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Pegah Peivandi

Lasting Impressions

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“Nothing distinguishes memories from ordinary moments. Only later do they become memorable by the scars they leave.” - Chris Marker, *La Jetee*, 1962.

To explore the relationship between time and memory, filmmaker Chris Marker tells the story of a man obsessed with an image from his childhood. Taking place in the fictional aftermath of World War III in France, scientists attempt to use time travel to discover how the past and future can save the present. They send the protagonist back in time to the moment he sees a beautiful woman on a jetty before a tragedy he can't remember occurs. Marker uses conflicting methods of storytelling to demonstrate the transient nature of memory. Firstly, what the protagonist claims to remember versus what plays out when he returns is completely different. Although everything appears to be as it was in the past, the way he interacts within that space as a grown man shaped by years of experience distorts the original scene. For example, he takes the woman out on a date, initiates a romantic relationship with her, and the memory becomes a love story in the present moment. Secondly, the story is told entirely through photographs with editor Jean Ravel collaging the images quickly or zooming in and out of them to reveal more context. Only upon expanding the images of the jetty first seen in the beginning of the film can the protagonist and audience realize that he is the victim of the aforementioned tragedy. In both cases, Marker illustrates how memories are only fixed images within our minds and are contextualized by how they make us feel. It makes the audience wonder which is more real and more valuable: the events that occurred to make a memory or the ways the memory stays with and influences our actions.

With *Lasting Impressions*, Peivandi invites viewers to meditate on how time and memory both inform personal growth in unique ways, although they're subject to change based on perception. From head-on, the work appears to be one fixed image of a lush and vibrant Ginkgo leaf standing proudly within an isolated frame. However, a look from a different angle reveals a multi-layered work comprising vinyl overlaid on top of a degrading matte print. The mirroring of these two materials echoes the formula of how a memory is created, allowing viewers to witness the inciting incident and the reflections that stem from it. Through repeated acts of layering and tearing tiles of the print, applied to the wall with wheat paste, the artist illustrates the eroding quality of memory and the foundational properties that remain. The erosion reflects the artist's perspective on time as well as their commitment to allowing circumstances to unfold naturally within their daily life and their art practice. In the same way an event is only as good as we remember it, the Ginkgo image printed on the vinyl film is complete and lacks the abrasions seen on the acrylic print. The translucence of the film acts to remind us that memories are reflections of what remains. The vinyl also features small printed dots that texture the image in the foreground. The way those dots pepper the acrylic paper illustrates the way memory retains elements of the original event that inspired it. These ideas are echoed in the symbolism of the Ginkgo leaf in Asian cultures as a symbol of endurance and longevity. Some Ginkgo Biloba trees have been recorded to live up to 1000 years old¹ and have lived to witness centuries upon centuries pass by. In all that time all the naked eye is left with is a static image of a tree despite retaining ancient emotional history within its veins. Peivandi's work allows us to witness these ghost-like impressions which we normally aren't able to witness and asks to consider how they've shaped our lives.

What's fascinating about rendering the unseen into the physical is how it explores memory as an appropriation of reality. Peivandi does this in two ways, firstly with the mirroring of materials and secondly by reproducing a digital artwork in physical properties. To achieve this, Peivandi printed out several sections of the artwork and reconstructed them to create the image of the Ginkgo leaf. As the protagonist in *La*

¹ Klein, JoAnna. "The Secret That Helps Some Trees Live More than 1,000 Years - The New York Times." *The New York Times*, 13 Jan. 2020,

Jetee experienced, the same image can completely change when contextualized in different circumstances. By virtue of being reassembled in the artist's image, the artwork itself becomes a literal manifestation of how time affects memory. While the large reproduction of a symbolic image is reminiscent of the pop art works of Richard Prince or Roy Lichtenstein, Peivandi's works aren't concerned with using product as conduit for accessing emotional history. They reject the capitalist notion of deifying industrialization, instead looking toward familiar symbols that are organic and inextricably intrinsic to our humanity. This has been a throughline in their works which often take inspiration from the Iranian art and culture they were exposed to as a child. In the digital illustration 'Shab-e-Yalda (Winter Solstice)' (2023) Peivandi depicts a pomegranate against an amorphous red background, a fruit that's intricately weaved throughout Iranian traditions. In an effort to get closer to the feelings that Iranian arts inspire within them, which Peivandi describes to me as "balance, flow, dynamism, love [and] existentialism", many of their artworks feature undefined shapes. By allowing themselves to let go of control and follow their muse, Peivandi plays with appropriated memory by creating forms that are reminiscent of images we've seen before while being notably distinctive. These shapes are a representation of liberating oneself from regressive structures and embracing your intuition. By removing judgement a third space between reality and the imagined is created where both can coexist, essentially connecting the dots between who we've become and how we got there.

Perhaps this third space where everything is in perspective is the only place where we can confront the traumas and triumphs of our past. What I find most remarkable about Peivandi's work is the way it invites you to a place where all of you, your past, present and future is accepted. A realm where you are allowed to be both whole and multifaceted. In Marker's world, his characters face off against a world suffocated by voices commanding the public to fit themselves into shallow narratives. In Peivandi's, they create space for us to consider that we have our whole lives to passionately decide for ourselves how we choose to live.

- Harry Clarke