

**Claire Klima**

***Opowiadać Wspomnienia: Reminisce***

I create paintings focused on human figures for public display. In my practice, I experiment with faces and bodies, as well as color. While many artists focus on reducing the mortality of their work, I am interested in creating fleeting exhibitions. Temporality also allows the work to better parallel a moment in time. The work I strive to engage in is not necessarily associated with authorship. Rather than creating work for the sake of institutional credit, the effect of the work can only be measured by the approval of the citizens for whom it was created. Public art differs from commercial art in that it is accessible to a more diverse audience. A gallery or museum attracts the same demographics, whereas a wall in a public space is encountered by various people in unique ways.

For *Opowiadać Wspomnienia: Reminisce*, I deviate from my use of vibrant hues to focus on line drawings with black paint. I use newsprint because it is not a durable medium. I render photographs of photographs, as my mother sends archived family images. In addition to decalomania, I create wallpaper mimicking designs found on traditional Polish pottery, including those in the family collection. The drawings are done on newsprint to be cut out and installed as a collage using wheatpaste, a water-based adhesive traditional in street art. *Opowiadać Wspomnienia: Reminisce* is to be exhibited in Wyandotte, Michigan, on the side of the house on Spring Street where my *babcia* grew up with her family. The people who will see the work will not necessarily recognize its subjects; time has passed, people have moved out for new to come in, but my grandpa continues to live there. However, there may be some who feel some familiarity with the imagery.

The style of the drawings is more immediate than any employed in earlier projects. Immediacy is necessary to capture the response of the artist towards what they are making. "Immediacy," according to Ariane Wiesel, "is the manner in which...media are abbreviated and hidden," while "media are the mechanisms through which connections are made and meanings are understood."<sup>1</sup> The quick illustrations I create are reductive, as are the photographs I am further reducing. In *Opowiadać Wspomnienia: Reminisce*, I am responding to viewing photographs of relatives who have passed; I remember some, and others I never met. This process embodies the act of remembering where I come from. I remember recantations and narratives rather than the people or places themselves. I take solace in the familiarity, but cannot ignore the distance.

I am not responding to the photographs as objects but as digital duplicates. I look closer by pinching my fingers on my phone screen rather than bringing the item closer to my eye. My unfamiliar relationship to the photograph as an object parallels the dynamics within my family and other families. Creating culture as Polish immigrants did in Wyandotte, Michigan is a means to feel closer to the people we come from. Commemorating members of that culture by displaying them on the exterior of the house in which they lived is an opportunity to contribute to that culture and continue that feeling of closeness. In the process, I will inevitably reduce what

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<sup>1</sup> "Immediacy: An Impossible Absolute?" Ariane Weisel, 2002, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/immediacy.htm>

came before in some way - meaning could be overlooked, symbols represented incorrectly, or incidentally faces depicted homogeneously. However, the interaction is reductive because my family members were not as proud of where they came from as where they were, and the sharing of culture fell out of fashion at some point down the line. My mother did her best to find pieces of what was left and show them to me. Interacting with these pieces of my culture may not return it to what it once was, or even make it mine, but it allows it to stay alive. At the very least, my grandpa will like my drawings, even if he cannot tell he is in them.

Engagement with the piece is less predictable. It is not on public property, but it is openly visible to the passerby. Since it will be assembled using wheatpaste, a water-based medium, and insubstantial newsprint, onto the aluminum siding, the installation will be susceptible to weathering. It will remain on display for one week, throughout which I will maintain the mural to the best of my ability. This represents the temporal nature of the relationships I am attempting to reconnect with, as well as the feeling of reconnection itself. The maintenance can sometimes feel more damaging, but letting it fall apart is not a viable alternative.