



FRIDAY, MAY 4TH

The Culturator: Now You See It, Then You Won't

by Juleana Enright

We've been taught to expect that not everything is what it appears to be, especially in the art world. This month, drive blindly through North Minneapolis and you may just miss a thought-provoking temporary art installation masquerading under the guise of a condemned house. As part of an Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, local artist Lauren Herzak-Bauman rented a house through the City of Minneapolis and turned the entire space into an installation – dubbed “thisisdisappearing” – interpreting the concepts of death, loss and how they affect the home.

At first glance it is like any other foreclosed home. It sits empty and boarded with no utilities on site. After the month-long artist residency, the structure will meet the typical demise, demolished and voided of any artistic anamnesis. In the meantime, through a series of installations and performance pieces, seven artists – including the project's head, Herzak-Bauman – work as artistic EMTs breathing a final breath into the structure and aiding in a celebration of its former life.

In Erin Hael's intimate “Risk/Reciprocity,” Hael uses the concept of the hxaro gift exchange in which Southern Africa's !Kung San tribe form gift giving relationships in an attempt to minimize the amount of economic risk the tribe experiences throughout the year. By asking her viewers to exchange a kiss with her, Hael explores the acts our culture deems as “risk-taking” on both an economic and emotional level.

In “Consider,” Herzak-Bauman creates an aesthetic visual bereavement experience using materials found on the first and second floor of the space. Through photos and installations, she examines how collections, repetition and time influence the grief process.

In “An Inventory: 2930 N. Newton Ave,” artist MC Hyland poses the question: when a house is condemned, what part of the tenants' previous life stays behind? Like an episode of CSI, Hyland's “An Inventory” attempts to track the house's past life through documented handprints, randomly scrawled phone numbers and abandoned paintings.

To glimpse the duality of residing at 2930 North Newton Avenue, artist Angela Sprunger's “We Used to Live Here” features large-scale drawings done on both the exterior and interior of the space's boarded up windows. Her drawings depict imagined snapshots from both an insider's and outsider's gaze.

In Japheth Storlie's “Sold,” Storlie merges the hope of the past with the verisimilitude of the present by creating a miniature version the house – set in its mint condition – using the current dilapidated house as a contrasting backdrop.

Artist and writer-in-residency Victoria Nightingale's piece “x-ray: a collection of poems for what is seen under a different light,” penetrates beyond the shell of a dying home to unearth the memories and enigmas left behind.

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To get an insider's peek of the exhibit and the concept behind this unique collaboration, I chatted with "thisisdisappearing" project lead Lauren Herzak-Bauman and exhibit artist Ash Marlene Hane.

Lauren Herzak-Bauman

***l'etoile:** Tell us a little about your background as an artist and some of your past work.*

Herzak-Bauman: I have been making objects and temporal installations about loss and mourning using clay as my primary medium. My experience with bereavement drives me to consider how loss affects the living; in particular the transition one makes from suffering from the death of a loved one to living with and housing that loss. The objects I create come from personal encounters growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, and sifting through the detritus found in the city landscape. Porcelain is my clay of choice for its ability to be both strong and fragile. Creating site-specific installations reaffirms my conviction that grief and mourning deserve a visual existence.



Herzak-Bauman's previous work "The Parlor Room Installation"

***l'etoile:** What was the concept behind thisisdisappearing?*

Herzak-Bauman: I received an Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board to create an installation within the entire space of a house, re-contextualizing each room to reflect ideas of death and loss within a domestic space. Throughout my weeks with the house, I will make drawings photographs and installations that explore how process, repetition, labor, and the passage of time influence grief. The project will culminate with an event in coordination with the demolition of the property.

***l'etoile:** How did you go about gaining legal access to the house you're using for this project?*

Herzak-Bauman: I wrote an email to Mayor Ryback explaining my project and inquiring about city-owned properties. My email was passed along and eventually I received a response from Mary Altman, Public Arts Coordinator, who put me in touch with people at Community Planning and Development (CPED) for the City of Minneapolis. It took a lot of months, emails, and coordinating with a lot of different people but it eventually worked out.

l'etoile: You've commissioned six other local artists to work with you. How did you choose them and what do they bring to the series?

Herzak-Bauman: I put out a call for participation to my art community and asked people to forward it to anyone who might be interested. I received a ton of responses and connected with a lot of artists in the process. I chose artists based on their willingness to respond to the space and willingness to continually work in the house over the two-week time frame between opening and closing. Since the house had no utilities, each artist had to be able to adapt their process to the space.

l'etoile: What kind of art mediums can we expect to see at thisisdisappearing?

Herzak-Bauman: There will be printmaking, bookmaking, a performance, and sculptural work. I'll be working with clay on site. One artist will be building a miniature of the house when it was in pristine condition then photographing it in front of the house. Another artist is creating images on the boarded windows that can be viewed from both inside and outside. I'm excited to see what everyone creates.

l'etoile: In regards to the plethora of building and house fires Minneapolis has recently encountered – one even tragically taking a life – do you see or do you think your viewers might see this piece as a sort of artistic eulogy for the losses?

Herzak-Bauman: There are a lot of ideas floating around this project – particularly to our region, the state of foreclosed and condemned homes, the recent tornado damage to North Minneapolis, and certainly the house fires. I see the project as a putting to rest the life and experiences of the home – especially since it will be demolished soon after I vacate. I'm responding to the surfaces, textures, and materiality of the place that are perhaps a result of certain tragedies.

l'etoile: How long will this exhibit be showing and where can we catch it?

Herzak-Bauman: The project officially opens this Saturday, May 5, from 12-4pm, and closes Saturday, May 26, 12-4pm. Viewers can come see the house on either of these days, [watch the blog](#) for updates on events or [make an appointment](#) for a showing. I recommend making a couple visits, possibly for both opening and closing. Each artist is at the start of their project and the work will be growing and changing over the coming weeks.



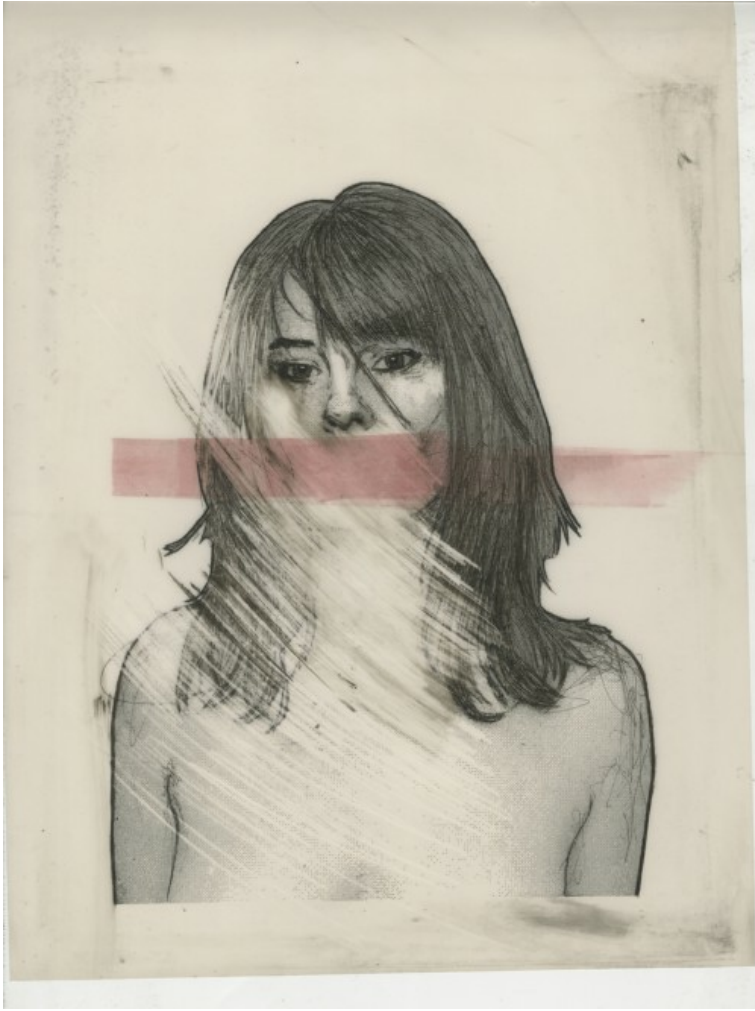
Ash Marlene Hane

l'etoile: How did you get involved with this collaboration?

Hane: I became acquainted with Lauren during long bleary-eyed screen printing sessions at the MCAD studios this spring. Working near each other for 20-plus hours struck up conversations and gave me a really wonderful appreciation for her work and approach. One thing led to another.

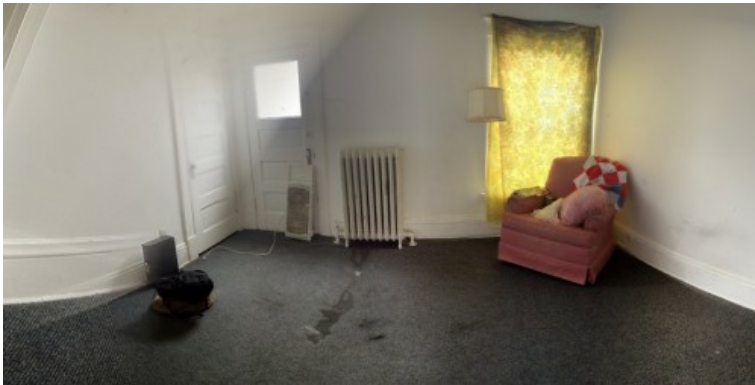
l'etoile: Your piece "Bright and Fading, A Long Goodbye," is a visual exploration relating to how we process memories and grief. In it, you've created a mural of your deceased grandmother by deconstructing a digital template. Can you tell us more about this installation and your creative technique?

Hane: My current practice involves beginning with a digital image which is turned into a printing matrix and then adding hand drawn elements and also removing information by hand. So in a way, the performative aspect of the work I am doing at the house is an extension of the method in which I have recently been working – like extending my printmaking studio practice over time and allowing people to come in and watch as the work evolves. Throughout the month of May, I'll be documenting her image; as the month passes, the installation will represent her memory. I will be documenting the transitions and posting images to my [website](#).



l'etoile: *At the end of the residency, the condemned house – AKA the temporary gallery site – is set to be demolished. Do you plan on taking your piece with you or leaving it behind as a kind of sacrificial offering?*

Hane: I am installing the work directly to the wall of the house, so the work will literally become part of the house, part of the walls. As the month progresses and I begin to delete from the image, I will be scraping and removing into the wall itself. Part of the work is knowing that it will eventually be lost all together save for pictures and the memories people have of viewing it.



Bright and Fading, A Long Goodbye

"This disappearing" opens on Saturday, May 5th from noon to 4 pm and runs through Saturday, May 26. Visit the exhibit at its temporary gallery house: 2930 Newton Avenue North, Minneapolis – yes, the one that looks like its falling apart.

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angela sprunger ash marlene hane erin hael japheth storlie lauren herzak-bauman mc hyland victoria nightingale