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Marcella Moliner

**H.O.M.E (Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)**

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I used to play with toys until an embarrassingly old age. The appeal of Polly Pockets and Build-a-Bear persisted into tweendom as peers adopted more worthwhile pursuits (Sims, Guitar Hero). If I'm being honest, I still have a lot of toys stashed away, buried in my Dad's basement somewhere. I haven't had the heart to part with select stuffed animals and dolls despite successive moves and the resultant need to declutter. Why hold onto these things? They retain so much connection to an earlier time in my life that I have trouble accessing without these visual, tactile aids. These nostalgic objects are able to unlock and retether my childhood memories in a way even photographs can't.

Memories can also reside in places. Take for instance the feeling you might get when you drive past your old elementary school or childhood home. These architectural memory objects are so powerfully nostalgic that, despite being tangibly rooted in place, are able to transport us vast emotive and temporal distances.

Artist Marcella Moliner is similarly interested in keeping memory objects and has discovered that photogrammetry allows her to collect places as well. Photogrammetry is a

3D digital imaging technique that involves taking dozens, sometimes hundreds, of photos of a single object from all sides and using a software to stitch these images together, creating a 3D digital rendering. Since the rendering is created using photographs, this 3D model is often highly detailed with true-to-life colours and textures. Moliner became fascinated with this technique during her days as a teaching assistant for the Exploring 3D Digital Objects course at OCAD University. She fervently practiced this technique, scanning almost anything she could get her hands on. When examining her archive of 3D models she discovered a commonality shared by these disparate scans: they all reminded the artist of the people and places surrounding her when they were captured. Realizing the sentimental power of photogrammetry, the artist began scanning precious objects and places of personal significance: the cowboy boots she wore growing up, childhood drawings created by the artist and her sister, the fountain in her current neighbourhood, and the prison in her hometown. These memory objects are all contained within *H.O.M.E. (Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)*, a work that is both a virtual cabinet of curiosities and a visual diary, created in Moliner's effort to find comfort and connection during a period of loneliness and isolation.

In *H.O.M.E. (Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)*, we follow the character of S.A.L. (which stands for Self-Afflicted Loathing), a creature composed of horse bones, shoes, knee pads, and other miscellanea. Motivated by a desire to cure his loneliness through the accumulation of objects, S.A.L. is the embodiment of the artist's own desire for love and companionship. "S.A.L. is the worst version of me," Moliner states, he "feels entitled to belong, and to collect and own things... to keep people and consume relationships." In the work, S.A.L. seeks connection at any cost, leading him to an egg containing the work's antagonist, B.E.C. (Beastly Elegant Creature), whose unusual appearance is modelled after Mike the Headless Chicken,<sup>1</sup> a subject of childhood fascination for the artist. After disturbing B.E.C., S.A.L. is confronted by this monster

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<sup>1</sup> Mike the Headless Chicken (April 20, 1945 – March 17, 1947) was a chicken who survived being beheaded and famously lived without his head for 18 months.

and is swallowed whole, a consequence of the character's all-consuming desire for connection. Moliner doesn't imagine this is the end for S.A.L. though. The title of the work—*H.O.M.E. (Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)*—suggests that this world encompasses many other eggs that might contain friendlier companions for S.A.L.

Eggs hold special significance for the artist, having grown up surrounded by chickens and ducks. Collecting eggs, incubating them, and watching them hatch connected the artist to the cycle of life, and the experience of finding unfertilized eggs left to rot taught her about death and decay. By creating this world of mysterious possibility rife with eggs, the artist is harkening back to her childhood association of eggs with exploration, discovery, survival, and comfort.

It took Moliner many months to produce this work. The countless hours she spent locating and scanning objects, and creating and editing the animation, allowed her to feel like the work itself was a companion. The artist poured herself into the work, creating its various components piece by piece over time. Some days she would test her animation chops by 3D animating technically challenging aspects, like the race car found zooming around the cowboy boots, whereas other days she would delve into the emotional content of the work, like when she scanned her grandmother's obituary to form the paper boats. Moliner eventually viewed her process as "feeding" the work—it became something she was nurturing and growing with.

As the volume of objects in the work grew, so did its maximalist aesthetic. Moliner realized that any and all memory objects could be scanned and situated together virtually, uniting sentimental items and places that would never share physical proximity. The artist's process allowed her to alter these objects as well, like the Hamtaro figurines she digitally enhanced, giving them vibrant hues and full lips. What results is a medley of both realistic and surreal elements, some things familiar and others aspirational. The sounds heard in the work are similarly multifaceted: a slow beat draws us in, and is

overlaid with foley sounds that enhance our experience of the objects and activities in the animation, which are further described in Moliner's haunting narration. The work is so maximalist that it even spills beyond the limits of the screen. In the artist's thesis exhibition, the plants and furniture seen in the work were presented alongside the video, creating an environment that invites viewers into S.A.L.'s world.

The artist has also made countless 3D prints of the yassified Hamtaros,<sup>2</sup> making these imaginary companions real. Moliner regularly offers these figurines as gifts to her loved ones, proliferating the sentimental items supposedly hoarded in the work. Just as my collection of toys connects me to my childhood memories, these critters become cherished memory objects and sources of joy for those in Moliner's life. *H.O.M.E. (Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)*, the animation and its material offshoots, allows the artist to find connection with others through nostalgic objects and affirms that maybe you're never too old for toys.

-Megan MacLaurin

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<sup>2</sup> In an interview about the work, Moliner described the Hamtaros as being "yassified." Yassification is an internet slang term referring to the process of making something better by making it queerer.