Precedents

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Precedents related to my domains:

1. Lindsey Elliot, *Rest in Pieces*, 2011 (MFA DT)

   Relevant domains: objects, memory, archive, history, semiotics

   Lindsey's project is based on the idea that certain physical objects hold sentimental value. As receptacles for memories, common objects are elevated from mundane to extraordinary. Such objects might not be useful or interesting on their own accord, but to their owners they are important symbols of life experiences.

   Lindsey constructed handmade replicas of mementos that are important to her. This tactic underscores the unique personal narrative that sets otherwise cookie-cutter manufactured objects apart in her eyes.

   I share Lindsey's belief that objects can hold sentimental value. Some of my initial prototypes and ideas explored ways of recording and communicating the narratives behind personal artifacts. Lindsey's approach is a more delicate treatment of this pursuit–making objects by hand imbues them with a sense of uniqueness and personal relevance without explicitly stating the details of each related memory. I am now re-orienting my project to be similarly subtle with the story-telling.

   Like Lindsey, I am interested in the types of objects that are too important to discard, yet not relevant enough to be part of their owner's daily life. I, too, am going to put these objects out for public display, but as a part of an archive. In her write-up on the MFA DT thesis website Lindsey notes that precious objects usually end up being stored in boxes at the back of a closet. My project is going to capitalize on this truth and highlight the oxymoronic nature of being both important and forgotten.

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2. Adam Scher, *Lost in Performance*, 2011 (MFA DT)

   Relevant domains: memory, archive, childhood, digital data

Adam's project explores how repeated recall and commitment of memories can distort their details. His work draws an analogy between the human mind and a computer, exposing that both are incapable of storing data without compromising its fidelity.

For his piece *upload_download_play_rewind* Adam uses Youtube and a VCR to manipulate the quality of home movies. Each upload, download, and play further obfuscates details of the imagery, mimicking how our conception of past experiences degrades over time.

Another piece, *cut_paste*, explores the nature of memory by trying to replicate the experience of picturing something in the mind's eye. Small cues visual guide the viewer toward the focal point, but the overall appearance of the imagery is an inexact, ambient representation of the subject matter.

Both my project and Adam's project is about preserving memories by archiving the things that trigger them. He uses computer software to literally "save" important photographs and home movies. Yet, his methodology proves to be counter-productive since each compression of the file damages its fidelity.

I too, am compulsively saving important things. As I go through this exercise I wonder if I will encounter the problem with technology that Adam's pieces reveal–will the act of archiving physical objects as digital data actually destroy what is most important about them? Even though digital data doesn't erode in the same way that physical objects do, it's clear that our memories are no safer when stored digitally.

Like Adam, I'm experimenting with digital data as a visual language. Both he and I use degraded, obscured images to represent our subject matter. My most recent prototype relies on the fact that it only takes a small visual cue to remind the viewer of something familiar. The photographs in my archive only show bits and pieces of the objects they record–just enough for their owner to identify them.

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3. Bree Rubin, *Verschrankung: Tangles with Tea Cup*, 2012 (MFA DT)

    Relevant domains: objects, relationships, philosophy, sentience, artificial intelligence

    With a simple household object, Bree invites the viewer to consider

principles of Object-Oriented Ontology. Her project questions our anthropocentric, subjective point of view by asking, "are humans the only sentient beings in the universe?"

Bree's Arduino-animated a teacup responds to human interaction. By creating the illusion that the object is moving on its own accord, she elevates its status from passive object to intentional actor. Anthropomorphizing a teacup in this way creates an accessible visual metaphor for larger philosophical theories about the nature of being.

My thesis is also related to theories of Object-Oriented Ontology. Yet, rather than reject subjectivity, I will use it as a relatable segue into the idea that objects are valued co-beings. Where Bree uses physical animation to anthropomorphize an object, I will use emotional sentiment to anthropomorphize objects. Since so many people already feel a special connection toward personal artifacts such as teddy bears, I think I can leverage that tendency into a tactic for getting them to entertain these fringe philosophical ideas.

Precedents related to what I think I will make:

4. Larry Baker, *Men's Home Solutions*, 2012 (MFA DT)

   Relevant domains: humor, advertising, consumer products, problem-solving

   Larry's project uses satire to comment on gender stereotypes. He designed a line of products that dress up cleaning supplies and other objects usually associated with "women's work" in ways that might make them appealing to men.

   His products aren't *really* for sale, but Larry proposes the possibility that these are desirable goods for a niche market.

   Larry uses exaggeration and absurdity as a tactic for getting the viewer to understand that the products are a joke.

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5. Jimmy Loizeau and James Auger, *Audio Tooth Implant*, 2001
   Relevant domains: critical design, satire

   Like Larry Baker, Jimmy Loizeau and James Auger also came up with a product idea that they never actually intended to produce and sell: a wireless receiver in the form of a tooth implant.

Their idea is to enable the wearer to discreetly hear a phone call, radio program, or an alarm clock alert. How? Bone resonance allows sound waves to travel from the jaw to the inner ear in the form of minute vibrations.

Although the technology exists for the tooth implant to become a real product, the artists' intention wasn't to put such a thing on the market. Rather, they wanted to provoke discussion around the questions and concerns that come with such an idea.

Like both *Men's Home Solutions* and *Audio Tooth Implant,* I plan to sarcastically advertise my thesis project as a (fake) product. Although I have earnestly been working toward a viable solution to the problem I have identified, I think that positioning that solution as product would force viewers to consider my creation outside the bounds of the gallery–it's not just an art object meant for contemplation, it's a suggestion that many people face the problem I have identified and that this is one way to solve it.

I would also like my thesis project to include a hint of satire. The whole reason we have personal artifacts is because of our consumer culture– we're always buying, giving, and receiving objects. It's funny to suggest that consumers buy yet another product for the purposes of archiving the products they already own. Encouraging further consumption exacerbates the issue and underscores the reason why we have so many objects in the first place.

Like these two precedents, I also hope that my project reads as slightly absurd. I am creating an extreme solution that reveals how obsessively some people hoard objects. It should read as slightly paranoid.

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6. Alex Stachelek*, Blink*, 2011 (MFA DT)

   Relevant domains: physical vs. digital space, visual language, materiality, distortion

   Alex's project plays with the viewer's perception of physical and digital space. He modified an SLR camera to connect to an Arduino. The Arduino was hooked up to various sensors that gathered data from the physical environment. The input from each sensor affected how the camera took photos. The photos of the physical space were then combined with digital noise video and projected back into the space as a distorted regurgitation of its surroundings.

I have been experimenting with a similar treatment for the images I capture for my archive. My most recent prototype layers a looping noise video over the digital photos I take of my artifacts. Digital noise is a common trope of low-quality video footage. I am using this easily-recognizable visual language to imply that my artifacts are being seen via a live, streaming video.

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7. Jennifer Sharpe, *Clothing Traceability*, 2011 (MFA DT)

Relevant domains: history, geolocation

Jennifer's project tracks the materials and labor involved in making a garment and aggregates this information online. Each clothing item she tracks is tagged with a QR code specific to its online record. By making the origins of each garment public knowledge, Jennifer encourages transparency and ethics in an industry that is notorious for exploiting resources and laborers.

Jennifer and I are both interested in learning, recording, and sharing the back-story behind objects. I, too, will create an online archive of this information. I have even considered tagging objects that have been archived with a QR code or RFID tag so that their future owners can learn about their history.