Dedication

For the sister, who supports me through my hardest time,
For my friends, who accompany me, cry, play, and laugh together,
For people who helped me in this communities,
For myself, who become strong,
Thank you all for being with me, support, and help me to improve this project!
Abstract of Thesis

Companion

*Companion* (2019-2020) is an ongoing project on the experiences of survivors from sexual assault and harassment in the form of a massive wall made of boxes of various sizes and shapes. I handmade each box from papier-mâché and painted into mixed acrylic colors. Moreover, I have collected experiences through personal interviews and consent. I transformed elements of their experiences by extracting striking elements of the rooms, feelings, colors, or places where the assault took place to represent within the interior of the boxes.

The scale and the form of the installation, bigger and taller than an average human size, I want to invoke the viewers a sense of holiness and sacredness. Some boxes are empty, as the many stories of sexual assault remain unknown. The support and confliction between each box on display is another point that I want to convey to my viewers. I place the boxes in a way where they are tightly held together; supporting each other's weights and balancing the whole form.

*Companion* (2019-2020) has a wild color palate. I add bright energy to the color palate in order to brighten the shadow of ignorant reality on the social issue. Along with papier-mâché technique layering more innocence to the deepest meaning into the form.

My intention to make *Companion* (2019-2020) is helping me and other survivors who have been silent for a long time, providing us a platform to speak and anonymously share experiences with the public. As well as telling all the survivors that we are not alone.
# Table of Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract of Thesis</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beginning of <em>Companion</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The inspiration of <em>Companion</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of <em>Companion</em></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The form of <em>Companion</em></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emptiness of <em>Companion</em></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not the end of <em>Companion</em></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Looking at the church narrowly........................................................................................................ 1
Untitled, 2019................................................................................................................................ 7
Untitled 2, 2019....................................................................................................................... 9
Lingering Bar............................................................................................................................. 10
Obsolescent Street.................................................................................................................. 15
Suffocating Space...................................................................................................................... 19
Companion, 2020......................................................................................................................... 20
Backyard and neighbors................................................................................................................ 24
The office........................................................................................................................................ 25
Drowning...................................................................................................................................... 29
The popcorn ceiling..................................................................................................................... 31

Looking at the church narrowly

I was in Sri Lanka for a youth camp event in 2018. The last day of the trip was reserved for free activities, and since most of my team members left, I had the day to myself. I walked around the fish market near the airport, and then decided to take a taxi back to my hotel. Instead of taking me to my hotel, the taxi turned onto a road and drove up a desolate hill. I asked the driver where we were going, and he told me that the building up ahead is a famous church in Sri Lanka. While at camp, I never heard about a famous church. All I knew at the moment was that there was nobody else on the mountain. The church was built on a cliff overlooking a river, so there was only one way down the hill. The driver told me to get out the car. Although I sensed that something was wrong, I felt more unsafe in the car, so I got out of the car and pretended that I was not scared. When I got into the church yard the driver pulled me over and said there was something nice behind the building. By the time I was shaking, but I was still able to remain strong and somewhat calm. I pretended that I was enjoying the view and said to him: "This is a great

1 Anonymous experience
view here. You lead the way and I'll follow you." The driver took one look at me and tried to grab me, but I was able to turn and start running down the hill without looking back. The driver chased me down the mountain, but stopped when he saw I was talking to some tourists. I kept running until I reached a coffee shop nearby. I went inside to catch my breath. However, while inside, the owner of the coffee shop stood next to me and kept asking me where I was from and making inappropriate sexual comments. I felt disgusted and I left. Right outside the coffee shop, the taxi driver was in his car waiting for me. He said: "Hey, girl." I walked hurriedly passed him and started to run again. Luckily, I ran into a couple of friends who took me back to my hotel. After these horrible experiences, I was afraid to ride in taxis or to be the only passenger in any car.
The beginning of Companion

I have always believed that if I keep thinking about the things that hurt me, I would be manipulated by this dark, evasive, and sad emotion. The bigger fear is that by focusing on these horrible experiences I will no longer be ME—the life that I want for myself will not be able to continue. When I was hurt, I didn't know how to adjust my out-of-control emotion and thoughts. I wanted to hide and run away from the chaos. I wanted to hide all the grief and pretend that nothing had happened so I could move on. I also wish I am able to forget the moment when night came so I could sleep well. Now, I look back at my memories, I want to be thankful to my PTSD moments when I internally felt the pain and helplessness. I wanted to continue to face my reality, so I bravely told the people around me that I was hurt and afraid. When I chose to speak out, I felt relieved and reassured. “I did it,” I told myself. At that moment I knew I could move on. In the book Adversity Quotient by Jianzhang Zou, a Chinese national secondary psychological consultant, he states that an adversity quotient is a score that measures the ability of a person to deal with adversities in his or her life. Knowing one’s adversity quotient enables an individual to redirect their thoughts about past events to their future internal potential, so that adversity or crisis will no longer be a negative factor in life. In most instances, people hope for a better life and want to start the healing process (Zou 17).

My idea of doing a project on sexual assault and harassment started with an online survey using SurveyMonkey. There were four questions to which participants could respond in a level from one to ten. These four questions were respectively:

1. How likely do you think it is you will experience sexual assault or sexual misconduct?

Answer:\(^3\):

16 percent of answer 1,
4 percent of answer 2,
4 percent of answer 4,
12 percent of answer 5,
20 percent of answer 6,
4 percent of answer 7,
8 percent of answer 9,
8 percent of answer 10.

2. Do you know where to get help? If you or a friend experienced sexual assault or sexual misconduct?

Answer:

20 percent of answer 1,
4 percent of answer 2,
16 percent of answer 3,
12 percent of answer 4,
4 percent of answer 5,
12 percent of answer 6,
4 percent of answer 7,
8 percent of answer 9,

\(^3\) Anonymous answer
8 percent of answer 10.

3. Are any of the following reasons why you would not contact anyone for help, such as police, university (if you are a student), work firm, etc.? (Mark all that apply)

I received some specific responses for this question:

- I did report it and nothing was done. It was not “enough” of an incident for anything to be done. Instead, I confronted the professor directly and dealt with the traumatic emotional trauma because no one else would help.
- Interpersonal relationships would be concerned if I was in a small town.
- I will contact for help.
- I wasn’t even thinking about telling anyone. I think the police won’t help.

4. Can you use one work to describe the act of sexual assault or sexual misconduct?

I received 22 answers for this question:

Abhorrent,

scoundrelly,

mislead instant gratification,

I need one sentence: the raper should be marked and let everyone know it until he/she dies,

unforgivable,

good, helpless,

horrible,
bad,
disgusting,
the f word,
traumatic,
horribly,
bad,
horrible,
miserable,
reality,
invading,
ridiculous,
disgusting,
unwanted,
eviless.

However, after a month of collecting information from these questions, I realized the survey was not the best way of receiving experiences and communicating with people. While I canceled the survey and tried to find a new way of reaching out to people, some individuals asked me if I was still doing a project on sexual assault and harassment because they had experiences they wanted to share. They willingly and graciously shared their experiences with me. Some of them, knowing that I was doing a project on sexual violence, gave me their consent to share the experiences with the public because they were ready to let the negativity go and thought this would be a positive step. Despite of the consent and trust from these individuals, I decided to keep the subjects of
these experiences anonymously due to the respectfulness. The author of the book *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel Van Der Kolk concludes that trauma is a fact of life. In the book, he states that the first step to start healing is to get up and decide to tell people about the pain. This was the reason why I wanted to start doing the project, to support people who told me their experiences and who are strong enough to face the pain in their lives. They finally stood up.


*Companion* (2019-2020) started as a series of scenes that I set up for the camera. These nearly empty spaces contained one or more details from each individual’s story. When I first heard the accounts of sexual assault and harassments people told me, the images in my mind was a foggy and empty space. These constructed spaces were not
completely abstract, but they all had a mysterious negative space and shadow. The photographs picture implied locations, but I left room for the viewers to fill the emptiness with their own experiences and emotions. Ken Gonzalez-Day is a photographer whose work had been influencing my thoughts on empty space. In his article, “Introduction: Searching for California’s Hanging Trees,” he states that

I had no way of knowing whether I was photographing the exact site or not. In my own journey, the photographs have come to symbolize points of resistance in a vast landscape, both physical and historical, over which I have no control. A solitary figure on a solitary journey, I have documented the empty space that lies between the historically unseen body of the lynch victim and my own unseen body. (16)

I felt the same when taking images of emptiness or attempting to transform an empty space as an imagination of the past into the sites of sexual assault and harassment that were shared with me. I used shadows and color to deliver a traumatic atmosphere. After seeing the results of the series of photographs, I wasn’t satisfied with the ambiguous messages that my audiences receive. Some people thought this series of images was about solitude, and other thought it was about memories of places. My intent was to construct images that would be interpreted as memories of the feelings in the places where tragic events occurred, not solitary spaces that could have positive connotations.
Considering this, I began constructing miniature models of the spaces where the stories of sexual assault and harassment took place, and then took photographs of them. By using small-scale models and dollhouse furniture, I wanted to create a feeling of going back to the innocence of childhood. I used harsh lighting on the furniture to create stark shadows, lighting the created a feeling of strangeness in the images. However, the photographs didn’t come across as clear as I want to pass to my audiences. At the same time, I was debating how to responsibly represent the sensitive experiences that were told to me. After many attempts and failures making photographs for this project, I decided to put down my camera and try something else.
I was looking for a job, and a friend heard about one and told me she could help. Later in the month, she introduced one of her colleagues to me and I exchanged contact information with him. One day he texted me and said he wanted to talk to me about a job opening. We met up at a bar. At the beginning, our conversation was normal, but suddenly he touched my hand and said to me, "I know you want to work in the US, but do you know what you need to pay?" Then he looked at me and smiled, which was disgusting. I told him I needed to retouch my make up, but I turned and ran home. Helplessness enveloped me because I couldn’t bring myself to tell my friend who introduced us because they work together.

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4 Anonymous experience
The inspiration of *Companion*

Life resembles a wall. Every striking and picturesque memory—exploring a new place, seeing a beautiful landscape, meeting a new person—becomes a brick inside one’s heart that slowly develops into a strong, supportive wall. Conversely, every atrocious event that happens knocks down or damages a portion of the wall. Sexual assault is one of the most damaging life events one can experience.

It is impossible to know all of the specific instances of sexual assault and harassment, but the cumulative impact of these experiences is terrifying because we know they occur at levels far beyond the reported statistics. *Companion* (2019-2020) is about accumulation. It is a form of data visualization that goes beyond the numbers to the heart of individual experiences. In the book “Adversity Quotient,” the author Zhang cites psychologist Morton Hunt’s statements that people are in a “state of balance,” which can break down or even collapse if dangerous factors take hold and the body struggles with stresses. (25)

*Companion* (2019-2020) is a wall, built out of recycled boxes covered with papier-mâché. It looks strange and wonky, yet the wall is stable even though it may appear to be falling apart. This confusion as whether the wall provides stability is on the verge of collapse, allows viewers to experience the paradoxical relationship between trauma and healing. Additionally, I want to show the strength and sturdiness aspects of these boxes made from fragile materials. *Companion* (2019-2020) is both sturdy and precarious. Boxes support each other to maintain balance and stability, despite their wonkiness and odd shape. This is the core of *Companion* (2019-2020).
Sexual violence is a social issue. These types of incident have always occurred, but now people are gradually starting to talk about it. This social issue is not about gender, nor a matter of age. Sexual violence is rarely reported; thus, it remains the most drastically underreported crime in the U.S. Below are some of the reasons for the low reporting rate according to the Sexual Assault Survivor's Guide from Saint Benedict Saint John’s University’s counseling & Health website. Survivors may not be sure if what happened was really a sexual assault. Sexual assault by acquaintances is often “close” friends, colleagues, boss, or etc., because it does not fit with society's general understanding of sexual assault. Survivors may think they will not be believed and may even be blamed by the police, the courts and friends. Many survivors find that a direct coping strategy is to indulge in denial that the attack or harassment ever happened. Without acknowledging the sexual assault, they get a temporary reprieve from their experience (Web)\(^5\). In addition to that, National Sexual Violence Resource Center mentions in eight out of ten sexual assaults and harassments, the survivors knew the perpetrators (Web)\(^6\).

Initially I wanted to do a project on sexual violence because it has happened to me. Later, some of my friends found out about my project and began to tell me their own experiences. I was shocked to hear their experiences because they had not shared them before. I was encouraged to continue working on this project. However, because of the sensitivity of the subject, I was intending to give up. In *Black Box*, written by Shiori Ito, who is a Japanese journalist, wrote of her own experience of being raped by a prominent Japanese journalist, Noriyuki Yamaguchi. After the rape, Ito sued twice, and the case was

\(^5\) [www.csbsju.edu/chp/sexual-assault-survivors-guide/#Definitions](www.csbsju.edu/chp/sexual-assault-survivors-guide/#Definitions)

\(^6\) [www.nsvrc.org/node/4737](www.nsvrc.org/node/4737)
dismissed both times. She was also the first person in Japan to accuse Japanese society of treating the victims of rape unfairly, while publicizing her own name and appearance. In the end, the case went to trial. In December 2019 the four-year battle against judicial and social loopholes came to an end. She won. She told reporters after her victory, when sitting in the press conference, she may be "the victim" but she is also a survivor and there is no need to be ashamed. After reading this book, I firmly believed that I should express my own and others' experiences in a respectful way. I admire Ito's persistence and courage. Although my topic includes both sexual assault and sexual harassment, as well as rape, I want to reveal the resilience and courageousness of survivors who re-embrace their lives by sharing their experiences.

The most well-known social movement of sexual assault and harassment is the Me Too movement, which has drawn attention not just from one place but from all over the world. The discussion of sexual assault and harassment began to be widely reported in the social news and in our lives. More and more people are tweeting "me too" using the hashtag. In my opinion, the movement has broken the shackle of silence on the sensitive topic of sexual assault and harassment; let me and other people, who have spoken out, know that sexual violence cannot remain silent. Our current silence is the protection of the perpetrator. The silence seems to give these perpetrator permissions to unbridled aggression against more people. I am impressed that a small hashtag has attracted so much attention, and the popularity of the movement continues to today. The influence is still growing. Once a lot of people gradually speaking out, accumulated “me too” becomes an influence on people who are still hurt. The Me Too movement has given me inspiration in making Companion (2019-2020).
If someone has not been sexually assaulted or harassed, they may not pay close attention to these issues. The sense of crisis may not exist if they are not survivors of these types of acts. Therefore, when these small events accumulate little by little and pile up, people, who are not paying attention to this social issue, will feel significant, and an enormous sense of crisis. By utilizing the form of a wall, *Companion* (2019-2020) as a wall is overwhelming and demanding of our attention through the accumulation of the experiences.

**Obsolescent Street**

I went home by myself when I was in junior high school. One day after school, I walked home with two of my friends and I was on the side closest to the road. I heard the sound of a motorcycle behind us. The motorcycle slowed down when it was very close to us. I thought we were blocking his way, so I leaned away from the road. Unexpectedly, I clearly felt a hand covering my butt. It all happened in a second. The motorcycle drove away quickly, and my brain went blank. I didn’t know if this was my imagination, but my heart was pounding. I told my friends, but they said I was being too sensitive. Maybe I’m the only one who knows I didn’t concoct my experience.

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7 Anonymous experience
The process of Companion

The process of making the work begins with collecting survivors’ experiences. Based on word-of-mouth, people volunteered to share their experiences of sexual assault and harassment with me. I invited people in my larger community to collect and donate cardboard boxes to the project. I also invited survivors and fellow artists to come to my studio and help paint the boxes. Through this process, I was able to break down barriers for people who have often been silent for a long time, giving them a platform to speak and anonymously share their experiences with the public. By asking for help from the community, I am able to have a greater accumulation of materials, which adds weight and value to Companion (2019-2020). Paper and glue are my tools to transform cardboard boxes layer by layer into a place that stores memories. The repetitive process of my production is a healing process. It also helps me alleviate the stress that comes from my own painful memories.

With my eyes following the brush, the paper moved up and down or left and right, making me feel relaxed like a spring breeze inside me. In the psychology, eyes moving around can relax the muscle and brain in order to be calm. Rapid Eye Movement is the process I use to forget the pain, rebuild the body and mind, or relax. In psychology, the professional name is EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). In the book The body Keeps the Score, Bessel Van Der Kolk is fascinating by the fact that EMDR loosens up something in the mind and brain that gives people rapid access to loosely associated memories and images from their past. This seems to help them put traumatic experience into a larger context or perspective (250-251).
On the other hand, finding inner peace through the process of building boxes consumed a lot of my energy, even though it allows my mind to float in a peaceful and quiet. Repeating the same movements over and over leads to a feeling of exhaustion in terms of physical strength. The body is tired, but the mind is relaxed. This strange phenomenon is well balanced during the process.

I love the moment when I fill the box with the last piece of paper. Looking at the covered box, I felt a sense of satisfaction. What I like the most is making odd-shaped boxes, one of which used a long rectangular box for this experience, painted with tiffany blue. The mouth of the box was just large enough to fit a small toy van. The most unforgettable impact for A was the narrow space in the car. The narrow mouth of the box that fits the van highlights the intensive and unconformable reaction to the experience, but the few beams of sunlight come through the car window gave A the courage to self-protect. The reflection of light made the line between light and shadow more mysterious.

The process of building the wall out of the individual boxes is similar to making each box, in that it is a repetitive process. The wall is assembled in a jigsaw fashion by intuitively placing the boxes until the whole wall is covered. I enjoy each installation of *Companion* (2019-2020) because I never know what it will look like because it is never put together the same way twice. This kind of random repetition gives me a rewarding sense of anticipation as it is one of the things that keeps me going forward.

Much like the sun and the moon, the day and the night alternate, the movement of picking up and placing boxes on the wall in different configurations is an ongoing process. Over and over again, as the wall builds up, and so does the healing process I had during the production making. Bessel Van Der Kolk states that
physically reliving the past and then reabsorbing it into a safe, supportive “container” can generate enough power to create new, complementary memories. A structure offers fresh options—an alternative memory in which your basic human needs are met and your longings for love and protection are fulfilled (302).

Unity is strength. Even though a single box is light and easy to knock over, when so many boxes are brought close together, they are strong.

**Suffocating Space**

*I went on a business trip together. When we were in the car, my boss’s hand slowly tried to touch my leg. I grabbed his hand tight and warned him seriously. Sexual harassment nowadays is a common scene in the workplace. I want to say no matter whether the other person is your boss or not, if you are suffering sexual harassment, you must stand up and refuse firmly. It is important to protect our lines.*

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8 Anonymous experience

*Companion* (2019-2020) is a visual demonstration of support, survival, and braveness after sexual assault and harassment. The work is displayed along the center wall of Gallery 102 and is the only work in the gallery. Boxes stacked up against the front of the central wall wrap around to the back side of the wall, giving the installation a larger-than-life scale. The accumulation of boxes makes this wall gigantic and heavy. The wall is not fully covered. I left some empty space near the top of the wall in order to give the viewer a sense of unstable and unfinish. The shapes of the boxes form a curved edge alone the top of the wall. The white space delivers a message of continuity. There is a sense of intensity when looking at the wall from afar. The unevenness of the individual boxes and the wall makes one afraid that a single careless move could weaken the structural integrity of the all and result in it burying anyone close by beneath it. Some boxes are small and barely visible, but still strong enough to withstand the weight of piece. Artist Leonardo
Drew has a piece: *Number 43*, created in 1994. This work has 160 handmade boxes in a grid against the wall. The work itself is a wall, built in the natural way. Its form is crumbling and barely preserved. The core of Drew’s work is also about the unmaintained and wonky exterior. Widgets are typically packaged in a loose grid. When I see this piece, even it is an image online. I can only imagine the outside world. *Number 43*’s different elements: the impenetrable surface, the grid, and the materials inside each box, emerge and explode in the present. Some structures which the forms are big attract people’s eye. Seeing Drew’s art piece inspired me to consider that each of my individual box has an experience to tell even as the work as a whole represents an even bigger experience.

The core element in this work is accumulation---the collection of experiences through the building of boxes. I wanted this project to be communal, so I asked people to come in and paint the boxes together with me. *Companion* (2019-2020) was also inspired by Allan McCollum, a contemporary American artist who is known for his series, *Surrogate Paintings*. Most of his works contain massive accumulation of objects that are presented as an installation, so that people can find different ways to interpret his works. One of the works, *Collection of One Hundred Plaster Surrogates*, would not correctly express the importance of the form if there was only one plaster surrogate on the wall. Even with the massive accumulation of surrogates, the individual piece is still unique in form. Meanwhile, McCollum’s work doesn’t go into the exhibition with explicit instructions on how to install it, so the final installation changes every time they are on view. Accumulation is accomplished through massive production. Accumulation focus the viewers thoughts on the endless accounts of sexual assault and harassment.
Despite my personal experience being sexually harassed many years ago, I can’t get the brown color out of my mind. I still remember looking through the door of the church, seeing the pew and the statue of Jesus. It’s the color of the church door that has stuck in my mind, so I chose a small brown box for my own story. I didn’t want to put the pew and crucifix in a box like furniture because it would not convey the silent feeling in my heart. I was inspired by Rene Magritte’s painting *The Listening Room*. The amazing part in this painting is the contrast between the normal size of the room and the abnormal size of the green apple. However, after looking at the painting for a long time, I think it may be also be a comparison between the normal size of the green apple and the abnormal size of the room: a average-sized green apple in an especially small house. This contrast of strange proportions inspired me to carefully consider the ways in which I place objects inside the boxes as a means to affect and manipulate how viewers react to the piece. The little brown box stood askew; instead of placing the church pew in the middle, it is placed diagonally across the frame and extends out of the box. I chose to break the rules and tried to combine different materials, scales, and sizes to produce a different visual impact.

A gentle tap on the surface of these boxes produces a clear echo to the papier-mâché. When people hear the material choice of papier-mâché, it is natural to think of a basic craft technique that even a child can do. Furthermore, the extremely saturated colors applied to the box, and the mini furniture inside some of the boxes refer to the innocence of childhood. In talking to the people who provided their experiences, there was a longing to go back in time when they were still kids and could still enjoy our lives like nothing happened. I, too, have a similar desire to go back in time. Therefore, I chose papier-mâché to express that life is not always smooth and bright. Instead, life is wrapped in this layer after layer of
hiding, struggling, and revealing. When I spoke to others about their personal experiences, I simply listen. I don’t ask for details, because I don’t want to force them to recall of the memories. In Bessel’s book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body* in the ranging of Trauma he mentioned

Trauma is not stored as a narrative with an orderly beginning, middle, and end. Memories as flashbacks that contain fragments of the experience, isolated images, sounds, and body sensations that initially have no context other than fear and panic (137).

Each time the brain automatically recalls an event, the details blur. However, being forced recall can have the opposite effect. Most of the experiences that I’ve collected are not overly full of details. In part, due to the amount of the time that has passed since the events took place. Yet the emotional panic still exists. Thus, papier-mâché seemed to be appropriate choice of materials given its multi-layer form.

The color choice for the boxes was more often than not an intuitive decision. The boxes were generally painted first, and then I would choose the box that was the most appropriate to the experience. For example, the image of the box presented below had a smooth surface that divided the interior in half. When I finished it, I intuitively chose black as the color to paint the box. When I saw the shape of the box, it immediately reminded me of the experience below.

*Backyard and neighbors*[^1]

I was 5 years old and my neighbor was 14. I don’t have many details to talk about, but my neighbor came over to my house and assaulted me multiple times. I remember when I was playing in my backyard with my toys. He would stand there and stare at me. I didn’t realize his actions until I grew up.

[^1]: Anonymous experience

The office

I'm a secretary. The job scope is wide. When I first took over the job, my boss stared at me in a way that made me uncomfortable every time I walked into his office to deliver a document. At first, I thought I was being too sensitive, and that I needed to relax. However, once when I went to deliver a document, my boss stopped me just as I was leaving. He then slowly walked up to me, put his hand around my shoulder and said, "let's read this document together." I looked like a gentle person, but I could not bear such a thing, so I knocked his hand off my shoulder and firmly told him to stop making sexual advances.
The emptiness of *Companion*

*Companion* (2019-2020) has a soft side. Some boxes are empty, as the many experiences of sexual assault and harassment remain unknown. The empty space tells more experiences. *Companion* (2019-2020) speaks to what I call “known unknown” -- all of the many instances of assault that we can’t see as well as those we choose not to acknowledge. The form of the piece, a wall composed of small scenarios taking place inside of hundreds of smaller walled spaces, intends to evoke conflicting emotions, a sense of holiness and horror, by standing in front of this gigantic wall.

The empty spaces in the boxes do not mean that nothing has happened, but it proves that in this society, as an individual, there are always more things happened than you know. The large number of empty boxes added up to put on more values and weights to experiences I didn't know about. As Ken Gonzalez-day's article, *Introduction: Searching for California's Hanging Trees*, he states that

A solitary figure on A solitary journey, I have documented the empty space that lies between the historically unseen body of the lynch victim and my own unseen body (16).

These empty spaces cause people to imagine and think: what has happened here?; why haven't others known?; what happened to the survivors? etc. What you know and what you don't know actually happens in these empty spaces, but you are not the survivor, you only know the surface, you will never know the details. The empty boxes in my work are not a space for more people to tell me what had happened to them, but to illustrate that these empty boxes tell the same important experiences as the full boxes, which already contain experiences throughout the installation. Moreover, the hundreds of empty spaces are also reflected what society ignores, doesn’t understand, and doesn't
offer respect to many survivors of sexual violence. This leads to survivors who may resist looking for help. I've collected about ten experiences, some from people I've known for a long time, and some from strangers. As an ordinary person, it is shocking of knowing ten people in your community have been though sexual assaulted and harassment. Every time I collect one more experience, I realize sexual violence happened progressively that most of them are buried in more empty spaces. The hundreds of empty spaces in contrast to the experiences I have collected did not highlight the revealing experiences, but rather the evidence expressed by more empty spaces.

Doris Salcedo, a visual artist and sculptor, her work inspired by her life in Colombia. One of her works *Untitled*, made in 2007. Salcedo used wood, concrete, metal and fabric build a wooden wardrobes and bed that are rendered back to back merged together. In her work, *Untitled*, what you see is what is on the surface, the wardrobes and beds tied together, which common furniture become mysteries and monstrous. What you don’t see are the empty spaces that are in all these cracks, holes, and gaps in between the wood, where Salcedo carefully sealed with white cement. Looking her at piece, the form of common furniture makes me think about what the stories behind the bed, the wardrobe, and the space. The empty space left in the Art Gallery of new South Wales where the work was displayed and the empty space in the wooden crevices of the work, brings a sense of oppression to the work, which reflects what Salcedo wants to trace the distortion of reality that occurs when power and violence are used as means of social control." (artgallery web)¹¹

Companion (2019-2020) is similar to Salcedo's work in terms of concept and form. My work makes use of the remaining space of Gallery102 to make a comparison with the work itself and illustrates the gigantic of Companion (2019-2020) and diverse levels of my work. There is also a lot of empty space around Salcedo's work to support the strangeness of the form. Conceptually, Companion (2019-2020) also uses hundreds of empty spaces to tell social oppression against sexual assault survivors.

Gonzalez-day wrote his experiences as a photographer then took photos of all kinds of sites, the empty space in his work describes the preserving the memory and document the history. Companion (2019-2020) is not a historical reenactment or documentary-leaning project, but my project shares a similar concept with Gonzalez-day, which is to remind many communities that it is never too late to rediscover your past or acknowledge other’s past (19).

The vast amount of empty spaces in my work represents the unspeakable phenomenon of the unfair treatment of sexual assault survivors in this society. Some people are putting up comments such as, “it could be that you’re wearing a skin-tight skirt at work,” “it might be you went out too late at night,” or more like “you should not dress up too much,” and etc. Survivors are exposed to the eyes of the public, and they do not deserve to hear this injustice. These empty Spaces in Companion (2019-2020) embody this asymmetry; meanwhile, the silent in the emptiness is also a self-protection.

These empty boxes have shadows inside them, similar to the flashback of hurt. Flashbacks are big and small. Survivors will try to convince themselves that what happened will be okay that we are still clean and innocent. Nevertheless, some survivors have been strong for a long time that their own strength has been eroded.
I went to a party at my friend’s house. I had a lot of drinks. And I felt really nauseous, so I went to the bathroom. Suddenly, one of my friend’s came in and he said he was taking care of me. The bathroom door was locked, and somebody slid in a condom. I didn’t remember what happened after, the next morning I could feel something happened, he said to me I was willing to do it. But I didn’t remember anything.

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*Anonymous experience*

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12 Anonymous experience
Not the end of Companion

The first experience that I shared in the introduction to this page is my own. This experience has been placed with all of the other boxes in Companion (2019-2020). Is it one experience among others? It is also alongside many more empty boxes waiting for the next experience to be told. The boxes filled with colorful figures and strange shapes function as a sarcasm of this world. We left the isolated elements in the box and said goodbye to the abyss in our hearts: the church pew, the pop-corn ceiling, the office chair, the car, the yard and the neighbor, the blue and green haze, the bar, and the old street, and etc. I am thankful for the survivors who bravely decided to heal by letting people know about their experiences. By putting some of their memories inside the box, they are able to leave something behind and detaching themselves from the bad moments. When the sunlight comes into the boxes, life is still good.
I was in a new environment and eager to make new friends. I met this person and we went to a bar together. After leaving the bar she invited me over to her place. I was excited to make new friends, so I went. She showed me around the apartment and then we went into her roommate’s room. She suddenly locked the door and I became dizzy. All I remember are hands all over my body, the ceiling with the pop-corn texture, and the yellow light.
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