Erika DeFreitas’ artistic practice explores the influence of language, loss and culture on the formation of identity through performance, public interventions, relational exchanges, photographic documentation and textile-based works. DeFreitas is a graduate of the Masters of Visual Studies Program at the University of Toronto and has exhibited projects in artist-run centres in Canada and the United States. Recent and upcoming exhibition sites include Gallery TPW, A Space Gallery, Gallery 44, Propeller Centre for Visual Arts in Toronto, the Houston Museum of African American Culture, performances with the 7a*11d International Festival of Performance Art, and a residency at Mentoring Artists for Women’s Art (MAWA) in Winnipeg.

Pamela Edmonds is a visual and media arts curator who received her BFA and an MA in Art History from Concordia University, Montreal. She is interested in developing contemporary art projects that deal with cultural identity and the politics of representation. Recent curated exhibitions include 28 Days (Justina M. Barnicke Gallery/Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto, 2012), Streaming Alterity (Art Gallery of Peterborough, 2012) and Serious Play (SPACE, London UK, 2011). She is a founding member of Third Space Art Projects, a curatorial collective co-founded in 2009 with Sally Frater. Third Space Art Projects is a forum for the promotion, presentation and development of multidisciplinary art projects that engage transcultural and diasporic communities, with a particular focus on visual cultures of the Black Atlantic.

IMAGES
front: Erika DeFreitas. Deaths, Memorials, Births, Saturday, November 11, 2006 digital photograph on Kozuke paper, 25” x 27”, 2006-2013
Photo credit: Daniel Ehrenworth.

3. Ibid.
4. Erika DeFreitas, “Friday, November 24, 2006.”
6. Ibid, 68.
7. Ibid.

ERIKA DE FREITAS
DEATHS/MEMORIALS/BIRTHS
Curated by Pamela Edmonds

March 1- April 13, 2013
...the artist serves as the historic agent of memory, while the archive emerges as a place in which concerns with the past are touched by the astringent vapors of death, destruction and degeneration...It is also within the archive that acts of remembering and regeneration occur, where a suture between the past and present is performed, in the indeterminate zone between event and image, document and monument.

Erika DeFreitas’ interdisciplinary, process-orientated works investigate constructs of memorialisation through conceptualist strategies. Drawing on both personal and cultural histories, her artistic practice explores the uneasy relationship between presence and absence, raising questions about what the body can and cannot remember, offering ways of negotiating individual and cultural loss by making ‘absence’ present in the representational field.

DEATHS/MEMORIALS/BIRTHS aligns itself with what critic Andreas Huyssen terms “memory sculpture” and, in so doing, transfers the work of remembering from artist to viewer. Huyssen identifies the emergence of artistic projects that “perform a kind of memory work that activates body, space, and temporality, matter and imagination, presence and absence in a complex relationship with their beholder.” These works, which occupy not the public spaces of monuments and memorials but the more intimate spaces of the museum or gallery, address individual identities at a corporeal level, even though the human body is often “just as absent and elusive as it would be in any memory of the past.”

DeFreitas’ art is filled with such apparent contradictions: concerned with impermanence and mortality, yet life-affirming and regenerative, marked with a sense of enduring hope in the face of loss and a deep sense of connectedness with others and the world - ephemeral testimonies to lives lived, to labour endured and to inevitable passages.

Pamela Edmonds, 2013