EPILOGUE: Michelle Bablitz, Justin Fondrie, Nicholas Hruby

May 16 – August 2, 2015
Introduction

*Epilogue* features the photographic work of three emerging artists who completed their Master of Fine Arts degrees at the Rochester Institute of Technology in 2014.

As Michelle Bablitz, Justin Fondrie, and Nicholas Hruby worked toward their thesis projects to satisfy their degree requirements, they realized that they were working along parallel paths. They used their thesis projects as an opportunity to look at and, more important, look beyond particularly significant moments in their lives. The stories of these moments varied—physical, psychological, emotional, or a combination of these. Yet the need to reanalyze them was equally essential and the artists’ skills as photographers allowed them to conduct the analysis in a visually powerful way.

The photography allows the artists to balance their experiences with enough detachment to allow their personal, visual stories to have meaning for viewers. Bablitz pays attention to “the internal struggle that occurs following a traumatic event.” Fondrie “questions how traumatic events—and the victims themselves—are remembered and then forgotten.” Hruby presents his work as “a representation of a universal human experience of distance and strain.”

Feelings of separation and loss are common to all of us. Exploring the meaning, and possibly even the beauty of those feelings, means that the next chapters of our stories will be much more fulfilling.

Todd Behrens
Curator, Sioux City Art Center

The series *I could go with you* is the fragmented narrative of one individual’s life following a traumatic event. Although none of the images depict scenes that are overly grandiose or momentous, the photographs construct a strange reality where domestic interiors are transformed into uncomfortable psychological spaces, plants are uprooted, and boundaries are imposed upon the natural.

The series’ narrator struggles to cope with memories that are overwhelmingly painful and shocking. While attempting to regain a normal life, the narrator must navigate these recurring memories. Time moves at a confusing rate, and she attempts to preserve her future while getting lost in the past. A photograph transports its viewer to a scene that can be infinitely reinterpreted, but never truly revisited. However, the fragile memories of the narrator are made permanent when etched into glass, though remain mutable by the shadow cast onto the image or background. In *I could go with you*, text and image communicate a disjointed narrative that mirrors how memory and trauma function in the human psyche.
Nicholas Hruby

*When the Distance is Too Much* explores the landscapes’ potential as metaphor for an individual’s state of mind. The landscapes act as a projection of human emotion. To portray the tension between our internal self and our projected, public self, I juxtaposed the confining domestic living spaces with the vast landscapes. The domestic spaces illustrate the isolation and unease caused by time spent away from my family. Temporal living conditions created tension and blurred my position and role within the family.

This series of images was created in response to the isolation experienced by leaving my family for extended periods of time. The hardship of being so far away from family and the strain that it put on my personal relationships influenced how I saw the landscape. The absence of my family brought to light personal turmoil and caused me to deal with those issues. The colors and emotional tone depicted in the landscapes serve as my search for internal understanding. My personal experience acted as the inspiration for these images, but the work is a representation of a universal human experience of distance and strain.

Justin Fondrie

I am linking events of car crashes through site-specific locations and pre-existing materials. In 2007, I was involved in a car crash that left me with temporary memory loss. Between the years 2008 and 2012, several people I knew from my hometown of East Troy, Wisconsin lost their lives in car accidents. The youngest victim was seventeen and the oldest was twenty-six. In this exhibition, two bodies of work based on the autobiographical and the biographical are interwoven into an interpretation about memory and loss.

Portraits that appear to be distorted by bright light and lens blur represent the victims who perished in car crashes. These appropriated images originated from obituary pages, photographs supplied by the victim’s family. Yet, here the portraits are almost made unrecognizable by the bright flash of light reminiscent of a car’s headlights.

Various related texts from news sources about each victim’s accident were compiled and are represented in images intended to convey pieces of information either lost or just coming into visual focus. The repetition of images and the artificial structure of “evidence” question how traumatic events—and the victims themselves—are remembered and then forgotten.
Front (clockwise from top):
Michelle Bablitz, I could go with you., 2013, archival inkjet print, 20 x 30 inches
Justin Fondrie, Untitled from At a Rate of Speed, 2014, archival inkjet print, 20 x 30 inches
Nicholas Hruby, Untitled from When the Distance is Too Much, 2014, archival inkjet print, 20 x 16 inches

Back:
Michelle Bablitz, I held his body down to keep it from breaking., 2013, archival inkjet print, 30 x 20 inches
Justin Fondrie, Untitled from At a Rate of Speed, 2014, archival inkjet print, 20 x 20 inches
Nicholas Hruby, Untitled from When the Distance is Too Much, 2013, archival inkjet print, 30 x 20 inches