



Adriane Little

Mapping Mrs. Dalloway

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Project Description

Literature is riddled with dead or otherwise missing mothers. Virginia Woolf's life and writing were partly, yet significantly guided by the death of her mother when Woolf was just 13-years-old. This loss reappears across her novels. As an artist, I am interested in studying both her writing and her as a woman who experienced this early and profound loss. Conceptually, this work is supported by continued research to advance the trope of the missing mother. Mapping Mrs. Dalloway represents a new way of visualizing text and image within my practice by incorporating data mapping in this new work.

For Mapping Mrs. Dalloway, I walked the streets of London and photographed along the path that Mrs. Dalloway walked in the novel. In doing so, I brought the walking path and Mrs. Dalloway forward 90 years into the present. These are the same streets that Woolf herself walked countless times. My intention was not to illustrate the novel, but instead to use stream of consciousness in capturing the images. This mirrors the literary strategy of the novel. This project challenged me to photograph in a new way. I was limited to a specific amount of time while in England. I knew where I would walk but I was not certain what I would actually find. As each day past, I became more familiar with the sense of place created by the movement of people in the city and the project evolved.

After returning from England, I selected 17 images from London. To bear witness to the spaces that Woolf occupied while writing Mrs. Dalloway, I included 3 images from Monk's House or the house of Virginia and Leonard Woolf in Rodmell, East Sussex UK; a view into her bedroom window, her writing lodge and the orchard in between. I then divided the text of the novel into 20 sections. Using software called Processing, each section is then visualized as a word count of the novel and layered over an image in the series. The circles grow larger the more often a particular word was repeated. The green that is used for the data mapping was color matched from photographs I took of the wall paint while inside of Monk's House. The data visualization both obscures and reveals information within each image. I perceive the interaction of the mapping within each image as moments of loss.

Context of Project within My Studio Practice

Conceptually, this new work is supported by research to advance theories of using the trope of the missing mother in literature and also to further articulate what I call the matrilineal ghost. In my work, I see the matrilineal ghost as a psychic container of sorts for collective and personal history or experience. It is a space that continues to evolve through the interrogation of traumatic moments. The theoretical frame of my research and artwork is supported by concepts of ritual and trauma through the presence and absence of the maternal body. This is then visualized with the artwork as a series of mediated rituals. In my artwork, ritual is a singular and private act; under the burden of grief and trauma. Ritual can be found within the process of creating this new set of photographs. In part, ritual here becomes preparation for physically creating the artwork just as the cutting of paper or typing did in previous projects. The ritual will continue into the parameters that are established for creating these new photographs.

The creation of this artwork is a continuation of the ideas and strategies from the recent projects that I have created. Yet, this new work challenged and exceeds the boundaries of my previous work in the concept and physicality of the artwork as experimental photography. The photographs as described were carried out in the style of documentary photography with an added layer of data visualization. Both strategies alone and especially in combination are new ways of working within my artistic practice. Conceptually, this research and artwork will articulate ideas of place, memory, trauma, gender and ritual.

Context of Project within Discipline

This new work is supported by research, ideas and theories from the disciplines of contemporary art, literature, literary criticism, gender studies, psychology and continental philosophy. The photographs created become a part of the larger canon of contemporary artwork that is conceptually grounded in strategies of text and image or text in artwork as non-linear narrative work. The artwork also contributes to scholarship in the fields of documentary photography and data visualization or the recontextualization of Mrs. Dalloway by way of the ideas of involuntary memory and stream of consciousness within the novel and landscape of London. Creativity can be seen as the accumulation of experience and observation. With that my intention was to read as much as possible about and by Virginia Woolf to fuel this creativity. Travel in England was essential to absorb Woolf as a person and photographically document the landscape, while connecting the mother-daughter relationship in Mrs. Dalloway to the surroundings in London. This new dimension richly informed the project.

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All images are 16" x 24" digital photographs (22" x 30" framed)
Hahnemühle William Turner Paper

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