

Artist Statement

The Artist came to terms with her parents absence by handling and organising their most familiar and everyday belongings. Instinctively as a photographer she engaged in doing what came most naturally, making images, of her Mother's gardening trowel and hand fork, her Father's well-worn gym shoes, Her lip-sticks and His sports trophies. In a certain way reassembling their life together and simultaneously archiving her own history and memories . These really are portraits, portraits in absence. Memories imbue ordinary objects with status and meaning. In handling the unremarkable and familiar possessions of an individual it is easy to imagine a level of contact is re-established or at least to access, at a heightened level of sensitivity, certain specific associated memories.

“I was afraid that when their house was cleared of these objects – objects that remind me of the minutiae of our last trips, exchanges and incidents – I might not be able to recall the details. I am trying to weave a safety net out of the threads of these memories, trying to make of these emotions, something more solid.”

I stepped into her shoes. I became that person she always wanted me to be. Standing in her kitchen, the sacred place of things that could not be touched, in front of me her private drawer of pieces of paper

with “things “ written on them, with her cooking utensils, measuring spoons and culinary implements. Drawers which always required her permission to open were now mine. Working out what to throw away, what to give away, what to keep. What were all these things for? Why were there so many different containers, vessels for cooking, dishes in a complex range of shapes and sizes? Why a person who chose everything so carefully and with a function in mind, should have all these objects so selected and collected and laid out in this manner?

It was not until a year after she died, almost to the day, when I opened Florence Greenberg and Evelyn Rose, the two great classical Jewish cookbooks to which she referred constantly, the more used and marked pages, a clue to those recipes which were most often consulted. I started to cook in order to recreate all the foods that she had so lovingly and carefully created with such style for my Father, in hope that feeding him with their particular taste, similarity, familiarity would make him eat and keep him alive. Everything has a use, every plate comes to life as I cook for hours in my own clumsy way .Every possible dish has its own pot. In spirit she stands inside me, my hands her hands. I peel chop and stir my way into her memory.” Amelia Stein, 2010.