

you, me, us

Moesha Magagula Raphael

BFA Graduate Exhibition

*to my mum,
thank you for giving me life
thank you for saying you love
me more when i say goodbye
i care for you*

*to my granny,
you will always be my angel
i love you*



to me,



to unravel a
torment you
must begin

somewhere





nonhlanhla II





nonhlanhla I

me, you us

*“This body of work is contextually set in
conversation between myself and family. “*

This project is about care, care that i am giving and teaching myself. It is centred around reconstructing memories from my childhood, exploring my identity, and reimagining concepts around family.

I call this project *me, you, us* and through it I grasp at and reimagine ideas of intimacy, care, trauma, and interpersonal relationships within the context of family. My work revolves around memory, repair and reconnection to these ideas. This body of work is contextually set in conversation between myself and family. The title voices this entangled connection.

My childhood is very memorable in the ways that it was sometimes joyous and mostly emotionally tumultuous. Growing older has meant realising that I had emotional needs that went unmet as a child and this only became evident when I left home and starting fostering my own non-familial relationships. *me, you, us* attempts to visually and emotionally explore the negative and positive aspects of my childhood experiences. I am exploring the possibility of an alternative past reality that acknowledges the duality of care and pain within my family history and childhood.

I am fascinated with how old photographs function as valuable objects, that romanticise the past. The significance of a family photo lies in its ability to evoke emotions and memories, allowing individuals to temporarily revisit who they once were. A romanticisation of the past is not a true channeling of my own childhood experiences. In my work I shift old family photographs and personal memories from being an experience of stagnant romanticisation into an emotive space for re-imagining, repair, and connection. This disjointing of my family archive from its precious subjectivity makes way to reconstruct a safer entry for my re-imagination of the past.

I disjoint figures and scenes to intentionally channel intimacy through physical closeness, as well as, to draw attention to my distance from intimacy. The recurring textile elements represent an entanglement of connection and a intentional practicing of care within myself and how I'm exploring my childhood through gentleness.

uhleka? ngiyahleka.







uhleka

ngatsi

ubona

libhokisi le

ma'smartie

uhleka;
to laugh, to smile

ngatsi;
like, about yourself

ubona;
you see, to see

lihbokisi;
a box

le;
of, other

ma;
the, mother,

*you're smiling like you're
seeing a box of smarties*

*you laugh like you're seeing
a box of smarties*

*you smile, you see a box,
other mother*

this phrase is not something I understood the first, second,
or even third time I heard it from my sister
It's when I realised how it made me feel
seen and insignificant, ridiculed
for excitement? joy?

when I'd hear it, it reiterated that there was to be;

***not too much attention,
not too much joy***



The cycle of packaging oneself within constraint, it ends here





This tapestry, ***uhleka? ngiyahleka.*** is a blanket that conceptually references the memory of my childhood being encased with experiences that fractured my sense of self and relationship to joy. While also, existing as a way to shift those experiences into a space of reclamation and reconstruction. The process of turning this phrase into a material object is not done to merely recreate the words and my associated feelings and memories. The materialising of the phrase is about recalling for repair. Using a loaded context within the framework of care, offers a point of contemplation in this work.

“uhleka ngatsi ubona libhokisi le ma smartie” transitions from being a pensive and anxious contemplation into an affirmative one. The title of the work suggests a question and an answer.

*I **am** smiling like I've seen a box of smarties.*



all smiles







a photograph; the gatekeeper of our happiness?

what does it mean to smile? to really smile and not consciously think of it?

joy is entanglement, perhaps







to care;





to break something apart into parts, implies that you intend to put it back together in a different way from what it was, hopefully. The pink threads that connect and flow through my textiles and collages are a manifestation of my reconnection and repair to family and myself. The threads are fragile in their materiality and thus lend themselves to my re-imagining and practice of care and intimacy.

my granny, Mpho Phyllis Magagula used to sew clothing for my mum older siblings. embody her as a figure I associate with care, motherhood and creation when threading into my work



home I



i always felt alone
in the home that was
full of people
alone in be the bed that
was a reach away from my
sisters' in the room we shared
alone when we commenced
the nightly soapy watching
ritual before bed

there were no 'good mornings',
and 'i love you... enjoy school'
no 'how are you feeling today'
no 'i'm proud of you'

there were birthdays.
those promised a moment
of happy limelight
and cake for lunch and
breakfast the next day

I don't remember hearing the
words 'i love you and
'you are safe'
i don't don't remember
feeling safe.

i held my breath but,
but not too much
as to not sound an alarm
not too much attention

but i still wanted to be seen

not scolding, but seen. not,
'so you don't need lunch'
'why was i called into school'
brace myself, seen
the other kind.

be kind where I'm not scared
and i can speak
the kind that gives space to
laugh and smile and cry
the kind that gives

i still want to be seen
to be loved and cared for
and to receive

to touch hands, and embrace
to feel less alone

to know and be known



home II



to be;



*being able to fully experience care and affection excites
my heart and i experience the idea of it.
but i am not sure whether i actually know how to receive
and feel that care.*

*i think my idealistic imagination of love
places me both, within and on the outskirts of its radius.*





The frames that my collages are made within are intentionally used as part of the composition. these frames accentuate the idea of preciousness of memory and reconstruction.
this sits in relation to the preciousness of family photographs

girls day out



together, forever





*you are soft and stem
you are not just the roots,
but your own flower too*

you are everything all at once

***untitled;
mother and child***



dear mum,

Family photographs specifically, ones of my older siblings, parents, grandparents, and relatives in their youth invoke a kind elation and time travel to when a photo was taken and its context. My interpretation of how old family photographs are looked at is associated with an embodiment of a past self or experience. While growing up, whenever a photograph of my parents or siblings was looked at, it would always be a collective experience. We would sit on my mothers' bed or huddle up in the living room, and then I would hear countless emotive memories.

It felt as though I was experiencing my parents and family celebrate and mourn the lives that they used to have and the people they used to be. This animate interaction with photographs made me question my family's relationship between past and present in relation to love and care. It seemed to me that the parents and family I was born into being the 7th child of 8, were no longer full of love and excitement and, community and being present. Perhaps in reality they were never those people, and that idea of themselves exists within photographs alone. However, from my experience, the ability a photograph has to reveal parts of a person or how they think/thought of themselves implies an embodiment of sorts. An embodiment that makes them come alive emotively, which is not something that happens (in relation to my family) outside of tense and stressful situations.

I am fascinated with how physical photographs function as valuable objects, that romanticise the past. This value is in a photograph's possibility to offer an emotive channelling of the past. Family albums are precious, with photographs protected by plastic sleeves and the boxes they're placed in the back of the cupboard. These precious photographs leave their protected spaces when it is time for the past to be romanticised – when someone wants to remember who they were and somewhat be that person again, even just briefly. The meaning that is attached to one's temporal presence (and thus what they embody in a photograph) is what I am disjointing in my work by, using the photographic/temporal presence of my family within a different context.

when i, grow?

I have a vivid memory of my granny visiting our house. I had a homework assignment in which I had to draw pictures of what type of clothes I would wear when I was older.

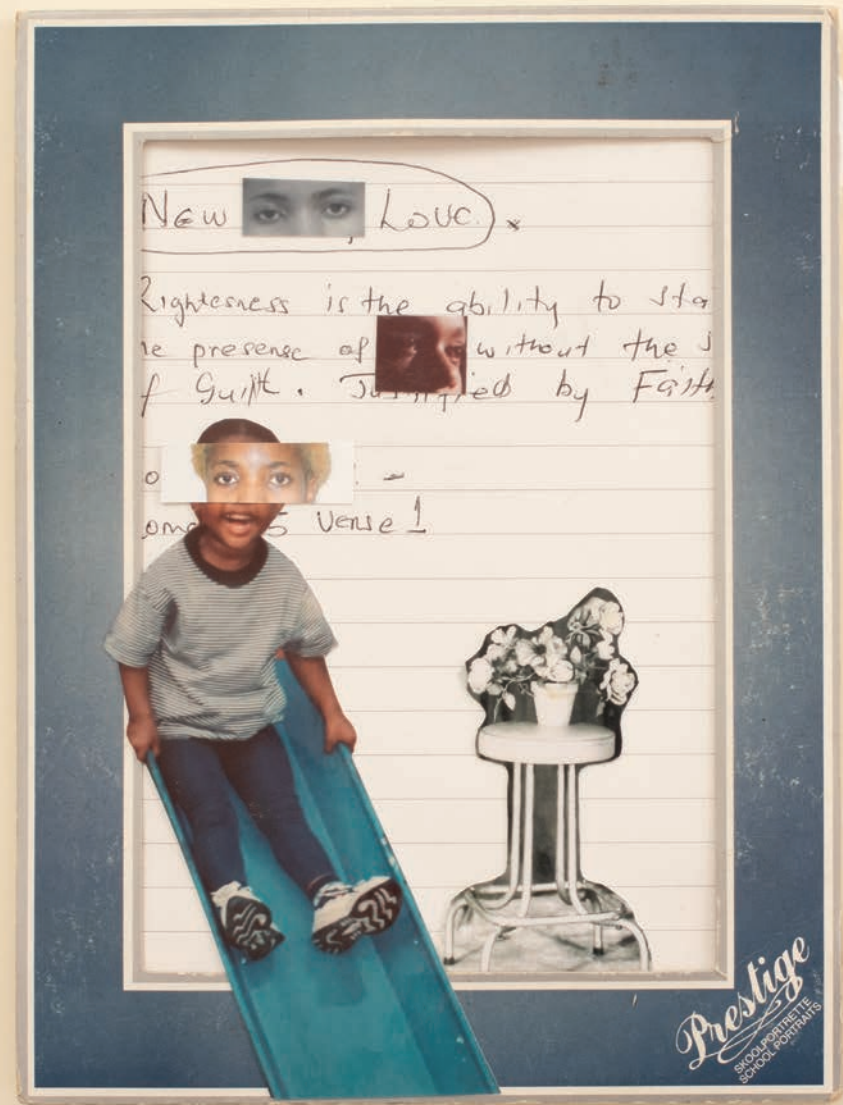
*I found it hard to envision because there were so many options but none of my own. My granny helped me with it. **a dress, high heels, and...***

I remember feeling happy. My gran was the person that saw me and I wish she was here now to see me.

This work is one that pays remembrance to my granny, Mpho Phyllis Magagula and the joyous memories I have of her. It also interrogates my own self-definition and ideals of modesty I was taught by women .







a new, love



boy, brother, father

*dear grandfather,
I never met you but all I know of you has created a
sense of longing for what could have been for me.*

*what is a father
who is a father to a son, a brother, a daughter
what is a man*

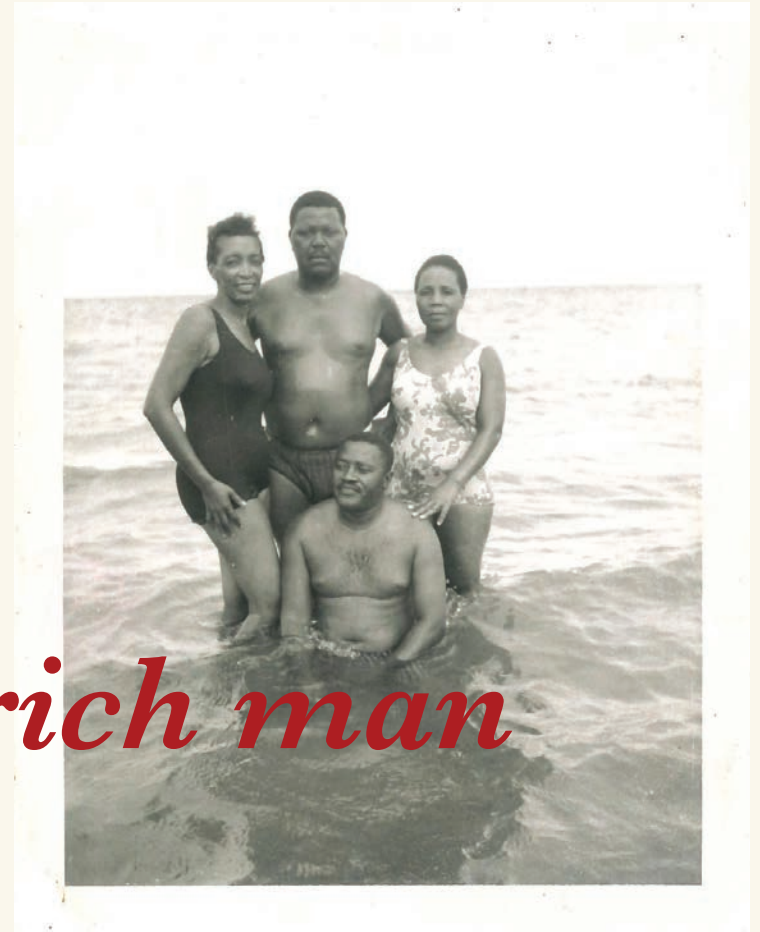




brothers, nephews, fathers?



my father was a rich man







where this flower blooms



Mphefeni; my brother William

My father was a rich man, as a phrase used by my other siblings, is the holding on to what was; the glory days

*But what if what was held onto was less tangible?
The father we deserve, and him being emotionally rich and present.*

mphefeni





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