

## ***Trace Evidence* by Rachel Weaver**

### Artist Statement

I am the daughter of a homicide investigator. I grew up in Alaska, in close proximity to the aftermath of many terrible crimes. Our garage was an at-home forensics laboratory where my father worked on skull reconstructions and fingerprint analyses late into the night. He taught me crime scene investigation and homicide photography, and this is the origin of my creative practice.

My work addresses questions of memory, ghosts, the supernatural, and the passage of time. I explore unseen histories and charged places, and seek to obliquely illuminate hidden presences of long-gone people and the echoes of events at sites in memoriam. I meticulously collect and catalog evidences in the form of audio field recordings, interviews, writing, and video/photographic documentation. The ritual process of investigation and the gathering of clues becomes a meditative and spiritual exercise, and scientific objectivity gives way to emotion, expressed through the ephemerality of moving image, and the spectral and dichotomous absence and presence that so characterizes sound.

When my father died suddenly and unexpectedly in the second year of my MFA while working on a high-pressure murder case, his passing caused me to reflect on the homicides that had permanently scarred and affected him and my family. In January of 2012 I returned to Alaska for the first time in over a decade to reinvestigate a homicide site that he investigated when I was five years old. This site sits at the base of a mountain, on the edge of a glacier, and what my father found there haunted him forever. The ensuing case led to traumatic impact on my family—terrifying death threats from associates of a serial killer, and an indelible, amorphous, faceless fear that colored the rest of my childhood.

*Trace Evidence* is comprised of audiovisual documentation taken at the homicide site, courtroom recordings, melodic elements that I composed and performed, phone conversations with my mother, readings of journal entries, and interviews with other investigators. The table is reminiscent of an interrogation room, but is marked by my father's fingerprints that I found and lifted after his death. It is an interactive surface that, when leaned against, allows the groaning and cracking of the glacier—sounds my father said filled his dreams—to be transmitted through the medium of human bone.

My father taught me that the dead speak to us. They reach out to us through the traces of their lives, and landscapes are full of their sleeping stories.

My motivation is tremendous love, and grief for all that is gone.