

Places of Presence: Newfoundland Kin and Ancestral Land, Newfoundland 1989-1991. Marlene Creates.

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[See table of contents](#)

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DIANE TYE

THIS PUBLICATION comes out of an installation by St. John's visual artist, Marlene Creates exploring aspects of memory and landscape. In three assemblages that depict the land where her grandmother, grandfather and great grandmother were born, Creates combines her own memories of visiting these places with the lived memories of her Newfoundland relatives. Each assemblage is a series of clusters consisting of a photographic portrait, a memory map, a transcribed narrative, and a landmark photograph. Some include a found object such as a stone or leaf. Individual and community experiences and identities all intertwine in these recollections of landscape to explore what is identified in the introduction as the works' four touchstones: the natural environment, spatial relations, land use and geographical imagination (9).

Although this work is intentionally more affective than scholarly, *Places of Presence's* deeper themes are skillfully highlighted in a intelligent and beautifully written introduction by Joan M. Schwartz, Chief of Photography Acquisition and Research at the National Archives of Canada and a SSHRC doctoral fellow in the Department of Geography at Queen's University. As Schwartz indicates, a strength of *Places of Presence* is its concern with the conceptual over the topographical: "*Places of Presence* is very much about memory — places of memory and memories of places" (12). Schwartz continues, "It is not local history or family history, but a cumulative remembrance of times, places and things past" (12).

I enjoyed this book. Creates' "visual expression of the complex workings of the geographical imagination" (9), raises much to think about. How does place become landscape? How are landscapes of the past remembered? How are those

memories gendered? How are sense of place and identity interconnected? Through their memory maps and recollections Creates' relatives give hints both to how place is kept in mind and how individuals experience and remember places differently. And, throughout the book there are indications of how people attempt to hold on to the past and to root memory in place; a rose bush or abandoned flower bed is symbolic of past lives. Seemingly natural elements become powerful objects of material culture.

Places of Presence, a full 64 pages, then is deceptively modest for the big questions it suggests. In fact, my only criticism is that I wanted more: more narratives, bigger photos, larger type font. Although the presentation is not unattractive, much of the visual appeal of the installation is lost in the publication. But that said, *Places of Presence* is worth picking up. Those interested in nuanced meanings of place, past and/or memory will find something of value here.