

# Samantha George

Walkerton Ontario, N0G 2V0 [contact@samanthageorge.ca](mailto:contact@samanthageorge.ca)

## Hector Artist Statement

This recent body of work, *Hector*, is an exploration of the ideas surrounding the digital life of an individual, ambient awareness, social networking, memorials, and the digital afterlife.

During October of 2009 I noticed a flurry of Facebook activity around my close friend Hector's profile. Hundreds of photographs were tagged, his wall had a constant stream of new postings from his friends, videos were commented on and Facebook regularly suggested that I start up a conversation with him. I was in awe and slightly revolted by this wave of actions because Hector had just passed away.

I found Hector's death to be a startling experience to deal with through Facebook, because all of the postings made it feel like he was still alive. I started thinking that through worldwide social networking there is no difference between the digital life and the digital afterlife- the connection still seems real with that person. This process made me face a number of questions in deciding if I should participate in mourning 2.0. I wondered, was it right to post our intimate sympathies between weekend photos and inane comments about the weather? Is a Facebook memorial no different than a tree planted in somebody's memory at a park? How can we find closure when Facebook only seems to extend somebody's life? And of course, why, when viewing the postings left by the deceased's friends is there no past tense?

To trigger these questions in the mind of the viewer, I have transferred images of Hector's Facebook profile, my profile, and my computer screen onto sheets of glass. The piece hints at the connection taking place with Hector from my note to him and from the present tense postings on his wall. However, if the viewer looks closely, they will see on the third window that his current address is HEAVEN. These images have been used with the permission of Hector's family and have only been edited to protect the last names of those involved.

In the end, I chose to tune out the ambient awareness of Hector; it turned out to be too painful for me. However, the irony of creating an artistic replication of Facebook and therefore prolonging the bereavement process hasn't been lost on me. Hector will live forever in my heart, but this piece is the end for me.