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**Tangible Memories. Black Photographic Self-Portraiture and the Strategies of Redefinition
and Empowerment**

This dissertation examines photographic Black self-portraiture from the last thirty-five years, with a concentration on projects from 2000 to 2024. The author introduces the category of tangible memories as a mode of cultural memory, combining a multitude of timelines that resemble a multiverse, where images from the past and present are simultaneously intertwined. This concept, like memory itself, is constantly transforming and is shaped by contemporary artists reenacting, embodying, performing, and appropriating American iconography, European art canon, and archival photographs. Drawing on a diverse array of Black portraiture, the dissertation focuses on four crucial notions, reflecting its decolonial and intersectional framework. The first chapter develops the concept of archival bodies entangled with the social, cultural, political, and, most importantly, the colonial matrix of power. The analyzed projects (Ayana V. Jackson, Lorna Simpson, and Adama Delphine Fawundu) delve into the history viewed from the perspective of the Black female spectators, actively reconstructing and performing the past by confronting archival knowledge. The second chapter examines strategies for re-pairing the art canon, playfully dissecting the legacies of Édouard Manet (Renée Cox, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Ayana V. Jackson) and Grant Wood (Lola Flash), while raising questions about the representation of Black female artists in major museums (Carrie Mae Weems, Helina Metaferia). The third chapter explores the notion of redefining portraits of Black families, focusing on portrait traditions and symbolism, self-discovery, coming-of-age, notions of home, place, migration, belonging, and connecting with ancestors (LaToya Ruby Frazier, Rahim Fortune, and Jonathan Mark Jackson). The last chapter discusses the depictions of the artistic studio as a site of empowerment for contemporary Black artists (Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Lyle Ashton-Harris, Carrie Mae Weems, Lola Flash, Omar Victor Diop, and Rashid Johnson). The dissertation aims to demonstrate that photographic engagement with memory—both collective and individual—constitutes a crucial act of resistance against historical amnesia in a period of political radicalization and rising social conservatism.