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Childhood Home

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Childhood Home

A Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Kira Buckel

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

May 2016

“A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.”

— Joan Didion

I began my work for senior project through small drawings and watercolor paintings I made through observing my environment at Bard. They culminated in a large painting in my studio made with charcoal, paint, collaged paper, and tape. As the weather got colder my attention shifted from my immediate surroundings to thoughts of my childhood home on Long Island. Given the wall space available in the studios at UBS, I knew that I wanted to work on a large, life-sized scale. I was excited to see how painting and collage could transform the experience of places I had developed a deep familiarity with. My first collaged painting of the “Meditation Garden” at Bard was a step in a new direction for me in the mediums of paint and collaged paper. This painting began my exploration in how physical and layered the process of working with painted paper could be.

With my subsequent work I furthered my experimentation with washes of paint onto sheets of paper that I would cut or tear into smaller shapes depending on their intended purpose in the painting. These shapes were collaged onto the paintings, which are composed of many sheets of paper that I glued together to make a larger surface that became a sort of warped blanket of paper. I experienced the process of staining paper in washes of paint as small color paintings that would become fragmented when they were placed into the larger painting, which was of a real place. I would then paint on top of or rip off previous layers of paper, paint, and tape or use sandpaper to alter the surface of the paintings.

I am curious about the effect of time on the places and things which surround us, how they break down and how we renew them. The paintings illustrating my childhood home became a mixture of real everyday moments and imagined ones, similar to how a child might see her house as a place of infinite possibilities. This child-like perception, which was partially inspired by the use of collage (I think the process of gluing may be one of the most child-like forms of art making), was inevitably mixed with my present relation to home. A simultaneity of joy and melancholy accompanied the creation of these paintings and the imagery within them. My family members appear in the paintings as abstracted forms of themselves, perhaps absorbed in a moment or an action that they have performed many times, or drifting into a daydream. Through painting, I wanted to mythologize a simple place, anticipating its disappearance at some point in a future time.

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