

*marks of time*

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

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For a moment, reflect on the *marks of time* that are often disregarded or wiped away.

Would you ever consider preserving the ring of dust that forms around objects, or collecting the residue that clings to your hands after handling items from the past? Have you considered the mark left behind from a label or tape that was once adhered to an object, or contemplated the duration of time that those two objects were connected? These questions stem from thoughtful observations that evoke

special,  
habitual,  
uneventful,  
less than perfect,  
worst,  
best,  
lost,  
found,  
unnoticed,  
forgotten,  
quiet moments.

*quiet moments.*

My work is an assortment of lines that illustrate gesture—evidence that articulates time.

These physical documents record and illuminate the past and the present. Each piece is a palimpsest—a document that is continuously re-used, but the traces of its original form still remain. The work continuously evolves, layers collect, and content grows. Marks and imprints highlight the attachment and detachment of objects, while drawing attention to their relationship. In the text *Teaching Ritual*, Catherine Bell explains that “Rituals preserve and change people, things, and situations. The study of ritual allows us to think about what is being preserved; the change that is being sought; and how that change is expected to

be effected, by whom, and through what means” (Bell 195). Collectively, these jewelry objects capture a series of rituals that recite a language . . .

Unwrapping,  
Wearing.

Wrapping.

Unwrapping,  
Wearing.

Wrapping.

Unwrapping,  
Wearing.

Wrapping.

Removing,  
Dropping,  
Re-attaching.

Remembering.

Tying.

Wearing,  
Wearing,  
Wearing,  
Untying.

Wearing,  
Tying.

Wearing,  
Wearing,  
Wearing,  
Untying.

Tying,

A knot.

Piercing,  
Piercing,  
Marking,  
Marking.

Marking,  
Piercing,  
Piercing,  
Marking.

Piercing,  
Piercing,  
Marking,  
Marking.

Time.

Carving,  
Shaping,  
Filing,  
Collecting.

Filing,  
Filing,  
Filing,  
Collecting.

Filing,  
Shaping,  
Carving,  
Collecting.

Preserving . . .

I began my research after reading Ann Hamilton's description of her piece "myein." She describes the knot as one-of the earliest forms of record keeping ("ANN HAMILTON STUDIO"). From that moment on, I understood the knots as a language, and valued their ability to capture time. An extension of my research includes the Quipu, an Incan recording device that is composed of knotted strands in a variety of colors. These Peruvian relics are a record of an individual's lifespan, and were utilized as a method of communication during war.

I began knotting, uncovering my attraction to the action, and my interest in the potential interpretations of the end result. My knotting studies continued for several months. I tied a variety of knots in string, paper, fabric, plastic, and wire. I wanted to understand the action in relation to time. How can I collect *marks of time*? How does the material affect the mark? I came to discover that fine silk strands would allow me to apply graphite, communicate value, and capture the ethereal essence of time. Graphite is a material that was and is still used in various methods of documentation and communication. Therefore, it is an important element in my work. Dyeing each strand one-by-one is a process that involves intimately handling each individual thread. The coating of graphite on each knot, symbolically emphasizes their ability to communicate and reveal information.

Every night I would dye a collection of fine silk strands with graphite. Every morning I would wake up, and wash and dry the silk. Then I would tie knots one by one—counting each knot—recording each moment, and developing a language that preciously demonstrates

the importance of documenting and preserving history. Each knot tied, represents a moment that has passed. When I was finished, I would quickly tape the strands into a notebook. I recorded the length of each strand before and after the knots were tied. I also recorded the date, the time, and the number of knots that accumulated on each strand.

These knotted drawings determine their visual presentation. The outcome is a wearable record of the past. The silver surface used for each piece is rolled by hand, slowly transforming the silver into a thin sheet. I heat the metal to raise the fine silver—covering the surface in a dusty white skin. The silver sheet is a timestamp. It provides a surface that oxidizes naturally and preserves the evidence of touch.

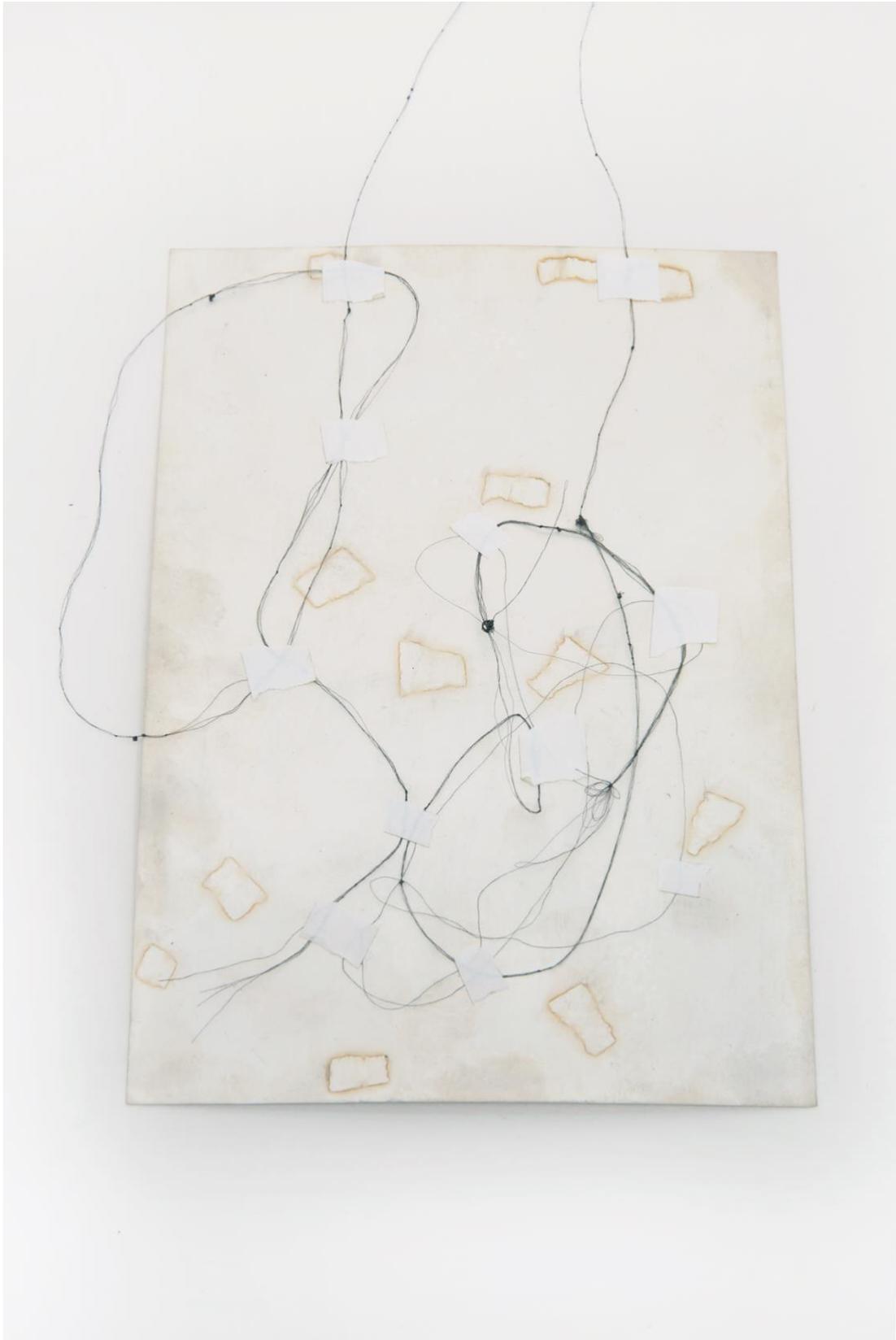
*Palimpsest* was created through this process. It is necklace composed of knotted silk strands that are taped to a paper-thin, five-inch by seven-inch sheet of silver. Over time, the adhesive on the tape wears away—detaching the thread from the silver. Each time this occurs, the thread is removed and re-attached. When the tape is removed, subtle brown stains are exposed. These marks are caused by oxidation. A ritual is performed each time the wearer unwraps the necklace and inserts the crown of their head through the opening. At that moment, the history of each strand is transferred to the wearer. When at rest, the paper enclosure reinforces the value of the necklace, protecting and preserving its existence.



*palimpsest 8.25.18*



*palimpsest 8.25.18*



*palimpsest 2.25.19*

Have you noticed how hair tangles and clogs channels, or burrows into your sweater? Over time, hair collects—clinging and sliding into the weave of our clothing, collecting on our sheets and our pillows, and tangling in our drains—interrupting the flow of water. In *tropos*, Michael Govan describes how we observe day-to-day occurrences. “The bodies of words confronting us each moment are rarely felt, sniffed, or seen for the deep physical and psychological effect, threat, or otherwise that they pose” (Hamilton, “*tropos*” 55).

In *chronology of moments*, I want the viewer to “focus their eyes on something that quiets the noise” (Stephenson 22). For this series, I chose fine steel wire because it mimics the appearance of thread, and possesses the strength needed to pierce through fabric. Every day for one month I tied knots in fine steel wire. The length of each pin was determined by the distance between the knots. I flattened each knot—pressing and preserving its layers. I then permanently fixed each connection point with gold, strengthening the knot and communicating the value of each

hour,  
minute,  
second,  
decisecond,  
centisecond,  
millisecond,  
microsecond,  
nanosecond,  
picosecond,  
femtosecond,  
attosecond,  
zeptosecond,  
yoctosecond,  
planck time.

When worn, their thin metal tails bury themselves into blankness—filling voids and embellish garments with coded thoughts. These twenty-eight pins are preserved under acrylic. They reference specimens that are collected, analyzed and classified. This archival display reminds the viewer that these pins are meant to be inspected and cherished. The essence of each knot is a self-reflection, serving as a reminder of moments passed.



*chronology of moments*



*chronology of moments*

How can we collect fleeting moments? How can we communicate their importance? A PIN is a fastener—sharp and thin—piercing through fabric and connecting two things. When a pin is worn, it embeds itself into a piece of clothing—creating a relationship between the wearer and the pin. Each time a pin pierces through fabric, it leaves an invisible mark. I capture these accumulations in *marking time*. I ask the viewer to focus their attention on a specific action, and to visualize the traces left behind. This collection of evidence translates the language of time.

*Marking time* consists of a six-inch, two-pronged, silver stick pin—and an off-white, transparent, swatch of delicate silk. I have chosen to enlarge the diameter of the pin prongs in order to magnify the holes. When *marking time* is worn, the silver pin punctures the silk, and the fabric of the wearer simultaneously—leaving a collection of holes, a copy of the marks from the wearer's clothing. Overtime, the silk becomes riddled with holes. These holes are reminders of moments that we choose to remember, or those that we choose to forget. Collectively, they resemble an ambiguous language, or code that is left for the viewer to interpret (Stewart 134,135).



*marking time*

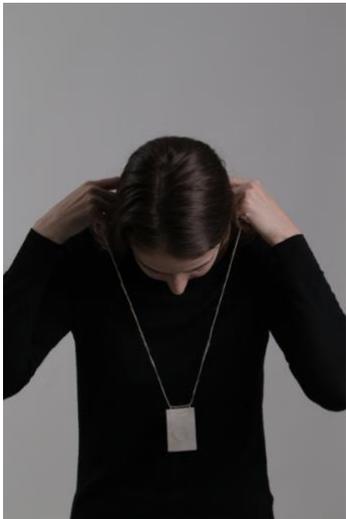


*marking time (continued)*

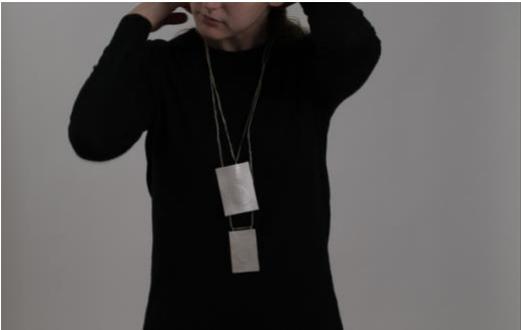
Collectively, we perceive actions and moments that occur in our lives according to our past experiences and the experiences of our ancestors. Somewhere in our bodies are the remnants of a pre-linguistic language that involves perception—lingering crumbs from a time when our senses were anxiously in search of meaning (Hamilton, “*tropos*” 55).

I develop objects that communicate “the way things ought to be in tension to the way things actually are” (Stephenson 26). I consider the residue of our bodies and the debris that surrounds us as markers of the past and present—subtle reminders of the places we have been, and the places we are going. Each piece is a remnant of action, specific gestures, moods, rhythms, and intentions—representations of history. Can we stop to observe a time lost or forgotten, reminding ourselves of the pathways that have led us to the present? Can we acknowledge that these fragments are worthy of our attention? These honest depictions of history provide us with a sense of agency. Understanding and accepting our existence diminishes fear and encourages growth.

In *vestige I and vestige II*, I repeatedly hammer a fine line into a thin sheet of metal, embedding the wire into the surface, and causing an imprint to be recorded on the underside. The hammer polishes the wire, creating a “halo,” highlighting its existence. This is a permanent mark, reminding the viewer of seemingly insignificant moments.



*vestige I*



*vestige I, II*

stamp, stamp, stamp,  
a cloud rises.

the air is full,  
remembered.

with time,  
the air is still.

falling to the floor,  
they settle slowly.

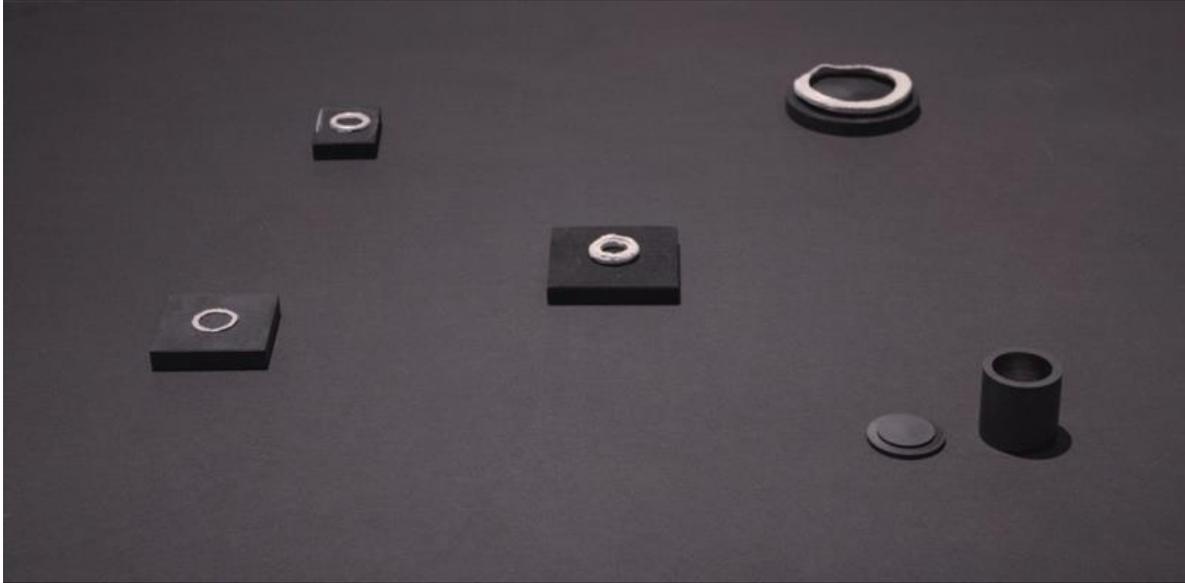
a sheet,  
transparent.

one by one they fall,  
the floor collects.

a blanket,  
thick.

the air is clear,  
forgotten.

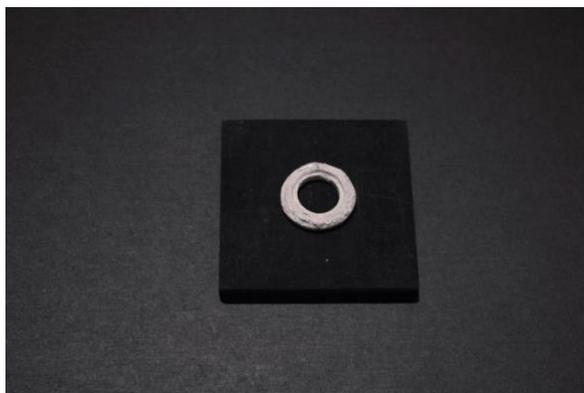
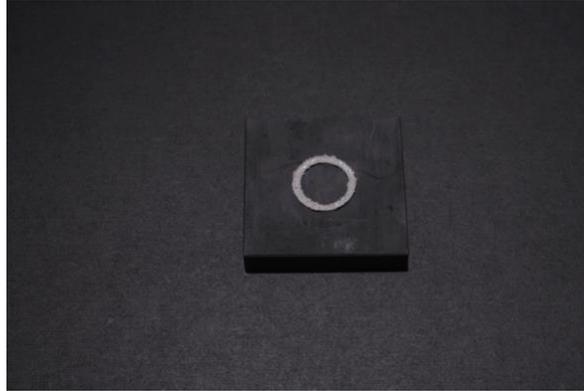
If something is not seen, is it really there? Dust surrounds us every day. It lines our surfaces and our floors, and continues to accumulate week after week. Oftentimes these particles remain unseen until they are wiped away. Dust is composed of our intimate matter. It is a collection of our bodies and an indicator of time.



*rings of dust*

I have been collecting the silver dust that accumulates as a result of filing. Each day I place a sheet of clean, white paper in the dust tray at my jeweler's bench. The paper catches the silver—keeping the dust as clean as possible. I begin filing a silver rod with a file used exclusively for this process. This helps prevent contamination. When I am finished filing, I pour the dust into small, glassine envelopes, similar to those used to store and protect stamp and coin collections. I then mark each envelope with the date and weight of the silver dust. The dust from the day is then carefully poured into the circular cavity of a compressed graphite mold—which give the rings their shape while, keeping the dust clean while it fuses in the kiln (furnace). The mold is then placed into a kiln set to 1763 degrees. The goal is to remove the mold when the silver dust fuses, but before the silver is molten. I repeat the firing process until the ring is fused enough for it to be removed from the mold. Next, I use the torch to slowly fuse the remaining dust particles that have not adhered.

Afterward, I clean the ring and repeat the process several times until the ring is substantial and can be used to create a piece of jewelry.



*rings of dust I, II, III*

How do we attribute value to “that which is not really there?” (Phelan 1), or that which is (seemingly) invisible? My work challenges what most consider precious or noteworthy. It

gives agency to those objects and materials that hold our memories—receptacles of our lives. I utilize fabric and metal as a means of documenting time. Textiles absorb and preserve sweat and oil. The residue collects and gathers between the creases and the folds. Overtime, oxygen and oils effect the surface of metal—creating a natural patina that is composed of an accumulation of fingerprints and oxidation stains. I ask the viewer to appreciate these *marks of time* because they are a collection of our history.

While creating the work, I was constantly searching—searching for the different methods of communicating a language that conjures meaning and embodies time. I present poetic compositions that evoke unique experiences for each individual. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart explains that grouping objects in a series because they are ‘the same’ is to simultaneously signify their difference. In a collection, the more the objects are similar, the more imperative it is that we try to distinguish them” (Stewart 155). Even though the work is ambiguous, it sounds familiar. The final objects presented on a long graphite-coated table, lie somewhere between object and jewelry—proposing the title “jewelry object.”



*marks of time*

“To arrange objects according to time is to juxtapose personal time with social time, autobiography with history, and thus to create a fiction of the individual life, a time of the individual subject both transcendent to and parallel to historical time” (Stewart 154). Through conversation and observation, I have come to understand my audience as a collection of individuals that embrace the sensitive and poetic, and are willing to spend time with the work. They observe closely, absorbing and interpreting the materials and layers of content presented. My audience considers the work both jewelry and object, and appreciates the honest depiction of the ephemeral. The transitory characteristics of the work compliment their relationship to time. I have discovered that my audience appreciates ethereal jewelry because the work requires a conscious consideration when it is worn. *Marks of time* invites the viewer to inspect the objects and develop a meaning that

describes their personal experience. These “jewelry objects” present the viewer with a collection of objects embedded with ritual. The work asks the audience to understand these “jewelry objects” as tools for recording history.

When I began my research, I developed the following questions for my audience. If I present an object on silver, will it be preserved? If I fix an object with gold, will it be cherished? If I pierce metal into silk, will it be revered? If I capture a moment, will it be observed? If I preserve a stain, will it be understood?

What leaves a mark? Time leaves a mark—a dark heavy stain that becomes increasingly visible day after day. We carry these remains with us year after year—learning to live, to love, to forgive, and to embrace. We seal the ends—closing the loop—collecting our remains. We carry the memories, the good and the bad, and sometimes we try to forget, and sometimes we try to remember—but mostly we forget.

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