

Elena Helfrecht

Plexus

Submission to the "Free Theme" IWPA Award

Work Statement

'**Plexus**' is a photographic case study through archival still lifes, highlighting the effects of inherited trauma and postmemory, and providing a familiar terrain to explore the influence of the family in the discovery of psychological and cultural processes within history.

In this work, I investigate the complex routes of my ancestors using my family home and archive. Finding documents and artefacts which lost their history and became indecipherable, I add my own narrative to what is left unknown, in order to create a metaphor transgressing personal and national boundaries.

When trying to put these found fragments together, the term 're-membering' becomes literal: I piece together the limbs of a body of events I have never fully seen or experienced, in order to understand the past, the present, and ultimately, the impact this kind of baggage has had on myself, the people around me, and the viewers alike. I use the objects and architecture of the house as parabolic proxies, turning them into gates connecting the past and the present. This creation of dream-like environments and symbols interlinks all that is remembered and simultaneously forgotten.

Even though history never repeats in exactly the same way, I can observe cyclical patterns reappearing, and catch myself repeating the behaviours of my mother and grandmother that so greatly ended up influencing me. With this body of work, I want to raise awareness for the aftermaths of conflicts generations later, and examine how collective memory is shaped and influenced. Creating a new sense of identity through confronting the past, spanning across four generations, provides grounds for a detailed investigation of postmemory, mental health, war and history.

(Information for the Jury: No animals were harmed or killed for this work.)