

Tracing the Marks: Conceptual Development as a Mapping of the Psyche

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Critical Reflection of Studio Practice

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet the requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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Abstract

This essay describes the relationship between psychoanalytic theories of embodiment and holding that exist at the conceptual core of my works. Investigating my studio work as a map of my psyche, my concepts will be interpreted through an understanding of myself backed by psychoanalysis to map their parallels.

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Introduction

Trackmarks traces along the edges of something too precious for words. Objects from the everyday bedroom become curated as evidence of an existing vocabulary outside of spoken language between father and daughter. A monument to the symbolic representations of my selfhood and narrative blends with a sonic soundscape that allows memory to linger in the present. An open CD tray extends an invitation for eyewitnesses to transform into carriers, breathing through them an afterglow of tenderness too important to fade into the annals of memory alone as they are given the opportunity to send the title CD into action.

Critical to understanding *Trackmarks* is my relationship to the objects that populate my bedroom. These map a story of my narrative selfhood contained and reflected back to me every day. Each item is steeped in memory and meaning while playing its part within my narrative selfhood as I practise my lines from the sanctuary of my bedroom before telling my story to the outer world. Exploring this self-generative relationship I have to the everyday as a symbolic language in my practice provides a deeper clarity to the story being spoken by *Trackmarks*.

The memories invoked by *Trackmarks* are provided essential context by the accompanying poem. This poem begins to tell the story of a father bringing flickering lights of hope to even the darkest nights of his daughter's journey. It is an exposition of the narrative I hold of my relationship with my dad during my late teens and the symbolic residency that objects take as embodied extensions of him, namely his car. Carried by the sacred space of his car, the nonverbal communication created through the sharing of music allowed a voice to my voiceless self. These journeys were not about the destination but how he fostered the resurrection of my relationship with communication.

This strained relationship to communication is consistently present within my practice. Looking back to a sculptural work from 2021, the imposing cube of *Outsider* stands as a reminder. *Outsider* is still an exploration of the self through the bedroom as a container, but its physical qualities act as defensive mechanisms to protect the tenuously burgeoning self from the viewer. This does not allow the communications contained within to permeate and connect to the viewer but instead positions them as a threat. Using this as context for *Trackmarks* allows a path to be seen on the map, showing the length and development of this journey as *Trackmarks* embraces the terrifying ordeal of being known far beyond *Outsider's* capacity. This development echoes back to the car as I learn to speak through my art in a personal and meaningful way.

As a whole, this essay explores tracking my relationship to selfhood as it is reflected within my concepts, consciously or unconsciously. *Trackmarks* becomes a flag proclaiming this spot as not just emblematic of sacred paternal love but the beginning of being able to communicate the largest creative act I will ever engage in: my selfhood. This drive towards telling my stories through artwork has been gifted a stronger basis of comprehension and direction throughout the development of this essay.

1. Pleased to Meet You...



Fig. 1.1: *Trackmarks*, full studio view, 2022.

In the centre of a large and open gallery room sits a silver Denon CD player stacked atop a boxy Leem brand bass amp. They are connected to one another by a long loop of black RCA cabling. Four CDs sit haphazardly atop the Denon with a *Trackmarks* CD crowning this short stack. The disk tray lays open, and a disk decorated printed with the image of a tyre waits in it begging to be played. The Denon is on, the amp is on, both are powered by a clearly well-used extension cable leading to the back wall. All that's left is to press the pretty little 'Play' button. Will you do it?

If you did, the tray would recede back inside and a curated tracklist would play through the amp. There are no tracks listed on the *Trackmarks* CD, but I will let you in on them anyway:

1. *Lay Me Down* by The Frames
2. *There Is a Light That Never Goes Out* by The Smiths
3. *This Must Be the Place (Naive Melody) - Live* by Talking Heads
4. *Drivin' on 9* by The Breeders
5. *Father and Daughter* by Paul Simon
6. *Golden Brown* by The Stranglers
7. *Mad Sounds* by Arctic Monkeys
8. *Growing up Beside You* by Paolo Nutini
9. *The Curse of the Blackened Eye* by Orville Peck

As the CD whirrs into action, the first song plays. The distinct drums and acoustic guitar are muffled via dampened treble and boosted bass as if overhearing the song from another room, another place, another time. Overtop the music a conversation is playing out. Two voices go back and forth with a familiarity and ease, melting into the music. The sweet soft tracklist provides a haze over the conversation, blending to create nostalgia and trap the attention of those seeking to overhear their conversation. As one song ends, it blends into the next. Their edges blur together. They are an embodiment of my relationship with my father during my late teens. These are the songs we shared during long hours driving nowhere.

You're looking at the CDs themselves now. Sitting ajar at the top of the pile is the case for the *Trackmarks* CD. The cover is the title written on the tire of my dad's car. On the back is my name on that same tyre but smaller and lower. Inside the case, there are two photos. On the right, under where the CD would sit is a photo of my dad's car in motion with writing on his rear window. On the left is a close-up of this text. My poem, handwritten in white on his rear window:

*“A JOURNEY,
A SHOOTING STAR OVER THE LAKE,
LASHING RAIN ILLUMINATED BY HEADLIGHTS,
SEAT HEATER ON TWO.*

*THE LULL CONTINUES UNTIL WE’VE ESCAPED ENOUGH TO FEEL AT HOME AGAIN.
I DON’T NEED TO LOOK AT THE SIGNS TO KNOW THE WAY,
OUR WAY,
OUR SPACE,
HELD BENEATH THIS SKYLIGHT.*

*WE JUST KEEP DRIVING.
ME AND YOU,
ONE AND TWO.”*

I hope your curiosity leads your hands to turn over this CD case and explore the details within. It is not stated, but this poem is for my dad. I hope your hands fumble through the other CDs featured too; *Something Else* by The Cranberries, *Blue Lines* by Massive Attack, and *Protest Songs 1924-2012* by The Specials. Each CD carries its own set of emotional weights that may transform how you encounter *Trackmarks*. Individual soundtracks lead to different perceptions, producing their own unique atmospheres. This interaction allows you to make your own choices, to have your own effect, and in turn curate a unique experience of the piece. I wonder if you will play any of these CDs gifted to me by my dad, if you will interrupt my CD with a new one or let it play out, if you’ll play my CD at all, or will you embrace silence? I wonder if you will be wondering the same things, wondering if you can touch the CD player, touch the CDs, hear the songs, and sing the tunes in a gallery space?

There is so much within Trackmarks that I want the viewer to explore. I want them to skip tracks, move forward, rewind, and replay until they are content with their own understanding - or simply let it play out and observe as a bystander. I want them to feel that wave of safety and tenderness through the cadence of the mixtape and the flow of chatter. I wonder if they will enjoy the breaks in conversation as we did, stopping to listen to the music fully and immersing ourselves within that moment. I hope the human warmth emitting through beaten-up speakers dissolves the unease of gallery spaces and wraps you in its embrace as you wander by.

2. I am the Object of my Own Association



Fig. 1.2: *Trackmarks*, exhibition detail, 2022.

When I look at *Trackmarks*, I see formative gifts from my dad - items that have contributed to who I am today. I see them as both a representation of me and of him/us. A bass amp that was given to me as a teenager dreaming of being a bassist, the mysteriously branded LEEM amp that I could find little information on but came with wicked cool wheels and a luggage handle. The worn patina of the amp has developed through being well-loved and dragged into every home I have inhabited. He researched and bought the Denon CD player for me when I declared that I was starting a CD collection, a very retro decision! I see the three CDs gifted to me by my father as a sentimental encouragement for facing a lifelong battle. Three reminders that there is love and there is beauty in this world; a CD of songs he and my mom

used to dance to, songs that brought joy and soldered them together, a CD of protest songs picked by a band he grew up with reminded me to never stop fighting, to never go gently, to hold on, and an album that he loves by a band we both love, a bond that we share. On top of the pile is the *Trackmarks* CD/Mixtape of my creation. Designing CDs was a skill passed onto me by him as I spent time in his graphic design studio working alongside him. The mixtape echoes the drives we shared. Countless hours going nowhere, playing music, the space both silent and full. Over time I would begin to talk and open up. He would keep driving until I felt okay enough to stop running. He held my hand and showed me that movement could take me everywhere if only I picked the right direction.

When I look at these objects, I see how I came to be. I see home. I see things given to me soaked in meaning that I now cherish. They not only belong to me but are of me. They trace my history. With the bedroom consistently being my most central locus, this is where I see the most representation of my selfhood. Analysis of this space represents my relationship with myself, rather than my relationship with others in a shared space, and so it is the nucleus of home for me. In this room, I do not see clutter when I look around. I see a map of who I am, who I want to be, and who I have been. Even the mould that creeps back in along my walls tells you a thing or two about me. I produce a lot of moisture (I'm a nervous being, I run very warm) and the level of executive function I am currently running on (Am I taking my ADHD meds?). The architecture is not mine, it is a blueprinted space that I had no say on. I am a student during a rent crisis, if I could have chosen a different home I would have. Less mould, more garden. I inhabit these walls until I don't have to anymore. What makes this my room is the population of my 'stuff', these precious bits of me scattered all around.



Fig. 2.1: *Bedroom*, photographic detail, 2022.



Fig. 2.2: *Bedroom*, photographic detail, 2022.

I'm not sure how to convince you of the weight these belongings hold for me, but I believe my works are attempts to convey how this. I agree with Bachelard's belief that we mimic the functions of inhabiting our home, and in reflection, these spaces mimic the functions of inhabiting our selfhood (Pallasmaa, 2005). What tells you more about how I inhabit my home than the objects that populate and create the space? They are my everyday arsenal of being me. They are not only the narrative product of my existence but also the confirmation of my internal narrative of self (Benson, 2001). This narrative is a creative act of selfhood for me, produced by thinking about myself, my life, my relationships and my actions (Benson, 2001). Byproducts and embodiments of these internal processes, this sacred *stuff* weaves itself into a tapestry of my selfhood. If we subscribe to Louise Bourgeois' belief that great art is autobiographical (Lesso, 2020), then there is an importance and value to using my bedroom everyday as my medium.

My home and self-identity integrate, amalgamating with my body and being. Pallasmaa (2005) describes the house as an architectural space to contain my thoughts; halting, framing, and focusing them in service as protection to the dreamer. I understand this as giving a physical space to contain the dream-like preconscious reverie fundamental to the unconscious

processing of experience that allows me to create my narratives (Caldwell & Ogden, 2007) . The physicality of the home embodies a crucial space separate from the external other to develop internal selfhood. It becomes a living and ever-changing extremity that holds me and my selfhood (Simha-Alpern, 2019). In its cradle I am safe to explore and play with my private selfhood, the various selves we become and shed cohabiting this architectural womb. As Gaston Bachelard eloquently put it, “The word inhabit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget, with an unforgettable house.” (Pallasmaa, 2005)

Seeing my explorations of selfhood in a gallery space is a total reframing of my bedroom sanctum. My interactions with these self-objects are normally in an architectural space designed for privacy. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there is an understanding in the gallery space that everything is up for examination and critique. Tangled cables, leftover dust, music taste, and my relationship to selfhood are all on display. The ambience of who I was in that car with my dad hangs in the air with every musical note. Every word we speak reveals something. I am confronted with being known and you are exposed to my memories. This is how I want it to be. You are not a viewer five feet away and deflected through an impersonal film, you are not a bystander or an afterthought. You are in my home, in conversation with my memories, walking through a land so dearly precious to me.

There is a lot that you can express without words. Breaking communication down into categories: 55% of communication is nonverbal, with 38% being vocal, and the remaining 7% attributed to the words themselves (The University of Texas Permian Basin, 2020). Music can be a vehicle for the embodiment of abstract thought. Sharing these songs with my dad in the car gave a voice to the things that I could not. It allowed me to be seen, heard, and understood without saying a word (Malone & Dayton, 2015). Bringing the songs that symbolise this into my

piece brings in the unconscious communication of the nonverbal as music affects an intuitive, unconscious level of processing as opposed to a more cerebral, conscious analysis of the visuals alone (Eerola & Peltola, 2016), creating an ambience rather than a message. The lyrics and conversation flowing throughout the mixtape enhance the tone set by the music with communication through vocal intonations, set at a level less immediate than the dominant nonverbal. The hardest to reach is the words themselves, requiring a conscious effort whether you focus on the conversation in the mixtape or have discovered the poem within the CD case. This mimicry of conversation slots into *Trackmarks* concept seamlessly as it delves into my own late-stage learning of communication.



Fig. 2.3: *Bedroom*, photographic detail, 2022.

Themes of boundary, communication, violation, and connection intertwine themselves throughout my work. They are constants. This piece is unique within this body as the viewer's curiosity is not positioned as an offence. It is not playing a game of push and pull. It does not

punish the viewer for seeking the artist within the art nor does it put the 'self' in a box, boundaried by harsh walls, with the viewer distinctly on the outside - as with *Outsider*, 2021 or *Untitled (box)*, 2021. No, *Trackmarks* invites you in. It asks you to hear what is being said. If meaning is a game of hide and seek, *Trackmarks* doesn't give it all away but it is not under the floorboards either. If you never press play then you won't hear the songs and if you do not touch the CDs then you cannot find my poem, but it is all there ready and waiting for you. Its messy wires of communication are unabashedly on display for your observation, deciphering, or detangling.

3. Through the Window of Poetry, I Saw Myself



Fig. 3.1: *Trackmarks*, CD insert, interior left, 2023.

The picture created is one of a warm car during a rainy night, carving a path by guiding lights, and a shooting star - an omen of hope that a wish may soon come to fruition, that there is something divine beyond the sky's dark lid. There is a distinct sensation that the car is protecting its occupants from environmental turbulence, such as the obscuring combination of rain and nightfall, where the two souls inside may exist peacefully despite what occurs externally. While the shooting star naturally denotes optimism, the sparkle of headlights on falling rain transforms a stock negative into a reminder that optimism can be captured if you can bring yourself to see it. This transformation of disharmony into beauty recurs in the repeated motif of pinpointed, twinkling lights in eclipse - their flickering nature a reminder of their

impermanence. This space has reliably been a vehicle for lifting shadows, navigating instability, and travelling through them safely together. The downpour reemerges as a sea of falling stars through the transformative effect of illumination.



Fig. 3.2: *Trackmarks*, CD insert, front cover, 2023.



Fig. 3.3: *Trackmarks*, CD insert, back cover, 2023.

Early memories of my dad involve exploring his CD collection, receiving musical gifts, and choosing CDs for the car rides. Later memories of my teens and times when I needed care centre around showing him my own developing music tastes in soothing car rides with no destination, or him taking me out to carefully, sentimentally select new CDs to mark hardships with the hope of something lovelier awaiting me. This was our way of connecting, relating to one another, and communicating what we struggled to say with our words. Growing up with this connection to music as something greater than noise has shaped my deeply emotional connection to songs. Knowing that the “two” being spoken of in the poem are father and daughter is perhaps not crucial to the understanding of the piece, but allows a deeper understanding of what is happening. The song *Father and Daughter* by Paul Simon not only carries heavy sentimentality but gives this context to the viewer if heard throughout the listening. Without this context, an ironically Freudian romantic misinterpretation of the poem could be reached... But let’s not go there.



Fig. 3.4: *Trackmarks*, CD mockup, 2023. Fig. 3.5: *Trackmarks*, CD design creation, 2023.

With this parental aspect in mind, a more complete interpretation of *Trackmarks*' poem can be done. With the car directed and driven by my dad, it acts as a metaphorical extension of his (the driver's) capabilities. My own understanding of this is that the narrative self can become embodied by the objects that I have ownership and therefore authority over, not only metaphorical additions to the body (Benson, 2001) but also extending cognitive processes to the non-body items and beyond-the-body environments (Foglia & Wilson, 2013). Where I see my narrative self-mapped in my objects, similarly I see my dad's car as an embodiment of my narrative of him. The car goes beyond an extension of him to become the symbol of our relationship at that time. In my narrative, it becomes a second skin of protection around me and because it is within his sphere of ownership he has authority over what permeates that barrier.

The extra layer of safety patrolled by the protective paternal gifts an extreme feeling of sanctuary to this representation of our relationship that I am quite literally able to sit in and be held by.

This idea of holding a safe space and containing a child within the parent powerfully invokes the container-contained dyad. This dyad was developed by Wilfred Bion from Melanie Klein's *projective identification* and largely coincides with Donald Winnicott's *holding* (Simha-Alpern, 2019) as an unconscious ability to emotionally regulate the other through the self, a process fundamental to emotional development in infancy (Malone & Dayton, 2005) (Morss et al., 2011). This skill is taught from parent to child and maintained until the child can do it internally and independently. I was a late bloomer with this concept and was unable to be the container for my emotions until adulthood. This led to a long engagement with self-harming behaviours before I moved in with my dad during my late teens. He would often come home from work and see through the emotional mask to the child within that was in need of holding, containing, and comforting. Most nights we would journey out in his car where he was able to regulate the emotions that I could not. I believe he was able to hold that non-conscious space of reverie, open to the non-verbal communications I was projecting as is necessary for the container within the dyad. He could transform these intolerable states into something manageable (Malone & Dayton, 2005), and in reflecting them back to me so often, I began to integrate this containment into my own psyche. Throughout my time with him, I was able to stop self-harming and allow myself to be held within his care, with the car being the unequivocal symbol for this journey.



Fig. 3.6: *Trackmarks*, CD insert, interior right, 2023.

A question looms over the journey within this poem. There is no clear destination other than to be in motion, but why was the motion so crucial? The holding of space, the trust in guidance, and the feeling of safety and sanctuary are often associated with the home but the car journeys with my dad embody these processes for me. These journeys were my first introduction to utilising these processes that I have been able to extend to my bedroom in acts of homemaking as an adult (Price, 2002). Learning to create safety from my dad can be seen as the purpose of our journeys. Just as my dad transformed his car for me as his child, I must do this for my home as an adult with the respect that the sanctum of the home is not a static entity but a process of transformation that can manifest the architectural space into an emotional container (Pallasmaa, 2005).

This “escape” from what would have been my home was an escape from myself. These drives gave me a saving break from my attempts to contain myself - something I deeply struggled to do. My dad gifted me a space to stop fighting and, instead, just be held. Bachelards mythology of the home paints it as having innate qualities that provide an autonomous,

undisturbed space for daydreaming. This mythology is steeped within our culture. Price (2002), however, reveals the dirty underbelly that this assumption paints over. For many of us, home is the original destination of trauma. The building of a “successful” home is tied to a sense of self, and failures to achieve this become internalised as *personal failures* due to this ‘knowledge’ that *home is a safe space*. If I have made my home an unsafe space and the world tells me that the outside is more dangerous than the inside, where do I have to go? For me, this manifested in the need to escape or reject myself. It was only in this space with my dad that I was no longer responsible for the dysregulation; I felt that I could rest, reset, and be ushered out of fight-or-flight.

When I felt that I could not contain myself, my dad took on that role for me, allowing me to see the illuminated darkness through the windows of the protective car as an extension of his container. A safe space was held for me “under the skylight”, not quite within the environment but not hidden from it. In the poem, “we” are driving the car and it is “our” journey in “our” space. There is an undeniable unity. It is a joint expedition to create a contained sanctuary from which we can evaluate the night. There is no clear discernment between who is leading this, as with the container-contained, one is not separate from the other but instead, each takes on the unconscious, non-verbal communication being shared (Malone & Dayton, 2015). “Me and you, one and two” can be a declaration of separation or the recognition that we are both one and we



are both separate, that it is an ebbing and flowing dynamic that can be traced but not solidified.

Concluding the poem with a question of “where do I end and you begin?” recontextualises *Trackmarks* as moving on from dependency. My dad's repeated patience and ability to hold this psychological infancy of mine allowed me to develop an integrated sense of

self (Malone & Dayton, 2005). Drive after drive, song after song, I began to internalise the container.

Fig. 4.6: *Trackmarks*, CD design, 2023.

4. You Bend or You Break



Fig. 4: *Untitled (box)*, 2021.



Fig. 5.1: *Outsider*, 2021.

To contextualise *Trackmarks* within both my conceptual trends as well as placing it within a timeline of my psyche, I want to look at a previous sculpture of mine. When comparing my previous works against current studio progress, I can clearly track the thematic threads binding them and their linked narrative continuity. My works *Untitled (box)*, early 2021, and *Outsider*, late 2021, both act as containers of the self with strict boundaries that play upon its communication outwards. The tension between internal versus external develops as the desire for communication rises against the need for overprotective boundaries, positioning these works within the war between wanting to be understood and wanting to be protected. The forms are of a cold, contemporary aesthetic that rejects the soft feminisation usually associated with the home as a cradle for the soul to rest (Price, 2002) in favour of a more defensive masculinity, perhaps in emulation of the fatherly guide.

The self is often conceptualised as a container with an interior, an exterior, and a boundary (Benson, 2005). This is particularly clear with *Outsider*. Engaging it as a frame of

reference for the symbolic self positions it as a starting point in tracking the mental journey that became symptomatic within my studio practice. With a physically intimidating scale of 120 centimetres in length, width, and height, *Outsider's* harsh white walls give a strong nothing. Inside, the ends of two acoustic cones collide from their separate starting points. Speakers at their origins are programmed by a Raspberry Pi to play recordings of me reading my mother's poems. Sensors beneath the box respond to the proximity of the viewer, and each speaker plays a reading chosen at random. The poetry overlaps where acoustic cones meet so that a viewer could eavesdrop by placing their ear to the wall with various points revealing more or less clarity in an invasive hunt for meaning. As the viewer gets closer and closer to the boundaries of the *Outsider*, the number of poems playing through each speaker increases, flooding the viewer with communication that overlaps into the unintelligible. There is a begging to be heard while punishing those trying to get close, or is it a whisper bursting at its seams that refuses to speak up yet prays for a listener invested enough to break the boundaries set?



Fig. 5.2: *Outsider*, in progress, 2021.



Fig. 5.3: *Outsider*, in progress interior, 2021.

Outsider was representative of my narrative selfhood at that time. There is a clear struggle with allowing myself to be known or heard and it embodies an internal conflict as I emerge into adulthood independent from my dad. In his car, my nonverbal communications were enough but outside of its nest I was confronted by the unsettling requirement to use my own voice for human connection and companionship. Without the nonverbal father, there is a turn to the verbal mother by using her words as an introduction to my own voice. I do not see this as a rejection of him in his absence but as an appreciation for how much can be learned from my parents' communication as this piece blends my mom's verbal communication with the protective architecture symbolic of both the car and the bedroom. It is important to note *Outsider* as the first appearance of my voice in my works, something that continued to be used and is a key feature of *Trackmarks*.

Caught in the sink-or-swim between of wanting to connect without being known, *Outsider* lays an over-conceptualised maze of meaning with an inflexible boundary designed to protect the fledgling narrative selfhood budding within (Simha-Alpern, 2019). The strengthening of this narrative selfhood is clear in the distance between *Outsider* and *Trackmarks*. *Trackmarks*, and therefore myself, is capable of using multiple levels of communication while telling the stories of my selfhood to create a conversation about that very subject with the viewer. On the flip side, *Outsider* is almost begging to be heard while resisting the vulnerability required in service of its nascency. It is unable to have the honest conversation that it craves but tentatively explores what it may feel like to have it. It is the beginning of a strength and certainty of self that would allow a more permeable boundary between self and other in order to build genuine connections to others as I had with my dad (Simha-Alpern, 2019). *Outsider* dips its toe into the waters of communication that *Trackmarks* embraces.

Reflecting on the conceptual weight of my studio practice provides a clear mapping of movement within my narrative self from something strictly internal, only allowed within spaces



under my authority such as the bedroom or protected spaces such as the car - to a story that can be freely shared. There is a depth to concept development as a marker for psychological processes dominating the mind that makes it a far more effective mapping tool of my psyche than other aspects of my life; such as finances, eating habits, or appearances. I am excited to utilise the understanding I have developed as I continue to pursue this journey in my practice.

Fig. 5.4: *Outsider*, in progress scale reference, 2021.

Conclusion

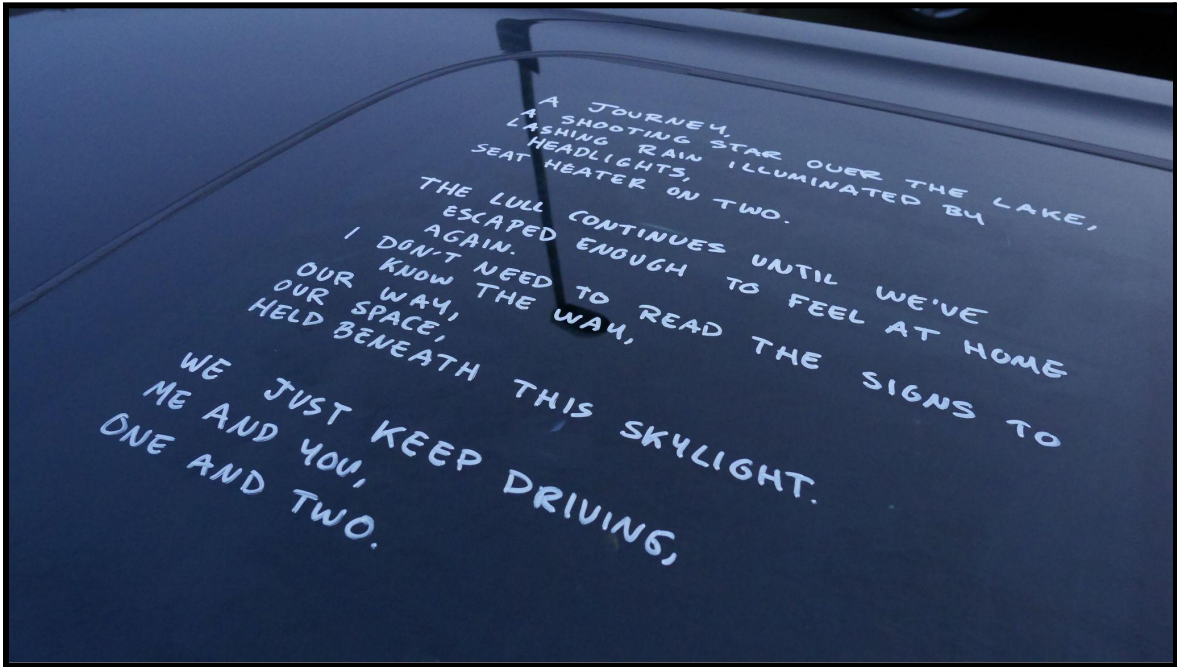


Fig. 3.7: *Trackmarks*, poem written on sunroof of my father's car, 2023.

Things are things, but there is a rich story imbued into the objects that make up *Trackmarks*. Deepening my insight on my relationship to these objects throughout the development of both *Trackmarks* and this essay has enhanced it. They become imbued with metaphysical qualities of our selfhood that we want to be reflected back to us (Benson, 2001), transforming the everyday bedroom into a curated gallery of our narrative selfhood. Each and every day, we engage with these reflections as we continue the creation and reaffirmation of our stories.

The commonality of the everyday was originally troubling, surfacing concerns about conforming to traditions associated with high art, and as a sculptor, it felt that I was abandoning the essential object-making of my discipline. Even using the term 'mixtape' felt like a dirty word

because of its commonality and the thorough integration it already had in my life. If it is something I already do, what makes it remarkable now? The ease I found with it as a medium and the significance already carried by the material felt like a cheat code to the meaning-making I craved. Embracing these qualities pre-laid into the everyday objects that come as a natural vocabulary redirected my opinion of them as a medium essential to the storytelling of my selfhood.

Recognising that objects function as symbols beyond their purpose opened a new language. A car does not just take me from destination to destination but is a vessel of protection. The sharing of music is not limited to complementary tastes, it is a conversation beyond what language could do for me. They expand throughout time, providing physicality to their attached memories that develop as the ever-changing selfhood adds new layers of perspective. When I first got my amp I had not yet been on all of those drives with my dad, but as it and I lived side-by-side through consistent interactions with and around it, hardware evolved into a beacon of tender remembrance.

My function as an artist who uses this language as my narrative device is a curatorial one. How can I convey to the viewer that the arrangement of my household objects is not a haphazard reproduction but composes a story of starlight during the darkest nights? The components of *Trackmarks* are so heavily soaked in meaning for me but a passing viewer is unlikely to divine the interactivity that allows the story to be discovered. This is the fundamental flaw of *Trackmarks*. In this scenario, the atmosphere created by the sonic soundscape and the contextualising poem remains nonexistent.

A familiar pattern emerges from *Trackmarks*' glaring foundational crack. An unconscious echo rings around this crack as the defensive properties seen in *Outsider* present themselves

again, relying on the viewer to push against a boundary to decipher my language. While this boundary is firmly rooted in a tradition of untouchable art in the gallery space. However, there is no indication from me that boundary does not exist within this piece and maybe that is a lingering discomfort with being known so clearly seen in *Outsider*.

Trackmarks is a story about communication. It captures a turning point in this theme that has been so clearly mapped throughout my work and focuses on retelling the sanctuary created by my dad that allowed me a space to grow my voice. The feelings of protection, tenderness, and hope are what I am trying to reproduce with those who encounter *Trackmarks*. Crossing this hurdle that bars viewers' access to the story being told is so clearly an echo of the lessons learned in that car and, perhaps, a conceptual invocation from my psyche to continue this journey. *Trackmarks* embodies a progression not only in my artistic practice but building a life fulfilled with connection to the world around me.

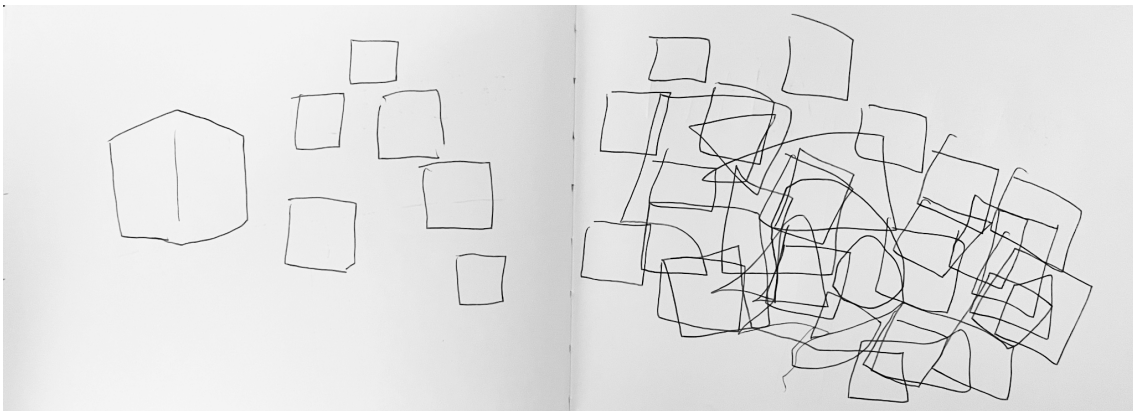


Fig. 6: *Untitled (box dissolution sketch)*, 2023.

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