

RESIDUAL

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Introduction

The past two years have been characterized by a tentative gravitation back to my memories of being in postwar Kosovo as a relief worker. Several years ago I made artwork regarding my experience there in 1999, but I had no plans to revisit this subject matter. Shortly after arriving in Hawai`i for graduate school I watched *The Hurt Locker*, an intensely psychological look at life in a war-zone. Though the film focused on U.S soldiers' engagement in warfare in Iraq, the emotions director Kathryn Bigelow was able to isolate and enhance transported me immediately back to my time in Kosovo. There is one particular scene involving a soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress. The main character: Sergeant First Class William James is seen grocery shopping with his girlfriend. He is in between tours to Iraq as part of a bomb disposal unit. As the camera zooms out he stands in the middle of an aisle appearing completely lost in the supermarket. In this frame Bigelow is able to highlight a profound feeling of displacement.

Deeply impacted by the film, I began to explore the subject of a war-zone, beginning with how war changes the landscape and architecture of the regions it plagues. However, creating paintings exhibiting a generic war-scape failed to really communicate what I felt in relation to this subject matter. I was denying my firsthand knowledge of living in the war-ravaged country of Kosovo. As a relief worker for Youth With A Mission (YWAM) I was sent to help distribute humanitarian aid and provide general, mental health support to the Kosovar people. Gradually I returned to

these personal memories, the strength of my own experience being a solid foundation from which to work.

Though potent and powerful my memories presented incredible challenges when I began to revisit them again. They were twelve years old, and had been formed when I was still a teenager. Now, as an adult, I struggled to relate to them. These experiences also involved an ethnic group from which I felt far removed. This distance was physical as well as cultural. Kosovo is a small country located in Eastern Europe. Living in the U.S., I found it difficult to stay physically connected to Kosovo. The language barrier was another layer of remove between the Kosovar people and myself. My first memories especially consist of correspondence mainly through translators. These past memories possessed a psychological remove being locked in grief and had their own distantiation, as I had not gone through the war with the Kosovar people. This struggle led me to physically return to Kosovo in 2011. During this second trip, I was able to engage in present day Kosovo and collaborate with local artists.

This thesis paper will explain how “Residual” is a manifestation of my wrestling with these ideas of displacement and removal from the war. I will also discuss “Residual” through lens of what Associate Professor of Art History at Bryn Mawr College Lisa Saltzman terms as “circles of reflection.”

“It is here, in a joint responsibility that the traumatic events, that is, fragmented and isolated events are shaped into a history which was witnessed and can be told to others. This introducing of “wider circles of reflections,” an activity, of which the survivor him-or herself is unable, can be seen as the construction of a context for the traumatic event. This context, intersubjectively and culturally shared, functions as a frame of reference which heals the trauma.” (Saltzman 226)

Saltzman explains these “wider circles of reflections” within the framework of dialogue between a survivor and a witness. “Residual” uses the essence of this idea, but illustrates it by using physical space. The conceptual, formal, and contextual function of “Residual” will be elucidated as I begin with the outside “circle of reflection” of the Commons gallery and move into the intimate, interior details of the installation.

“Residual” is an exhibition that endeavors to present in visual, audio, and material forms the devastating, continual effects of ethnic cleansing on the people of Kosovo. Through the use of “circles of reflection,” “Residual” creates several different positions for the viewer to engage with the layers of Kosovar and personal memory made visible within the gallery.

“Residual:”

“Residual” is an environment in which the viewer can enter and be engaged with the evidence of my artistic process of remembering. Webster’s dictionary terms “residual” as relating to, or characteristic of a residue. It also can be defined as the quantity left over from the end of a process. (www.merriam-webster.com) “Residual” inhabits this artistic residue of remembering and is layered with the experience of the viewer.

The peripheral space outside the gallery symbolizes the widest “circle of reflection” to the event I have formulated. (See fig.2) “Residual” provides multiple positions for engagement. The viewer is able to have an experience outside the gallery by periodically hearing sounds from within the exhibit. The front window and door of the exhibition space are left exposed, giving the viewer a glimpse of the show from a safe distance. My intention was for “Residual” to pose a certain amount of threat to the viewer. Using ethnic cleansing (a human rights violation that forms various policies to forcibly remove people of another ethnic group) (Goodhart 344) as a construct, the feeling of sadness in “Residual” is acute. The deeper the viewer travels into the installation the more concentrated this emotion is expressed. Aware of the solemnity of the show, I did not want to immediately thrust the viewer into the troubling atmosphere within the gallery.

If the viewer chose to enter, he or she would be positioned closer to the psychological experience. The studio-station is what immediately confronts the viewer. It is a space that introduces the viewer to what I have been wrestling with conceptually. The first item the visitor encounters is my white, house-paint covered shoes sitting on the

edge of an equally paint saturated rug. These empty shoes, situated at the front of the installation, (See fig.4) symbolize my absence from the war, as well as my personal memories of Kosovo. Between the ages of eighteen and nineteen I watched the “Kosovo Crisis” unfold on CNN. Greatly moved, I remember distinctly the overwhelming desire to go to Kosovo to help. I joined an organization called Youth with a Mission (YWAM), which, like the Peace Corps, trains volunteers in basic areas of relief work. I was then sent to the city of Gjakova, Kosovo with the purpose of providing mental health support to the postwar population.

I flew from England to Macedonia, and then took a bus through various checkpoints to Prishtina, the capital city of Kosovo. As soon as I arrived I was struck with gravity of my surroundings. There was no power and the temperatures were below freezing. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) occupied the region at the time, stabilizing the area. Each day, I would pass soldiers and see tanks roll by. Gjakova was an area particularly hard hit by the war. Boys and men from the age of twelve and up were rounded up like cattle, then either killed or thrown in a Serbian prison under arbitrary charges. Many of the widows told us stories of loved ones “missing” and were tormented daily with the uncertainty of their fate. Here is one excerpt from my journal regarding a widow visit:

“I was crying, she was crying, Rina (translator) was crying. Trashj asked Rina a little about her story; apparently she lived on an infamous road that was hit very hard by the Serbs. It was by God’s grace that her family was saved. All night they heard the screams of men, women, and children being shot and burned alive. The atrocities that she witnessed and experience go on. I really started crying and after coffee we prayed.”

The time spent with these widows was the most memorable part of my journey. Each day, partnered with a translator and a teammate, I would visit widows of the war to

hear their stories, to lend an outsider's ear, and to validate their suffering. We would spend as much as three hours in each home. Each time, we were greeted with a tremendous display of hospitality; much Turkish coffee was offered and consumed. These visits entailed listening to horrific stories, one after another. We heard stories from young men who survived their involvement with the KLA, Kosova Liberation Army. With stoic faces, they would voluntarily lift their shirts to show their stomachs, which were marked by scars from bullet wounds.

I will never forget this experience, it has forever marked by senses and I find a smell or a scene from a movie will automatically place me back into the position of remembering again. My stories of postwar Kosovo are the basis for "Residual" and are illustrated for the viewer through the use of artist statement as well as what items are displayed at the studio-station.

Placed on the rug is my studio desk and chair, which are positioned flush against a narrow wall. This barrier of the studio-station slows the viewer down and creates a space to experience without going further into the installation. The whole of the exhibit is soaked and smeared with white house paint. As the viewer approaches, they are immediately faced with the artist statement. Beginning on the wall, the text; runs down and onto the surface of the desk symbolizing the connection between concept and process. (See fig.5) Placed around the desk and hung on the wall are sketches, notes, old brushes, a respirator, and buckets all heavily coated in white house paint. (See fig.6) These objects are symbols of my artistic process, but are rendered unusable by the magnitude of paint applied to them. These tools became metaphors for the halt I

experienced while trying to connect with the memories of the past. They also serve as memorialized artifacts to the making of “Residual.”

The studio-station also represents my mind wrestling with the facts and truths behind the war. Though arriving only months after the war I did not personally witness it. I also had limited information about the origin of the conflict. The media coverage at the time of the war led the U.S. to believe it was a war fueled by ancient, ethnic rivalries: a civil war better left to be resolved between the two groups. However, being there at the site of the war I learned a more gruesome and disturbing truth: that it was a political war stirred primarily by one leader determined to take over the land and people of Kosovo.

When Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic came to power, Kosovo’s autonomy became the hyper-focus of a tyrannical political campaign. Milosevic was able to capitalize on ancient myths and racial tensions stirring a great dissention between the Kosovars and Serbians. Systematic steps were made to eradicate the Kosovar people from the land they inhabited for generations. (Malcolm 344-356) The difference between ethnic cleansing and genocide is that ethnic cleansing aims to erase a culture out of a region through manipulating legislation. Genocide is solely a means to destroy a people group by physical harm or systematic killing. The Kosovo war towards its end reached the status of genocide, but for years began as methodic, increasingly aggressive agenda to “cleanse” Kosovar Albanian culture from the territory of Kosovo, inhabited by 82.6% Kosovar Albanians. (Goodhart 345)

This inconceivable idea of ethnic cleansing became the context for my installation. I desired to create a space that represented the absurdity of this notion.

Though the physical identity of a person is stripped away the memory of that life remains to haunt those left behind.

Moving past the studio-station, viewers are beckoned to enter into the other side of the gallery. (See fig.9) Sound can be heard, but it is not the driving force that causes them to proceed further. The soundscape begins, “‘I am young at this time,’ scratch, scratch, ‘I was in my village,’ scratch, scratch, ‘Yeah, I have lots of stories with war,’ scratch, scratch...” (See fig. 10) It loops seamlessly and creates a meditative rhythm. Sound morphs the coats into speakers and it as if the viewer is surrounded by a “cloud of witnesses” droning the dissonance of those not yet found. The soundscape is continual and unending auditory bearing of witness. It is full of sounds and experiences that are residual of the war in Kosovo.

This composition of sound is inspired by synesthesia, or the stimulation of one sense alongside another. Synesthesia describes the evocation of one kind of sense impression when another sense is stimulated, e.g. the sensation of color when a sound is heard. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>) A synesthetic tendency of mine is to translate sound with mark making. This exploration was the birth of “Marks for the Missing” a collaboration with local, Kosovar artists during my second trip to Kosovo. In this project, participants could convey their feelings through striking a paint canvas connected to microphones and speakers. The sounds represent the participant’s emotions as they reflect on their personal stories of the war in Kosovo. (See fig.1)

Walking past the studio-station, my intent was to cause the viewer to be overcome with the heap of coats that are piled and pressed against the wall (See fig.11).

Drawn by the calculatedly hung coats, the viewer is immersed in an experience primarily aimed at their emotions. They have a choice to physically step into the space and onto the paint-caked floor. The pulsating space displays three rows of surface-altered coats. (See fig.12) These rows symbolize those deceased but accounted for in the Kosovo war. They represent the closure of those who died in the war; their families know what happened to them. The coats surround the viewer by being placed on three walls. Each coat is an individual shell and communicates a unique person who lived. These coats are hung on nails symbolizing the memory of coats in a refugee camp twelve years ago.

I remember seeing these coats on one of my widow visits, my translator and I traveled to a small refugee camp on the outskirts of Gjakova. We entered a room that was lit only by daylight, and I immediately noticed the back wall of the home. A row of coats hung on the wall with a line of pictures hanging above them. The coats and pictures stood inside the room as if they were a shrine to her loved ones. The widow and her relatives cried as they explained the loss of eleven family members in the war. I remember feeling like I was being crushed under the thick, heavy weight of their grief. The image of the coats and pictures is one that is forever imprinted on my mind.

In contrast, the coats piled on the ground exude a cruel disregard for their placement. The materiality and meaning of the coats is pushed to an extreme degree. Over two hundred coats that have been transformed with paint are stacked and arranged as if they were a pile of wood. The heap symbolizes a mass grave where bodies are thrown in a semi-orderly fashion. Often mass grave sites are not even covered just left open to decompose. Aesthetically, coats cast on top of each other became sculptural and

powerful combined when together. (See fig. 13) The mound of coats represents those who are still missing, and whose absence is not yet reconciled within their families. Their position, pushing up against the studio-station wall, symbolizes the weight of this concept on my conscience. It emblemizes the enormous responsibility towards the Kosovar people I felt as I began to develop my installation.

The creation of “Residual” is my way to “bear witness” for the atrocities and injustices done against the victims and survivors. “Residual” is based off my personal experience and feelings towards the traumatic events and the aftermath of the war. Because I cannot know the emotions that the victims experienced while they were trapped in their wartime nightmares, I can only express what I felt when I heard their stories, and what I perceived while I was physically there. This became a burden of responsibility as a witness to their pain. I feel privileged to be connected with the Kosovar people in this way, but also stymied because my experience with the Kosovo war is restricted to the aftermath. As I listened to survivors of the war I became filled with their grief. During our conversations, we relived the experience of their story together. Saltzman speaks of this act of bearing witness:

“To a certain extent, the interviewer-listener takes on responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt he bore alone, and therefore could not carry out. It is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the re-emerging truth” (Saltzman, pg. 225)

I was stationed in Kosovo for the sole purpose of visiting and listening to widows. Virtually everyone in Gjakova had lost someone and they were not able to speak to each other about their traumatic experiences. My team became witnesses to their stories, grief, and pain. Conversing with foreigners—complete, strangers—seemed, to release the

floodgates of what they went through during the war in graphic detail. A common request I received on visits was to share what I heard when I returned home to the U.S. The significance of this commission to remember is exemplified through the heap of coats compressed against the studio-station and within the installation itself.

As the viewer proceeds behind the wall it was my desire was to elicit a feeling of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of coats. I also wanted to draw their attention to the coats on the wall as individual entities, while the heap represented a more collective piece. The different installation methods of the coats conveyed two dissimilar, but equally powerful, messages. The hung coats inherently exuded more care. Each one was thoughtfully hung off the floor and given an individual area. It was my intention that the coats on the floor communicate that less attention was given to them. The mangled pile suggests a more utilitarian method of grouping the coats.

Instead of the viewers simply walking around the heap as if it were a sculpture, I created a direct connection between the viewer and mound. I wanted the viewer to have some kind of relationship with the concept of those “missing” from war that seems so abstract and alienated from their daily life. I found that by amplifying their steps through a sound system buried in the mass of coats I could achieve this connection. The concept for burying contact mics in the floor came from past memories of a widow visit.

One specific memory is of moving through ice and snow, trudging to a dreary, haunting structure, which stood alone, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. This widow welcomed us in, with a face that looked as if she had weathered several storms. She told us the story of the death of her husband, who was shot by Serbian troops while trying to protect a neighborhood child outside of their apartment building. She held her husband

as he was dying, but had to get up to run in order to survive. She knew that he was not yet dead when she was forced to leave, and remembered his blood stained on her own shirt. I remember the resonance of my steps on a cold, concrete floor as we looked for a widow's apartment.

Placing a few mics towards the outer middle of the space references the sound of my own steps in this memory. However, most of them were arranged near the heap and in the path of the two exits. By positioning them in a concentrated way right next to the pile, the viewer's steps would be dense and loud. It was my aim for the viewer to be intimately and profoundly tied to the mass. Additional mics were also placed in the exits of the interior space. As viewers vacated the installation the sound of their footsteps contributed an auditory response to their environment. Through my memories I was able to provide a way for viewers to create their own experience inside the gallery. The second trip fueled the decision to create an unsettling surface for the viewers to walk on. I note this in my travel journal:

“What hit me most, what caused such a visceral, strong unsettling feeling was actually the ground. So much is still hid in the ground in Kosovo, mines, and unidentified, missing people. When I walked the hill to the top of Shabrati (a mass grave site), it wasn't the unbelievable vistas that caught my full attention; it was walking on the uneven ground covered sporadically by dried grass. Fake flowers, strays from memorial bouquets, were meshed within and deep gouges could be seen in the surface of the dirt. The ground in Kosovo makes me nauseas and causes a sense of hyper-vigilance.”

Although my memories of Kosovo from 1999 have had a tremendous impact on my worldview and my artwork, I felt it was necessary to return a second time to fully construct a representation of my experience with postwar Kosovo. When I returned twelve years later, I had many pre-conceived ideas of what would inspire my work. The first time I went, I had been struck by the wreckage of architecture I saw left behind by the war: the burning smell, shattered glass, and rubble everywhere. There were still

remnants of what architect Ole Bouman defines as ‘warchitecture’ (the calculated destruction of culturally significant structures.) (Herscher 156)

Targeting historical buildings such as churches, museums or libraries aims to eradicate a people’s identity, pride, and sense of self. The term “warchitecture” arose from architecture theory during the Sarajevo war. (86) “... *the semantic force of warchitecture lay in its representation of a war on architecture, which, for them, was a war on history, memory, and culture...*” (86) This warchitecture still proved compelling, but I found myself inspired by different experiences such as the walk to Shabrati (mentioned in the above journal entry) and my opportunity to collaborate with Kosovar artists.

Instead of using solely tarpaper to translate the experience I had at Shabrati, I wanted another layer that could speak to what was not seen. The torn tar paper that was actually an old painting symbolized Kosovo’s old warchitecture as well as my past artistic process. It portrays the remnants of violence that lies so thinly under the surface in Kosovo’s ground. The effects of the tarpaper could be determined by other senses from the viewers. They could detect the burning smell and feel the uneven ground, but the appearance of the tarpaper lay concealed. Layered over this was the drop cloth used in the process of creating “Residual.” The cloths exhibited the white residue of what had happened to the coats. The floor element of “Residual” enabled the viewer to be transported further into the imaginary world I have created.

Christian Boltanski’s piece, *No Man’s Land* greatly impacted the symbolism and installation of my psychological space. Boltanski wrestles with these incredibly heavy questions in *No Man’s Land*. As you enter the tremendous, vacuous space of the Park

Avenue Armory, there is a back wall of some sort of archive. Inhabiting most of the space is sections of folded clothing sitting on the ground. Each large square is illuminated by a fluorescent light suspended in the middle of the orderly pile. Wooden poles help mark these sections. Attached to one pole per section is a small speaker that amplifies the sound of a single heartbeat. A multitude of sections spread over the expanse of the Armory and revolve around an epic, five-story heap of clothing resonating hundreds of heart-beats. A large claw drops from the ceiling at the center of the heap. It periodically picks up clothing and then releases it back onto viewers to contribute their heart-beat; Boltanski provides an intimate connection between the viewers and his work. Grappling with subject matter involving genocide and mass removal of identity can seem extremely challenging to relate to the daily lives of the viewer.

Boltanski's colossal installation is driven by concepts of death and the seemingly arbitrary nature for those who die. What is death? How is a person's time determined? Boltanski's subject of death also stretches out to themes of genocide and loss of identity. (Gumpert 100) *"You can hold onto the clothes, and even the heartbeats of many, many people, but you can't keep anybody."* (www.nytimes.com)

Through *No Man's Land*, he is able to create a space that inhabits the monumental weight of his subject matter. Boltanski's clothes did not have many restrictions; he used all forms of garments to communicate his message. The simple decision to fold and grid piles of clothes enhanced the power in the heap of clothes. The great mountain he built was made of layers of clothing tossed on top of each other. The impact of the installation

is astounding; Boltanski creates an awe-struck response from his viewers. Viewers are able to add to the soundscape of heartbeats by getting their own recorded.

As I engaged in the process of “Residual” I was thinking of incorporating the viewer’s senses allowing them a tangible way to create a memory. I wanted to involve something personal like Boltanski’s heartbeats. “Residual” involved the viewer’s step, their physical response to what they were hearing and seeing within the space. I endeavored to foster awe in the space with design of the coats and predominately white palette. It was important that all the garments be coats referencing my personal memories. The only other clothing item was my shoes, which through my personal memory; viewers have access to subject matter relating to the Kosovo war.

Boltanski ingeniously integrates the individuality and spirit of each person that has vacated his or her clothes. I believe he accomplishes this intimacy and representation of the human spirit by using sound. Boltanski removes the visual, just as we are not able to see the spirit; we are not able to see sound. As viewers enter *No Man’s Land* they are overcome with the cadence of heartbeats. This repetitive soundscape stimulates their own heart and provokes a sensory as well as deeply emotional response to what they see.

I believe “Residual” accomplishes similar goals of reaching the viewer as *No Man’s Land*, but achieves them very differently. Through the means of personal memory and artistic process I invite the viewer into an intimate manifestation of my psyche. This intimacy is translated through the use of placing parts of my own studio in the gallery. I as the artist act as a vehicle or a conduit for the viewer’s experience. Through the tactility of my process and use of material the viewer is able to directly engage with the art.

The primary material used to accomplish this was white house paint. This medium is the most dominant and pervasive material used in this piece. Virtually nothing in the installation is without white paint. This generic house paint symbolizes several different ideas. First it is speaking to the war crime of ethnic cleansing. According to Nuhi de Stani in his documentary, *My Blood My Compromise*, the Serbian paramilitary used rape and other despicable tactics in order to destroy the Kosovar family unit. They used the Kosovar culture against its own people. Milosevic knew that if a Kosovar woman were raped she would be ostracized from her family. The Kosovar family home holds a sacred and powerful meaning. Even if a woman is raped in her own home she does not relocate unless she is forced to. This white paint represents the whitening out of identities pertaining to culture, family, and individual.

The material had to be house paint instead of gesso or primer. I was convinced of this because the paint needed to convey the nature of ethnic cleansing that ranges from the destruction of the Kosovar cultural buildings to Kosovar homes. Primer, though similar in effect, suggests preparing the surface to accept the real change in treatment. House-paint represented a more substantial transformation in surface. In addition to embodying the practice of ethnic cleansing, the white paint also references the stillness and white covering of snow, which permeate my first memories of Kosovo.

The paint conveys a freezing of time that occurred to my memories locked in the past. It also integrates the perspective of those that have loved ones “missing.” Time stands still for family members until they are able to have knowledge of their loved ones whereabouts. This stillness was paramount in my mind; I wanted to create a space that

focused the viewer on listening. It was my intent to position the viewer in the role of witness. This hearkened back to memories of listening to the stories of widows.

This material and color also enabled me to make tangible the concept of the invisible residue of trauma. Chris Hedges in his book *War is a Force that Gives us Meaning*, characterizes this as the “physic wounds of war” that generate and reverberate long after the national trauma has taken place. (Hedges 141) As the viewer enters the second portion of “Residual” they step onto this residue. As they walk on the floor the paint cracks and shifts in some areas. This releases powerful, but opposing ideas. The action and effect of the viewer’s steps can represent breakthrough and awareness to what the paint symbolizes. The viewer’s physical impact on the ground also presents another layer of trauma and discolors the surface as they tread through the space.

Once everything became white the installation enfolded the idea of a spiritual realm. A haunting feeling is created through the treatment of the ubiquitous white. The application of paint is razor thin in certain areas and extremely thick in others. Another affect of the white space was activated through natural light and indoor light. During the day it was sometimes glaringly white; everything seeming exposed and bleached. (See fig.7) At night the space exuded the feeling of a burial ground and a sanctuary. (See fig.8) The light shifting through “Residual” served as a greater metaphor for making visible what is hidden. The light also enhanced the idea of public and private space. During the day the gallery was incredibly open and visible. However, as the light dimmed the space transformed into a reliquary, intensifying uneasiness as viewers explored the interior.

Process

The process of “Residual” is an integral part of the final installation. It is the language I use to communicate the ideas behind “Residual.” Kurt Schwitters’ *Merzbau*, *The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, an epic installation that became his life greatly influenced how I used this vocabulary of process. Schwitters addressed the subject of war in a very psychological way that I identified with. He took the tumultuous experience of living through WWII and transformed his apartment into an ongoing installation that conveyed how this experience affected his psyche. His rooms and grottos pay homage to friends and exhibit grotesque darkness as well as hopeful moments. It is as if to navigate his installation is the same as walking through his mindscape. I desired to make that personal psychology tactile in the gallery space.

“Schwitters' Merzbau mirrors the artist's fitful attempts to negotiate a path through the miasma of his work and life.”(Gamard 44) Schwitters’ miasma was manifested in the materiality of Merz. Cardboard, scraps of paper, stamps, doll heads, and miscellaneous objects collected from friends as well as the streets outside his home were Schwitters media of choice. He assigned new meaning and purpose to the seemingly random detritus by appropriating them into his studio process.

The material Schwitters’ found on the streets was absorbed into Merz and became the architecture of his world. My process is not unlike Merz; by using the aesthetic of my paint I transform the objects I choose. The paint becomes a force and takes over my studio as well as the gallery. The white paint enables “Residual” to become a space that is repulsively beautiful, a similar quality found within Schwitters’ *Merzbau*.

The objects I incorporate into “Residual” are inspired strictly by personal memory. Schwitters’ use of his studio was a controlled chaos, a delicate balance of a tremendous amount of material. He accomplishes this by the way he is able to integrate his media into larger architectural forms. My studio, though indeed chaotic in nature, was simplified and reduced to the essential components that I desired to transport to the gallery. Schwitters’ included anything he encountered in his daily life and he constructed his *Merzbau* from that mass of material. “Residual’s” assemblage does mimic the appearance of my studio, but focuses more on the feelings I had while engaged in my studio process.

The main materials I chose to use for this were coats and white house paint. This paint became a pervasive and aggressive material. It became part of my life, attaching itself to my clothes and following me wherever I went. The purpose of my studio became an interesting juxtaposition between an insidious factory churning out coats ruined of their function and a beautiful space that had been transformed by this white paint. The coats went from being lightweight and easily transportable to rigid, heavy objects. They were saturated in the paint repeatedly until they became stiff. Many had the texture of congealed pieces of paint because the paint was in a state of constantly drying. The process was extremely powerful and violent necessitating physical force to achieve my artistic goals.

As coats dried, I ripped them off the wall causing them to tear and leave parts behind on the wall. At the time of my collection there was also a coat drive happening for those in need on the mainland. I battled with guilt as I waited hours at the Goodwill

warehouse in Kalihi, gathering coats all individual in style including jackets reminiscent of the 1990's as well as present day. I would organize them in piles and with a single black garbage bucket would dunk coats in the white paint, hanging them to dry. It was important to me that they retained the form achieved from being hung. I would do this with black gloves that then became encrusted with the paint. The freshly immersed and hanging coats would create pools of paint on the drop cloth below. I would drag other coats through the drop cloth with the residual paint. Becoming overwhelmed by the quantity of the coats needing to dry, sites began appearing throughout the third floor of the art department. I began to see this exhausting process as a metaphor for the political war in Kosovo. Through the leadership of a single man, a whole culture was ripped apart through ethnic cleansing.

Though using extremely loaded objects—coats: covered in white house paint—it, was important for “Residual” to communicate its message in an abstract way. I looked to the work of Anselm Kiefer for a methodology tackling this subject matter. I wanted the materials and sounds to create an aesthetic that possessed the “hermeneutic undecidability” found in Kiefer’s work.

Hermeneutic undecidability can be defined as “*The ability of a cultural representation to generate not just ambiguity but a conflict of interpretations: radically contradictory readings of the same set of signifiers.*”-Matthew Biro. An example of “hermeneutic undecidability” in “Residual” is the rows of coats hanging on the wall. Instead of assigning personal identification to these coats such as a photo, the meaning of the paint-drenched garments left more imaginative space for the viewer. The interpretation of the whitewashing of identity takes place all over the world and does not

only manifest itself through ethnic cleansing. The idea of “whitewashing” identity influenced my decision to use house paint as well as how it was applied to every inch of the installation.

Consequently, it was also important in communicating loss of identity, not to include the human form in “Residual.” This artistic decision was supported and inspired by Kiefer’s *Iron Path*, 1986. This piece exists without the figure conveying a powerful sense of absence and loss. *Iron Path* consists of oil, acrylic, and emulsion on canvas, with olive branches, iron, and lead. It is large in scale: 86 5/8 x 149 5/8 inches. It depicts a dreary railroad track that authoritatively ascends the picture plane. It eventually diverges into two different directions at the very top of the painting. The surface of the piece is heavily layered with material. It is gray and desolate in color, but possesses intermittent pockets of gold pigment. At the lower portion of the track, one set of climbing shoes is attached to each rail. Hanging from each shoe are olive branches and an abstractly rendered gold leaf hovers in the sky. (Biro 133-135)

Like “Residual,” this piece communicates through materials and objects. Even without human figures, it speaks of the Holocaust and those carried away to their death via railroad. Though *Iron Path*’s foundation is of death materialized in heavily applied paint and lead, the surface and composition communicates transcendence. The concentration of gold color builds up towards the extremely high horizon line. The lines of the railroad move in a dramatic, vertical direction symbolizing “Jacob’s ladder” or a stairway to heaven. (133)

Through “Residual,” I sought to communicate these two ideas of death and loss through the position of the coats. The garments on the walls move in a strong horizontal

and vertical direction towards the ceiling of the gallery. It gave the allusion of a higher space and the aerodynamic shape the coats assumed lent themselves to this idea of ascension. The height and shape of the studio-station also added to the dynamism of the environment. The stacked coats were a way to communicate past cruelty. Though formed in the same shape as the ones on the wall, they were not allowed to rise let alone be individuals. The expanse of floor that stretched around the heap on the ground embodied desolation. I felt transcendence was achieved through the overwhelming use of white, vertical lines of the coats, and design of space. Studying the emotions of Kiefer's work and how they are evoked contributed to the success of "Residual."

The soundscape for "Residual" portrays the aftershocks or reverberations from the Kosovo war, specifically the "missing", people who have disappeared during ethnic cleansing. In order to give voice to the invisible, or these "psychic wounds of war" I found it necessary to use sound. I began to see sound waves as translation for the residual effects of trauma. The soundscape for "Residual" played on loop using the feature "crossfade" via Ipod. This enabled the composition to flow without interruption and added to the meditative spirit of the space. I used the pieces of sound collected from "Marks for the Missing" and created individual Mp3's through Audacity. I then transferred the Mp3's to a more musician-orientated program called Logic. This enabled me to compose and layer sounds to produce a cohesive piece.

The other sound component was the transformation of the gallery floor. This amplified ground manifested itself by consisting of three layers of material. The first being a protective plastic drop cloth, the second a layer of tar paper to contribute a burning smell as well as better acoustics for the contact mics taped to the first layer.

Finally the third was a representation of the floor in my studio, paint-caked in most areas with the residue of the coats. The mics were placed in sporadic locations. I wanted the viewer to be constantly discovering the sound and be unsettled not knowing if it were their step creating the sound or another viewer's footstep. These mics were connected to a sound system comprised of an 18" speaker, mixer, equalizer, and amp all hidden within the heap of coats. My desire was to translate the emotions of hyper-vigilance and unease previously mentioned in the memories formed during my second trip to Kosovo.

“Residual” is a layering of artistic process that includes my own as well as those engaged in the collaboration of “Marks for the Missing.” The process of “Residual” is laid bare within the gallery space symbolizing the unending aspect of the show's title. The residue of trauma is described through process and indicates that the “circles of reflection” to the war in Kosovo continue on.

Conclusion

“But societies that do not confront the past remain trapped in an Oz-like world, a world whose most important truths are felt-then repressed-every day, a world where official lies are perpetuated by a vast bureaucracy.” –Chris Hedges

“Residual” is the interweaving of experiences I had in Kosovo in 1999, and then again twelve years later in 2011. This installation bears my physical interpretation of Saltzman’s “circles of refection.” “Residual” positions viewers at different points of experience to the event I have created. It is a psychological atmosphere thick with the residue of personal memory and the history of Kosovo. The viewer is drawn into this multisensory exhibit through a shrine of personal artifacts. Photos, drawings, books and random detritus sit on the desk and hang on the wall surrounding the artist statement. The view of painted coats behind the studio-station pulls the viewer further into this unsettling and foreign space. These objects emanate a soundscape made of individual memories. As viewers proceed into the exhibit, their own steps are amplified through the use of contact microphones. Thus, the viewers activate the space with their physical presence, inspiring sensory awareness and interaction with their surroundings.

“Residual” is a rich overlapping of experience and memory. This installation is not a fabrication of the experiences I had in Kosovo, but rather a translation of the emotions felt while being there and while remembering. The “Oz-like world” Hedges speaks of in *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, is what “Residual” became. It is a place where the past is frozen in time and where the truth about the Kosovo war lies underneath the surface. My hope is that “Residual,” through sound, might bring signs of life to what trauma has fossilized. This arrest of time pertains to those still “missing” from the Kosovo war as well as my personal memories of being there post war. The

physical act of returning to Kosovo in 2011, and the artistic process of remembering unlocks this horrendous past.

Through the viewers' participation, the experience of "Residual" lives on and perpetuates new memories. Finally, "Residual" is my own arduous journey in remembering and reconciling my place within this part of Kosovo's history.

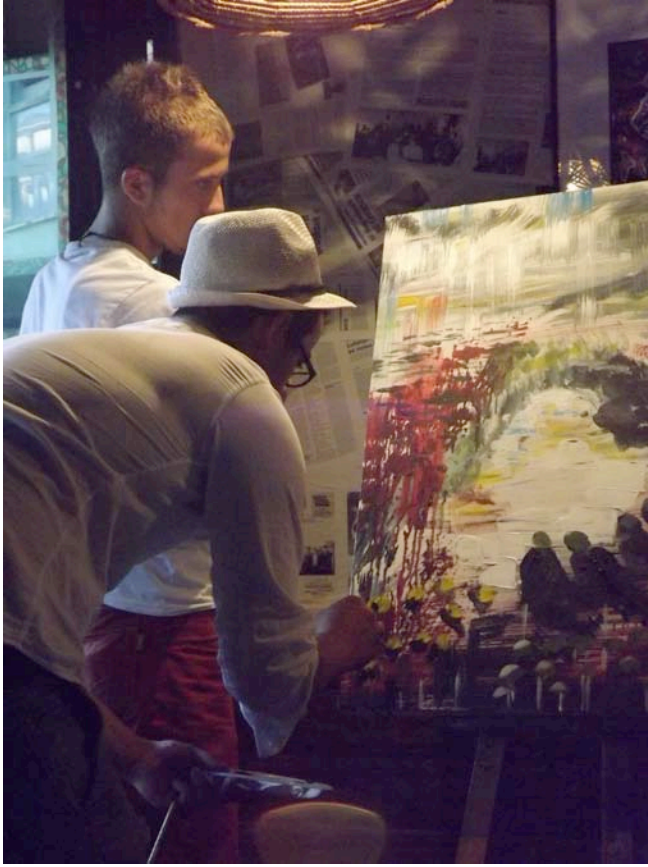


Figure 1. “Marks for the Missing” Project 2011

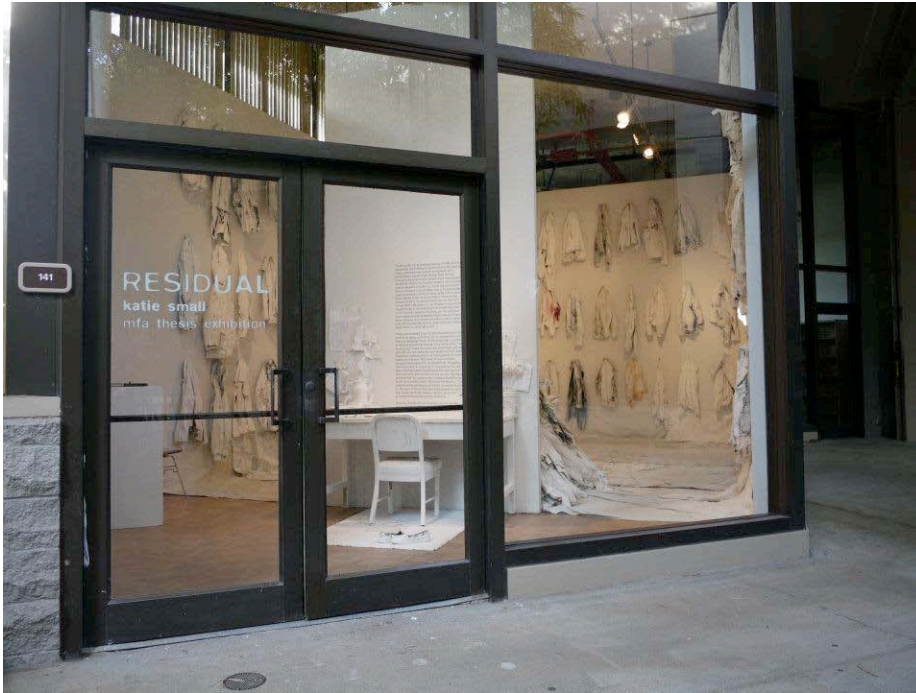


Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

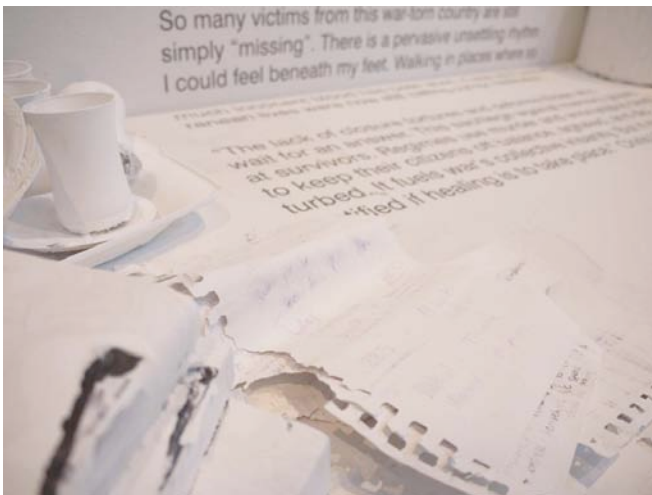


Figure 5.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.



Figure 9.

Figure 10. (MP3)



Figure 11.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.

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