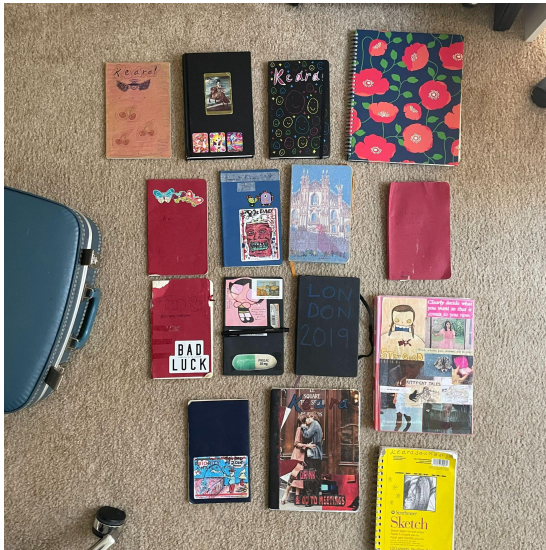


Autobiographical Visual Essay

I. INTRODUCTIONS TO ART



Some of my earliest memories surrounding art education are that of frustration. I felt limited by mediums such as drawing and painting and envious of those who could reproduce imagery clearly and accurately. I did not consider myself an artist because I could not draw well, which was reinforced by ideas of “art” that were presented to me in early art education: mechanical talent equals a good artist. I felt too afraid even to let myself explore art out of deep-seated perfectionism and the idea that it was something that could be passed or failed. Despite these negative notions, I was still filled with creative energy, thus

*Journal Covers*  
began my love of journaling. Writing became a way to express myself without being “perfect.” I learned of the escape that writing, and later art, gave me. A way to deal with the trauma and addiction I was experiencing in my life. A way to take the inspiration that movies gave me and create from it. A way to express the depression and loneliness of being a teenage girl. These journals have become a personal archive that allows me to look back at those times equal in pain and joy. I have a concrete narrative of my life events that led me up to this point. Journaling is a practice I continue to this day.



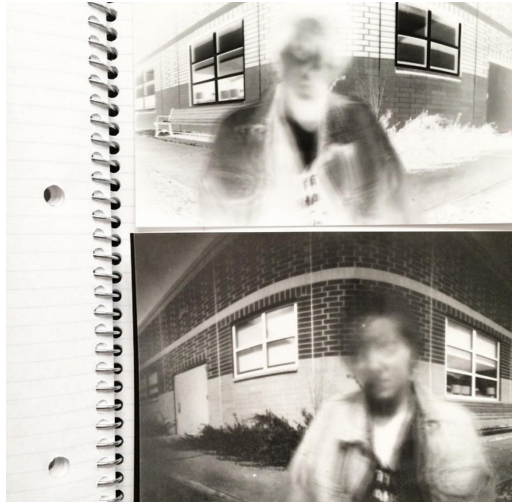
*Journal Collection*

Then, sometime around 9th grade, was my introduction to photography and the realization of how moved I was by form, line, and color. This inspiration also sprung from a newfound love for cinematography. Movies like Sofia Coppola’s *The Virgin Suicides* and Gregg Araki’s *The Doom Generation* introduced me to a way to express emotion through moving image and sound. I began taking the darkroom classes offered at my high school. The old notions I had about perfectionism and art dissolved. For me, there was no way to fail at photography. I was granted the ability to reproduce the world as I saw it, which I always wished I could achieve through other mediums. Guided by a very technically skilled teacher, I fell in love with the control of making images, my creativity further ignited by the element of surprise when shooting

film. To note the setting, the environment I was in limited my perception of the rest of the world. Small town suburbia made me feel trapped. Art became a way to manage that; I found beauty in the mundanity and sought escape through movies and art online. Documenting the monotony around me, I continued making photographs all four years of high school - my favorite works being the images I created on a pinhole camera, the small series of scenery and powerlines, and pictures of my sister. Encouraged by my high school photography teacher, I decided to pursue higher education in art.



*Portrait of my younger sister - 2014*



*Self-portraits on a pinhole camera -2015*



*Early photo series - 2015*



*Another series*

## **II. HIGHER EDUCATION**



The continuation of my art education at university allowed me to experience a creative community in a deeply meaningful and inspiring way. Moving to New York for school allowed me to create art in a bubble; I spent my whole life seeing, making, and consuming art. I spent the first few years cultivating a photographic voice and learning about different mediums within photography. Process became as important as the final result. I fell in love with shooting medium and large format film. I also began to seek inspiration from female artists such as Tracey Emin and Francesca Woodman. Their deeply personal works influenced me to take my practice further in exploring personal relationships and emotional openness, mainly through self-portraiture. The self-portraits I made at this time greatly reflected the isolation and depression I experienced while living in New York.

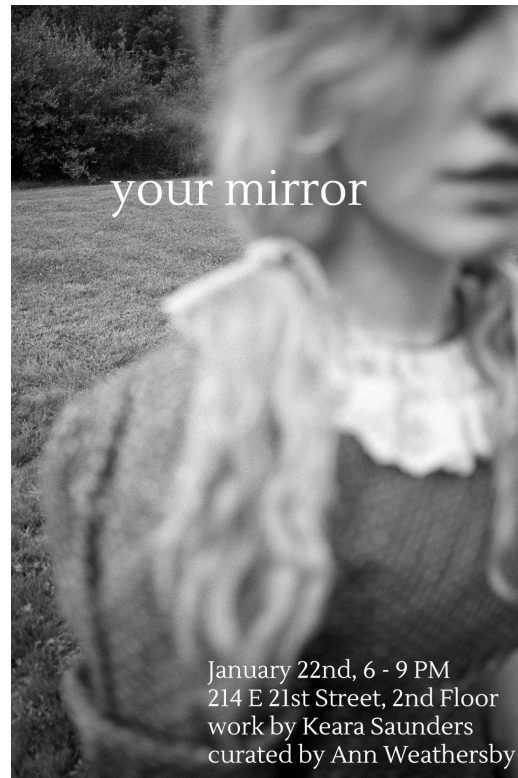


*Self Portrait 2020*

One of the most significant takeaways from my higher education in art was the ability to give and receive critique in a meaningful and constructive way. My senior thesis critique was the highlight of my undergraduate career. I learned the importance of vulnerability in art, primarily through criticism. How equally humbling and liberating it is to expose the most intimate parts of oneself through art.

The community and support of my class at the time allowed me to create my senior thesis project, *Your Mirror*, and exhibit the work as my first solo exhibition. To cite my artist statement on the project, “I began to document my sister obsessively, photographing her and myself in moments of stillness and unrest, attempting subconsciously to look back into the daydreams of

our childhood. Through these images, I am trying to illustrate the existence of our mirrored world, the disguises we wear, our performance, and our inevitable similarity as siblings.” This exhibition was and still is the highlight of my artistic journey. The pandemic struck about a month after this show and greatly impacted my process and work as an artist.

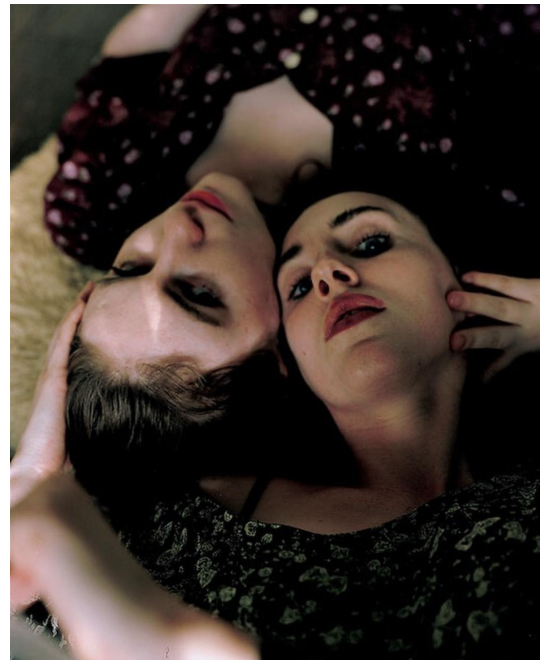


*Flyer for the show*



< *Standing with my work*

*Image from the show >*

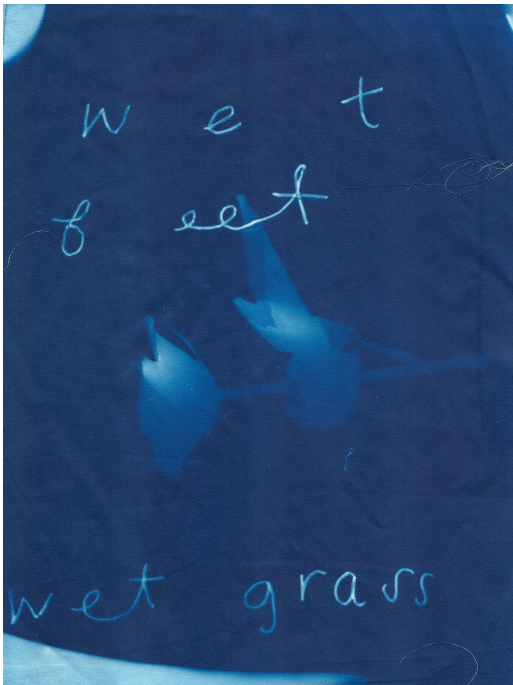


### III. Now

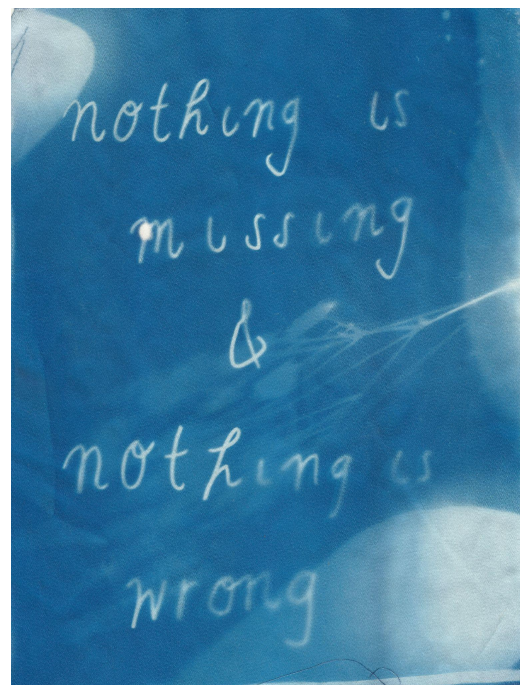


It has been two years since I finished my undergraduate degree in art, and during these past two years, I have created very little. I have maintained small practices such as journaling and taking polaroid photos to document my life - practices like these have always been a part of my life and creative expression, a steady undercurrent to maintain even the smallest amount of creativity. When I begin to expound upon these practices, I know that art reemerges in my life.

Being back in an environment that fosters creativity has been the catalyst for my art practice. I am taking time to examine the past two years of stagnancy. The last intentional and successful body of work was during covid lockdown - with no access to photographic facilities, I began printing cyanotypes at home using text from journal entries and movies.



*Wet Feet 2020*



*Nothing is Missing 2020*

This work emerged from a barren and still time in my life. I now have the experience of creating art under such circumstances but now, paired with more access to creative materials and peer feedback, I can expound on the ideas that made my last project and tap into more profound creative potential.

Current circumstances in my life, such as grief, change, and uncertainty, are all pulling me back towards art as a means to process emotion and share my experiences with others. The art I have created that I feel is the most meaningful has often come from a place of loss. For example, learning to exist and create in a post-pandemic world, mourning the loss of what once was, and embracing the change of the future; on a more personal level, losing friendships through time and death, finding ways to express myself and understand the natural narrative of change. These experiences tie back into the driving forces behind my artistic practice: trying to capture the ephemeral and a means to create an archive of my own life.