

Melanie Colosimo

Stay as you were when you had left

"I cannot bear it!" said the pewter soldier. "Now, I know what it is to have a visit from one's old thoughts ... you may be sure it is no pleasant thing." – 'The Old House' by Hans Christian Andersen (1848)

I forgot about the old brown house on Sherwood Street for almost 20 years. But the remembering gave me a chill. It was our neighbourhood's haunted house.

Most of us have such a house. Home to such menace, beyond any ghosts and past horrors, our Overlook hotels and Amityville horrors house the real nightmare of a past trying to exist in the present.

Melanie Colosimo's houses share this sinister trait.

Created for her MFA thesis exhibition, the Halifax-based artist's pen and ink drawings and two-channel stop-motion animation depict important houses from her past. These structures – devoid of context, life and warmth – are inaccessible. These are not homes. They're representations of Colosimo's attempt to "negotiate the impossible journey to one's past home and to explore the relationship between nostalgia and the uncanny."

Colosimo's ghost haunts these structures. It calls to us – compelling us to trace our way from structure to structure – whispering with inviting detail to come closer and stay forever, and screaming 'Run away!' with its emptiness.

Thus torn, Colosimo shows us how to safely deal with nostalgia, with a reflective act like drawing. Like nostalgia, drawing is a remedy for a loss, but an achievable action. "There are a couple of different types of nostalgia. Reflective nostalgia is one of them," Colosimo says. "There is a difference, but they kind of go hand in hand – you've just got to be careful."

Indeed, these drawings are a warning. They are the bastard horrors of Colosimo's retreat into nostalgia, and the true depiction of the hollow haunts she found there.

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