

Long Lost: Memory and the Climb Towards Home



Haley Mae Caranto, Reclamation (2024) | Photograph by Jacob Hyun

By
Chloe Vuillermoz

"The works in the show invite reflection on reunion, estrangement, and the complex notion of home; wherever or whatever that may mean to each of us. Reflecting on my experience of the exhibition, I thought too of what my own connections to home look and feel like. Home in the body, home in soil, home disjointed, and home returned."

A complicated homecoming has settled over California College of the Arts' PLAYSPACE, a graduate student-run experimental gallery located on the main campus' Nave. This fall semester, the unique space is directed by Giorgie O'Keeffe DePaolis (MA Visual and Critical Studies 2025). Prompted in part by ideas of reunification amidst the opening of CCA's new campus building Double Ground, O'Keeffe DePaolis welcomes the past home in their exhibition, *Long Lost*. The show and its accompanying panel—which featured four of the artists—were a sort of confluence, something to behold. There were moments of reflection surrounding personhood, land, distance, and coming back to a familiar unknown. Current CCA students and alumni both had work on display in the event which ran Sunday September 22nd to October 27th, 2024. Those artists include current students: Angela Zamora, Haley Mae, Rochi Urbano, and Millicent Villacastin and alumni: Narges Poursadeqi, tamara suarez porras, Djinnaya Stroud, and Ashley Martin-Prideaux.

The panel was on a quiet and dreamlike Friday evening, illuminated by the stories the artists shared. Hosted by O'Keeffe DePaolis, the curator posed questions to match the tenderness of the artwork on display. It is always a privilege to hear directly from artists; to learn about their process and what their pieces represent in relation to themes in their personal practice and the exhibition as a



Foreground: *Millicent Villacastin, Self Portraiture* (2024)
Background: *Djinnaya Stroud, Protection for my prayers* (2019)
Photograph by Jacob Hyun



Angela Zamora, installation view of *My Nest, Juros Colgados, and Cucharas Para Mi Mama* (all works 2023)
Photograph by Jacob Hyun

whole. In their answers, the artists spoke to the power of intergenerational connection—and the weight of its absence. This is represented not only in the pieces displayed, but in a broader sense too. The artists were both current undergraduate students and graduate alumni, but those of us listening in on the panel were of a similar assortment—even O'Keeffe DePaolis' Mom was there.

The PLAYSPACE gallery is an intimate setting, with limited space and what I imagine to be a unique curatorial challenge. Still, the works in the show are strong, inviting



Installation view of *Long Losts* at PLAYSPACE Gallery
Photograph by Jacob Hyun

reflection on reunion, estrangement, and the complex notion of home; wherever or whatever that may mean to each of us. Reflecting on my experience of the exhibition, I thought too of what my own connections to home look and feel like. Home in the body, home in soil, home disjointed, and home returned. In a piece titled *Self Portraiture* (2024) by Millicent Villacastin, they depicted themselves in the form of a shell—a configuration of sorts. The installment was ornamented with offerings to remind them that they are home by “giving home to a vessel.” Many of the sculptural works in this show seemed to offer themselves as a container for something, whether it be a sense of home, memory, or a combination.



Narges Poursadeqi *Fragile Memories* installation (2024)
Photograph by Jacob Hyun

“Collective and personal memory” rings true in pieces like Rochi Urbano’s *Timeless Joy* (2022), a stand-alone wooden rocking horse, beckoning me to go somewhere sacred and private of my own. This piece, in dialogue with Angela Zamora’s multidisciplinary installation, felt particularly nostalgia inducing. Zamora’s stop motion animation video *My Nest* (2023), described by the artist as a “sort of climb that I do to reach seclusion,” gestures toward the experience of navigating periods of isolation that surface in between moments of togetherness. Surrounding the video, which plays on a small vintage TV, are wooden spoons embellished with illustration and lace, titled *Cucharas Para Mi Mamá* (2023). On a backdrop of somewhat billowy white fabric mimicking drapes, are hanging ceramic and lace ornaments, or *Juros Colgados* (2023). As a whole, Zamora’s installation elicits a sense of space, to be filled up and protected.



tamara suarez porras, *24 frames* (2015–2019)
Photograph by Jacob Hyun

Both of the graduate alumni on the panel shared stories of disjointed memories of youth and blood relationships. *Fragile Memories* (2024) is an installation made up of many elements of archival material including videos, images, and sounds from Narges Poursadeqi’s childhood and later travels out of Iran. Located by the entrance of the gallery, as soon as viewers enter the space, they are invited to sit in one of two wooden rocking chairs angled towards a television. Beside the TV, two reel viewers with several master photo discs offer a tactile, participatory opportunity to engage with the work. As the artist noted, the images in both the video and reels resonate with the shared experiences of many Persian children born around the time of the 1979 revolution. Depicted in images of highways and backlit by the sounds of cartoons, Poursadeqi equates memory to fragility. The images in both the video and reel feel present but distant, as the cloudy memories of the artist’s childhood become difficult to decipher. In contrast, tamara suarez porras’ piece, *24 frames* (2015–2019), surfaced ideas of reparenting and the ever haunting “what if” of situations rendered impossible by time and space. Consisting of images taken from Super 8 film, porras explores topics that evoke the lingering pain of old wounds, materializing in stills from a speculative archive and an imagined dialogue between a parent and child.

Each panelist explored form and exposed different aspects of themselves, and together engaged in conversation about moments long lost. The layered themes of the exhibition were seamlessly intertwined, further emphasized by the unification of current and past students. As a current student, I found it really inspiring to not only get to dive further into the work of my peers, but to witness for a moment what might be waiting for me after graduation. Practicing and discussing art is integral to who I am and I'm certain I am not alone in that sentiment. The manifestation of vulnerability and care between community members is always an immeasurable value, and this feeling is tangible in *Long Lost*.

Chloe Vuillermoz (BA Writing and Literature 2026) is a multi-genre writer and musician originally from Colorado's front range. Their written work explores themes of grief, memory, and landscape. Also pursuing a minor in History of Art and Visual Culture, they are intrigued by queer histories in art, literature, and the spaces in between.

