

DAVIS | ORTON | GALLERY |

photography — mixed media — photobooks

114 Warren St. Hudson NY 12534(518) 697-0266

karen@davisortongallery.com

<http://davisortongallery.com>

Artist Statement

Smith Eliot

Fragments

August 6, 1986: I woke up and had no idea who or where I was, what day of the week it was, or what I'd done the night before. I sat up in my Murphy bed and looked out onto my single room apartment on the south side of Chicago. I saw a quick flicker -like snapshots- of my surroundings...

- blobs of acrylic paint squashed into the dirty berber carpet
- burn-holes on the window sill
- overturned bottles and crushed cans on the desk.

...and like trying to find that special, obscure signal on the radio dial -moving into it for the briefest second and then quickly out of it, dialing back slowly, slowly, I finally stopped on the hairline of reality that was "me."

This wasn't the first blackout I'd had in the past 15 years. I'd struggled many times to patch together some reasonably representative semblance of what occurred during blackouts...the reconstructive process was familiar and alien all at once.

Nearly 30 years ago on August 6th, everything changed; I got clean and sober. And yet I'm still patching things together, looking for skeleton keys, for needles in haystacks and for small hidden rays of light.

My blackouts and lapses in memory have led me to conclude that memory exists as discrete points in space. They are muddied by time, and made obscure by a certain kind of accretion. Our minds draw figurative lines between these points, and give us the illusion of seamless, but memory is actually fragmented, perforated and fleeting. This body of work explores events that have happened (or are happening) in my life from this perspective.

Technically speaking, these images are collages of negatives. I have many, many 1000's of old large format negatives from the past, some of which I have bought in bulk from garage sales, and others that are my own. Each one is modified through cutting, scratching, marking and inking, and unconventional materials such as blood, salt, hair/fur and silver shavings are introduced. The resulting pieces are mostly held together by scotch tape. After being assembled, I scan the negatives and create prints. I am currently working on a new presentation for these: mounted to cradled wooden panels that are cut to fit the shape and dimensions of each piece, and then finishing them with encaustic medium.