memory as a framework strengthens the validation of objectivity as both are repeatedly revisited, reviewed, and under reconstruction to develop an understanding of unrecognizable present information. In this project, a theoretical relationship between memory and objectivity mimic each other. They are a challenge to process and contain multiple pieces often with unrecognizable characteristics. Reconstruction is needed to recognize memory and objectivity as one whole itself, despite the scattered pieces and difficulties to interpret.

The power of memory shapes the visual perspective of familiar imagery as a literal painting may expose too much while an abstraction may do the opposite. Therefore objectivity is harder to interpret. To deconstruct a memory, an image, a perspective is to reconstruct the preconceived value of subjectivity in a painting, an experience, a persistent dilemma. To be recognized as one memory and one body of work is a key component in this project. It is to comprehend the confusion and suffocation of traumatic grief.

How does the recognition of objectivity in a visual body of work reconstruct memory as one object? In this painting series the attempt to reclaim an object associated with death is to take

it apart, scoop out the insides and polish and repeat as needed. Coinciding with this discussion question, it is vital to recognize subjectivity and literalness evident in the content of a personal artistic narrative. Identifying subjectivity in an artwork associated with sudden bereavement is at risk of losing it's structural spine. There is an importance of first introducing objectivity into the grief process as it allows a face to face conversation with an object encapsulating the trauma of loss. Objectivity is to reprocess a memory by pulling it apart and putting it back together. The framework of color theory, linework, and abstraction work in relationship with a theoretical spine of deconstruction to reconstruct the body of this project, memory.

The bed is the object as it is an universally used household object that is always theoretically changing. Whether that a new pair of sheets, size, material, everyday objects are interchangeable and carry room for change with removal then replacement. Taken from the book *Documents of Contemporary Art,* Maurice Halbwachs excerpts from *Space and Collective* and *Memory* and *On Collective Memory* question the impact of loss and fluctuating circumstances that affect memory. *Focusing on Space and Collective,* Halbwach asks why a person becomes attached to objects.

 "Our physical surroundings bear our and others' imprint. Our home - furniture and it's arrangement, room decor - recalls family and friends whom we see frequently within this framework. If we live alone, that region of space permanently surrounding us reflects not merely what distinguishes us from everyone else. Our tastes and desired evidenced in the choice an arrangement of these objects are explained in large measure by the bonds attaching us to various groups. All we can say is that things are part of society. However, furniture, ornaments, picture, utensils and knick-knacks also 'circulate' within the group:

they are the topic of evaluations and comparisons, provide insights into new

directions…"

With his framework of objects as household furniture, Halbwach examines how objects fill and

create a space in which our imprints are left as a reflection of personal desire, preferred

arrangement, and living situation. This excerpt has influenced my project by taking household

objects and recognizing them as interchangeable and personal as our personal spaces are created

with intention and reflect our living and personal circumstances as objects are always changing.

Whether in design, comfortability, or placement, an object can be deconstructed for desire,

renewal, replacement, or repositioning.

In John Ransom Phillips three paintings addressing death is shown with a purple and

beige palette and identifiable figures. The color palette creates a relationship in which the viewer

can arguably interpret calmness rather than deep intense colors that are often associated with

death or the complete opposite. The content presented challenges subjectivity by deconstructing

the literalness of an object with familiar and relatable imagery. With the medium of watercolor,

it's natural transparency makes the content easier to engage with in comparison to the heavy

layering and dark color palette in his other work. Distracting from the pain of death, a milky

beige color in work with transparent shades of purple create a subtle interpretation of gentleness.

However, the usage of scale may allow the viewer to dig into these colors, the more they begin to

represent death the association of an image of a deathbed can be seen. Phillips successfully

maintains the objectivity of a bed by taking away the literalness of an object by producing

content that happens in or on beds.
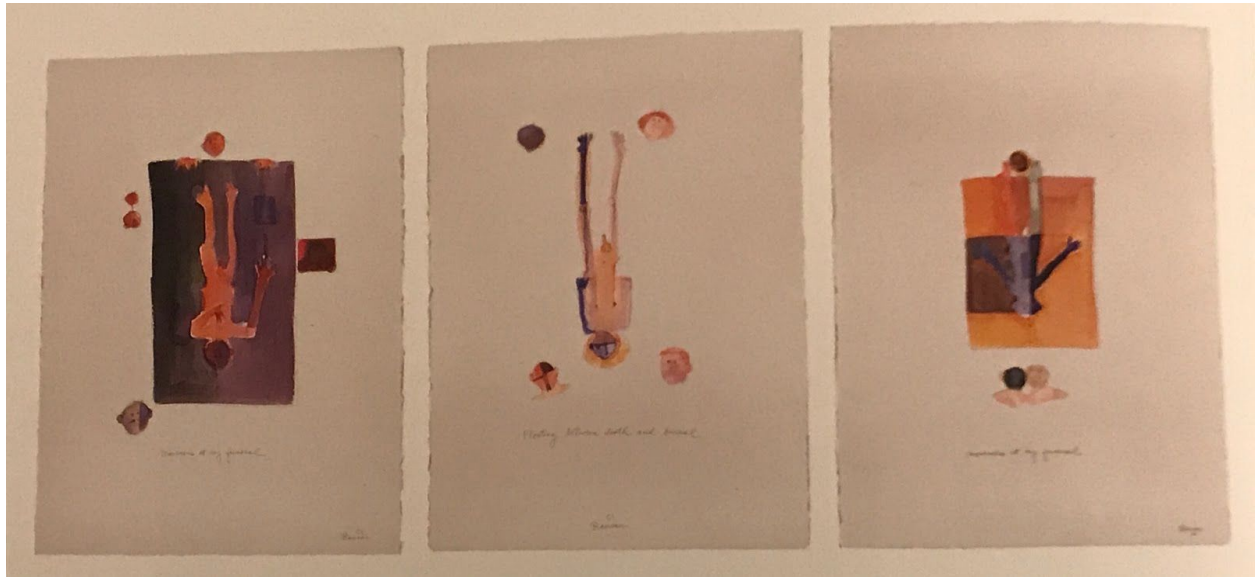
[Left to right]
Mourners at My Funeral
Floating Between Death and Burial
Mourners at My Funeral
Watercolor, 2001, 30 x 22.

A bold and strong usage of color an linework in Basquiat's painting *Untitled* captures the viewers attention as it is categorized under abstraction or neo-expressionism. Subjectivity and objectivity commonly creates conflict with an art critic or artist. Pink, red, orange, a musty green, dark blue, and yellow are dominant colors accompanied with intense linework that can be read as messy or uncomfortable. The subject in *Untitled* can be recognized as a figure with Basquiat's recurring loud and chaotic black lines framing the anatomy of the figure. The usage of bold dark line and vibrant yet dull colors are in conversation with each other as there is a balance in the composition and scale.
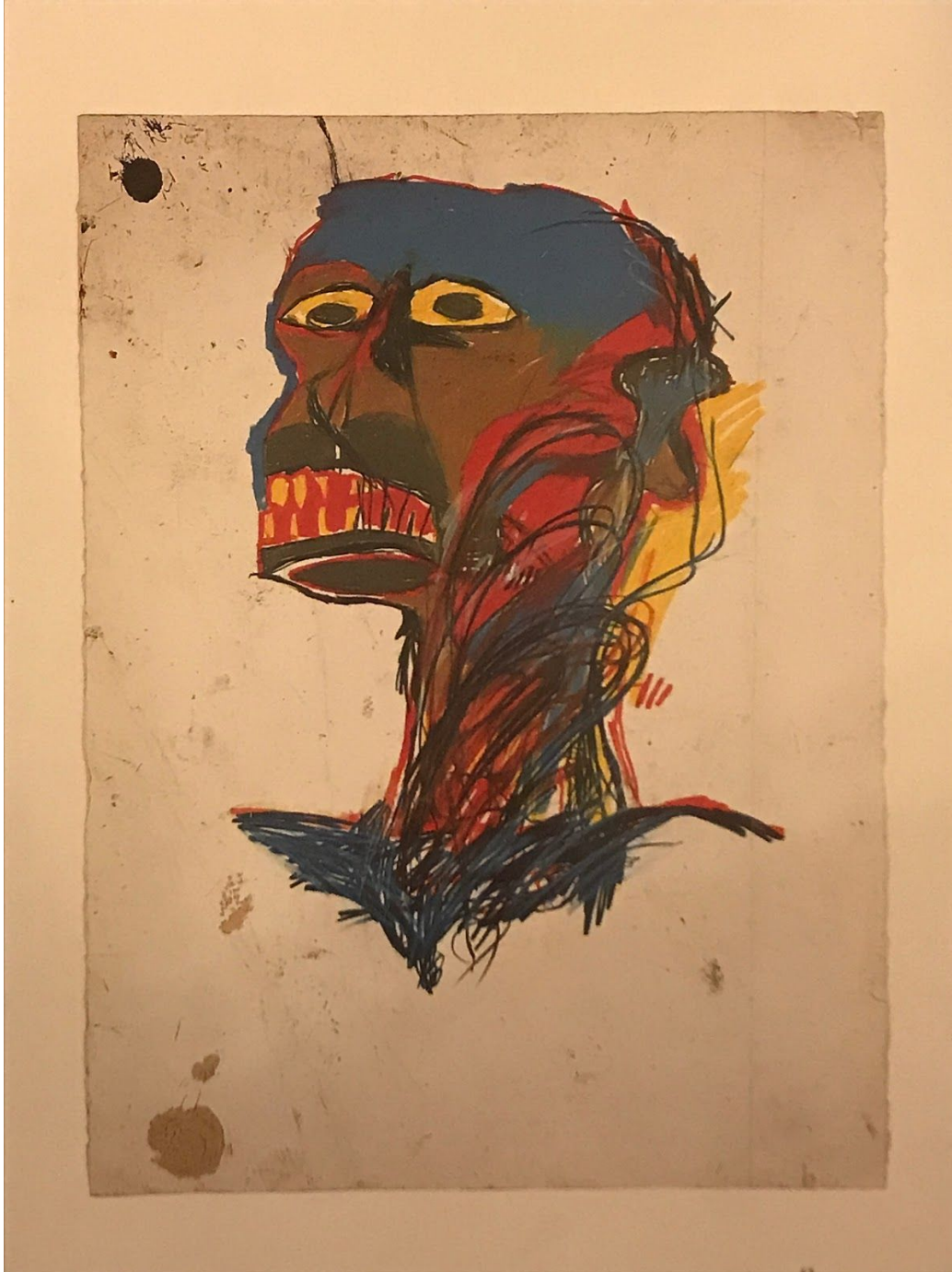
Jean Michel Basquiat
Untitled, 1982
Oil paintstick on paper
30 x 22 inches.

The involuntary relationship with grief embodied objects highlights objectivity in creating an abstract non-literal body of work to be interpreted as one painting. The object being the bed visualizes a casket and a last memory. It is a representation of taking apart a familiar and daily object that now holds grief. It is to change the visual memory of an object and take apart it's values. To take apart is to re-do, revitalize revisit, re-paint.

Annotated Bibliography

Basquiat, Jean-Michel. "Untitled." *Basquiat*, The Brooklyn Museum, 2005, p. 61.

Untitled resembles a similar color palette seen in my colored pencil piece which is the backbone to my project as it carries a significant event and timeline. I chose to do an abstraction of my loved one with the influence of Basquiat's Untitled to with the framework of vibrant color and messy line. These two fundamentals of visual art have always been a strength and I wanted to incorporate artistic stylization that would not disrupt the objectivity of the series and this painting. In my figure painting, I decided to break subjectivity by holding onto the objectivity of the bed. I chose to use brushwork for sections of the background and a palette knife for the majority of the piece.

Halbwachs, Maurice. "The Memory Image/Space and the Collective Memory//1925." *Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by Ian Farr, Whitechapel Gallery, 2012, pp. 47-49. Memory.

Maurice Halbwachs framework of memory in objects and focus on household furniture helped me break down the literalness of a household object. I applied my theoretical lens

of deconstruction through painting and connected this to the spine of my project, line and

color.

Harrison, Sabrina Ward. *Messy Thrilling Life: The Art of Figuring Out How to Live*. Villard

Books, 2004.

Sabrina Harrison is a Canadian multimedia artist who is known for their vibrant and

personal self discovery like collages. Messy Thrilling Life: The Art of Figuring Out How

to Live is filled with Harrison's collage in portrayal of her artistic journey from California

to New York City. In this book Harrison's content includes trauma, memory, and

aspiration in connection to their past and present day surroundings and or objects at the

publishing time of this book in 2004.

John Ransom Phillips

Mourners at My Funeral (Left)

Floating Between Death and Burial

Mourners at My Funeral (Right)

For all three of these pieces I first focused on the motif of death and how Ransom

successfully portrayed his narrative while keeping the bed as his object. I was drawn to

Ransom alone by his usage of objectivity and range of heavy thick oil paint to

transparency seen in his three pieces above. Prior to the bed, I originally was going to

focus on bathroom objects. This changed and I had decided on switching to my object

being a bed in correlation with specific events and dates, this came from m colored pencil

sketch and worked with Ransom's solid execution of objectivity in many works.

Phillips, John Ransom. "Floating Between Death and Burial." *Bed as Autobiography: A Visual Exploration of John Ransom Phillips*, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 38.

Phillips, John Ransom. "Mourners at My Funeral. (Left)" *Bed as Autobiography: A Visual Exploration of John Ransom Phillips*, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 38.

Phillips, John Ransom. "Mourners at My Funeral. (Right)" *Bed as Autobiography: A Visual Exploration of John Ransom Phillips*, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 38.

Reinhardt, Ad. "Red Painting ." *Oranges and Sardines: Conversations on Abstract Painting*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2008, p. 31.

Reinhardt's usage of color in Red Painting influenced my color original color pallete and

transitioned into the bed painting as I wanted to keep a range of values 4-8 in a dark red

palette.

Ricoeur, Paul. "The Memory Image/Memories and Images//2004." *Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by Ian Farr, Whitechapel Gallery, 2012, pp. 66-70. Memory.

I chose this excerpt as it connected the powerful impact of imagery in connection to

processing and experiencing memory.