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Senior Projects Spring 2023

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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Spring 2023

## Realm of Remembrance

Brandon Vanbach  
*Bard College*

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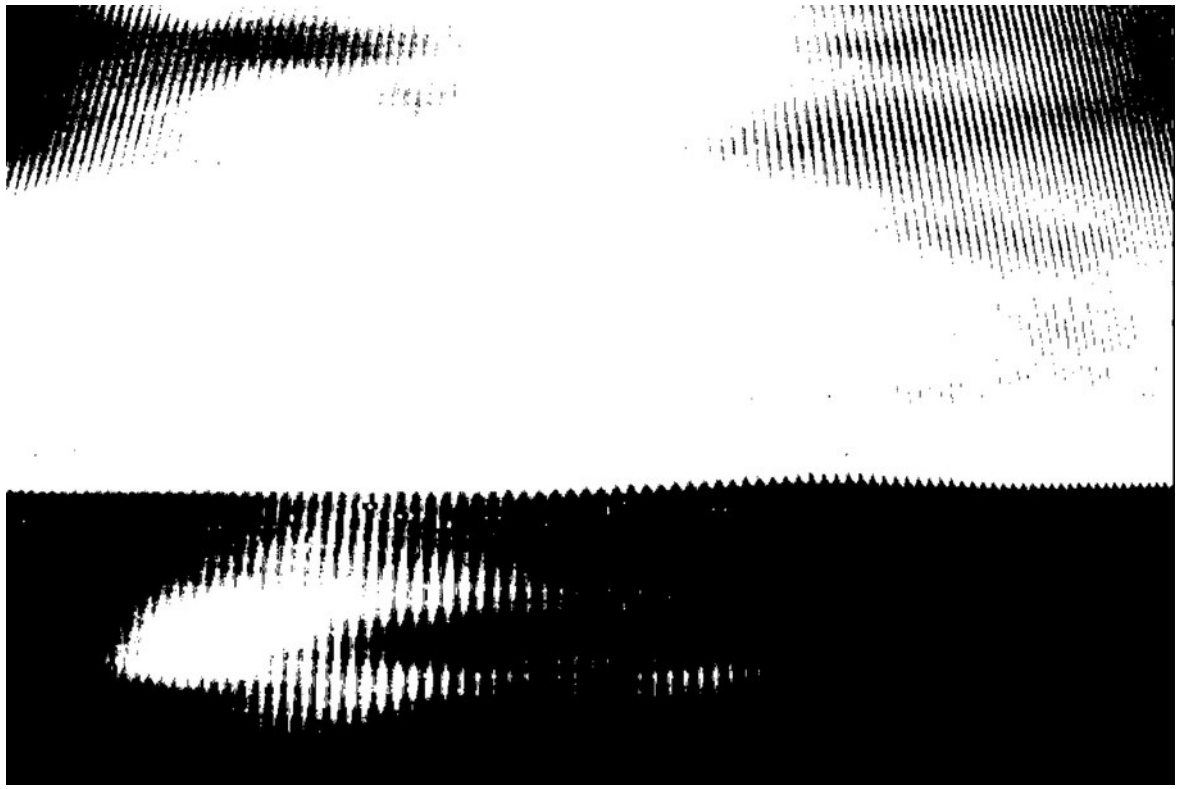
Realm of Remembrance

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

by  
Brandon Vanbach

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2023





To my mother, Thuy Nguyen.

## Acknowledgements

To my wonderful advisor and mentor, Maggie Hazen: My years at Bard have not been easy, but it was you who taught me how to be gentle to myself. It was you who taught me patience. It was you who taught me to simply just do no matter what the odds. For that I am grateful. Thank you for guiding me the whole way through.

To my professors: Thank you immensely for your generosity, encouragement, and patience. This project is nothing without the knowledge you have graciously given me.

To Blake Masi, Julia Crager, Sylvie Winkler, and Eleanor Tappen: Anything and everything I say will always be understated. It is impossible to put to words how grateful and appreciative I am to have your love and support as friends. I wish you could feel how much I love you. You will forever be the greatest, smartest, funniest, and sexiest group of people I will have ever had the pleasure of even breathing the same air as. You are special. I know you know it. Please continue to shine your light on the rest of the world.



## Artist Statement

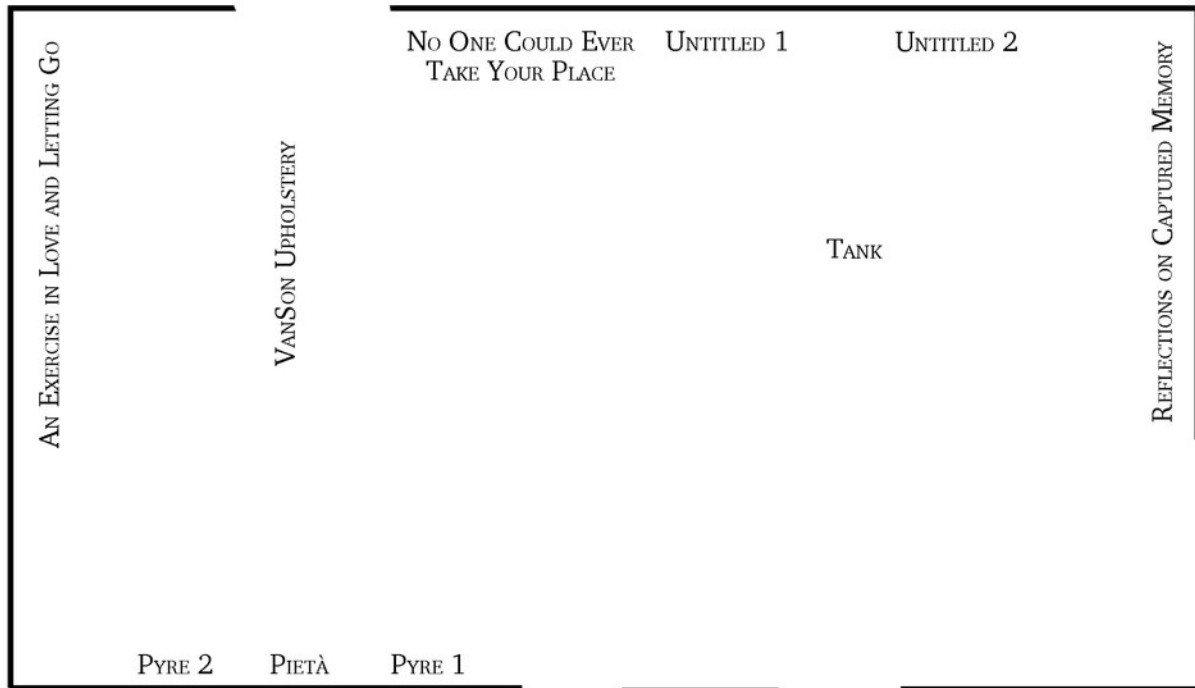
In September of 2021, I turned 21 years old. During that time I also discovered a 8mm video tape in my childhood home. Unbeknownst to me, this tape, which hadn't seen the light of day since its conception, would end up consuming my life.

The tape was a home movie filmed by my mother and her partner at the time during an outing to Vietnam in 2005. The footage consisted mostly of landscapes and claustrophobic close-ups of distant relatives. Rarely would I enter the frame. But I wasn't interested in seeing myself as a child or even seeing a shimmering Vietnam sunset that I have no recollection of. It was seeing small moments of my mother's radiant smile. It was seeing her beautiful face softly illuminated by a golden sunset reflected off of water ripples. She looked like an angel. I had never seen her smile in that way before. I felt melancholic and at the same time enamored. I almost hadn't even recognized her. She was a stranger to me. In that moment I realized, that's exactly what she was to me, a stranger yet a mother. By virtue of generational, societal, and language gaps, I know nothing of her story, I can barely speak to her on account of my failure to understand her native tongue. At the same time, she knows nothing of me. I will never be able to understand her and her struggle just as she will never understand me. Despite this, maternal and unconditional love lingers.

The 8mm tape marked a shift in my life. That estrangement is nothing new however. Growing up I always felt a sense of familial and maternal disconnect. I chalked it up to the immigrant experience but even that felt unresolved to me. My creative practice since has been attempts at uncovering the estrangement I felt watching the footage.

In September of 2021, I entered the *Realm of Remembrance*. Through a series of video installations and sculptures, I offer my childhood and familial history in order to explore notions of memory and love warped by the horrors of diaspora and migration. The materials take the form of objects familial and familiar to me from childhood blankets and toys to found footage. While objects like toys tend to be conflated with connotations of plastic, material, and consumption, in the case of my mother these materials become vessels of a certain love that became lost in translation, altering meanings of consumption in favor of gestures of affection guided by the American dream.





***REFLECTIONS ON CAPTURED MEMORY***

DIGITAL VIDEO (COLOR), FOUND FOOTAGE, EXCERPTS BY OCEAN VUONG

***UNTITLED 1***

PLASTIC CHILDHOOD TOYS, BIRCH WOOD

***UNTITLED 2***

PLASTIC CHILDHOOD TOYS, BIRCH WOOD

***NO ONE COULD EVER TAKE YOUR PLACE***

DIGITAL VIDEO (COLOR, SOUND)

***TANK***

FAUX MINK FABRIC, CARDBOARD, NEWSPAPER, POLYESTER FLAG, INCENSE

***PIETÀ***

2005 TRANSFORMERS TOYS, FAUX MINK FABRIC

***PYRE 1***

PLASTIC CHILDHOOD TOYS

***PYRE 2***

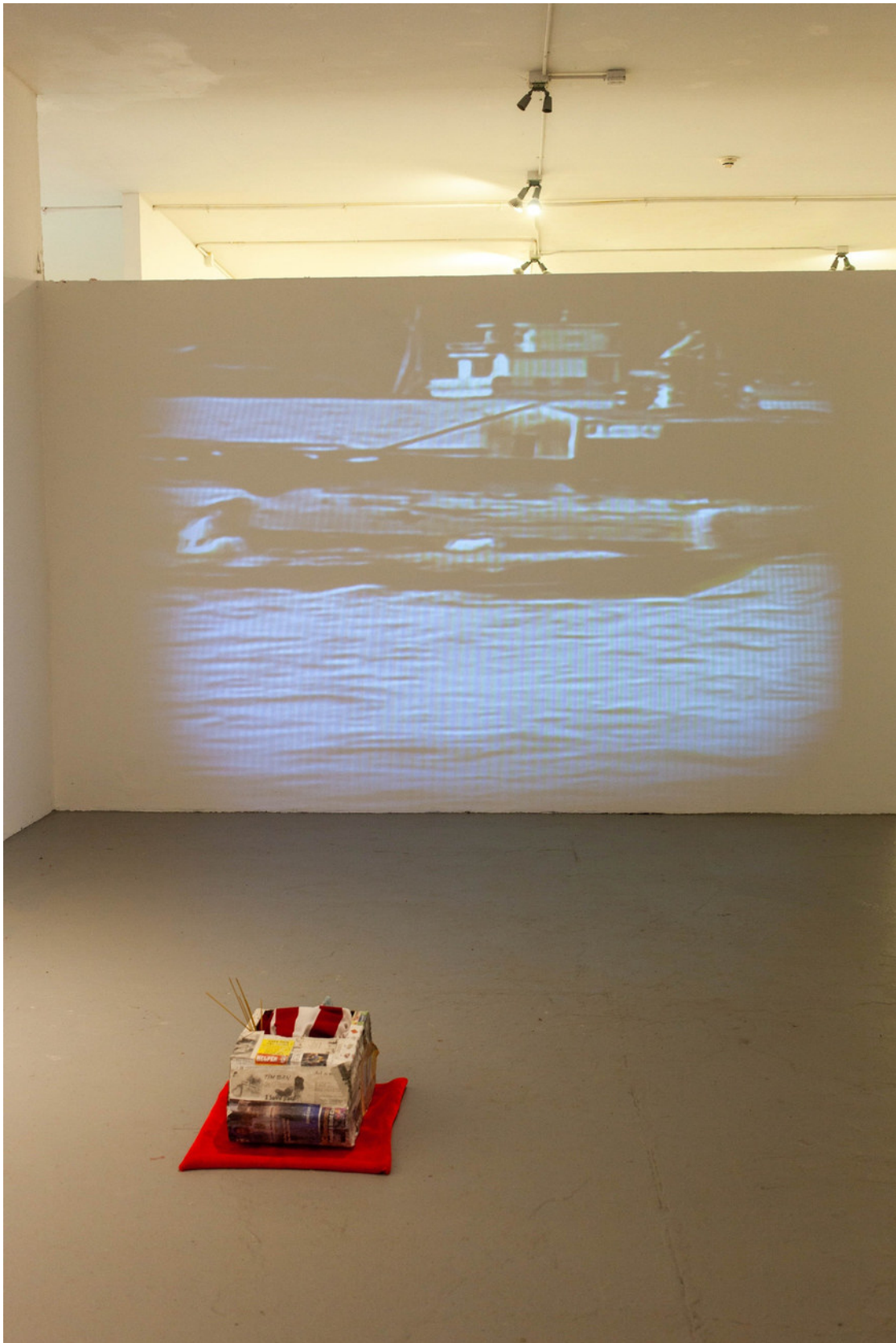
PLASTIC CHILDHOOD TOYS

***VANSON UPHOLSTERY***

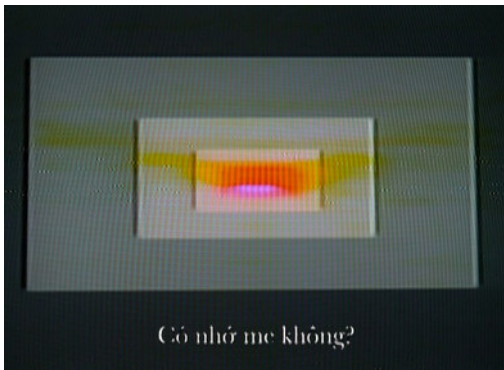
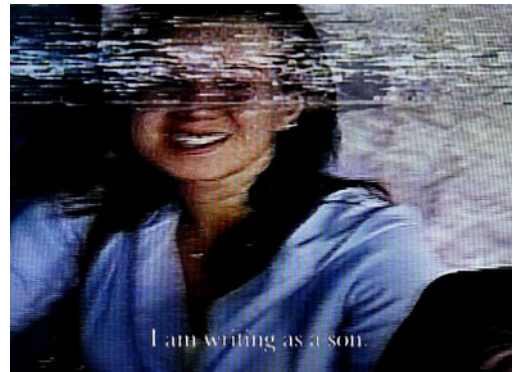
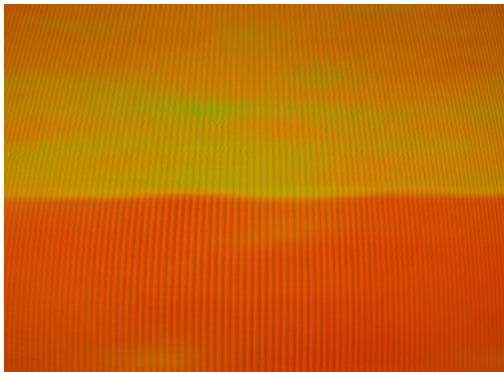
BIRCH WOOD, FAUX MINK FABRIC

***AN EXERCISE IN LOVE AND LETTING GO***

8MM TO DIGITAL VIDEO TRANSFER (COLOR, SOUND), FOUND FOOTAGE, BIRCH WOOD



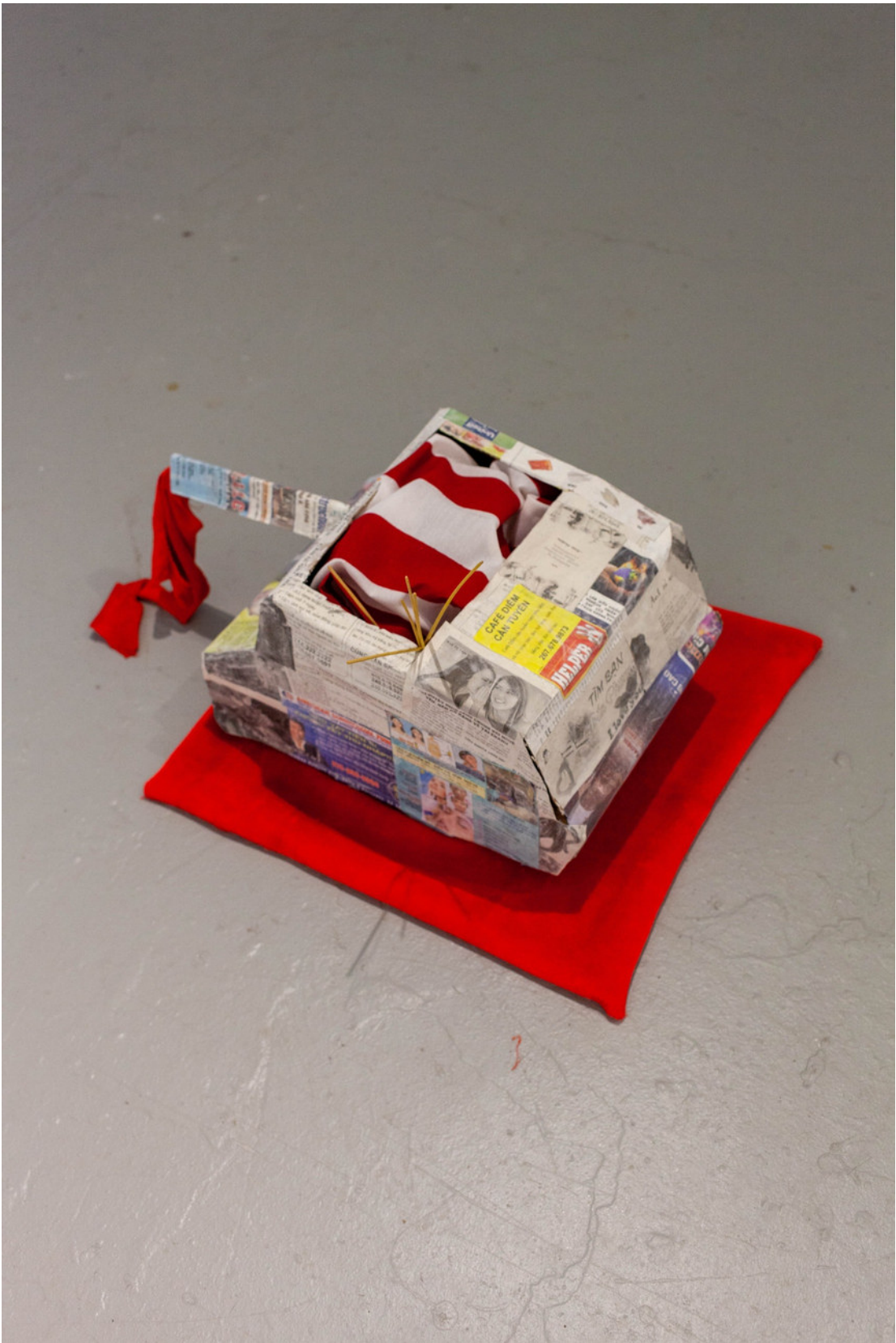
Installation views, Realm of Remembrance, Red Hook, New York (2023)



Stills from Reflections on Captured Memory  
Screener link: <https://vimeo.com/brandonvanbach/rocmp>



Tank





Installation views, Realm of Remembrance, Red Hook, New York (2023)



Untitled 1



Untitled 2

4 years later, the plaza remains abandoned



i can see myself as a child again



Stills from No One Could Ever Take Your Place

Screener link: <https://vimeo.com/brandonvanbach/nocetyp>





Installation views, Realm of Remembrance, Red Hook, New York (2023)



Installation views, Realm of Remembrance, Red Hook, New York (2023)



Pietà



Pyre 1



Pyre 2



VanSon Upholstery



Installation views, Realm of Remembrance, Red Hook, New York (2023)



Stills from An Exercise in Love and Letting Go

Screener link: <https://vimeo.com/brandonvanbach/aeilalg>





mommy remembers when



FEB. 24, 2005





Brandon Vanbach **Realm of Remembrance**