COLLECT ART

Forgotten

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On the cover ‘Untitled’ by Yuriy Turbin

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Editor's message:

There are things that disappear without ever truly leaving us. A face fades from memory, a familiar place changes beyond recognition, a story is lost between generations, and an object once treasured becomes an anonymous presence in a forgotten corner. Time moves forward, carrying people, places, and experiences into the distance, yet something of them remains—sometimes as a fragment, sometimes as a sensation, sometimes as an image we cannot fully explain. The forgotten exists in this delicate space between presence and absence, where what has been lost continues to shape what remains.

To forget is often understood as an inevitable part of being human. Memory is selective, imperfect, and constantly changing. We preserve certain moments while allowing others to dissolve, keeping what feels essential and releasing what seems distant. Yet forgetting is not always a passive process. Some things are forgotten because they are considered unimportant; others disappear because they are inconvenient, uncomfortable, or no longer fit the stories we tell ourselves. There are memories we choose to leave behind and histories that are deliberately pushed into silence. Between personal recollection and collective memory lies a complex landscape of things remembered, things erased, and things waiting to be rediscovered.

Art has always possessed a remarkable ability to enter this landscape. It can bring attention to what has been overlooked, give form to what can no longer be seen, and create a space for voices that might otherwise remain unheard. Through painting, photography, sculpture, drawing, and other artistic practices, the forgotten becomes visible again—not necessarily as a complete reconstruction of the past, but as an interpretation shaped by emotion, imagination, and contemporary experience. Art does not promise to restore everything that has disappeared. Instead, it asks us to look more carefully at what is still here.

A weathered wall may hold the traces of generations. An abandoned building may preserve the atmosphere of lives once lived within it. An old photograph may offer only a partial account of a moment, leaving unanswered questions about the people who inhabit its frame. Even an ordinary object, separated from its original purpose, can become a vessel of memory. Its worn surface, altered form, or unexpected presence may reveal more about time and human experience than an object preserved in perfect condition. What appears insignificant at first glance can become meaningful through attention.

Perhaps the forgotten is not defined by the absence of memory, but by the absence of attention. We pass familiar streets without noticing their changing character. We overlook the quiet labour behind everyday life, the traditions that survive in private spaces, and the individual experiences hidden beneath official narratives. We become accustomed to what surrounds us, and familiarity gradually makes it invisible. Art interrupts this process. It encourages us to pause, reconsider, and recognise significance in places where we might not have thought to search.

For artists, the act of looking back is rarely a simple return to the past. Memory is not a fixed archive that can be opened and read without alteration. It is reconstructed through the present, influenced by distance, emotion, imagination, and the passage of time. A remembered childhood may differ from the childhood that actually existed. A place revisited after many years may seem smaller, quieter, or entirely unfamiliar. What we remember is inseparable from who we have become. Through this uncertainty, artistic expression creates new relationships between past and present, allowing fragments of experience to acquire meanings that were previously unseen.

The forgotten also carries a collective dimension. Across cultures and generations, communities inherit stories, rituals, symbols, and ways of living that shape their understanding of identity. Some are carefully preserved; others gradually disappear as languages change, landscapes are transformed, and social structures evolve. The loss of a tradition may seem inevitable in a rapidly changing world, yet every disappearance raises a question: what do we lose when we stop paying attention to the knowledge carried by those who came before us? Contemporary art can become a meeting point between inheritance and reinvention, acknowledging the past without treating it as something that must remain unchanged.

There is, however, a difference between remembering and romanticising. The past is not always comforting, nor should everything that has disappeared necessarily be restored. Forgotten histories may contain conflict, injustice, grief, and difficult truths. To bring them into view is not simply to celebrate what was, but to reconsider how it shaped the present. Art can create room for this complexity, resisting easy conclusions and allowing contradictory experiences to exist alongside one another. Sometimes, the most meaningful act of remembrance is not to provide an answer, but to make space for a question that has remained unspoken.

Equally compelling is the relationship between forgetting and transformation. Not everything lost must be recovered in its original form. A memory may become an abstraction; a familiar image may dissolve into colour, texture, or gesture; an inherited symbol may be reimagined through contemporary materials. In these transformations, the past does not disappear entirely. It becomes part of something new. The artist works not only with what remains, but also with the gaps, uncertainties, and silences surrounding it. Absence itself becomes a material—something that can be explored, questioned, and given expression.

The forgotten may also refer to those parts of ourselves that have been neglected. Beneath the identities we construct for the world, there are abandoned ambitions, unacknowledged emotions, and versions of ourselves that no longer have a place in our everyday lives. Creativity can offer a way of approaching these hidden territories without demanding that they be fully explained. An image, a gesture, or a form may express something that language cannot adequately contain. Through the act of making, what was distant can become accessible, if only for a moment.

In this sense, art does not merely preserve memory; it changes our relationship with it. It reminds us that remembering is an active process, one that requires curiosity, empathy, and a willingness to look beyond the obvious. The artist becomes both observer and interpreter, gathering fragments from the visible world and the inner landscape, bringing them together in forms that invite others to participate in the act of discovery. Each viewer, in turn, encounters the work through a different collection of memories, associations, and experiences. What is forgotten by one person may be deeply familiar to another.

What is forgotten does not always ask to be recovered. Sometimes it asks only to be acknowledged. In bringing these fragments into view, art creates a temporary meeting place between absence and presence, silence and expression, loss and possibility. It allows us to encounter what time has obscured and to recognise that even the most fragile traces can carry profound significance.

Because perhaps nothing disappears completely while it continues to influence the way we see the world. A memory may fade, a place may change, and a voice may fall silent, yet their impressions remain woven into our individual and collective consciousness. The forgotten lives in these traces—in the spaces between images, in the textures of things that have endured, and in the stories that return when we least expect them.

To remember, then, is not simply to look backward. It is to become more attentive to the present, more conscious of what we inherit, and more responsible for what we choose to carry forward. And sometimes, through the language of art, what has been forgotten finds a new way to speak.

Rachel Hutchinson

Rachel Hutchinson is a Northern Irish textile and mixed-media artist based in Carrickfergus, County Antrim. Following an earlier career as a professional artist working on public and private commissions, she returned to her practice after a decade-long hiatus, finding in embroidery a means of reconnecting with making through repetition, tactility and restraint. Working primarily with hand stitch, cloth and found or fragile materials, Hutchinson explores memory, communication and perception. Her work is characterised by restricted colour, repetitive processes and surfaces that carry the physical evidence of their making. Text frequently appears fragmented, obscured or only partially accessible, creating a tension between what can be seen, what can be understood and what remains withheld. Through accumulation, concealment and material distortion, her practice considers the traces left by experience and the ways memory can shift, fragment or persist over time. Rather than seeking resolution, Hutchinson creates works in which absence and uncertainty remain present, asking what is retained when words, experiences and histories begin to disappear.

My work explores forgetting not as a complete disappearance, but as a process in which fragments remain. I am interested in the traces left behind when language, memory and experience become incomplete: a word that can no longer be fully retrieved, an absence within a familiar structure, or a feeling that persists after the details surrounding it have faded. Working with hand stitch, cloth, handwritten text and mixed media, I use repetition, layering and concealment to make these processes physically visible. Stitch accumulates across surfaces, compressing and distorting the fabric, while fragments of language emerge and disappear within the material. Raw edges, puckering and irregularities are deliberately retained, allowing the consequences of time, repetition and sustained attention to remain visible.

In Forget What You Said, the words "FORGET WHAT YOU SAID / REMEMBER HOW I FELT" move between visibility and concealment, suggesting the different ways language and emotional memory endure.

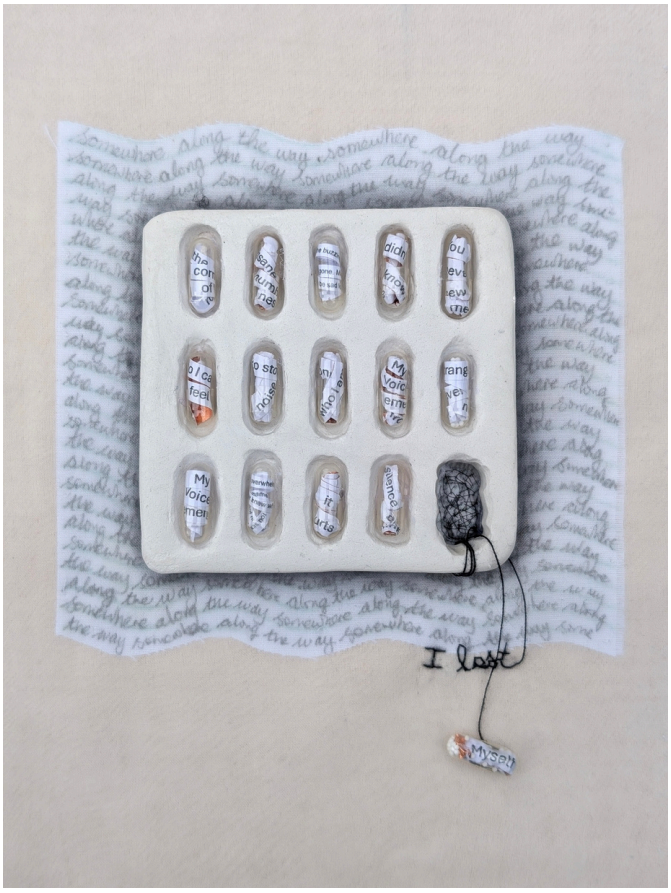


Forget What You Said - Cotton and canvas, 42x53x3cm (framed), 2026

Within Holding Patterns, repetitive stitching gradually absorbs fragments of text until communication itself becomes unstable.

In works such as Somewhere Along the Way, handwritten fragments are preserved but made inaccessible, while an empty compartment introduces a deliberate absence.

For me, the forgotten is therefore not empty. It occupies the space between presence and absence, between what can still be reached and what has already begun to disappear.



Somewhere Along the Way

Cotton, canvas, silk, clay, gelatine, copper, pencil
48x41x3cm (framed), 2026

Somewhere Along the Way explores the gradual fragmentation of memory and identity. Fragments of words and thoughts are preserved within small compartments, while handwritten text repeatedly traces the phrase "somewhere along the way." One compartment becomes a dense tangle of black thread, leading to the stitched words "I lost" and the displaced fragment "myself." The work considers how parts of experience can become obscured or disconnected over time, leaving traces of what was once whole.

In Somewhere Along the Way, handwritten fragments are preserved while simultaneously made inaccessible. How do you think about the paradox of preserving something while preventing it from being fully recovered?

The fragments are physically still there, but they have been folded, rolled and enclosed so they can no longer be fully read, which creates that sense of something being almost retrievable but just out of reach. I actually considered providing a magnifying glass so the viewer could decipher more, but realised that would undermine the point: I wanted the experience of trying to retrieve the information to become part of the work. To me, that feels very close to forgetting, because preservation doesn't necessarily mean accessibility.

The empty compartment in Somewhere Along the Way introduces absence as a physical element. How can an empty space carry as much meaning as the material surrounding it?

The repetition of filled compartments creates an expectation, so the empty one immediately draws attention to what isn't there. I like the idea that sometimes we can remember the existence of something without remembering the thing itself, as though there is an outline left by its absence. The empty compartment contains the least material, but that absence can carry as much weight as everything surrounding it.

In Forget What You Said, the distinction between words and emotional memory becomes particularly complex. Can a feeling survive more completely than the language originally used to express it?

Yes, I think it can, although I'm not sure either words or feelings survive completely unchanged. The starting point for Forget What You Said was the experience of no longer remembering exactly what was said while still remembering very clearly its impact. The words the work tells us to forget are the most legible, while "Remember How I Felt" is partially obscured. Perhaps we don't remember an experience so much as we remember what it left behind.

You describe forgetting not as disappearance, but as a process in which fragments remain. What first drew you to this space between remembering and losing?

I think it came partly from returning to my own practice after a decade away and discovering that some things were immediately familiar, almost instinctive, while others were much harder to retrieve. It made me think about forgetting as something less definite than loss: we might forget the exact words of a conversation but remember how it made us feel, or retain one tiny detail while everything around it has faded. I'm drawn to that uncertain space, to what survives, what changes, and what remains just out of reach.

How does the physical act of repetition influence the way you think about memory, particularly memories that become fragmented over time?

I can be very sensitive to what is happening around me, and the tactile repetition of hand stitch allows everything else to recede for a while. I often reach an almost subconscious state where I stop analysing every decision and work more intuitively, and memories can surface in much the same way, as words, images or impressions rather than complete narratives. As the stitches accumulate, individual marks disappear and the cloth puckers and distorts. I like that contradiction: adding more doesn't necessarily make something clearer; sometimes it begins to obscure what was there in the first place.

What interests you about the moment when words can still be seen but can no longer be fully understood?

Communication doesn't always come easily to me; I can have a clear sense of something internally but struggle to translate it into words in a way that feels accurate or is understood as I intended. That has made me very aware of the gap between intention and interpretation, and partially obscuring language lets me create something of that experience for the viewer. The words are present, but presence doesn't guarantee understanding, and sometimes that uncertain space can communicate more than if I made everything completely legible.

How do imperfections become part of the meaning of the work rather than simply evidence of its construction?

I have quite a perfectionist tendency, so learning not to correct every irregularity has been an important part of developing the work. Repeated stitches make the cloth pucker, pull and distort in ways I can't completely control, and I've learned to let the material show what has happened to it rather than trying to erase that history. I've gradually realised that perfection and resolution aren't the same thing; sometimes knowing when to stop is more important than making something flawless.

You returned to artistic practice after a decade-long hiatus and found embroidery through repetition, tactility, and restraint. How has returning to making changed your relationship with time and creative process?

Before I stepped away from art, I had an established practice creating public and private commissions, but over time I became increasingly concerned with making my work more commercial and listening to opinions about where I should take it. Eventually, I could still recognise the work as mine aesthetically, but I no longer really recognised myself in it. When I returned in 2024, I deliberately kept my practice private and rediscovered the freedom of making without an audience in mind, allowing myself the time to follow an idea simply because the work required it. I didn't return with the intention of rebuilding a career; I returned because I needed to make again, so feeling ready to share the work now is incredibly exciting.

What It Felt Like - Cotton, canvas, 40x33x3cm (framed), 2026



At what point does repetition stop preserving meaning and begin to transform or erase it?

I don't think there is a precise point, and that uncertainty interests me. Repetition can initially feel like a way of holding onto something, but as the stitches accumulate, they begin to interrupt and absorb the text, so the act of trying to reinforce something can ultimately contribute to its disappearance. Perhaps repetition doesn't erase meaning altogether; it changes where that meaning resides, from the words themselves into the time, effort and physical surface of the work.

Across your practice, the forgotten occupies a space between presence and absence. Do you see this uncertain state as something to be resolved, or is the unresolved space itself where the meaning of the work resides?

I think the unresolved space is where much of the meaning resides. I've become more comfortable with the idea that uncertainty doesn't mean the work is incomplete, and leaving things obscured, absent or unanswered also creates space for the viewer to bring their own memories and associations. I don't want to resolve that uncertainty; if anything, I want to protect it. The work doesn't ask us to recover everything that has been forgotten. It asks us to consider what remains when we can't.



Observing - Cotton and canvas, 35x35x3cm (framed), 2026



Part Of All This

Cotton and canvas, 42x35x3cm (framed), 2026

Part of All This, from the Holding Patterns series, explores the space between remembering and forgetting. Dense, repetitive black stitching accumulates across white cloth, obscuring the underlying text until only isolated fragments remain visible. The process becomes an act of preservation and erasure: the words have disappeared from view but remain physically present beneath the surface. The work considers how memory can persist in fragments, leaving traces from which we attempt to reconstruct something that can no longer be fully recovered.