

Putting pastness in the viewing present

Three photography shows at the Danforth examine the workings of memory

By [Mark Feeney](#) Globe Staff, Updated March 27, 2026, 5:30 a.m.



Rachel Loischild, "Deer Island," 2020, from the series "Quarantine Islands." COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

FRAMINGHAM — All photographs show the past. Pastness is what the medium does. Click the shutter, and what had been a *now* gets preserved as a *then*.

Sometimes that pastness is consciously used in the service of history, a shared past, or memory, a personal past. A conscious use of pastness informs three shows currently at the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University. They run through May 24.



Rachel Loischild, "Angel Island," 2023, from the series "Quarantine Islands." COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

[Rachel Loischild's](#) "Quarantine Islands" comes in two parts. One consists of two-dozen color images (20 inches by 24 inches or the reverse) of one-time sites of quarantine centers.

The people in them were there because of health reasons (leprosy, yellow fever, plague) or for less dire if more sinister causes. They were immigrants to the United States or Jewish in Poland. The Warsaw Ghetto is among the sites Loischild has photographed. Others include Deer Island; Pekinese Island, in Buzzard's Bay; and Angel Island, in San Francisco Bay. No persons are visible, which lends a brooding eloquence to images of surpassing loveliness.



Sarah Hadley, "Leading Me Down," 2023. COURTESY OF SARAH HADLEY AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

The other part consists of a set of unevenly shaped large collages, with details scanned on to vellum from vintage postcards of quarantine sites. The contrast with the photographs is fundamental: present and past, clarity and obscurity (the collages are blurry, as if seen through a scrim).

Actually, there's a third element. It's a large installation in the middle of the gallery where most of the photographs are hanging. Made of woven willow branches, it's in the shape of a circle and has a title that in this context matters a great deal: "Cordon Sanitaire."



Annette LeMay Burke, "The Hearth." 2020. ANNETTE LEMAY BURKE

Ten photographers are in "Memory is a Verb." (Why the lower-case "is"?) They are [Elizabeth Bailey](#), [Annette LeMay Burke](#), [Dena Elisabeth Eber](#), [Sarah Hadley](#), [Diane Hemingway](#), [Susan Lapides](#), [Lori Ordovery](#), [Jennifer Pritchard](#), [Rosalie Rosenthal](#), and [Aline Smithson](#). All have several works on display. The title indicates the importance of memory as inspiration for the photographers.

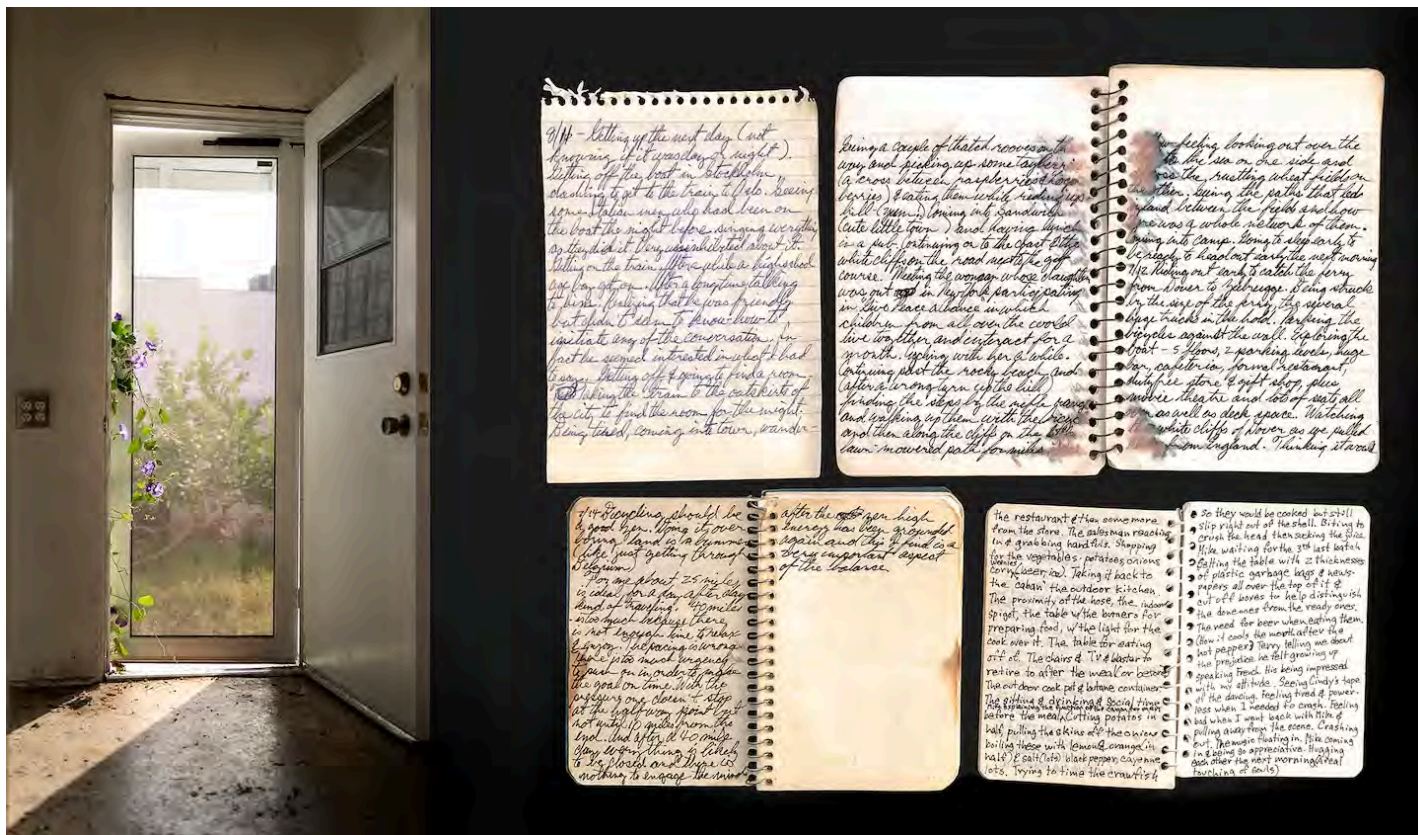
Sarah Hadley grew up in an apartment on the fourth floor of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (her father was its director). Her black-and-white photographs are of a different building, a house in Italy, but one can easily imagine Mrs. Gardner responding to their blend of the exotic and domestic.



Lori Ordovery, "Self Portrait Night Sky," 2025. © LORI ORDOVER

After her parents' death, Annette LeMay Burke projected family snapshots on walls of the family home. The juxtapositions are striking, even a bit unnerving. The contrast with the impersonality of the Florida condos Rosalie Rosenthal shows is striking and unnerving in a different way. There's a further contrast, between those photographs, and vinyl wallpaper behind them, scenes of lush nature.

Lori Ordovery offers a different version of juxtaposition, but also involving domesticity. She photographs herself in spaces where she lives and has lived: the personal as spatial.



Elizabeth Bailey, "Her Escape." COURTESY OF ELIZABETH BAILEY AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

Elizabeth Bailey's series "The House Next Door" was inspired by the death of a little-seen neighbor, so the memories are less Bailey's than, speculatively, those of someone else. The title of one of the photographs, "Bailey the Voyeur," acknowledges the moral ambiguity of her status as self-appointed investigator.



Diane Hemingway, "Signs," 2023. COURTESY OF DIANE HEMINGWAY AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

The interiority of memory doesn't preclude outward-looking views. "Signs," from Diane Hemingway's series "The Wild Cosmos" (not a bad way to situate the operation of remembering) is startling and vivid, thanks to the orange-yellow warmth of a splotch of glare at dusk. No less startling and vivid is the sight of a bird taking flight in Dena Elisabeth Eber's "The Land of My Ancestors #1 (Mount of Olives)." Taken in Israel, it grounds memory in place — as do other of her photographs in the show, taken in Ohio and New Mexico.



Dena Elisabeth Eber, "The Land of My Ancestors #1 (Mount of Olives)," 2025. COURTESY OF DENA ELISABETH EBER AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

In "Memento Mori," [William Betcher](#) uses photographic format to collapse past and present. He has taken daguerreotypes and tintypes (two early photographic processes) of dolls and toy soldiers, doing so to spooky, even creepy, effect. There are a dozen on display. Even spookier/creepier are the dozen 24-inch-by-30-inch images that Betcher has made from original daguerreotypes and ambrotypes (another 19th-century format) and printed on plexiglass. They are a temporal equivalent of the [uncanny valley](#), looking neither of the past nor of the present.



William Betcher, "Untitled." COURTESY OF WILLIAM BETCHER AND THE DANFORTH ART MUSEUM

There's another exhibition currently at the Danforth, "Celebrating 50 Years of Collecting: Community." It includes [Edie Bresler's photograph of Fast Freddie's](#), a Mobil station food mart in Wakefield where the first winning \$10 million scratch ticket was sold in the United States. The photo's a knock-out, very happily so, though the viewer likely won't feel as knocked out, let alone as happy, as the winner did.

RACHEL LOISCHILD: QUARANTINE ISLANDS

MEMORY IS A VERB

WILLIAM BETCHER: MEMENTO MORI

At Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University, 14 Vernon St., Framingham, through May 24. 508-215-5110, danforth.framingham.edu/see-art

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