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*Personal Inventory*

Cotey Pope

May 21- July 2, 2014

Cotey Pope's *Personal Inventory* is an archive of footage and recordings she has been collecting since 2011. The audio was all recorded on a portable cassette tape player she carried around with her, which is also featured in the footage.

I have been friends with Cotey Pope since I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She was a year younger, probably 14 at that time and I was 15. We met when someone pulled the fire alarm at our high school and we had a lot of time to kill outside while the teachers sorted out the confusion with the cops and fire fighters. I think some kid stood on a car and got suspended but I could be remembering this wrong. Cotey had on skeleton tights, red eyeliner and was carrying a Misfits tin lunch box; I was wearing my brother's Ninja Turtle belt from when he was a kid and ill fitting thrift store clothes. This was early 2000's suburban "alternative" culture pre-Myspace Internet time; compounded by the fact that we lived in the bustling metropolis of Grimsby, Ontario: population 20,000. She was definitely the coolest person I had ever met.

Pope splices shots of her little sister dressing up next to books sprawled open on a bed, bright lights and shadows, combined with audio recordings of telephone conversations and doctor's appointments, recounting of childhood memories, woven together with her own music recordings, then rearranged and edited out of sequence to create a new narrative. Through this collection of archived memories, *Personal Inventory* explores nostalgia's inner workings, and the way memories fade and change despite our best efforts to hold onto the past. At the start of the video, the camera out of focus pulls in on a diamond like-object being turned and rolled in a hand. The sun (or light) glints off of it, and in the background what sounds like a toy piano being played. Isn't it strange and funny and frustrating all at once the way memory is like this out of focus diamond? At first sharp and vivid, then slowly over time the edges get smoothed out and the shape changes, and eventually it's really only the glints of light bouncing off that you can actually recall. While watching *Personal Inventory*, I was flooded with my own memories of our friendship and sharp pangs of nostalgia for our high school sleepovers, introductions to new music, drawing together and writing letters confessing existential teenage worries.

In the sequence of recordings and footage there is also awareness that the ways in which memories are collected can influence how they are remembered. At one point, there is a short clip of Pope speaking, "this is an audio response to your email...I feel like I'm literally being buried in a shallow grave...slowly" which floats through while footage of her sister running in the snow wearing a cape goes backwards and forwards, but stops short after she says "anyways..." and a finger comes down and presses stop on the tape player, effectively cutting short, and even placing that memory out of context. She also recounts a childhood memory of a kid stealing her Pogs and teasing her, and how she ran home angry to tell her dad. In the process of remembering, recounting, and trying to hold on to a memory, it always seems to shift and change, resulting in the memory being quite different than how the event actually happened.

In my experiences, nostalgia comes up most often when there is a lot of change or upheaval in my life, causing me to turn inwards and reflect on memories that seem more fun, more romantic, more exciting, or seemingly happier than my current situation. It's easy to romanticize the past; the danger being that even miserable times can seem interesting and beautiful in the distant haze that dulls the especially painful parts. In reliving distant memories, your life plays out like a movie; almost like your experiences are not your own because of the way they become built up, mysterious, and even magical events. *Personal Inventory* plays with the distortions, discrepancies and idealized ways we remember our experiences, as well as the ways that we process and recall those memories.

-Alicia Nauta