



Véronique Guimond-Payette, *Mamans*, 2015.

Véronique Guimond-Payette is a fourth-year photography major with a minor in art history at Concordia University. Informed by the visual arts, literature, psychology and history, her art practice explores themes of emotional memory, family and trauma. She examines the nature of intimacy and introspection through photography, a medium that she perceives as a bridge between the past and the present, and between reality and fiction. Guimond-Payette's work also examines art therapy and psychology as engaging acts of catharsis.

Inspired by *The Mother's Joy* (1875) by Bernardus-Johannes Blommers (1845–1914) and *The Happy Mother* (1874) by Albert Neuhuys (1844–1914), Guimond-Payette questions idealized conceptions of motherhood in her photographic installation *Mamans* (2015). She perceives the romanticized depiction of a mother's joy in the two nineteenth-century works as a unidimensional façade preserved in an unrealistic bubble. Drawing from personal experience, the artist uses the language of photography to express a fragmented, imperfect, intergenerational image of motherhood. Photographs scanned from the artist's personal archives have been reformatted, digitally printed and placed sporadically across three white walls. The images are a mixture of spontaneous and staged snapshots of the artist's family life spanning over four generations (including pictures of herself, her mother, her grandmother and one of her great-grandmother). The viewer intimately scrutinizes the artist's private pictures within the public space of the gallery. Evoking a sense of transition and the transmission of trauma and memory, these photographs embody meanings and memories that are extremely personal to the artist, but that remain ambiguous and mysterious to the viewer. The fragmented family album spread across the white walls draws the viewer's attention to signs of presence and absence in relation to motherhood. The installation commences with a photograph of a hollowed-out passion fruit on

the first wall on the left; for the artist, this image signifies trauma passed down through generations. The red colour and round, hollow shape of the fruit also bring to mind the trauma of giving birth—the trauma that marks a woman’s transition to motherhood. The varying sizes, colours and scattered placement of the images convey the non-linearity of family life, and more specifically of motherhood. The display of the photographs on three walls rather than within an enclosed space reflects Guimond-Payette’s desire to leave the meaning of her installation open-ended. This piece is about transitions, motherhood and recollections, but it is also an exploration of unstable forms such as memory, identity, and interpersonal relationships.

Kimberly Glassman