



Judy Daley: Fragments  
July 4 - August 9, 2009





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This is a powerful collection of enigmatic figurative drawings ... imagery drawn from found photographs ... an excellent body of work by mid-career artist, Judy Daley.

George Wale, Director of Programs

Judy Daley  
Fragments, 2006 - 2009



Fragments XXVII

An unsettling presence emanates from the drawing that I gaze at across the room. It is of a still figure emerging from the rich, velvety black background that defines it. It has appeared as if a guest in the room, with something to say... As if in a dream, the words are not there and I must grasp, relying on a reading of the body language, the figure placement in the composition, the clues found in the artist's drawing techniques—shading, blending, smudging, cross-hatching—any mark from the artist's hand that signals the intentions of the subject.

The artist is Judy Daley and her work frequently explores the nature of personal history and how an individual is defined by what is consciously kept and recorded over time, as well as by what is cast out. In the past her processes have included drawing, photographic techniques, assemblage and collage with found materials and photographic negatives, and this body of work, *Fragments*, continues this exploration and draws inspiration and content from a rich cache of several hundred salvaged nitrate negatives (c. 1920's to 1950's).

Daley has drawn skillfully upon earlier experiences in selecting and editing of materials for collage and assemblage; these tactile works held a certain nostalgic remembering and relied on a variety of papers, fabrics, vintage photographs and salvaged domestic and architectural fragments from abandoned home sites. Assembled together, these evocative materials merged to create a magical sense of memory and ephemerally suggested someone's past traces like a breath on a window or a fingerprint on a worn wallpapered wall.

The new drawings of the *Fragments* series developed directly from this earlier research and continue its essence. In these works Daley has edited and reshaped her notion of ephemeral moments in space and time, eliminating visual details and focusing on the particular elements that continue to engage and reinforce her ideas. Still working with found materials, in this case a box of photographic negatives, she again edited, cropped and selected the fragments that she rendered in the final drawings, keeping tight and conscious control of all aspects of the process. The result is a strong and connected body of figurative works that are at once enigmatic yet familiar, comforting yet strangely unsettling.



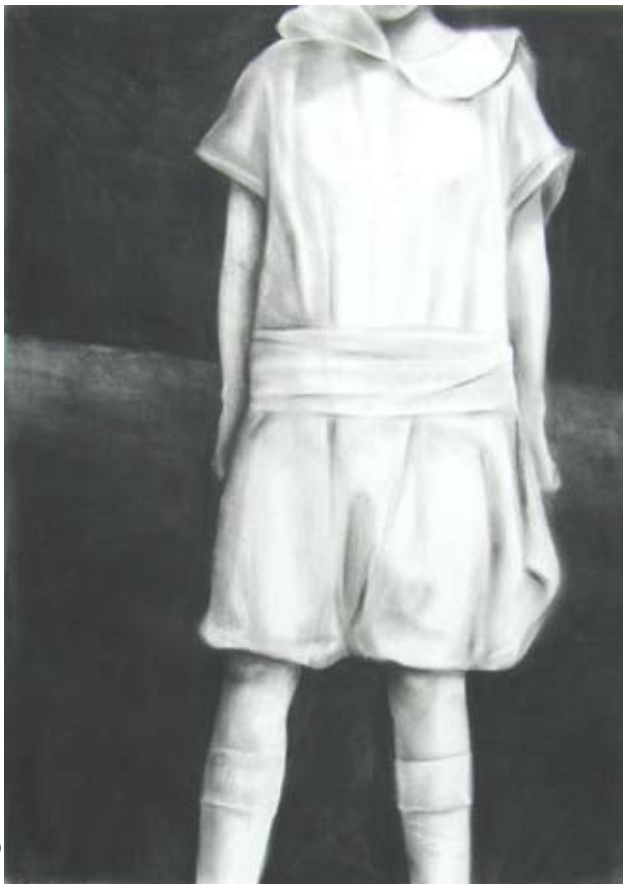


In these drawings the figures are enigmatic and mysterious and lost in time. Clothing styles give subtle clues but fabric patterns and details are missing. Most strikingly, the compositions developed from the negatives are selectively cropped to reveal only the torso and some limbs of each figure, forcing the viewer to look elsewhere- within the gestures of the body and the tactile drawing techniques- for the traditional signs of human emotion and intention that are most easily read in facial expression.

In some of the works a soft hazy blending technique tells the story, defining the folds of cloth, a certain cast of light on a dress bodice, a rippling hemline. No fabric pattern or detail of significance breaks the visual trance of light moving into shadow, shadow moving into light- it carries me across the figure and the picture plane in a rhythmic and hypnotic way and keeps my eye returning again and again to travel over the gentle time-washed surfaces.



Fragments XIII



Fragments VIII

In other works I am able to find this expression in the beautifully drawn hands instead. It is interesting to experience the way in which the eye and brain are able to transfer this search so smoothly from a missing face to those hands and find such narrative there that it satisfies the quest completely.

Sometimes it is the dramatic negative space framing the figures in graphic isolation that describes, returning my gaze again and again to the contoured landscapes of clothing shrouding them. Body language becomes increasingly insistent and compelling, speaking mysteriously. Viewed in a connected series, as this suite of works are presented in the gallery, they create a powerful presence, their rhythms of sensuous darkness in perfect balance with the modeled forms of light playing across forms, anonymous bodies but eerily familiar somewhere in time.



Fragments II

By gazing like a traveler across these figurative landscapes I enter the dialogue. In this way I create and add the fourth layer of meaning to the works, following first the actions of the subject of the photograph, whose choice of clothing, body language and physical placement in that precise moment of light and shadow first attracted the eye of the original photographer; secondly, the photographer's gaze, selecting the composition, determining the details to be included in the picture to be made and envisioning the original visual story, and thirdly; the eye of the artist in discovering and selecting the original photographic negative, reframing the composition through cropping and simplification of detail, and adding the crucial elements of sensuality and contemplation of time-passage through drawing.

This key filter of the artist's vision provides a new story drawn from the old, one that alludes to the power of memory and the constructed and fragmentary nature of any personal history. As well, Daley shows a sensitive appreciation of the specific gesture and language of the female body through her selections. The wondering gaze of the viewer, the fourth layer, continues the journey by searching for visual rhythm and pattern in the fabric folds, reading the complex hand positions and negative spaces that frame each figure, sensing the mystery and narrative of each figure and discovering the poetry of the gesture and the intention that is the fruitful vision of the artist.

- Dawn White Beatty, May 2009



Fragments XXV



Mission: The Burlington Art Centre is a champion of visual art and fine craft in Burlington. We engage the community in the appreciation and creation of visual arts and are home to our art and fine craft guilds. We provide opportunities for discovery and 'hands-on' learning, as well as mentoring and showcasing visual artists at all skill levels. BAC is dedicated to building and promoting its collection of Canadian contemporary ceramics.

Vision: The BAC is Canada's best, interactive, visual arts centre for artists, students and our communities and is recognized as such.

Values:

BAC as an organization and its people will strive to conduct themselves in a manner that is:

Inclusive

Inspiring

Encouraging

Engaging

Collaborative

Strategic Intentions:

- BAC will provide a provocative, energized, welcoming visual arts experience that is inclusive for members of our community.
- BAC will build capacities for youth programs and involvement.
- BAC will attract, develop and retain quality employees, artists, volunteers, and Board members by providing a challenging, creative, meaningful and fun experience.
- BAC will encourage guild sustainability and growth
- BAC will operate through community outreach programs and collaboration.
- BAC will maximize the use of resources through highly effective work practices.
- BAC will manage financial resources wisely to provide financial stability.

Inspiring imagination, enriching lives

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On the Cover: Fragments XXIV

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From Judy Daley:

I wish to dedicate this exhibition to the memory of my friend David Somers, whose support of my work over the years provided immeasurable encouragement.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Ontario Arts Council through the Exhibitions Assistance Grant Program.



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