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## English Tobacco and Polaroid Transfers



"#11 Dad/Ajit," from "Fabricated Memories," 1997-2000. © Annu Palakunnathu Matthew / Courtesy the artist and sepia EYE

**Annu Palakunnathu Matthew** was 11 when she moved with her family from England, where she was born, to India, her parents' homeland; a short time later, her father died. The force of these events has echoed through Matthew's art, which uses photography to explore ideas of memory, place, identity and loss. A selection of images, ranging from digital animations of slowly shifting family photos to light-streaked silver gelatin prints made with a Holga in India, is on view at [sepia EYE](#) gallery in New York until December 26, and in a two person show at [Twelve Gates Arts](#) in Philadelphia until December 15.

Among the works in New York is *Fabricated Memories*, a small, handmade accordion book of Polaroid emulsion transfers that digitally mix images of Matthew's family from childhood photos with images she took on a five month trip to England as an adult (Matthew moved to the U.S. when she was 28). The dreamlike amalgamations show cool-hued scenes of city streets and suburban houses and gardens, layered with images of her dad or both parents, alone or with a small child. The relationship between the new and old images is sometimes unsettling—the characters in each seem to exist in parallel universes. In one, an attendant in a red coat ushers a figure into a black taxi while nearby, a man leads a child across the street. In scale and tone, the two sets of figures match, but the father and child, added later, seem like ghostly interlopers.

The book is printed on paper made from tobacco leaves, and presented as a cigarette box, "to emphasize the fact that my father died due to his smoking," writes Matthew in a statement. "The paper has been stained with tobacco juice so that the viewer experiences the tobacco through sight, touch and smell." (The entire New York exhibition was scented with tobacco) "The pages of the book are made from a delicate handmade paper to suggest the images, like life itself, is very fragile," she writes.