

Gathering and Shattering Home: Creating Images of Belonging through Diasporic Touch

Sarah Davies

MPhil/PhD Student, MIRIAD Manchester Metropolitan University



Abstract

My art practice examines issues of belonging in the Swedish diaspora in the north of England, bringing a partially hidden minority discourse into the public realm. I am developing a notion called diasporic touch, exploring how a combination of seeing, touching and creative writing opens up an imaginary space where 'there and then' is 'here and now,' where the process of making art generates a sense of belonging. In this paper I intend to analyse how I collect and transform material culture in my art practice, how I negotiate what I call the 'uncertain I/eye' of my diasporic subjectivity.

Diasporic touch is a conceptual idea naming a reiterated gesture in my art practice, a gathering and shattering motion, which collects material culture from dominant cultural narratives and their heritages and uses the material visuality of my art practice to fragment their explicit meanings (Kristeva, 1980), creating new cultural forms. In this case study I use my house in Manchester as a starting point from which to imagine my partial and multiple belongings, problematising the notion of home as tied to place. I will investigate how I visualise my embodied double cultural narrative experience through superimposition and explore how I use these layered environments to enact an intimacy with past memories and present experience.

When I create images of belonging through diasporic touch I materialise Homi Bhabha's notion of 'third space'. This transformative handling through art (Bolt, 2004) is generating a sense of intimate belonging in the wavering mobility between dominant cultural discourses. What type of visual representations do my Anglo-Swedish 'hyphenetic' energy (Papastergiadis, 2007[2000]) produce? What happens as I re-activate past experience in a new environment, as I gather and shatter home? In my art practice Swedish material culture linked to the idea of nation, turns darker; shifting from being idyllic to conveying a haunting sense of loss, my collection of treasured things become veiled by melancholia.

