

ART GALLERY OF NORTHUMBERLAND

# DAEMON & SAUDADE

An exhibition by  
**Colleen Schindler-Lynch**



#### **I WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE**

**THE INCREDIBLE SUPPORT OF** the small team of close friends, relatives and colleagues who over the years have encouraged me. My family, mom, sisters, aunts and cousins who are my foundation. My husband Grahame, who is an artist like me and is one of the few to understand why I do what I do. Thank you for your help with constructing, setting up, graphic designing, idea bouncing and trouble shooting. My amazing team of immensely smart colleagues at Ryerson University and without hesitation, I want to acknowledge Shelagh Stewart, whose support and input I value. Her friendship, generous spirit, guidance and energy are treasured. She is one of the kindest souls I know. Finally, thank you to Olinda Casimiro and the Art Gallery of Northumberland for exhibiting my work. Support for Canadian artists is crucial and with community based programming, visitors have access to art and culture in wonderful ways.

*When the Hen  
Sees the Snake's Feet*

**THERE ARE  
MANY WAYS THAT LOSS LEAVES  
IMPRESSIONS UPON US**

**Olinda Casimiro**  
Executive Director  
Art Gallery of  
Northumberland

and for centuries, artists have turned to their work to address and interpret feelings of anger, confusion, fear, sadness, hope and love. The Art Gallery of Northumberland (AGN) is pleased to present *Daemon and Saudade* an exhibition by Colleen Schindler-Lynch. While no painting, photograph or object can ever mend the holes that materialize in our hearts, Colleen Schindler-Lynch's work address's loss in ways that attempt to begin the healing process, however long it may take.

The Art Gallery of Northumberland supports emerging Canadian artists and strives to present intellectually stimulating, diverse exhibitions and programming through active dialogue between the Gallery audience and the visual arts. As a community gallery, the AGN provides access to art and related programs to the people of Northumberland County. Colleen's work connects thematically with contemporary Canadian art practices exploring narratives that evolve from issues of identity, memory, shared experiences, loss and grief. These narratives speak to common experiences beyond her personal connection and reflect shared human issues and conditions.

The AGN recognizes the Town of Cobourg for its partnership. I am grateful for the support of the Exhibitions Committee and their dedication: Mary Donaldson, Irena Orłowski and Joan Tooke as well as the former director James Campbell in their selection of this exhibition. I am also grateful for the assistance of Robert McLeod and Stephen Gilberry whose thorough handling of details was essential. And finally, to the artist Colleen Schindler-Lynch, for her courage, thoughtfulness and of course, talent.



*Rooster Pooster*



**Installation View**

**BACK LEFT:** *The Invisible Years*

**FRONT LEFT:** *Well Worn / Worn Well*

**DRESSES LEFT TO RIGHT:** *XO Skeleton,*

*Black Heart Paillettes,*

*You Can't Unring the Bell,*

*Hye Won Hye, Xinteng*

**RIGHT:** *Set Aside*



***Installation View***


*LEFT: Set Aside*

*MOURNING JEWELLERY LEFT TO RIGHT: Toska,  
Rooster Pooster, Suppressed Histories*

*BACK WALL: All Your Labels Are By Choice*

*RIGHT: When the Hen Sees the Snake's Feet*





**Daemon** indicates something going on behind the scenes; today it typically refers to a computer program that is running in the background and is beyond the user's control. In language, we have many phrases that speak to the same idea. Expressions such as more than meets the eye or read between the lines allude to the same concept – a subtext that is meant to be understood but not stated.

**Saudade** is one of those words that is just missing from the English language – words that convey a complexity of meaning and sentiment. It refers to the love that remains after someone is gone. It encompasses feelings and experiences, emptiness and absence, nostalgia and melancholy. It is an emotional state that brings both sad and happy feelings together.



# life after

Xinteng

CHARLENE K. LAU

ON DAEMON & SAUDADE

# after life

In Giacomo Leopardi's *Dialogue Between Fashion and Death* (1824), Fashion is Death's sister; both are children of *Caducità*—Frailty or Transience. While Leopardi's jocular dialogue is intended to inspire a rather damning view of fashion and its fleeting nature, death and destruction welcome the opportunity for change and re(birth) in a life after. This theme of life in and after loss runs through the works in *Daemon and Saudade*, where various facets of grief and mourning are articulated in wearable sculpture and portraiture. Together, the objects function as a collection of *momento mori* recording aftermaths and meditations on life, love, loss, and their messy realities. Punctuated by memory, Schindler-Lynch's works speak to fragility and tenuousness, yet simultaneously, how these states can be met with resilience. They ruminate on the mutability of the body, human relationships, and the tension and protension between love and trauma. Each object serves as an individual portrait of such grappling, whether understood in the traditional sense of portraiture—a photographic or painted image of a figure—or more abstractly as a snapshot of *Being-in-the-world*. A universal sense of *Being-in-the-world* is reflected in the titles Schindler-Lynch has chosen for her works, many of which borrow phrases from across cultures. Whether Thai, Chinese, West African or Russian, each culture wrestles with putting a name to the multitudinous dimensions of the human condition.



As a medium and protective shell or second skin, sartorial fashion takes on the spectral form of a human body. How we dress and craft ourselves is often closely tied to our core identity, where garments can be easily shed, replaced or discarded according to deeply held beliefs. It is this aspect of the inner being worn on the outside that Schindler-Lynch examines in her garments and accessories. In *Xinteng*, a Chinese term that can loosely be translated as heart-aching love, the embroidered patches of words including *baffled*, *anxious*, *bile*, *avoid* and *cry* speak to the diverse emotions Schindler-Lynch endured with the illness and death of her father. Derived from her journal entries, the words externalize private pain normally felt and not seen. Schindler-Lynch describes this visual effect of the appliqués as scabbing—bloody looking, their edges unfinished and fraying, their script gothic and abrasive like a heavy metal typeface—which can be likened to rituals of tattooing and scarification. Such aesthetics of injury bring about feelings of disgust and repulsion, their biological evocations physically discomfiting, like a re-enacted duller pain. The raised material surfaces also indicate an excess and cellular regeneration: past trauma(s) and a covering over, while perpetuating the idiom that “time heals all wounds.” Whatever its effect, the saying bears some truth, where emotional, mental and physical hurt leaves indelible marks on one’s person. After loss and the grief that follows, we are forever altered in mind and body, reformulated, readjusted for this new world of the “without”.

The physical manifestation of pain in *Xinteng* oozes out of the shift dress form, its simple silhouette made messy, complicated and grotesque. Using the compound thiourea dioxide, Schindler-Lynch has, as she calls it, “discharged” the colour from the skirt portion, draining it of its darkness, and “recharging” it with an oxblood hue.

*You Can’t Unring the Bell* is a platinum velvet shift dress eight concentric semicircles of the repeated phrase “shut up” have been laser etched into the dress around the collar. Four sections of silver hair extensions appear to emerge from the surface of the velvet; two segments flow from the left hip, while two more appear to spill from under the right breast. The back of the dress features an etched, thick vertebrae-like column of the phrase “MeToo” running down the spine. Although Schindler-Lynch conceptualized the garment before the popularization of the #MeToo movement, it now speaks uncannily to the contemporary awareness of sexual assault and harassment, and the collective trauma that remains. Like lesions, the words are imprinted onto the velvet, literally burned through the cloth. Visibly scarring the fabric’s epidermis, the letters reveal ochre backing underneath, at points destroying its structural integrity altogether.

LEFT: *Xinteng*

RIGHT: *You Can’t Unring the Bell*







In these works, the use and displacement of human hair onto garment surfaces speaks to another type of loss: for Schindler-Lynch, her own hair lost after chemotherapy treatment for cancer. Having or not having hair is inextricably bound up in contradictions of health versus sickness, and life versus death. While hair signifies health and strength, hairlessness connotes illness and weakness. Despite this, hair has no life in it, but is rather made from death, that is, from cells that are no longer of use. Yet, we give life to hair: washing it, cutting it, styling it, replacing it where it was once lost. In this way, hair is given a life force after death.

When out of place, hair or fur recalls sickliness or unease as in Meret Oppenheim's fur gloves, *Pelzhandschuhe*, and metal and fur bracelet (both 1936), Elsa Schiaparelli's women's boots adorned with cascading monkey fur (1938), BLESS's *Furwig* (1996) and *Hairbrush* (1999), or even Martin Margiela's *wig coat* (2009). The uncanniness of hair near but not attached to the body is strangely morbid, not dissimilar to the use of a loved one's hair in Victorian mourning jewellery. Worn on the exterior, hair represents a type of non-verbal discomfort that is decorative yet intimate, flipping the inner turmoil outwards into the world in an act of diffusion and release.

*Black Heart Paillettes*

This inside-outside reversal is also evident in the laser-cut bracelets that comprise *Suppressed Histories*, externalizing innermost, obsessive thoughts. Each can be read as a meditation, a never-ending poem stuck in a loop, with each repetition providing some kind of alleviating function: "What the heart wants" reads one, while another is resigned to acceptance: "I have stupid moments where I forget that anything is wrong." The inner supplants outer again in *Black Heart Paillettes*, in which over 60 miniature black hearts, etched and laser cut from acrylic, fall like tiny grenades down the front of a white leather shift dress. Each paillette has a function similar to a badge of remembrance—reminiscent of Victorian Jet jewellery—a mark unto the garment-as-second-skin and the imagined body underneath. As with the "sash" of hair in *Xinteng* and jewellery pieces *Well Worn*, *Worn Well* and *Rooster Pooster*, this arrangement of hearts recalls formal military wear and creates a sort of body armor, a shield made visible, a protective shell against the world. Perhaps this device is most explicitly echoed in the work Hye Won Hye—a West African term for endurance—which takes the form of a Girl Guides or Boy Scouts sash, complete with embroidered badges of achievement in matters of the heart—badges that are earned through life's tests, proudly worn and displayed.

*Black Heart Paillettes*





The photographs in the exhibition point more directly to a portrayal of loss, putting faces to the name of grief. Taken from the Thai expression, *when the hen sees the snake's feet and the snake sees the hen's boobs* features four large, full length, colour portraits of women neither in nor completely out of focus. The women have each experienced a type of grief, her pain specific and secret known only by the woman herself and another. With this in mind, a strangely indistinct and funereal aura hovers over the images. The portraits are a bit roughened and degraded; they give an impression of the well-worn, and seem to almost vibrate with the women's weariness. Their tintype likenesses speak to a certain quality of preciousness—tintypes can be easily carried around in a jacket pocket or handbag—but also plays with their outsized proportions. Here, we can only offer empathy and compassion to these women, their sorrow the magnitude of which we do not know.

*Set Aside* is a triptych of black and white, digitally-aged, blurry photographs that feature a woman sitting on her heels and handling a package that represents a Pandora's Box. In the first photograph, she is in midst of picking up a box on her right; in the central image, she holds the box carefully in front of her in quiet contemplation, perhaps testing its weight, unsure of how to handle its contents. In the third photograph,

*Set Aside*

she turns to her left and is about to set the box down. In each of the triptych's parts, the box does not touch the floor. She holds onto it somewhat ambivalently, unable to let it go. As with *When the Hen Sees the Snake's Feet*, the work is restrained and shrouded in secrecy, yet its melancholy palpable.

In its many forms, grief is meant to be a transitory state, a process and path through to eventual healing. But how might it go on, and what happens when one is stuck in a purgatory of intense sorrow with no closure? Schindler-Lynch imagines a life beyond grief and how it also forever changes the fibre of our being. As the works in *Daemon and Saudade* express, complicated realities and sensations follow loss, laying bare inner lives in all of their complexity. ■

**Charlene K. Lau**

is a New York-based art historian,  
art critic and cultural worker.

Her writing has been published in

The Brooklyn Rail, C Magazine, Canadian Art,  
Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty,  
Fashion Theory, Journal of Curatorial Studies,  
and PUBLIC.







This series of commemorative mourning jewellery reveals details of lives through a symbolic language that expresses grief and loss. Historically, the Victorians fashioned accessories such as bracelets, rings and brooches as mementos fused with sentimentality for both the living and for the departed. They used codified symbols to convey thoughts about death, the afterlife, and lessons for the living.

The black acrylic in *Suppressed Histories* and *Rooster Pooster* references the use of Jet in Victorian jewellery. The small ceramic series shown in *Toska*, represents small devotional items that a person would carry. These portable objects with images of loved ones impart messages of comfort and affection and are intended to remind the wearer of someone's absence.



ABOVE: *Toska*  
LEFT: *Suppressed Histories*  
OPPOSITE: *Toska*, detail





*The Invisible Years*



## COLLEEN SCHINDLER-LYNCH

**ARTIST'S STATEMENT** Although trained as a printmaker, my work is interdisciplinary—from sculpture and drawing to textiles and photography. This body of work, involves issues of identity and narrative—it explores portraiture and memento through photography and sculpture. and conveys fugitive events and transient recollections and attempts to delve beyond the surface of the body. ■ In *Daemon and Saudade*, the viewer is asked to piece

together the scene or try to understand an unspoken trait or character in the subject of the portrait. Digital representations recreate the look of historical tintype photos and the distressed edges of glass negatives. They recall a time of slow documentation and close inspection—a time when images were precious objects. It is not my intent to misrepresent the authenticity of the images, rather, I use using the visual language of history to make connections between old and new.

As with the photographs, mourning jewellery reveals details of lives through a symbolic language that expresses grief and loss. These mementos and devotional items are fused with sentimentality for both the living and for the departed.

A series of dresses suggest using the body as a dimensional canvas to relay narratives through wearable artwork. These garments are printed, stitched, camouflaged and blatantly plastered with messages that acknowledge dress as a vehicle for communication with the potential to speak in a multitude of ways.

**Daemon & Saudade**  
**Colleen Schindler-Lynch**

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**Art Gallery of Northumberland**

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**Gallery Hours**

Tuesday to Friday: 11 AM – 4 PM  
Saturday & Sunday: 12 – 4 PM

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