

***An Archive of Longing* is dedicated to everyone who helped bring it to life.**

I truly don't know what I would have done without the support of my close friends and family who pushed me through this final semester at TMU. In moments of feeling overwhelmed, it was the people around me who reminded me why I started and helped me to keep going.

I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to this project through photos, interviews, and conversations. Being able to sit with your stories and memories allowed me to get to know the people I care about even more, and made this project that much more meaningful.

Thank you to my friends back home in Calgary for always cheering me on, no matter the distance. Even though we're not in the same city, your support has always been felt. And to my friends here in Toronto, thank you for making a new place feel like home. Living between these two places has shown me that home isn't just one location, it exists in the people and the memories we share. No matter

where I am, I find myself missing the other, feeling homesick for both the places and the people I love. That feeling became such an important part of this book, and it's what inspired me to explore nostalgia in the way that I did.

And to my roommate, thank you for listening, for grounding me, and getting me out of the apartment when I needed to clear my head. You've made this experience so much better, and you've truly become one of my favourite parts of Toronto. I would also like to extend my gratitude out to my professor, Beatriz Juarez, who was there for me every step of the way.

Lastly, to my mom, dad, and Katie thank you for everything you've done for me. Your support goes far beyond this project. Thank you for encouraging me pursue fashion and pushing me to take the leap and move out to Toronto. That decision changed everything for me, and I wouldn't be here without you. *An Archive of Longing* holds the memories I hope to never forget, and the ones I know I'll return to.

Please enjoy!

Love
Tanya



**AN
ARCHIVE
OF
LONGING**



The

Fast

beats

inside

Me

Like

A

Second

Heartbeat

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 OVERVIEW

Introduction
Statement

8-9
10-11

04 THE COLLECTIVE

Micro vs. Macro
Fashion's Past
What's With All The Reboots
Through Our Senses

24-25
26-29
30-33
34-35

07 A RETURN TO HOME

Home is Where The Heart Is
Landscapes of Calgary
Remembrance
New Beginnings

64-65
66-69
70-75
76-81

02 ORIGINS & EVOLUTION

Timeline

14-15

05 A CURATED PRACTICE

Collected Objects
Generational Artifacts
Evelyn Tan

38-45
46-47
48-51

03 ACROSS MINDS & CULTURES

Psychology
Emytology

18-19
20-21

06 IT'S PERSONAL

Looking Back
Storing My Life
Heirlooms

54-55
56-59
60-61

08 FINAL REFLECTION

Bridging Worlds 84-85
Letter To My Future Self 86-87
References 92-93



My Sister and I

Introduction

Nostalgia extends beyond just longing, shaping both our personal and collective experiences. This book explores how memory influences identity and the way we understand who we are becoming.

Nostalgia exists on both personal and collective levels, emerging in shared cultural moments and defining eras, as well as in more intimate memories connected to places and people. My exploration of nostalgia began out of personal curiosity, but has since expanded into an examination of its broader social, cultural, and psychological contexts.

Experiences of nostalgia aren't only limited to distant memories. I often find myself reflecting on moments that have happened only months ago, a feeling that I think many people can relate to. This raises the question, why is it becoming increasingly difficult to remain present?

Engaging with this feeling more critically, can offer clarity and a deeper understanding of personal experience. Even today, nostalgia is embedded within our everyday lives, influencing collective memory, marketing practices, cultural production, and individual decision-making.

Even through social media, anyone can access the past. These digital platforms allow for the immediate revisiting of any past experiences, places, and relationships. Intensifying both our connection and longing to them. My book examines personal and collective nostalgia, considering how shared experiences create points of connection, while individual memories remain deeply personal.

This book explores nostalgia through a mix of interdisciplinary methods, supported by cultural and psychological research that examines why we are able to experience it. Through photography, typography, mixed media, cyanotypes, interviews, and personal reflection, this project focuses on how nostalgia can be explored and communicated through both academic and creative practices. The work presents nostalgia as something that exists across shared experiences while also remaining rooted in individual memory.

This book is designed to encourage the reader to reflect on their own memories and past experiences, creating space for personal connection. Each element of the project was developed to translate emotion into a visual and material form, allowing nostalgia to further be experienced.

Much of the inspiration for this project comes from my own experiences, particularly the memories created with my family. These moments have shaped the direction of the work, and influenced the way I approached the visuals like the photography and family photos. As a result, this book becomes not only a reflection of my own memories, but also a collection shaped by the people most important to me.

Statement

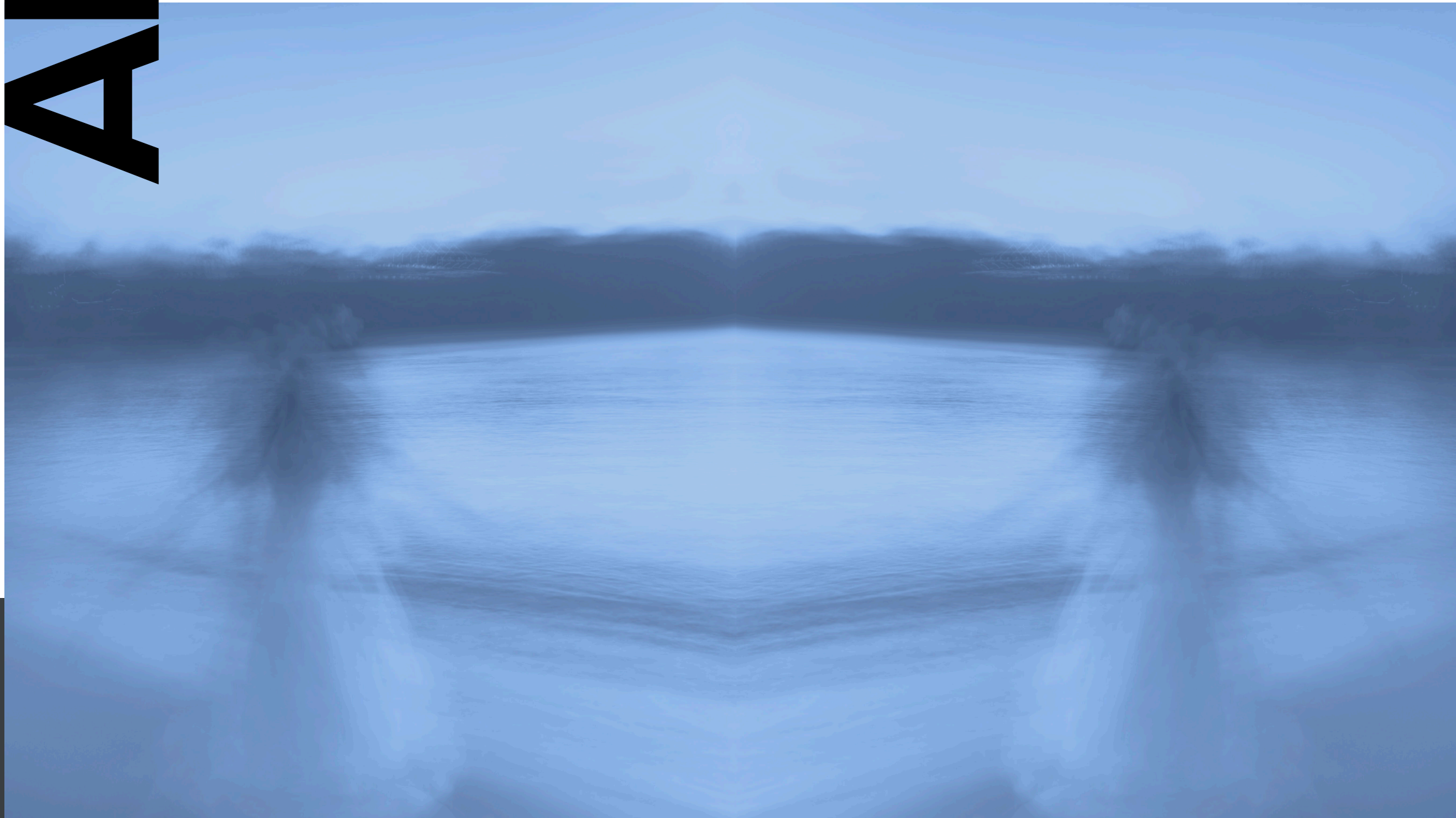
Through my creative process my book is designed to encourage reflection and emotional connection. Inviting the reader to engage with their own memories while considering how nostalgia has shaped their own identity.

**“...AS OF THIS
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REMEMBER EACH
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THE PITCH OF LONGING”**

— Mahmoud Darwish

ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

Nostalgia has evolved from a medical condition once associated with homesickness into a complex cultural phenomenon. This section explores how its meaning has shifted over time, shaped by both social and historical change.



To understand how nostalgia is perceived today, it is important to return to the origins of the term itself. Over centuries, the meaning of nostalgia has significantly shifted. Originally carrying negative connotations and was often associated with illness, linked to symptoms such as stress and homesickness. Over time, this perception has gradually changed.



By tracing the evolution of nostalgia, it becomes clear how the concept has been reframed, increasingly accepted, and culturally recognized. While nostalgia is often seen as a trendy term today, its long history reveals that it is not a new feeling, but one that has existed for centuries. Understanding its past allows for a deeper recognition of why nostalgia can still carry negative associations, and why it continues to be linked to both comfort and discomfort in the present (Wildschut et al., 2025).

1600s

1688 The term nostalgia was first coined as a medical construct by Johannes Hofer in his dissertation. The word originates from the Greek terms nostos (homecoming) and algos (pain).

Hofer used the term to describe homesickness attributing it to symptoms such as sadness, insomnia, fever, weakness and loss of appetite (Wildschut et al., 2025). His research was done on Swiss troops serving in France, where these symptoms were believed to affect the military's performance.

1700s

1705 Swiss physician Johann Jakob Scheuchzer, refused to have the Swiss troops be associated with nostalgia, fearing it would make them look weak. He proposed instead that nostalgia was a result of increased atmospheric pressure caused by the soldiers' descent into the mountains. This theory was later challenged and debunked by other physicians.



Johann Jakob Scheuchzer

1800s

1883 A woman is diagnosed with nostalgia by physician John Collins Warrens, who described her condition as an "unusual longing for the native country". After finding no physical illness, he concluded that the cause must be coming from her mind (Wildschut et al., 2025). At this time, numerous physicians still believed nostalgia was a mental disease, contributing to the lack of research about the phenomenon.

1892 Nostalgia continues to receive little attention in medical research. During this time, physician Daniel Hack Tuke argued that "nostalgia always represents a combination of psychological and bodily disturbances, and for this reason it must always be defined as a disease". Nostalgia was then observed as a form of melancholia.

1900s

Early 1900s During this period, psychoanalysts began interpreting nostalgia as symbolically linked to childhood and a longing for the past. Nostalgia was further characterized as being bittersweet but was distinguishable from depression because of the sentimentality associated with it.

Researchers began to view nostalgia as a coping mechanism for change and uncertainty. By the late 1950s, nostalgia was no longer seen as a pathological disorder or disease but as a normal response to remembering the past.

“HE PROPOSED INSTEAD THAT NOSTALGIA WAS A RESULT OF INCREASED ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE...”



1950s to 2000s Nostalgia continues to move away from being associated as a disease, and instead gets brought into the conversation of development, memory and personality research. In 1992, scholars made distinctions in personal and historical nostalgia (Wildschut et al., 2025). It starts to be seen as beneficial to the psyche, as it helps individuals feel grounded and connected with their identity.

2000s

2000s to Present Day As more research has been done on nostalgia, we have started to see the psychological benefits, and how it can be used as a therapeutic tool. Studies show that individuals who experience nostalgia report a greater sense of social connectedness and identity continuity.

Nostalgia also helps in reducing sadness and stopping feelings of existentialism, giving a sense of purpose to people's lives. While it remains bittersweet, it is seen as more beneficial than harmful and can be triggered through a variety of ways, especially through smell and touch.

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WE HAVE NEVER
KNOWN.”** — Carson McCullers

Examining nostalgia
through a psychological
and cross-cultural lens

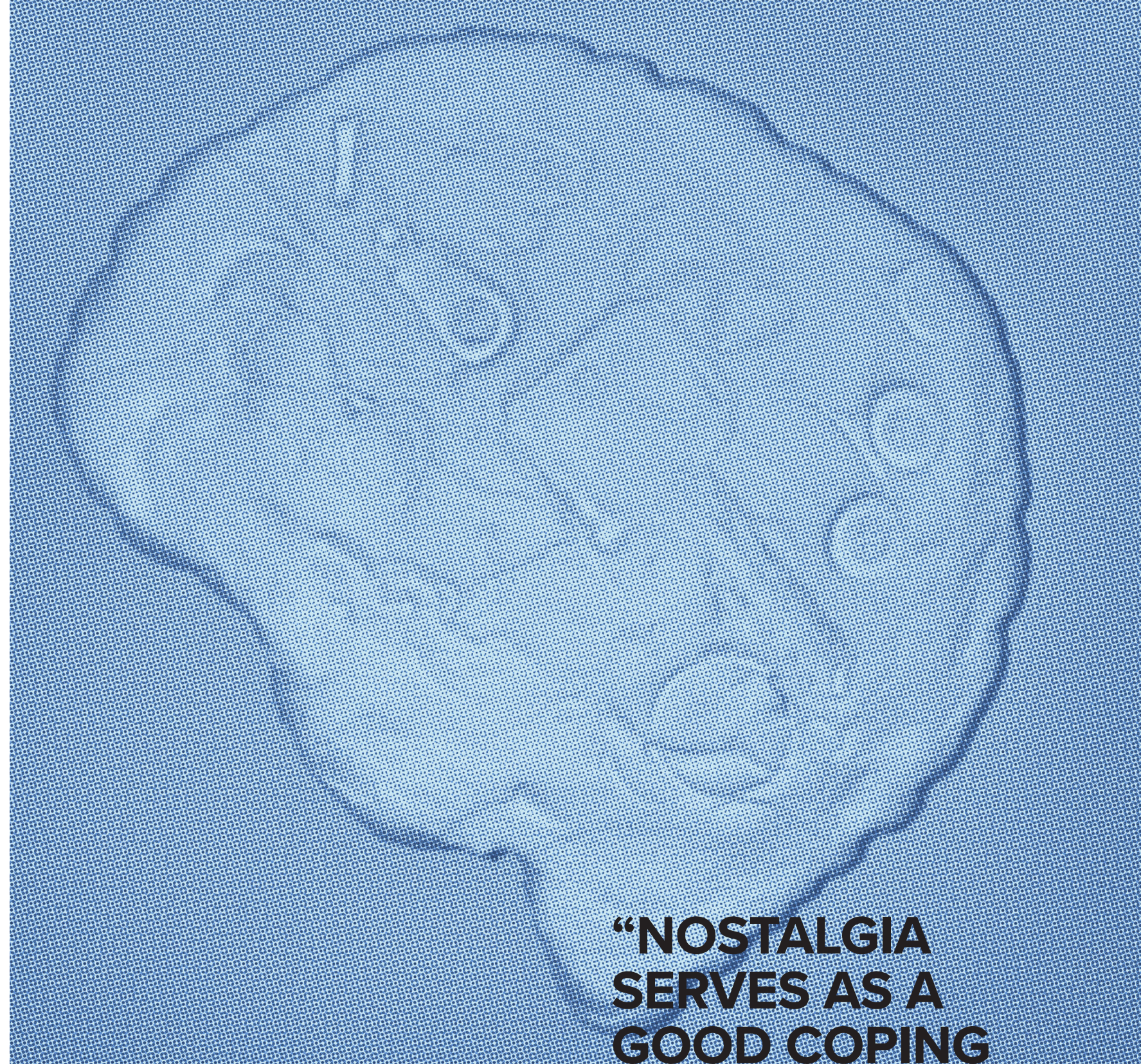
ACCROSS MINDS



AND CULTURES

The Psychology of Nostalgia

How does nostalgia impact our daily lives and our identity?



“NOSTALGIA SERVES AS A GOOD COPING MECHANISM FOR THOSE FACING DIFFICULT PERIODS IN THEIR LIVES AND HELPS THEM TO FIND A SENSE OF PURPOSE.”

Nostalgia, while sentimental, provides a much deeper function in our psyche. In *Finding Meaning in Nostalgia* (2017), psychologists Constantine Sedikides and Tim Wildschut examine how beneficial nostalgia can be in contributing to our self-continuity, purpose, and social connectedness. Arguing that nostalgia is not just a feeling, but rather a tool that can be used to improve our outlook on ourselves and society.

Their experiments included narrative inductions of scent-evoked nostalgia, nostalgic memories, and nostalgia evoked through song lyrics. To perform these experiments they asked participants being tested to visualize a nostalgic event from their past.

They also had a controlled condition where another participant visualized a typical everyday event from their past or something that they're excited for in the future. They then were asked to write down three words that described what they were feeling and note what the memory was about. A questionnaire was later given, asking them statements

like "I feel nostalgic at the moment - yes/no". Interestingly, the participants that had nostalgia reported higher levels of positive affect in comparison to the control participants. The experiment had also been done using music. They asked UK graduates to tell them which titles of songs and artists of three different songs bring them nostalgia. These participants were then once again divided into the experiment and control groups.

A week later they chose at random a song that picked by a different member in the experiment group and tested the lyrics to assess it across the *Presence of Meaning in Life* subscale. It is a questionnaire that determines how much an individual feels like their life is purposeful and significant. Those that had listened to the song reported to have higher levels of greater meaning than those who didn't. These findings have suggested that nostalgia helps an individual find meaningfulness in their life, combating any major feelings of existentialism. They argue that through nostalgia individuals are able to reflect on positive memories and experiences, reminding them not only of who they are, but why their experiences matter. Self-continuity is largely important

to our identity and through nostalgia individuals can connect their past identity to their present one. Allowing for reflection on prior relationships, formative moments, and memories that shape them into who they are today. This transforms self-continuity to an emotion stabilizer, especially during transitional periods.

Nostalgia deeply social, as it includes the memories of family, friends and other significant relationships rather than purely isolated events. The authors found that nostalgia increases the feeling of belonging and identifying yourself as a part of a group. They called this idea the "reservoir of meaning". This reminds individuals that they're not alone but instead that they have a network of meaningful relationships. This also works as a buffer against uncertain experiences. Loneliness, stress and even feelings of meaninglessness can be combated through recalling these positive memories. Nostalgia serves as a good coping mechanism for those going through difficult or stressful periods in their lives.

Beyond just its emotional effects, nostalgia also plays a role in shaping someone's future. Sedikides and Wildschut suggest that reflecting on past experiences can help to reinforce a greater direction in life and motivation from learning from the past. Once again nostalgia proves to be beneficial in helping individuals carry forward the values and experiences that build their foundation.

Furthermore, it contributes to the way individuals understand their personal narratives over time. Rather than existing as just isolated memories, these moments are remembered to reinforce a specific idea of self. This process highlights experiences that provide them with more comfort, and meaning, all while actively integrating it into their present. The authors emphasize that this is an active experience, where memory is continuously reshaped to support psychological well-being. While this is an ongoing process that will last our whole lives, nostalgia shapes how people understand themselves and their place within the world.

The emotions and feelings associated with nostalgia are universal and exist beyond any one culture or language. Words have the ability to capture memory, emotions and that sense of longing, which can't always be translated directly (Matei, 2017).

The terms presented reiterate the idea that nostalgia is universal through people, cultures, and spans over a number of lived experiences. Across languages, we find the commonality in the bittersweet feelings of home and longing for a time that has since passed.

From around the world, words that mirror the feeling of nostalgia and their meanings

Dor

Saudade

Toska

Sehnsucht

Mono no aware

Nostimon

Dor is "derived from the Latin dolus, which means "to ache," the Romanian word dor refers to a visceral pain suffered when separated from your home" (Matei, 2017). Its identity is significantly tied to Romanian origins and its history of being invaded, often displacing many of the villagers. It also has ties to their dependence on shepherding which was often done away from home for months at a time. Dor is in line with the idea of social connectedness where it brings attention to good memories and relationships which helps in bringing a sense of comfort in unfamiliarity.

Saudade can be interpreted as feeling equal amounts of both love and loneliness at the same time. Compared to both missing and desiring someone or something. "A fixture of art, music, and literature in Brazil, Portugal, and beyond, the word is the ultimate paradox: 'a pleasure you suffer, an ailment you enjoy'" (Matei, 2017).

Toska is a Russian word that often is used to describe a long period of longing. It is a strong emotional ache that exists between desire, regret and nostalgia. But unlike nostalgia where it more so connected to people and memories, toska is without a clear source or reason for feeling this way. It makes the feeling much more complex and hard to pinpoint.

Sehnsucht is a German word that describes the intensities of yearning. It highlights that the process of longing is actually more enjoyable and fulfilling than the desire itself. It can be compared to the excitement and build up before an event like a birthday, but the wait ends up being better than experiencing the event itself. Sehnsucht is also tied to the idea of fictional memories, creating a sense of longing for something that may never have fully existed.

A Japanese philosophy that celebrates the impermanence of the world. It means to seize the moment, rather than thinking about the fragility of life. "The phrase mono no aware refers to the 'pathos' (aware) of 'things' (mono), meaning being in tune with the ineluctable transience of the world"(Matei, 2017). It is coming to terms with knowing people, places, and your belongings will exist even after you are gone. An example of this philosophy can be found in Japan's love of cherry blossoms, they are highly valued because they are ephemeral. This bridges the idea of nostalgia giving you a sense of purpose because life is so fleeting. Placing value in the ability to remain present while longing for memories that will soon be in the past.

Nostimon is an ancient Greek word which is the etymological ancestor of nostalgia. "It was first used in Homer's Odyssey to reflect when Odysseus, long estranged from Troy, longs for his "day of return"—or nostimon emar." (Matei, 2017). Nostimon emphasizes a deep longing to return home. In modern Greek it no longer means homecoming, but rather to describe something pleasing.

**HOW DOES
NOSTALGIA
MANIFEST IN A
GENERATION**
Now?



**THE
Collective**

Macro vs Micro

Exploring the balance between individual experience and shared cultural memory. Highlighting how they differ and are similar.

These factors help to transform nostalgia into a “machine” which turns our memories into a place of comfort and the ability to retreat into that feeling during times of uncertainty. This article breaks nostalgia into two categories: macro nostalgia and micro nostalgia. Macro nostalgia is a part of the collective experience.

This takes around ten to twelve years to fully develop because of changing trends, cultural shifts, political changes, fashion, and technology. It comes into play in the resurgence of fashion trends and what eras people gravitate towards. An example of macro nostalgia would be the Covid 19 pandemic that started in 2019. Many remember the lockdown, working from home, online school, etc. This was a huge shift in how we operated in our day to day lives.

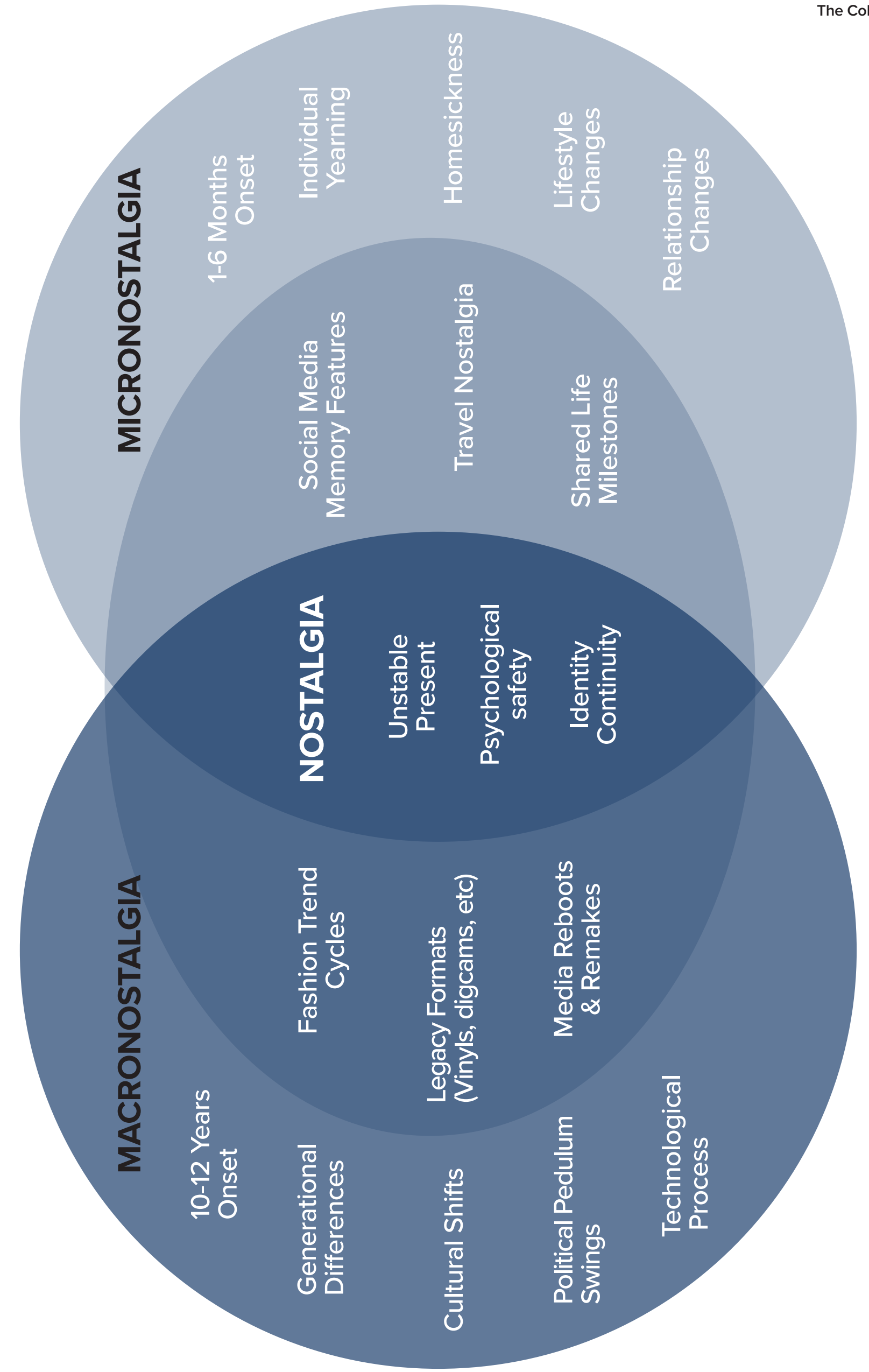
Micro nostalgia, on the other hand, dives into much more personal memories and feelings. This is felt a lot sooner, around the one to six month mark. Often experienced after lifestyle changes, relationship changes, and homesickness. These more intimate memories can be triggered by a scent, a song, object or photograph. Memories act like a safety net for uncertainty, allowing us to retreat back to a sense of comfort from the past when needed.

I dive into the idea of personal nostalgia later on in my book and how differently it is felt and experienced by each individual. Micro nostalgia can be looked at like as a cycle, being viewed closely it appears repetitive (every 1-6 months) but when you zoom out it resembles a helix. It constantly moves forward while still looping back. At an even larger scale this looks like a pattern of constant loops.

This turns into the idea of macro nostalgia and how your personal memories being felt every one to six months is then looped in with the rest of society feeling the collective nostalgia every ten to twelve years. This is typically when generations begin to reminisce on the “good old days”. Nostalgia whether being experienced on a personal or collective level, connects us to the past and what we continue to reflect back on in the present.

To better understand the two distinct sections of my book, it is important to introduce the idea of collective and personal nostalgia. Recognizing this difference helps us to understand how memories are experienced both individually and across groups of people. The Nostalgia Machine (Morning, 2025) stands between both an emotional response and a cultural system.

Micro



Fashion's Fast Past

Examining fashion as a temporal practice that reflects nostalgia, culture, and social change.

Fashion is constantly evolving but always remains at the intersection of the past and present. In *Cross-temporal explorations: Notes on fashion and nostalgia*, Heike Jenß argues that fashion can be used as a medium to help individuals understand where they exist in time. Similarly, fashion itself falls between both micro and macro nostalgia because of two important factors: personal expression and cultural influence.

The swing of fashion trends is reflective of the 10-12 year mark. This is typically clothing brought back from past decades, redesigned and reinterpreted to bring a new trend to the market (Morning, 2025). Fashion has the direct ability to not only present itself as visual nostalgia but a template for what emerges in the future.

As nostalgia moved away from its initial meaning and was mixed into consumer culture, it evolved into a cultural awareness. Modernity sped up the process through photography, film, and print. This allowed nostalgia to circulate visually, becoming a socio-technological practice. Nostalgia was no longer just a private or personal emotion but one that could be acknowledged amongst a generation.



Kate Moss Modeling for Calvin Klein

“FASHION IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST TREND CYCLES, IT CIRCULATES NOSTALGIA AND REFLECTS THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE TIME.”

Jenß proposes that vintage dressing is an act of performative engagement with temporality. Wearing clothes from another decade explores the idea of being in another time, attempting to embody what was felt during that era. Vintage clothing can be seen as material nostalgia, something that fast fashion is not able to fully replicate.

The author also critiques those that compare retro culture revival to cultural stagnation. Arguing that the revival can lead to dynamic and interpretive ideas. “As soon as an earlier fashion has partially been forgotten there is no reason why it should not be allowed to return to favor and why the charm of difference, which constitutes its very essence, should not be permitted to exercise an influence similar to that which it exerted conversely some time before.” (Simmel, 1901, as cited in Jenß, 2013, p. 116) The revival of past styles also reflects the social conditions of the era that they originated from.

This is especially relevant in today’s world with the resurgence of Y2K and 90s styling in the past few years, following a rise in self-expression and playfulness. There has also been an increase in conservative clothing which can be attributed to current political and social aspects because fashion is a reflection of the zeitgeist it takes place in. Clothing and fashion is much more than just trend cycles, it circulates nostalgia and reflects the culture of the time. It helps us in understanding the past and its influences on the present and future. A temporal practice that is simultaneously shaping and being shaped by society.



Naomi Campbell

Faux fur coats

Faux fur jackets have made a comeback, but in a way that feels more like everyday wear. Rather than being overly bold or dressy, we're seeing minimal silhouettes paired with neutral colours. Their return also reflects a growing shift toward more conscious fashion choices by the new generations.

Capri's back in style?
Very 2000s



Bella Hadid

Capri pants are on the rise as, pictured on Bella Hadid, and it's hard not to connect it to the return of early 2000s fashion. Once a staple of that era, they're being reintroduced with more refined fits and updated styling.

Low rise pants/jeans is a trend that has grown exponentially in popularity. This silhouette found in most stores today can be attributed to the early 2000s. This return has also made slimmer pant styles more popular as we move away from wide leg and baggy styles.

Big surge in low rise



Halle Berry

Carolyn Bessette



90s minimalism
making its way back

90s minimalism is starting to resurface again, seen throughout a few recent runways. The style is focused on clean lines and stays away from maximalism.

What's With All The Reboots?



Superman (2025)



Analyzing the industry's reliance on nostalgia and how it shapes the rise of reboots, remakes and sequels.

There has been a noticeable rise in the number of reboots over the past few years. From television series and beloved franchises to live-action adaptations, the media industry seems increasingly focused on remaking old classics rather than investing in new ideas. In theatres, audiences are watching new versions of the movies they grew up with, yet these remakes often fail to capture the same appeal as the originals. Why does mainstream media continue to push for a blast from the past?



Jurassic Park Rebirth (2025)

This can largely be explained by emotional investment. Established franchises and characters already have audiences who are familiar with and attached to their stories, which creates the expectation that there will be less financial risk. Familiarity can feel comforting and builds trust in what is being produced. In this way, nostalgia becomes a powerful marketing tool that the media industry continues to capitalize on.

Movies like *Superman* (2025), *Fantastic Four: First Steps* (2025), *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* (2024), and *Jurassic Park: Rebirth* (2025) are all examples of the industry using familiar franchises to market toward nostalgic consumers. However, this does not mean that they can not create media that makes nostalgic references.

Stranger Things is a show that heavily relies on 1980s nostalgia, yet has concepts that are original to the show. It focuses on the aesthetics of that time in reference to its technology, clothing, and pop culture. It engages those who were and weren't around for that time, wishing they could go back or experience it for themselves for the first time.

“IT IS EASIER TO REVISIT A STORY WE ALREADY KNOW THAN TAKE A CHANCE AT SOMETHING NEW. STUDIOS UNDERSTAND THIS AND EXPLOIT IT.”

Creating a sequel, reboot, or remake of an already existing franchise also puts pressure on directors to capture the original charm of the story. A lot of the time this isn't possible, and the new version falls short of what made the original so special.

An example of this is *Monster High: The Movie* (2022). The franchise had been loved for years through numerous animated films, each featuring unique fashion and characters inspired by the popular Mattel dolls. The fashion, distinct personalities of the characters, songs, and overall world-building of the Monster High universe helped it build a huge audience. When a live-action version was announced, many fans were left wondering if it could even compare to the original.

When the movie was finally released, fans were left disappointed. The plot felt predictable, the characters behaved differently from the original versions, and the costumes looked cheap (Dizon, 2025). Because of this, many viewed the film as a cash grab that strayed too far from what made the original so loved. Sometimes franchises are best when they're left as they are rather than being followed up with additional movies or shows.

Unless the goal is to truly honour the core essence of the original, these projects often fall short of audience expectations. The emotional connection audiences have to these characters can begin to fade when companies prioritize producing more content over maintaining the quality that made the story meaningful in the first place.

New original ideas can make filmmakers nervous in the event that a movie doesn't perform as well as they hope. While this can happen, when an original idea does succeed, it shows audiences what true creativity looks like. A great example of this is *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022).

The studio behind the film, *A24*, has become known in the industry for producing unique and unconventional films. *Everything Everywhere All at Once* became *A24's* highest-grossing film, earning over one hundred million dollars worldwide (D'Alessandro, 2022). It was also an important story to share, as it centered on the life of an Asian American immigrant family. Over time, *A24* has built a strong cult following because of its commitment to originality and distinctive storytelling. Supporting new ideas is important because it shows the industry what audiences are interested in beyond the movies and shows they grew up with. While these ideas might not always be trending, they give creatives the opportunity to tell new stories and represent voices that are not always centered in mainstream media. The lack of unique ideas can be better explained in Mina Le's video essay *Does Originality Still Exist Anymore?* (2025) In the video, she examines our cultural

Jurassic Park Rebirth (2025)



“JURASSIC WORLD REBIRTH PROVED THAT AUDIENCES STILL CRAVE PREHISTORIC ACTION WITH A GLOBAL DEBUT OF \$322 MILLION OVER THE LONG HOLIDAY WEEKEND.”
— Josh Weiss

reliance on nostalgia and how familiarity can sometimes become a creative obstacle. The media industry is currently experiencing an oversaturation of reboots, remakes, and sequels to already beloved movies and shows. In many cases, nostalgia is used simply as a marketing tactic that encourages audiences to return to characters they already love. However, she also makes the point that

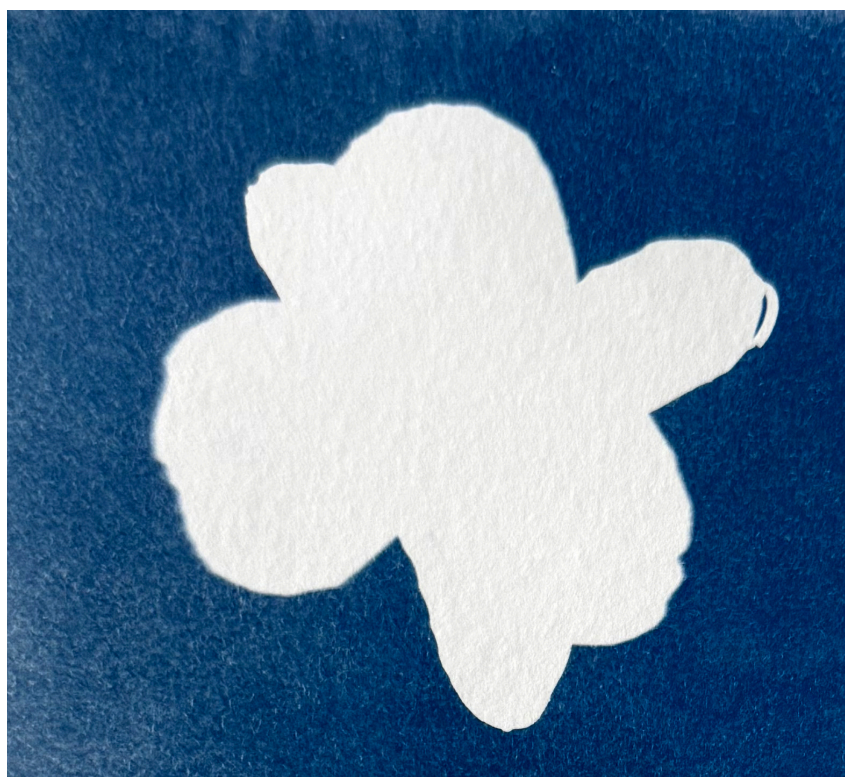
nostalgia and originality can still coexist. Nostalgia can serve as inspiration rather than a direct copy of the past. This can also be understood through the theory of affective economy. Fontefrancesco (2023) explains that affective economies operate by using emotional attachments and transforming them into economic value. In this way, people's feelings and nostalgia become commodities that can be monetized. Much like fashion, media that relies on the past becomes a cultural reference point. It can provide comfort and familiarity during uncertain times, but limits

the production of new ideas. The lack of originality in media is not simply a coincidence, but often a strategy for companies to profit from franchises and characters that audiences already feel connected to. While it may sometimes feel like we are being shown the same content repeatedly, there are still creatives working to develop new and unconventional ideas. Nostalgia itself is not a bad thing, but when it is relied on too heavily, familiarity can begin to replace innovation.

Through Our Senses

How do scents, sounds, and sensations transport us back in time?

In *The Proust Effect: Scents, Food, and Nostalgia*, Green et al. (2023) argue that nostalgia is often triggered through our senses. Smell, taste, touch, and sound all have the ability to transport us back to specific moments in our lives, allowing us to relive those memories. Have you ever heard a song, tasted a meal, or smelled something that instantly brought you back to a past experience? Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as the “Proust Effect,” named after Marcel Proust, who described feeling transported back to his childhood after eating a madeleine cake dipped in tea.



This multi-sensory experience reflects something many of us encounter in everyday life, unlocking memories we may have forgotten we even had. Physiology also helps explain the connection between nostalgia and the Proust Effect. Experiments have shown that scent and taste produce some of the highest levels of memory activation because of their strong connection to autobiographical memory in the brain. Memories triggered by smell, in particular, tend to be especially vivid and emotionally intense.

Our sense of smell develops significantly during the first decade of life, when we begin cataloguing new scents for the first time. Because of this early development, smell-based memories often become some of the most powerful and long-lasting. Sensory-triggered memories can also provide psychological benefits by increasing self-esteem and reinforcing a sense of meaning in life (Green et al., 2023). During periods of uncertainty, individuals often return to familiar smells, tastes, and sounds for comfort.

Nostalgia can therefore act as a psychological tool that helps people cope with stress and loneliness by reconnecting them with moments of happiness from earlier in their lives. Overall, Green et al. demonstrate that sensory triggers play a key role in how nostalgia is experienced. Taste, smell, sound, and touch all have the ability to activate memories and allow us to revisit them in the present.



For me personally, there are a few different tastes, smells, and sounds that take me back to specific memories from my life. Marigolds always remind me of Mother’s Day because in elementary school we decorated small pots of them to give to our moms. For some reason, whenever I smell them I am immediately taken back to my mom’s reaction when she received it and how happy she was.

Every time I taste eggnog and rum, I think of my dad because it has become our tradition to have it every Christmas without fail. The scent of vanilla perfume reminds me of my sister, since it has always been her favourite fragrance to wear.

Whenever I hear the song *Bad Habit* by Steve Lacy, I think of my first year of university and how often my friends and I would jokingly sing it in the dining hall. I also asked my friends what memories are triggered by certain scents, sounds, or tastes in their lives. Their responses further demonstrate the Proust Effect and show just how powerful our senses can be in storing and unlocking memories.

Kathryn Nguyen: Different songs or albums transport me back to various moments in my life. *Swimming* by Mac Miller reminds me of grade nine. *Harry’s House* by Harry Styles reminds me of my senior year, especially senior ditch day. *Emails I Can’t Send* by Sabrina Carpenter reminds me of my trip to Mexico. *Sunburn* by Dominic Fike reminds me of my second year of university.



Charlene Pham: Smelling Elizabeth Arden’s *Red Door* perfume instantly takes me back to when my grandma was alive. It was her signature scent whenever she went out. My grandma lived with me, so I always remember smelling it on her. I have fond memories of watching her spray it while she was getting ready to go out. It brings back memories of her feminine energy and how beautiful she was.

Shayla Thang: The light but sweet fragrance that used to be on dolls, Barbies, and Bratz. It’s a sweet, light vanilla and fruity scent. Whenever I smell something similar to those notes, it brings me back to those simple childhood moments of playing with barbie dolls with my cousin. All those hours spent creating storylines and truly letting time slip away.



A CURATED PRACTICE

Exploring material nostalgia through the objects we still carry with us.

Collected Objects

Conversations with friends about the objects that still feel nostalgic today.



While exploring the idea that nostalgia can be triggered by material objects, I interviewed a few friends and asked them to identify their "nostalgic object." I then photographed each person alongside the item they chose. I interviewed friends from both Calgary and Toronto: Yashvi Bhagat, Madeline Lewis, Esha Dhillon, Kaitlyn Volk, Sarah Ly, Perrin Langille, Charlene Pham, Shayla Thang, and Kathryn Nguyen.

Each interview highlights an object in their possession that still brings them nostalgia and how it continues to shape their lives today. Many of these objects stand out because of the emotional connections they hold to childhood or family memories. These items act as personal archives, offering a glimpse into the lives of the people who own them.

What emotions or associations come up for you when you think about nostalgia?

Charlene Pham: I think about comfort and sadness all together. Nostalgia is a bitter sweet feeling for me because I have always had a hard time with change and I can be very reliant on my comfort space when I find it. Sadness comes from thinking about how the moment won't happen again, and joy/comfort comes from feeling grateful that I got to experience it.

Madeline Lewis: Sadness, a longing for my childhood, but at the same time happiness because it was such a positive time for me. I associate nostalgia with comfort and security, as well as longing.

Esha Dhillon: Very bittersweet, I miss being a carefree child not caring about any issues besides what toys I wanted to play with but at the same time I'm glad to see how far I've come mentally and emotionally.
Perrin Langille: The main emotions that come up for me are yearning and anxiety.

If you had to choose one object that embodies your nostalgia, what would it be and why?

Madeline Lewis: Probably ballet shoes. I started dancing when I was five years old, so this has been something that continues to be such a big part of my life.

Kaitlyn Volk: I would have to say my baby blanket, it has travelled around with me to so many different places and always brings me comfort.

Esha Dhillon: A Barbie musical jewelry box. I've been collecting hotel key cards from different vacations for as long as I can remember. It's nice being able to remember each trip and how I felt being there.

Perrin Langille: The necklace that has a cross pendant was my grandma's on my mom's side. It reminds me of home and family, even though I'm not religious and of when my mom gave it to me.



“THE POSITIVE MEMORIES I HAVE FROM THESE EXPERIENCES HAVE MADE ME WHO I AM TODAY, AND HAVE ENCOURAGED ME TO CONTINUE PURSUING THE THINGS I GREW UP LOVING.”
— Madeline Lewis

Madeline Lewis



Shayla Thang: Squinkies, they were probably one of the first actual objects that I was dedicated to collecting and every time I'm reminded of them, I reminisce on all the times I opened a new pack.

Kathryn Nguyen: One object that embodies my nostalgia, would be my first teddy bear. It has been with me ever since I was born and in each household I have ever lived in. It's one of the objects that has been consistently in my life and represents my childhood.

Yashvi Bhagat: An object that embodies my nostalgia would be my basketball shoes from my freshman year of high school, they were the Zoom Freak 1 (the white, red, and gold colour-way). They remind me of a time in my adolescence when I was truly becoming comfortable with who I was, marking the beginning of my confidence and self-discovery.

Has the meaning of this object changed as you've grown older, or does it still carry its original emotional weight?

Madeline Lewis: I still dance, so ballet shoes are still a big part of my life. I'm not sure if the meaning has changed a ton for me, I still have such a strong love for dance. I think it's beautiful that an item has carried such importance to me for over 15 years.

Kaitlyn Volk: I think the emotional weight my baby blanket carries has grown over time. I still have it with me and sleep with it every night.

Esha Dhillon: I'd say as a kid, collecting the key cards was more of a quirk. Now it reminds me of how quickly life passes and how much more there is still to live and explore.

Perrin Langille: In growing older, moving away from home, and after my grandma passed I feel like it's gained even more meaning to me. It emotionally, is really good at grounding and making me less nervous in new situations.



Shayla Thang: Although I no longer collect them, I still have a bunch laying around at home and they still carry their original emotional weight. I still find them super adorable and it does bring me the same happiness I would get when unboxing them as a child.

Kathryn Nguyen: This object still holds its original emotional weight as it represents multiple eras of my life. I am able to picture every single bed that this stuffed animal has been in for each house I've moved to and it reminds me of what my life was like then at each important milestone.

Yashvi Bhagat: Although it still carries significant emotional weight, I no longer associate the shoes with my current confidence. Instead, they serve as a reminder of what I am capable of in moments of self-doubt. When I see them now, they push me to strive for success in my current life, aligning with my present goals, just as I was able to achieve the goals that were important to me during the time I wore those shoes.

“YOU NEVER REALLY LEAVE THE PAST, IT WALKS BESIDE YOU, QUIETLY HOLDING PIECES OF WHO YOU USED TO BE.”

— Unknown



Kathryn Nguyen



Perrin Langille

WHAT TIME IN YOUR LIFE DO YOU FIND YOURSELF RETURNING TO THE MOST IN YOUR MEMORIES? WHY THAT MOMENT OR PERIOD?



Yashvi Bhagat

Yashvi Bhagat: I would say my early childhood, the early 2000s. I believe this period holds the strongest emotional connection to my personality, as the moments during this time felt wholesome and genuine. I was able to truly enjoy experiences for what they were, without the pressure of “capturing” the moment or getting caught up in distractions like recording or documenting them.



Shayla Thang: There are two key periods I often find myself reminiscing about. The first would be middle school. It was the first time I switched schools and met people I didn't grow up with. I learnt a lot about my likes, dislikes and hobbies. While it was for only two years and I don't really talk to those classmates anymore, I remember those fun daily moments of being 13.

and learnt so much about myself. I look back to first year because it's where this all began. I knew it was going to be an insane journey with lots of ups and downs but again, the start is so bittersweet to me and I can't believe it's been almost four years.

The second period was the first year of university. Although I'm still in university, 2022 was the year where my life quite literally changed, both internally and externally. I moved out, I met people who I consider to be lifelong friends

Madeline Lewis: I find myself returning a lot to when I was 7ish and my sister was around 5. We were really close and would just spend every day playing together. Since we no longer live together, I really cherish those moments.

Perrin Langille: I think because it's so far from me now, I always look back at my earliest childhood days with my siblings. It's just nice to reminisce on the times where we all used to live together and fight over stupid things like who got the tv remote or make up fun dances or visit our cousins. I find myself returning to that tune because the moments with my siblings are so few and far between as we've grown into adults.

Do you think your nostalgia is more connected to people, objects, or moments?

Charlene Pham: I would argue my nostalgia is more connected to moments. The environment of the moment is a large part of it. I have many memories of going camping all over the Ontario parks, or on big family trips to the Caribbean. I've also lived in the same house my whole life, so I have lots of attachment to my backyard from the parties, playground, and pool times we've had. Or even my local mall and how the infrastructure used to be, and the stores I used to go in. The nostalgia from these moments

also comes from how I felt. Sarah Ly: Moments because there are a lot of objects that bring me nostalgia but nothing that I can name as number one pick and I always make an effort to see the people I care about so I don't really feel nostalgia with them. If I do feel nostalgia with people it is because of a moment(s) I've had with that person and its the same with objects. Objects and people bring me nostalgia because of the moments I've had with them.

Do your nostalgic memories reflect who you are today in any way?

Kaitlyn Volk: Yes they definitely do, I was a kid that would create so many different worlds when I would play that now it helps my creativity and it comes easier to me. Nostalgia also has been so influential for my friends and I.

I AM STILL FRIENDS WITH A FEW GIRLS I MET IN KINDERGARTEN AND EVERY TIME WE MEET UP THERE'S SOMETHING WE REMINISCE ON AND LAUGH ABOUT.

My memories with family show our connection and how I'm close with them today too. My sister and I can recall tons of special moments and how we would play together all the time.



Sarah Ly

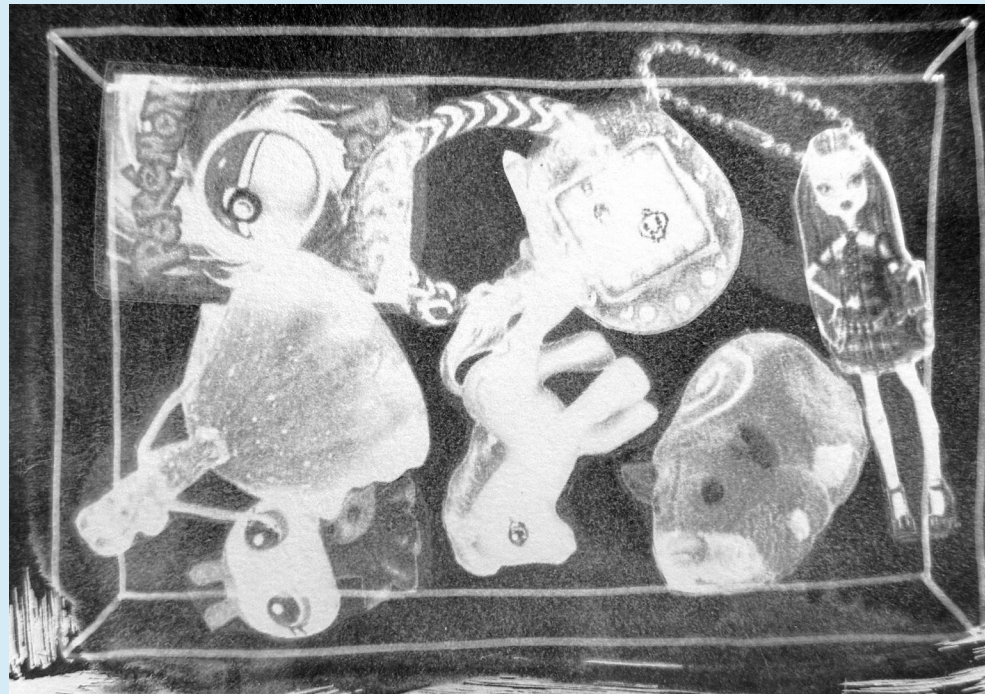
When you look back on the past, does it feel supportive or more overwhelming for you?

Esha Dhillon: A balance of being both supportive and overwhelming. When I think about the hardships in my life, I realize how depressed or angry I was. However, I'm not that person anymore and haven't been in a long time either. Recognizing how far I've grown as a person makes me reflect and reminds me that if something happens in the future, I can get myself out of it again. Knowing I'm capable of coming out of a depression again is very supportive for me because it shows me that I'm a strong and capable person no matter what.

Generational Artifacts

The toys, games, and technologies that shaped Gen Z's childhood

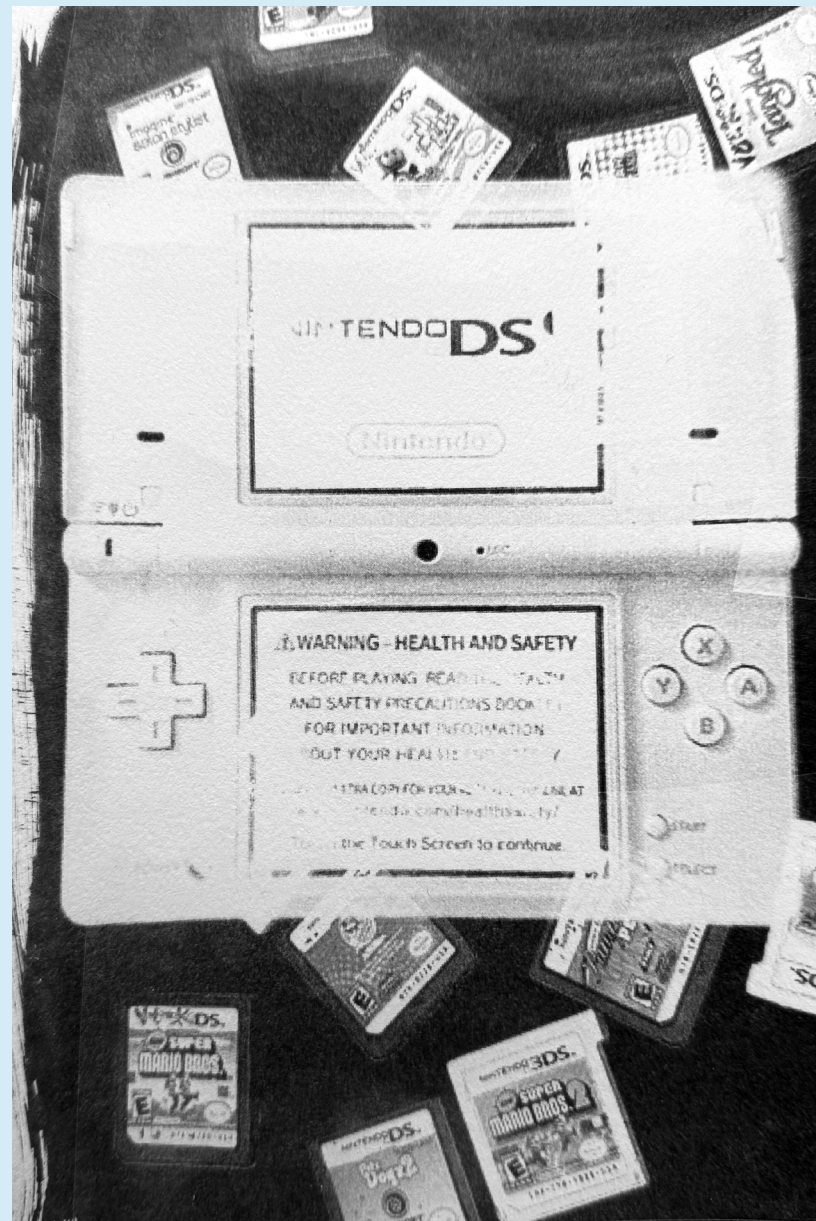
Assorted Toys



Ty Beanie Boos

This section explores the question: what objects or artifacts feel nostalgic for a particular generation? Nostalgia can also be experienced collectively when people share memories tied to objects from a specific time in their lives. These artifacts often represent the experiences, technology, and cultural moments that shaped that generation's childhood. To investigate this idea, I conducted a short anonymous survey through my Instagram.

The Nintendo DS



The Nintendo Wii

RESULTS

Participants were asked which generation they belonged to, and all respondents identified as Generation Z. I then asked them to name an object they felt nostalgic about from their childhood. Four answers appeared repeatedly: **the Nintendo DS, the Wii, childhood toys** (such as Tamagotchis, Pokémon cards, and Barbies), and **stuffed animals**, particularly Beanie Boos.

Many responses were connected to a specific time in life (76%), feelings or emotions (70%), and relationships with friends or family

members (50%). Around 66% of participants said these objects felt both personally and generationally nostalgic. I translated the most common objects into cyanotypes. These images represent the toys and technology that shaped many childhood experiences for my generation.

The Nintendo DS and the Wii, for example, were a huge part of how many of us spent time with friends and family growing up. Even now, it's common to see people online reminiscing about these games and the memories connected to

them. It is interesting to see how quickly this has changed, as younger generations now grow up with iPhones and iPads as their main technology. Although objects and technologies evolve, collective nostalgia continues to connect people who shared similar moments in time and experiences that can never quite be replicated again.



Evelyn Tan, from interview with ArtHub Magazine.

Evelyn Tan

During my research on nostalgia and memory, I came across the work of Vancouver-born artist Evelyn Tan. She had gotten her BFA in illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design.

She is an incredibly talented artist that explores memory and nostalgia through girlhood and adulthood in her practice. She creates these dreamlike landscapes of her personal memories through mixed media such as graphite, painting, and digital rendering.

She focuses on themes of identity and pinpointing her personal nostalgia. Moving out for college was an especially formative experience for Tan and her work, being away from

& Growing Up

Artist Spotlight: Evelyn Tan is a contemporary artist whose work explores memory, nostalgia, and identity through dreamy, layered imagery.

home and growing into herself. In an interview with Dzhupina (2024), Tan explains that much of her inspiration comes from the earlier stages of her life, when the world is experienced with wonder and joy. Many of her childhood memories are tied to her family's love of art.

Growing up, reproductions of works by artists such as Klimt and Van Gogh hung in her living room, while her father would draw characters like Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker for her. Art was something that surrounded her from a very young age. This influence continues in her work today, where her use of vibrant colours and layered textures gives her pieces a dreamlike and reminiscent quality.



Ink Diary Series, Evelyn Tan

The transition from childhood to adulthood is a central theme in her imagery, representing how both stages of life continue to shape who we are in the present. While childhood may sometimes be remembered through a sense of naivety, it also holds curiosity and joy for life.

Adulthood, although often accompanied by new responsibilities, can also bring independence and opportunities for new experiences. Through her artistic practice, Tan translates the feeling of nostalgia into visual form. Her exploration of memory and identity reflects the powerful role nostalgia can play in shaping how we understand both our past and present.



Ink Diary Series, Evelyn Tan

“MY WORK IS PRIMARILY CREATED WITH THE INTENTION OF EXUDING A PEACEFUL MELANCHOLY, OR A BITTERSWEETNESS. IF ANYTHING, I’D HOPE FOR MY WORK TO TAKE THE VIEWER BACK TO A SENSE OF FRESH NOSTALGIA, IF POSSIBLE.”

— Evelyn Tan

Today, Tan is based in Los Angeles where she continues her artistic career. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines and publications. In 2024, she held her first solo exhibitions at Andand Gallery and LaBeast Gallery, both of which showcased her nostalgic and memory driven pieces.



Ink Diary Series, Evelyn Tan

IT'S

This section is entirely dedicated to personal nostalgia and the how it shows up for me. From looking back on yearly souvenirs, old photographs, heirlooms, and interviews with family, I dive into nostalgia as a form of remembrance.

PERSONAL



Reflecting on my past and how it has shaped me into who I am today. Engaging with my memories and how it has influenced my work.

Nostalgia is often tied to memories formed in the earlier parts of our lives. Every year I get older, I find myself reflecting more on the experiences I've had and how much has changed. I remind myself that this bittersweet feeling is a part of growing up, yet I still can't help but hold onto these different eras of my life.

I think I have always been a sentimental person. Growing up, I preferred an eclectic array of decor in my room. From top to bottom I curated my space with objects that had their own stories: silly sticky note drawings from friends, small trinkets from adventures, and countless photographs. If you pointed to anything in my room, I could tell you the story behind it. While my room has

that I will always miss and will never forget. Leaving home for university was the first time I truly stepped into independence. I moved somewhere completely new and didn't know anybody. I am incredibly grateful to have people in my life who pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and experience life in Toronto.

Someone I couldn't have done it without is Yashvi Bhagat, my childhood best friend, and home away from home. Many of my best memories in Calgary includes her and I needed to be reminded of that in a new city. Coming to Toronto five girls in particular changed the course of my life, and I owe so much gratitude to them: Perrin Langille, Sarah

Looking Back

Ly, Shayla Thang, Charlene Pham, and Kathryn Nguyen. I met them during the Pitman Hall BBQ during orientation week, and since then I couldn't imagine my life without them.

changed over the years, many of these memories remain in their place or stored in my yearly memory boxes. Every item that has the ability to take me back to a specific moment in time. To anyone else these may seem like throwaways or clutter, but to me they encapsulate different parts of the people and places I love. I experience nostalgia for so many parts of my life.

My childhood is a huge part of that, thanks to my mom and dad who made it so magical. I'll never forget the feeling of waking up to see what each holiday would bring from finding presents under the tree and a treasure hunt to find the last gift or eggs in the yard on Easter. I will forever be grateful for them and those core memories that they created for me. These moments strung together living under the same roof are ones

Over time, these friendships and experiences have become memories that I carry with me, much like the objects and artifacts that hold meaning in my life. These items bring me comfort in knowing while life continues to evolve, there are so many more memories yet to be made that will eventually become a part of my life's collection.

Nostalgia remains ever present, reminding me of the privilege of having a life worth looking back on. This perspective has also informed my creative practice working with mixed media, photography and cyanotypes. Through this process, my work becomes a way of preserving moments from the past and that might otherwise fade with time.

Stories My Life

Focusing on the artifacts of my life and why I add a new shoebox for each year to the top of my closet.

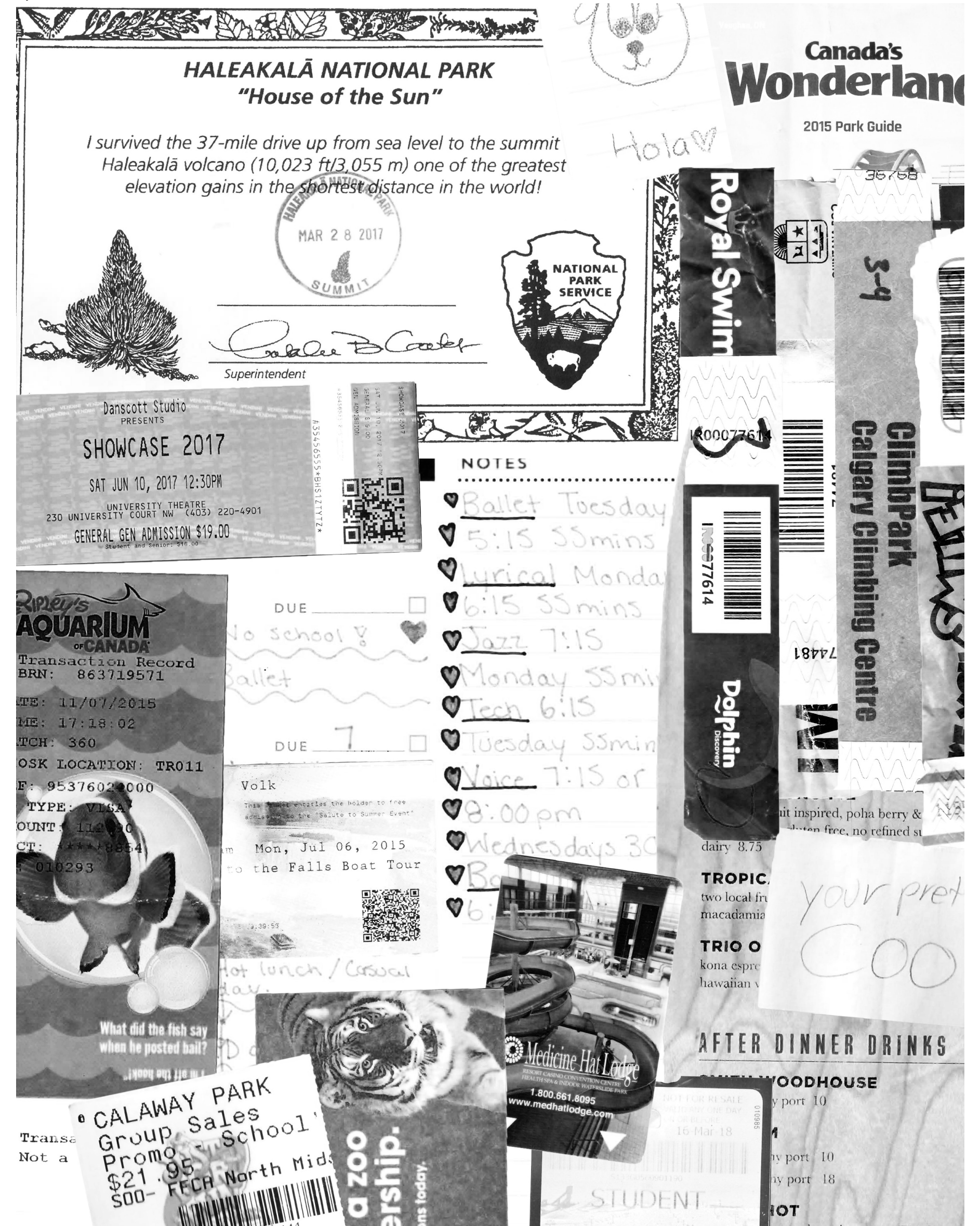
This "scrapbook," as I like to call it, is also an accumulation of places I've been. Some of my favourite souvenirs are things I simply found along the way. When I look at them, I am immediately transported back to places throughout Canada and other parts of the world. I like keeping physical objects as memories because they bring back pieces of the places I've been in ways that photographs sometimes cannot.

When I'm older, it will be special to look back on these boxes and see how much I've done, remembering the small moments through the objects inside them. I think my mom started this habit when I saw the beautiful scrapbooks she made for herself in high school, including one documenting a big Euro trip she took. She also created scrapbooks for my sister and me while we were growing up, so in many ways I like to think that I'm simply continuing the collection she started.

Around 2018, I began collecting pieces of my everyday life, and storing them in what I called memory boxes. These objects contained memories I didn't want to lose, slowly becoming time capsules that document different stages of my life. Everything from, ticket stubs, notes, plushies, photographs, each moment has shaped me into who I am today.


As time continues to pass, I am able to look back into each box and see fragments of myself preserved in time. These keepsake boxes reflect memory attachment to material objects, carrying the weight of why they were saved in the first place. Each year I create a new one, allowing the objects inside to add to the archive of my lived experiences.

My collection of souvenirs





Alex

 June 1, 2017

Taya,
I hope you had a
good day at school! ☺

Love, Mom

My cats are truly
another member of the
family. I miss them all the time



Ernie

polaroids of
times I wish
I could go back to



Lucciano's
ROMA
Il Maestro Del Gelato

ROMA
ITALIA

Lucciano's
FDC Italia S.r.l.
Via delle Muratte, 76/77
00187 Roma
P. IVA 01707760052

DOCUMENTO COMMERCIALE
di vendita o prestazione

SCRIZIONE	IVA	Prezzo (€)
NO PICCOLA	5%	4,50
PREZZO MEDIA	10,60%	5,50
TOTALE		10,00
TALE COMPLESSIVO		10,00
cui IVA		0,91
pagamento contante		10,00
importo pagato		10,00

30-08-2024 20:33
RACCOMUNDO IL COFFEE

Thank you!

Souvenirs
from Italy,
my favourite
city for my favourite
place was Florence

OLIO E PIU'



post cards are
always some of
my favourite souvenirs

Heirlooms

Unlike keepsakes, heirlooms bridge memory across generations. These objects carry accumulated meaning, preserving the stories of my family history and the people connected to them. For me, these heirlooms have helped to shape my identity and keep me connected to my roots. These objects are meant to be used and cared for, serving as a constant reminder of those who came before me. Through this scan I capture not only the memories of my loved ones but how they will continue to live on through me and the next generation.

The bird with a heart in its beak is an ornament we hang on our tree every Christmas. It is meaningful to both sides of my family because it represents family members who have since passed away. Placed at the top of the tree each year, it serves as a reminder to celebrate their lives and the memories they left behind. The two gold necklaces were given to me after my grandma passed away, and whenever I wear them I think of her. My grandma also passed down a gold ceramic jewelry dish with birds on it to my sister. The gold ring originally belonged to my Lola. She passed it down to my mom, who later passed it down to me.

A collection of heirlooms that have been passed down to me from both sides of my family.



A RETURN TO HOME

Why it's important to never forget your roots and how honoring them makes me feel closer to home.



“HOME IS ANYTHING, ANYWHERE, AND ANYONE WHO RETURNS ME TO MYSELF.”

— Qimmah Saafir

Home Is

Home is not always a physical place, but a feeling shaped by memory and familiarity. This section explores how nostalgia allows us to carry a sense of home within us, even as our surroundings change.

Where The Heart Is

Home plays a central role in how nostalgia is experienced, particularly for those that have experienced displacement or migration. In these situations, home often appears through remembrance, and the nostalgia tied to meals, rituals, clothing, language, and religion. By bringing these cultural aspects into a new environment, individuals are able to maintain a connection with their country of origin while strengthening their cultural identity.

Research by Amina & Abderrezak (2018) examines this relationship between acculturation and nostalgia among individuals that have moved to a new country. Their study found that participants who maintained stronger ties to their home country experienced stronger levels of nostalgia than those who had fully assimilated. This suggests that nostalgia not only serves as a mechanism for sustaining cultural identity but also supports

self-continuity. Through this lens, nostalgia becomes a way of staying connected to home while navigating a life in a new place. Rather than existing only as a physical place, home becomes the recreation of everyday practices and traditions.

This sense of homesickness and sentimentality also extends beyond personal experiences into broader cultural contexts. Brands often leverage this emotional connection/response in marketing, using familiar language, food, music, and cultural symbols associated with a consumer's home country (Amina & Abderrezak, 2018). A sense of trust and comfort is created, implying they understand your cultural identity and therefore understands your experiences. Nostalgia's tie to home carries such strong emotional meaning that it transcends personal memory and becomes recognized in wider cultural and economic contexts.

“NOSTALGIA TRANSFORMS INTO A WAY OF SUSTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SELF-CONTINUITY WHEN THE PHYSICAL CONNECTION TO HOME IS DISRUPTED.”

— Amina & Abderrezak



Landscapes

Around

Calgary

The spaces around Calgary that hold significant memories for me.

These photographs were taken throughout my hometown of Calgary, Alberta. It felt important to highlight my own connection to home, especially after moving to Toronto for school. Coming here has been one of the best decisions I have ever made for myself, allowing me to find independence and grow into who I am today. At the same time, I think I will always be a bit homesick.

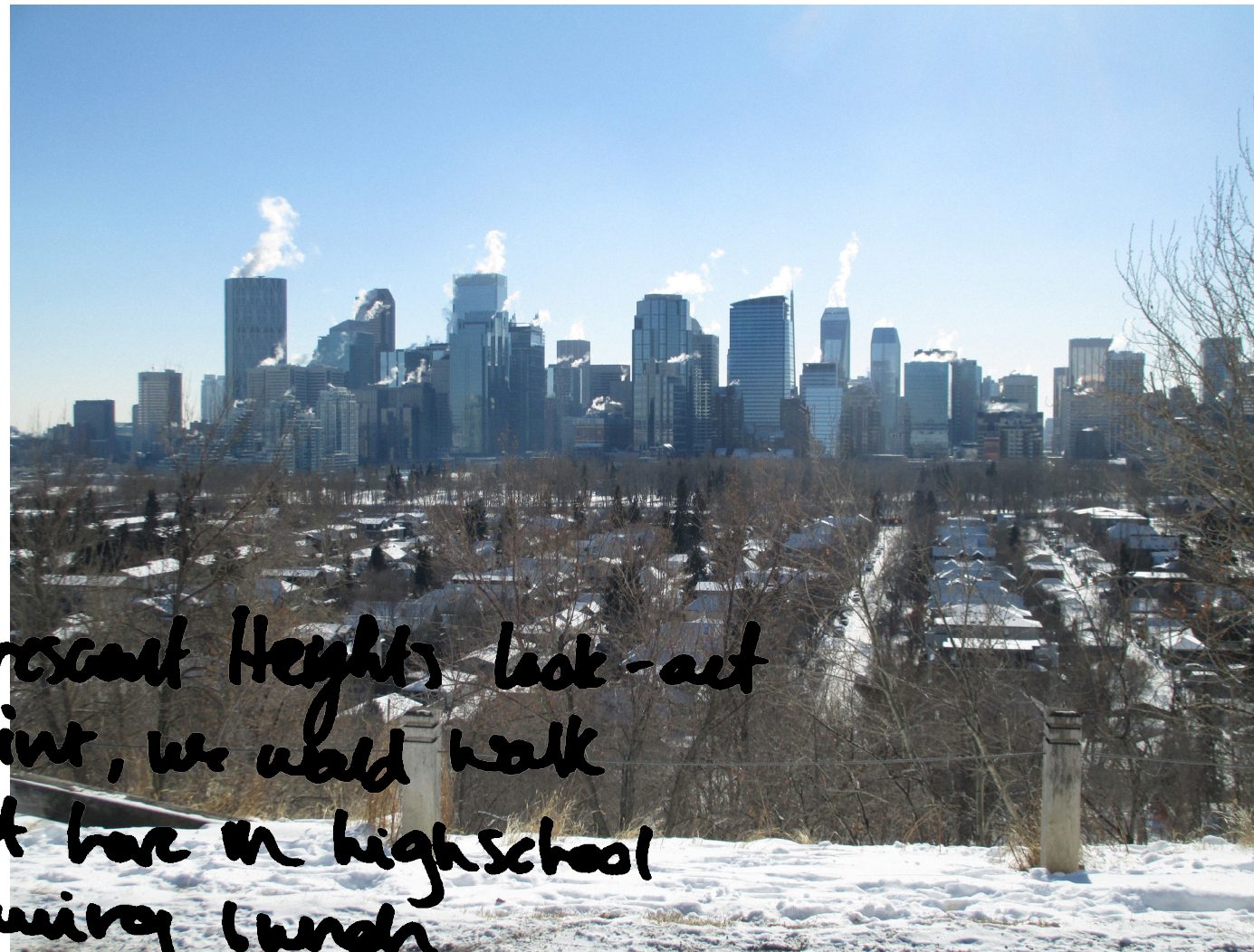
Each time I come back home I'm always hit with nostalgia that can come from spending your entire childhood in one place. Since leaving, I have a deeper appreciation for where I grew up and will always be a part of who I am. This includes: High Park downtown, Peace Bridge, Nose Hill Park, and the lakes/ponds that are in and around Calgary. These images archive the places that stand out in my mind when thinking about home.

High Park during sunset

Walking across Bow River



My spot for reflection
& journaling whenever
I felt overwhelmed



Crescent Heights look-out
point, we used to walk
out here in high school
during lunch

Nobe Hill Park
one of the most
beautiful places
during fall



Remembrance



Grandma Ann and Granpa Frank's 50th Anniversary



Darin, Darcy and Glen on the farm

“STORYTELLING HAS LONG BEEN A WAY FOR MY FAMILY TO KEEP THE MEMORY OF OUR LOVED ONES ALIVE AND HAPPENS AT EVERY ANNUAL FAMILY REUNION.”

Through Nostalgia

Through interviews with the Volk family they share memories and stories about what their childhood was like.

Through an interview with my father's side of the family, nostalgia became a way to explore remembrance. In sharing stories, this became a way to honor and preserve my grandparents memory and our family history.

Storytelling has long been a way for my family to keep the memory of our loved ones alive and happens at every family reunion. In these moments, I get to experience a side of someone I hadn't known before, a funny story, something they once said, or a memory from a trip or special moment, all taken turns between family members.

My dad's side of the family is quite large, with five brothers and three sisters. They were all born in Oyen, Alberta, a small town outside of Medicine Hat. My grandparents were farmers, so as they grew up, everyone helped out on the land too. I think in a lot of ways this shaped their strong morals and values like hard work, patience, honesty and embedded them into our family legacy.

My grandparents were inspirational for the lives they created for themselves and kids and whenever I think of them I can't help but be grateful for everything they've done for our family. That strong sense of connection continues today through traditions that bring us together each year. Our annual family reunion takes place every summer at a camping site near Buffalo Lake, just outside of Red Deer.

This tradition has been around for as long as I can remember and began as a way for everyone to see each other at least once a year. As our family continues to grow, these reunions have become even more meaningful, giving us time to reconnect when it can be difficult to keep up with everyone throughout the year. Many of these "remember when" conversations inspired the questions I asked my family.

In this interview I speak with Darin Volk, Audrey Gross, and Glen Volk (my father, aunt, and uncle). Together, they shared stories of my grandmother and grandfather, who are sadly no longer with us. Through these conversations, their stories continue to live on, honouring their memory within our family.

When you think about our family, what memories come to mind first?

Audrey Gross: I still have very strong memories of the old house. When I think about it now, I think about living there very differently than I did at the time. As I've gotten older, I've come to understand how hard my mom and dad worked and how much things have changed since then. I think about how different life was compared to today living without running water, electricity, or basic utilities. It's hard for people to even comprehend what that would be like now, but that was our reality at the time.

We also went to church almost every Sunday. If we couldn't go, my mom would light a candle at home and we would kneel down and say the rosary together. Everyone would grab a chair and kneel at it while my mom led the prayer. Sometimes we were snowed in, or someone was sick, so we prayed at home instead.

Darin Volk: That social aspect with my mom and dad was really good. I remember we were always either having people come over to our place on the farm or going to someone else's. Every couple of weekends, someone was visiting someone, there was always a plan to go somewhere or get together to play.

Is there a place that holds strong memories for you?

Audrey Gross: I'd go up to the old house and wander around and just have good memories. Even the road going there, it's such a familiar feeling. You know, just remembering all the little places around the farm, like Campbell's Corner.

Darin Volk: When you talk about that sense of community, Kappen really stands out. When we were younger, there were sports days and all kinds of events, and hundreds of people would show up. You knew almost everyone there. The first ones were huge, if you arrived late, you could barely even get through the gate because there were so many parked cars. It was so much fun.

“I DON'T THINK I REALIZED HOW GOOD WE HAD IT BACK THEN, OR MAYBE I DID, BUT I DEFINITELY VALUE IT MORE NOW.”

— Glen Volk



*The old house
before moving to
the farm*

Are there certain stories you like to retell so they aren't forgotten?

Darin Volk: To go camping and fishing we would take a single-cab red truck with a camper on the back. It was a three-quarter-ton truck, and we would just jump in. We could climb between the truck and the camper and sit inside the camper for a while, then come back into the truck. That was always a highlight for us. It was usually just Darcy and me. The only other big trip I remember was going to Disneyland. Mom and Dad took us there, and I think it was just Darcy and me as well.

Has your relationship to memory and nostalgia changed as you've gotten older?

Darin Volk: Growing up on the farm, you didn't really think about money that much. It wasn't about money, you had what you needed, and that was enough. If you needed something, you got it, and if you didn't, you went without. Today it feels more about want than need, and that's changed.

Glen Volk: I think we both realized that we had it really good. Growing up, I was always glad I came from the farm, I always felt lucky, especially with the family we had. And I agree that even now, I value it more than I did before.

Are there any traditions, habits, or values you feel came from them?

Glen Volk: Everything came from them.

Darin Volk: I think right from the start, a lot of that came from them. There were so many things we learned from that. Dad was always fixing things. He never bought something unless he had already tried two or three times to fix it first, or unless it was truly impossible. Fixing things was just what he did. Now I do the same. Even going camping every year, that tradition started with our mom and dad. Glenn still runs the camp now, but it all began with them.

When you remember loved ones who have passed, what things bring them back to you is it an object, a smell, a sound, a saying?

Darin Volk: I'll have a taste of something and for some reason you're not even thinking about it, but all of a sudden you'll be like, "Oh, I remember this." It takes you back 40 years real quick. Specifically the smell of homemade buns, she would always greet us with about six buns on a plate whenever we visited. It was every time. I always loved those homemade buns, and even now, when I see similar ones in the store, they remind me of Mom. I always think of her.

Glen Volk: I would say for some reason it's fried potatoes. We used to have that for dinner, it was always one of my favorites. We also had chicken noodle soup every Sunday. Every time when we went to church, it would be on when we got home.

Audrey Gross: Whenever I see green and red Christmas lights, because that's what mom and dad would always put up. I also remember how dad would crush crackers up and just put ketchup on it and eat them while he's waiting for his soup.

Volk family reunion with all the siblings



Audrey Gross and Glen Volk

“THAT LYRIC THAT SAYS, ‘WE DIDN’T HAVE MUCH, BUT WE HAD IT ALL’ REALLY STANDS OUT TO ME. I THINK IT TRULY ENCOMPASSES OUR FAMILY.”
— Darin Volk

The Tiller and Wouldn't Change A Thing is are two original songs by Audrey Gross, a singer and songwriter describing how life was growing up on the farm in Oyen.

Darin Volk: That lyric that says, 'we didn't have much, but we had it all' really stands out to me. I think it truly encompasses our family. You were rich in being together, family, community, having Mom and Dad and all the brothers and sisters. Everyone was so close. I think that song really captures Mom and Dad.



What moments or people from the past do you find yourself remembering most often? Why those?

I was recently reminded of something. About a week ago, I took one of my socks off and noticed a hole in the bottom. As soon as I saw it, it immediately reminded me of Mom sitting at the table late at night, around ten or eleven, fixing socks. She would have this big pile in front of her and would just sit there darning them with yarn, half-watching the television, fixing all the little holes.

It's funny how something like that sticks with you, because now you'd just throw the sock out. But Mom never did. If you had jeans with a hole, she'd fix them. If you had a shirt or socks, she'd fix every single one. We went through socks like crazy with how many kids there were, and she never threw them away. There would always be these thick patches of yarn at the bottom where she'd repaired them.



Darin, Dean, and Darcy (left to right)

The apartment in Coronation



In conversation with the Balaricias.
My family reflects back on moving
from the Philippines to Canada.

This section shifts focus to my mother's side of the family and their experiences of immigrating to Canada. Through their stories, I was able to better understand how their sense of home has changed for them and how they continue to remember the Philippines. Their reflections explore the challenges of moving to a new country while recognizing Canada as a place of opportunity.

While living in Manila, my Lolo and Lola were extremely hardworking. My Lolo worked as the head manager at a VIP restaurant and lounge inside a hotel, while my Lola stayed at home to care for their children. One day, a hotel owner and his wife were visiting on vacation and happened to be seated at my Lolo's table. They quickly recognized his strong work ethic and exceptional customer service. Impressed by him, they offered to sponsor him to come to Canada. This gesture created a huge chance for my family to start somewhere new.

At the age of seven, my mom packed up her life along with the rest of her family to start over in a new country. They first settled in Coronation, Alberta, where my Lolo and Lola began working at the hotel. My mom and Uncle John arrived in Canada first, while my Aunt Marissa and Uncle Leo joined the family two years later. Over the years, the family moved between several small towns before eventually settling in Cereal, Alberta. Later on, my mom moved to Calgary when she was 24, and my Uncle John followed a couple of years later. My Aunt Marissa moved to Medicine Hat with my Lolo and Lola, while my Uncle Leo still lives in Cereal today.

I interviewed Evelyn Volk, Marissa Gould, Leo Balaricia and Marciana Balaricia (my mom, aunt, uncle and Lola). In listening to these conversations, nostalgia appears in the ways they remain connected to their culture through food, language and everyday rituals.

New Beginnings

“NAPAKAHALAGA NA HUWAG KALIMUTAN ANG IYONG PINAGMULAN AT KUNG SAAN KA NANGGALING, KAHIT NA PAGKATAPOS NG PAGLIPAT SA CANADA.”

— Marciana Balaricia

Translated to “It’s very important to never forget your roots and where you come from, even after immigrating to Canada.”

What do you remember most about the days leading up to leaving the Philippines?

Marissa Gould: To speed up the process of moving to Canada in January 1981, my parents made a painful decision to leave Leo and myself in the Philippines because we are not Rolly’s biological children. Our Canadian permanent residency papers were finally approved in July 1983. For two years, we lived with our grandmother and hung out with half a dozen cousins. I remember feeling so torn as I was looking forward to being with my family again but I was also leaving behind people I have grown to love.

Evelyn Volk: I remember the day we were leaving, I was seven, and all of my mom’s relatives were there to say goodbye. My parents didn’t really explain that we were leaving the country, we just knew we were flying somewhere. We heard it was Canada, but we weren’t sure if it was for a short time. It was hard for us to fully understand what was happening because my parents were so focused on preparing and didn’t talk much about it with us as children.

What surprised you most when you first arrived in Canada?

Marciana Balaricia: What surprised me most when we arrived in Canada was the snow and the cold. We arrived with only thin clothes. The family who sponsored my husband took us in, and a few days after we arrived, the wife of a restaurant owner picked us up and brought both families to a second-hand store.

She bought us winter clothes, boots, hats, and mittens, and made sure everyone was prepared. I was also surprised by how hard I had to work. In the Philippines, I was a housewife taking care of the children with my relatives. In Canada, I had to begin working full-time right away.

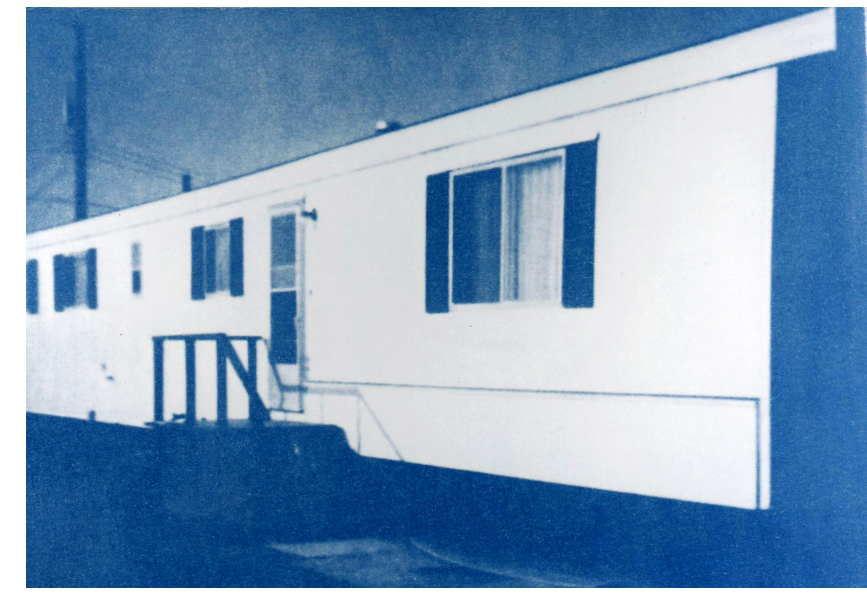


Winter clothes from the hotel owners



New Beginnings

Evelyn Volk’s class photo



When did Canada start to feel a little bit like home? What made that happen?

Marciana Balaricia: Canada started to feel like home when we realized there was a community around us. When we arrived, there was another Filipino family, and having them there made a big difference. We were able to lean on each other as we adjusted. When we moved into our first basement apartment, we had almost nothing. We didn’t have any furniture, so we ate our meals sitting cross-legged on the floor.

To us, it felt normal, we had a whole place to ourselves. The co-owners of the Frontier Hotel came to visit, they were shocked. They kept saying, ‘Oh My God, you guys have nothing.’ Within the next few days, they brought us a table and a couch, helped us order beds, and showed us how to get everything set up. They even went to a thrift store and picked out furniture for us. That moment made us feel cared for, and it helped Canada truly begin to feel like home.

Were there any moments when you felt out of place?

Marissa Gould: I moved to Canada on my 14th birthday. I was a shy child growing up in the Philippines, which was magnified 100X when we moved to Canada. I kept to myself when I was in Jr High and High School. It wasn’t until I moved to Medicine Hat and I attended college in 1988 that I came out of my shell. Being alone in a city, I forced myself to meet new friends and take part in social activities.

Marciana Balaricia: When we first arrived in Canada, everything was new, and I had to work hard on my English. I worked in the kitchen, and everyone at the restaurant spoke English. I didn’t have much time to feel out of place because we were thrown into working full-time, paying the bills, making sure the rent was covered, and making sure the kids went to school. We didn’t really have time to think about it. We just kept going, head first, because we didn’t have a choice.

Evelyn Volk: When we arrived in Coronation, my mom and dad wanted to run their own restaurant. After about one or two years, we moved to Red Deer, then after six months we moved to Eckville. After almost eight months, we moved back to Coronation, and then later we moved to Cereal. Every six to eight months we were moving, and it was really hard to make friends.

Is there a memory from home that you still carry with you? How does this make you feel?

Leo Balaricia: I was raised by my grandmother. Every time I go home, her memories are in that house, and it makes me feel happy.

Marissa Gould: I remember Christmas and New Years in the Philippines vividly. We grew up watching American movies so I knew how lavish Americans decorate for the holidays. As the oldest child, I thought it would be great to have stockings but we couldn't afford to buy Christmas decorations so I would use dad's dress socks and fill them with candies for Ev and Jon.

We didn't have much but mom made sure we had traditional Christmas meals like Pancit, Adobo, Spaghetti with hotdogs and Sweet Rice. I remember making homemade tambourines out of flattened bottlecaps and metal wire so I could sing carols around the neighborhood with my siblings and friends. We sang both English and Tagalog Christmas

Carols. Looking back, I realized we just made up words to 'Jingle Bells' as no one taught us the proper words. None of the adults knew the words either, it was all gibberish.

“ I REMEMBER MAKING HOMEMADE TAMBOURINES OUT OF FLATTNED BOTTLECAPS AND METAL WIRE SO I COULD SING CAROLS AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH MY SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS.”
— Marissa Gould



Leo, Marissa, Evelyn, John (left to right)

What traditions or rituals did you continue after moving, and why were they important to you?

Leo Balaricia: Saying po or opo like thank you po. Shows respect to elders or someone you admire.

Marissa Gould: The Philippines is predominantly Christian. Praying and going to church are something that I continue to do to this day. Catholicism was ingrained in me as I was growing up.



Rolly and Marciana Balaricia



Family camping trip at Cypress Hi

Evelyn Volk: When we moved to Canada, Christmas wasn't as big for them, but for me it always felt important because it was a yearly celebration leading into the new year. I remembered it so clearly from the Philippines. Because my parents were so busy working at the restaurant while we were growing up, I always found a way to make Christmas happen myself.

I would drag a fresh Christmas tree home from the hardware store in Cereal on my own. Luckily, our first house was only a couple of blocks from the store. I saved up my allowance to make sure we had some decorations too.

Lastly, what helped you feel proud of your culture while living in a new country?

Marciana Balaricia: What helped me feel proud of my culture was never forgetting where my roots are or how hard it was to leave the Philippines. A big part of Filipino culture is gatherings and celebrations, especially Christmas. When my husband and I were living in places like Cereal, Oyen, and Youngstown, we made many friends through working in restaurants and being part of the community.

We always attended community dances and socials, because getting out, mingling, and celebrating is part of who we are. Staying connected to family and friends, celebrating life, and being together helped me feel proud of my culture while living in a new country.

FINAL



My final closing thoughts on my exploration of nostalgia and how it has informed my work process. These last pages close the gap between personal and collective nostalgia.

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**“NOSTALGIA
ALLOWS US TO
CONNECT TO
DIFFERENT
MOMENTS
FROM OUR
PAST, BRIDGING
THEM TO THE
PRESENT.”**

My final closing remarks and the significance of longing.

Bridging Worlds

Throughout this project, I explored nostalgia through cultural, psychological, historical, collective and personal lenses. A personal curiosity about nostalgia quickly turned into the basis for my book. Broadening my understanding of just how deeply nostalgia shapes our identities, relationships, and lives. While it is often described as a longing for the past, it becomes clear that it is far more complex than that. Nostalgia allows us to connect to different moments from our past lives and bridges them to the present.

Every generation experiences nostalgia for their childhood. It is a collective experience that can be found in the cultural artifacts like media, technology, fashion, etc. These shared references connect us to each other and create memories across a large number of people. As each generation reflects on the past, it becomes clear how quickly our lives can change and how strongly the culture of a particular time defines the memories we carry with us.

At the same time, nostalgia is deeply personal. Through keepsakes, family interviews, heirlooms, and photographs of my hometown, I was able to explore the ways memory is carried through objects and shared stories. Nostalgia is unique to each individual, and I found that through talking with friends and family, familiar objects, songs, and scents, are the most powerful ways to honour our memories.

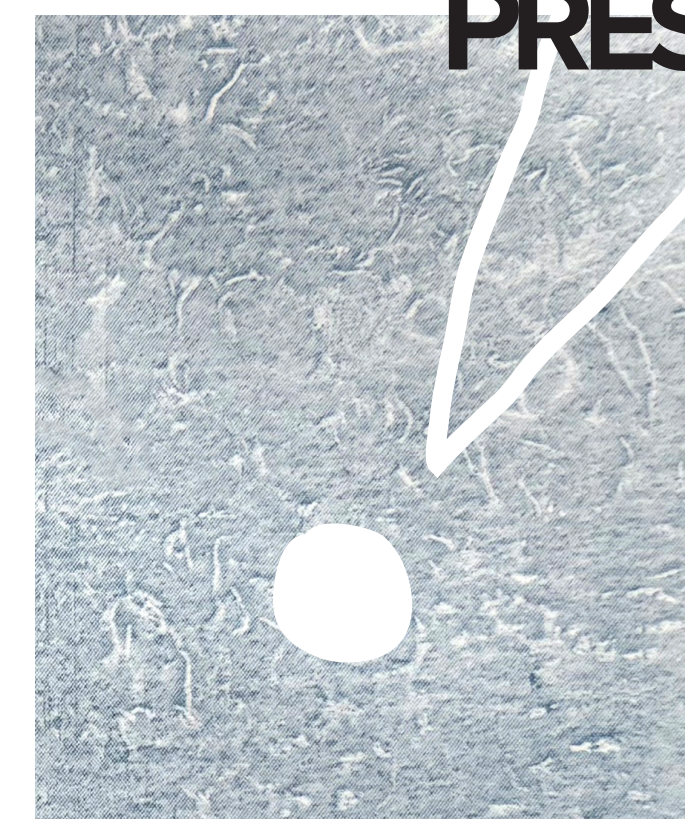
Although nostalgia can feel bittersweet, it psychologically reconnects us to who we once were and better understand our present and future selves. It exists across every moment in time, and constantly reminds me what we experience today may become something you look back on years from now.

I encourage everyone to collect and share their memories with those around them. In doing so, parts of ourselves continue to live on through the stories and the objects we keep. When we begin to forget who we are, these memories

are there to remind us. Sentimentality and nostalgia go hand in hand, and when you do encounter those moments, savour it. It is a strong reminder that the life we are living is one worth remembering.

Through personal artifacts, photographs, interviews, cyanotypes, and mixed media, this book is my expression of nostalgia materialized. Weaving together individual stories and shared experiences, this book reveals how reflections on the past can differ from person to person while still expressing common feelings of connection, loss, and belonging.

By bringing together personal archives and lived moments, *An Archive of Longing* invites viewers to reflect on their own histories and consider how longing exists not only as remembrance, but as something that continues to be a part of our everyday lives.



The last piece I wanted to leave in my book was a letter to my future self. I remember one year in high school one of my teachers asked us to write to ourselves for graduation. We took the entire class to write it and she said she would give it to us in our final year there. I never did see that letter again, but that's besides the point.

Since then I've digitally sent a letter to my future self each year, talking about what I had been doing, people I've met, places I've been. I would also ask questions to my future self. Upon reading them it's such a strange feeling because your past is someone that is uncertain and curious about what is going to happen and your present is able to trace your memories all the way back to them.

In this case, I thought I would write to my future self, the one that has since graduated and embarking on a whole new era of her life. I think it will be interesting to look back on when years have passed and give myself a moment to remember the four years I spent at TMU and how formative they were for the rest of my life.

Letter To My Future Self

In honouring my tradition of writing a future letter to myself each year, I thought I would make one for a year into the future.



“WHAT I
LOVED IN MY
OLD LIFE I
HAVEN’T
FORGOTTEN,
IT LIVES IN
MY SPINE”

— Leonard Cohen



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