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Senior Thesis: BFA in Photography

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The Silence

It's not what I wanted, but it's what I needed.

It's been so long since I last visited this gentle yet unsettling quietness. Time seems to go on forever with no end in sight. As I sit here, I am able to hear my own breathing. Oxygen flows past my nose, my mouth, and through to my lungs and then out again.

This is the space we've all been in before, where it's just the mind and self. Whether it's the need to get away and collect your thoughts, or it's a day off. It's so comforting. Away from all the noise. Time seems so abundant that it comes to a standstill. It's so quiet. So peaceful. It separates you and the rest of the world. As I sit here, this time looking around at a familiar place, small details around me began to slowly reveal themselves. A glimmer of light on the window sill that I've never noticed before. The shapes of shadows that engulf the walls. These quiet moments let the mind rest, wander, and discover. Free to focus on oneself and the surroundings. At the same time, this quiet moment is so short lived.

What happens when you dive too deep into the silence? The thoughts begin to wander too far. It's something that can't be controlled. It takes you to the time whenever, and wherever it wants. Questions and what ifs begin to brew. The comforting silence turns into waves of what's unknown, and everything collides. The silence can be deafening ...Maybe it's been too long in this place. I should leave.. But how... ?

I discovered my own fear and comfort in being alone through the process of the making of this project. There's frustration and anxiety in being alone, but sometimes there's also comfort and tranquility. One side of me is afraid of being alone and confronting myself because I crave interactions with other people. While the other part of me craves time alone because I am actually afraid of being left alone and forced to confront myself. This body of work, *The Silence*, explores the moments of struggle between the state of peace and tranquility and the deep tumbling waves of scorching negative thoughts about things that have happened, things that have yet to happen, worrying, and uncertainty. It talks about wanting to be alone and to slip away from the commotions of life, society, and responsibilities. The need to escape for a moment into a secure and familiar bubble for self preservation. Wanting a moment of silence and just having that moment to myself. However, that peaceful moment almost always seems to be short lived.

My expectations of the calm and silent moment quickly turns into loud thoughts that are screaming from inside my head. It feels deafening as everything goes silent, but this time everything starts to fade. I grow smaller and smaller until I am transported into my head, plunged into the deep water and washed away by the rushing waves. What I thought I wanted turns into the absolute last thing I want, it is the thing I absolutely wanted to avoid. The tumbling turbulent thoughts. Then all of a sudden, all the turbulence fades away for a mere moment. Just enough for everything to seem like it's peaceful again. The uncertainty is still there, but this time displayed in a positive light. Like I can calmly persevere through any conflict that comes my way. I want to preserve that moment, hoping it would last forever, but it never does stay. I am forced to say goodbye to that moment, that comforting peaceful moment until next time as the waves of unrest come rushing back to bury the peace.

I chose to use photography as the medium for this project because it feels the closest to real life. Even if the medium can be manipulated, a photograph seems more familiar. It can shift the audience to another place, but it will still feel like this world. Therefore, making the work relatable in a sense that we are here, in this space, in this reality.

Through each of the images, I wanted to create a sense of still and silent moments. The light sources guide the eyes and show what is beyond the shadows, while the dark shadows of the prints deliver a more unsettling feeling that represents the uncertainty during the moments of being in the silence. The idea of having these light sources in my photos was inspired by the photographer Rinko Kawauchi. Her work often poetically depict life and ordinary moments of life as extraordinary ones. In many of her photos I noticed that there is a light source illuminating the subject and that light helped guide my vision.

The only framed photo in the show is placed in the median of the sequence. The shadowbox holds the image that represents the tranquil moment that I desperately try to preserve. The moment that makes me feel at peace, but also invincible at the same time. The moment in which I am finally able to come up from the heavy waves to take in a breath of fresh air. I decided to use a black shadowbox because I wanted to set the photograph back and cast a shadow on it as it is displaying a moment of peace within the darkness, but not taking over it. The photograph being encased and displayed behind a piece of glass plays into the idea of wanting to preserve the moment. At the same time, I thought it looked like a memorial for the moment.

I chose to begin the sequence with a darker window and end it with a lighter window to show the passage of time. It could be a day or however long this episode lasts. In this sequence

of work, I showed the darkness of the silent moment by using the darker window image in the beginning. The lighter one at the end can then act as a way out with the sun shining through like a new day has come and the stone has been turned for now. I chose to use images of windows because they are looked at either from the outside or in, and are often a metaphor for hope, change, and an entrance into the unknown. In this case, we are looking out, and at the end, the window lets the comforting light in as a sign of hope in the future. I wanted to convey with the lighter image that it was the end for now. Because both images are located in front and the back, it creates a cyclic effect.

The reason I chose this subject matter to focus my project on is because I am more of an introvert. I often find myself falling back into this cycle. This is something I myself struggle with a lot and I find that this extends to beyond just me. Many people struggle with their own silent moments. I am attempting to display an aspect of my depression and something that affects it greatly through my photographs. It was very important to me to articulate through my photographs what I deal with and how I deal with it. Some artists that have also photographed their depression are Edward Honaker, Tyler Rayburn, Maureen Drennan. Looking at their photographs inspired the ideas for my own depiction of my experience of depression.

Being in the silence is not what causes my depression, but it is one of the moments that affects it. Overthinking is something that many people struggle with, even without depression or any other mental illnesses. Especially in today's society where most people experience some type of stress. It is a man made problem and a common occurrence. However, overthinking does cause stress, and stress is one of the many factors that contributes to depression.

Some of the causes of this illness are a decrease in the chemical levels of serotonin and dopamine. Chronic stress also causes lower levels of serotonin therefore contributing to the state of depression. This illness is still being researched today, and researchers still do not have a full understanding of it because of the many factors that vary from person to person.

Aside from the mental weight, it can also cause physical problems as well like fluctuation in appetite and weight, difficulty with memories, decision making, and concentration. On top of that, it can also cause fatigue, a weakened immune system and insomnia. Approximately 16.1 million adults are affected by depression in the United States, and 280 million people in the world suffer from depression. Worldwide statistics show that 75 percent of people with depression go without seeking treatment. In just the United States, 1 out of 3 people are not receiving treatment. Why is that? One of the reasons may be because socially, it's still considered a taboo subject by many. Even though it has affected humans all throughout history. Another reason may be how expensive it might be to seek treatment. From what I've seen and my own experiences in treatment, it takes a stable job to pay for treatments, but depression can impair the ability to work for some and it just becomes a vicious cycle.

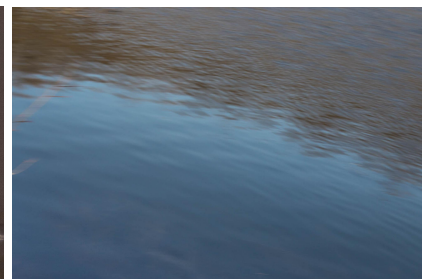
One of the most important issues this series of work touches on is how many people there are, suffering in their own silence. Even if they are screaming for help inside, all that comes out is nothing. Just silence. I'm lucky enough to be able to reflect and share my own silence through this project. To help dissipate the taboo around this subject and to help others understand. I will continue to make work on this topic through research, my experiences, and my healing process. Photography is my outlet for my feelings and thoughts. My silence is not what I wanted, but it turned out to be what I needed to help myself and hopefully others as well.



First Image (Dark Window)



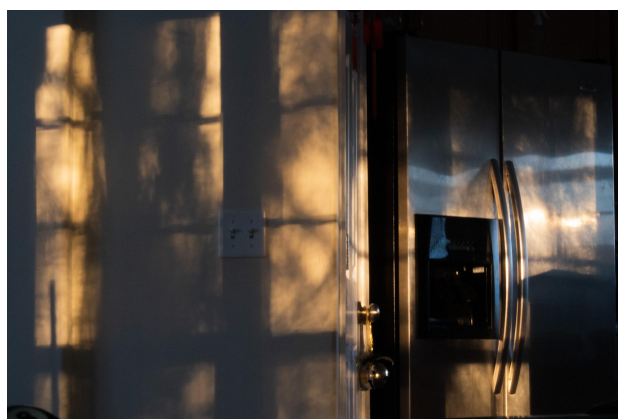
Last Image (Light Window)



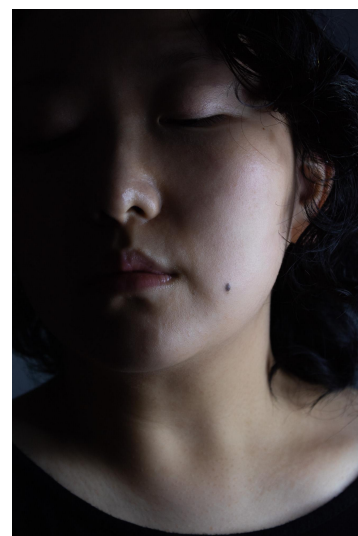
Rushing Waves



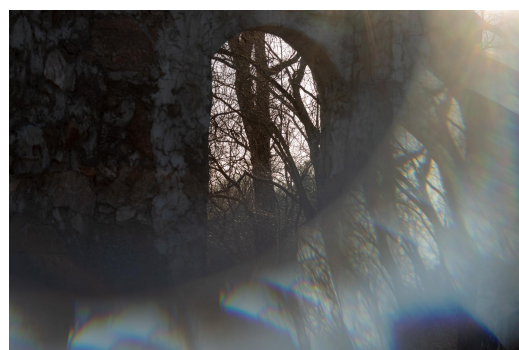
Framed Photo



Shadows That Engulf The Walls



Examples of
Lightsources



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Artists

Rinko Kawauchi

<http://rinkokawauchi.com/en/>

Tyler Rayburn

<http://www.tylerrayburn.com/>

Edward Honaker

<http://www.edwardhonaker.com/booktwo/fp9qf7oq9ruz18zbg1h0a4uc18n4ix>

Maureen Drennan

<https://www.maurendrennan.com/sea-that-surrounds-us/jvo7c11tg6zniq08fsp2zqoc628nr5>