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BEING STATIC DYNAMIC

It all started with a short visit, then a discussion and before I realised I was carried away by Dalila Dalléas Bouzar' concept and project on memory and memory loss. Soon enough I was bent on doing an exhibition with her works in Savvy Contemporary – obviously in the conceptual lines of this art space.

This project proved to be of particular interest, as memory/memory loss serves as one of the corner stones on which this art space is built. In the sense that the space was initiated, *inter alia*, to remind the Western society in which we find ourselves today about a too often forgotten fact, i.e. that there is great art and great culture from all four corners of the globe.

Memory is normally understood to be something static and genuine – the ability, consciously or unconsciously, with the help of the nervous system to store, to order and to re-call positive and negative information or experiences. Memory can also be treated as a refuge, i.e. a haven in a nomadic circumstance and a conglomeration of many dynamic pieces that serve as a point of recollection. Due to the plasticity, complexity, ambiguousness, manifoldness and multi-laterality of memory as form – a form for history, a form for narration, a form for political issues and a foundation for the future – I chose to use the title **Being Static Dynamic** as a working title for this exhibit with Dalila Dalléas Bouzar, long before an appropriate curator for the exhibit was found and the title **here and now... amnesia** was chosen.

The concept of the exhibition **here and now... amnesia**, in its diverse approaches towards the topic of memory, epitomises Savvy Contemporary's *mode d'emploi*.

Not only will the concept of memory be investigated upon from an architectural point of view but also from a political, socio-cultural and biological perspective.

In an age where telephone numbers are no longer retained in the head as we all have our numbers in the mobile phones, where each person is forced to own many email passwords, PIN codes, TAN numbers, one can probably say that the abundance of information at our disposal helps to cultivate a general societal amnesia.

In an age where the consequences of hurricanes, tsunamis, wars, political upheavals are all compressed in a 15-news as super-captions, were the culture of reading newspapers slowly but surely dwindles as we prefer watching youtube and facebook, one can probably say that our here and now is spiced up by an empathy amnesia.

In an age where the verses of our poetry are the slogans of commercials and political jabbering, one can probably say that our here and now is synonymous to a cultural amnesia.

But wait a minute! If Savvy Contemporary takes upon it self to do an exhibition with five artists from four continents (Dalila Dalléas Bouzar, Dominik Lejman, Rebecca Loyche, Maryna Markova, Francisco Rozas) on this topic and thereby putting some dynamism in this static lines of thought then one can probably say that our here and now is defined by a reawakening, a new-found consciousness and a tendency of **Being Static Dynamic**.

dr. bonaventure soh bejeng ndikung / art director, exhibition maker & critic / berlin

MNEMOCRITICAL ERA / HERE AND NOW ... AMNESIA

Influenced by cultural, social and political changes, remembrance, commemoration and forgetting are ongoing processes that accompany the construction and re-interpretation of personal and national identity. Lots of facets and questions arise about memory - one of the biggest mysteries of the human brain - studied in different fields, such as in neurobiology, psychology or philosophy. Researchers consider memory as a process, with a diverse set of cognitive capacities by which we retain information and actually reconstruct past experiences from bits of information stored in various parts of the brain. In order to reflect upon things and make conclusions for the future, we go back into our memories of the past in the present. It is therefore an important link between past, present and future.

In everyday life we all live and act because of our mementos, our remembrance, our registration of the past and our learning from it. Sometimes we are reminded accidentally through chain reactions of thoughts, ideas and associations. Recollection, remembrance, retrospection, aided recalls, selective retention, reassuring a moment or the joy of an afterglow... A strange phenomenon is the "Déjà vu". The experience of feeling sure that one has already witnessed a current situation, even though the exact circumstances of the previous encounter are uncertain and were perhaps imagined. Could that be an anomaly of memory, giving the impression that an experience is being recalled? Or is it an act of precognition or prophecy?

The conscious and the subconscious mind work together but it seems that the potential of the subconscious is bigger, because the conscious mind would get overloaded trying to process all of the incoming bits of data on a daily basis. Instead, all of the information is stored in the subconscious and we may never deal with it, except if the mind chooses to process it at night, through our dreams or if we choose to try to access it through hypnosis.

Memories fade away, we neglect, dis-or mis-remember, we lose sight of something. It can be a specific voluntary function of our brain to forget, as in traumatic events of the past, in order to survive. Traumatic memories can come back in dreams, provoke psychological and psychosomatic disease. The loss of

memory - amnesia - through accident or sickness or just forgetting with the process of ageing is a common fear because it affects identity.

In our modern society, memory also means storage space in digital media and information flows constantly through internet, mobile phones, TV, radio, and press, the question of the "quality" of our memory is very present. Can we remember all the information we get? With all of the images through today's media cycle, our eidetic memory (photographic memory) and short term memory are intensively stimulated.

Humankind has always stored objects, art, written documents, souvenirs and so on to create archives for our memory, in order for them not to get lost, so they can be passed on to future generations. The invention of photography played its very own important role in archiving and memorization. It made it possible to physically keep instant moments as an image. As well, it is a valuable tool to help us to remember or recall persons, spaces or past moments of our lives and our world. Even though Roland Barthes writes in "Camera lucida" that photography is never, in essence, a memory... but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory. Film and video even go further in recording scenes and sounds, activating more of our senses. These mediums made it possible to show us things we didn't see or live in reality. Nevertheless they allowed us to remember them as "lived" and as actual knowledge.

Societies create memorials, commemoration days to remind us of history, in order to endure in the future. Historical memorials are often built long after an important event, or the death of an important figure - a hero the collectivity should be reminded of, a reaction against the loss of collective memory and a way to reflect upon mistakes of the past, or to idealize, an expression of nostalgia. Memorials can also change or disappear and could be forgotten forever...

For many artists memory is an impulse for imagination and creation. For some it is a theme for their work. The 20th and beginning of the 21st-century could be characterized as a mnemocritical era. Many artistic projects and exhibitions have questioned remembrance, storage and reconstruction of the bygone.

The notion of “Gedächtniskunst” (“memory art”) appeared in the 21st-century. The implication of places of remembrance, the design of cenotaphs or memorials, new storage media, all reveal a new culture of remembrance. The functions of memory, the creation of identity, the problems of storage selection, archiving or conservation became important questions in art. The memory of the historical past of a country is a recurrent subject that interests many artists of the 21st century, like Jochen Gerz and Christian Boltanski (so called “Spurensicherer” of the nazi past). Louise Bourgeois discovered her creative impulse in her memories of her childhood, Chris Marker offers in his multimedia CD “Immemory” a veritable 21st-century remembrance, an exploration of Marker’s memory itself. Mike Kelley built a model of the town where he lived as a child, whereby the parts he didn’t remember were left empty. Some artists create intentionally interstices, breaches, blank spaces in script, video or audio for the aesthetic cause of remembrance - empty spaces for the imagination and the memories of the reader/holder/listener to be deployed.

In the exhibition **here and now... amnesia** at Savvy Contemporary memory traces of five artists from Western and non-Western countries based in Berlin are offering a “here and now” with their art works, mostly exclusively created for this exhibition. The French-Algerian painter Dalila Dalléas Bouzar reflects upon the memory of her personal past and the violent past of her native African country Algeria in a series of drawings and paintings and an audio-installation. Through this work she presents a part of her current project in Algeria. The artist Dominik Lejman from Poland is showing a new video-painting. The projection of an old man swimming in place could be seen as a metaphor of the here and now, the immaterial and intangible. The American artist Rebecca Loyche approaches memory in a series of four videos. The videos are psychological portraits of past recollections and loosely based on taboo themes of amnesia, narcissism, infatuation, and compulsive disorders. The installations of the Ukrainian artist Maryna Markova will approach the problem of the loss of identity due to amnesia and the political choice of destroying memorials of heroes of the soviet past - a trial to erase collective memory. Francisco Rozas from Chile is searching for memory of space in situ - behind the architecture of the gallery Savvy Contemporary- and will rebuild from there. He will question the idea and memory we have about paradise/nature in Europe and South-America through a second installation.

dalila dalléas bouzar

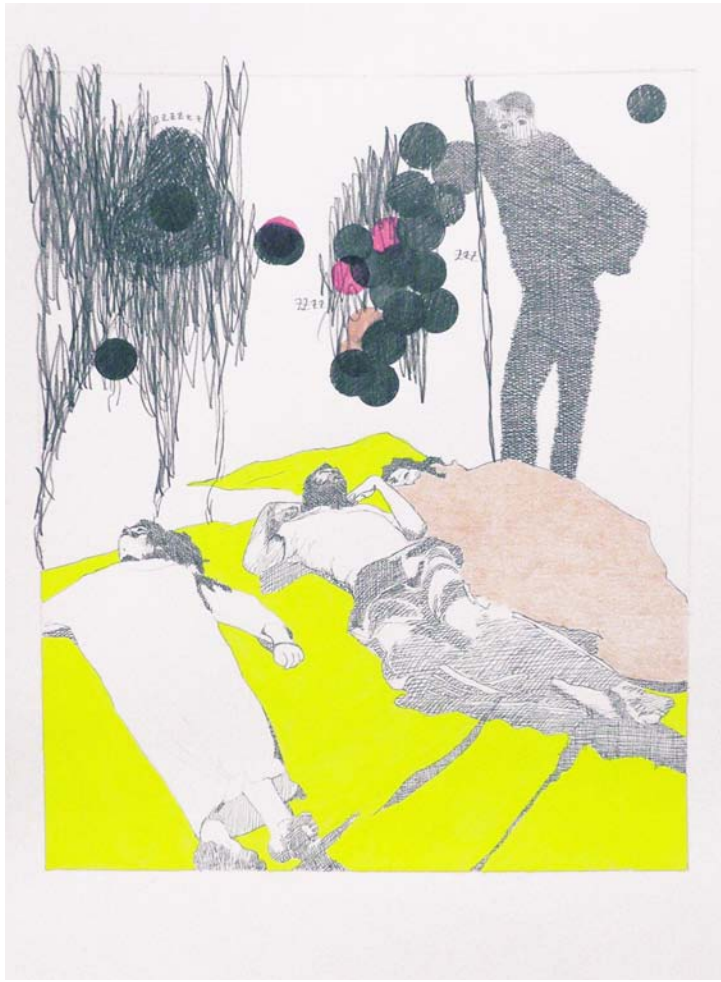
artist / oran, algeria

THE HUMANKIND IN ART'S ASSESSMENT

Dalila Dalléas Bouzar's paintings emanate the feeling of visions close to those that emerge from "flower cloth". In certain ways they reveal both simple and highly sensory moods, fears and passions which take shape in a mapping of sensitive dominated pastel shades. True to her wishes and feelings, the artist spreads the picturesque by chromatics, which makes her emotional universe visible, enhanced to universality, reminiscent of the work "Lucian Freud, The Butcher." As if meant to exorcise fears and fantasies, she tracks down the ghosts that inhabit our imagination and the harsh reality that comes to our minds in moments of terror; her triptych "Sentinel" is eloquent in this sense.

With great mastery in the way of bringing out floating colours, Dalila Dalléas Bouzar succeeds to crystallize emotions through symbolic figures that range from art history to icons of known political figures. Revisiting "Women of Algiers" or "icons of Saddam and Khomeini" is a given way to rethink the contested history of the post-colonial Arab world. This world, still inhabited by the effects of the painful past wars of liberation is now stirred by ideological political movements, often violent, which affect the individual citizen in his/her physical and moral self. Therefore, organising painting workshops for women in 2004 in Oran was a means for the artist to feel and express emotions by sharing, which helps to continue to live socially. But the experience of violence and trauma also needs to be broken. A work about memory that the artist procures in a sensible way through images, by creating a purely artistic device as well as revisiting the traces and scars of near and distant past. This is also the question of vulnerability and fallibility of mankind. The much too human dimension can be captured in the manner of perception on history, without a preconditioned judgement. Isn't this power of art, which is able to open to various interpretations by convening emotions and leaving room for doubt?

rachida triki / professor, curator, author / tunis, tunesia





A PROJECT IN ALGERIA

Why did you choose to work on the subject of memory in Algeria?

When I saw the documentary movie called Algérie(s) by Malek Bensmail, Patrice Barrat and Thierry Leclère (2004) that retraced 10 years of the black decade - from 1992 to 2002, and the research about informations about that war - in this movie the conclusion was that there were really few images and information about that war. For the public, nothing was published, so the people didn't know much. After there was a weight belt about this decade, it was forbidden officially to talk about it, the memory of this event was difficult to be formulated, there was no source of images and even if it existed it was difficult to access and it was difficult to remember.

It responded to my autobiographical memory. For a long time I have had a bad memory about my past, my childhood and youth and I was always wondering why I couldn't remember things my sisters did. I realized that I occlude some things, which scared me because I can hide things to myself, but if I occlude I don't even know what it is. Now I am in a phase where I am ready to recall my own history. What happened in Algeria made me feel my strong attachment, even though I was only born there, have family there, but I never lived there really, I have a strong relation and the history of Algeria makes me feel as if I lived it also. When I saw that movie I was really astonished and I felt that I want to talk about that history and when I will touch that memory it will influence my own being. That's why I am doing this project, because it is important for me, it is not only an artistic project, it is a project that I do with a lot of energy and I want to stay the course.

What did you realise yet?

In January I went to Alger in the first a phase of research and discovering, where I wrote a first draft of the project, i.e. how I want to work on the memory in art. I wanted to go to Alger to know it better, as I didn't go there since 2004. I wanted to know how I will feel and if it was possible to do something there. I started to do interviews with people between 18 and 60 years old, about memory, and it was interesting to see the difference between the generations, man and woman or the different social strata.

I asked questions about the Algerian war and the civil war. The remembrance is more about the violence, the stories are very violent and it shows what this violence did to memory. I am oriented towards that question. I also researched about funding. I made contacts with the Centre Culturel Français in Alger, as well as other associations. I did a complete paper to present the project officially and I started a workshop of drawings, the base of that project. When I was thinking about memory I thought about the media drawing right away, it is the base of my artistic education. I started a series of drawings and I will show my first part of it at Savvy Contemporary in **here and now...amnesia**.

What is the project in Algeria exactly about and how do you plan to realise it?

It is a tentacular project, I was reflecting about finding a way to talk about memory, I thought about the people. I want to do photographs of places of remembrance, find traces existing in the country, places of collective memory or special events of the wars. These photographs will tell stories about these places of remembrance and will hopefully liberate memories. I see memory as a fluid that has to circulate and when it can't circulate properly problems will start. In Algeria psychological, social and economic problems are existing because of that fact. The fact not to be able to express memory, to be caged, hinders a society to develop and in Algeria there is a real problem of violence in families, towards children, towards women, more than in other balanced societies that you can't explain only with the economic problems. It is not innocent.

A part of my project is to organize workshops of reflection about memorials. How to do it, why, for who, which form can it have in urban space etc. I thought about that because I am living in Berlin, where one always comes across "Stolpersteine". There are German artists that work on memorials like Jochen Gerz and I got inspired by that artist in Germany. This workshop on reflection with Algerians, young artists or motivated people is very important. I think it is interesting, because the goal is not to create imperative memorials but to talk about remembrance and to make information circulate. What is interesting in doing the workshop will be to include a social reality and I will not be the isolated artist working alone in her studio. And more to that, one can observe direct results of this group work.

The other project is to create a library, a furniture/object, an artistic work containing documents about

the two wars, an object “library” accessible to anyone. At the end of the whole project I would love to present an exhibition, to show the whole work, have talks, lectures and conferences. The most important work for me would be the drawings because it is my very personal part of the whole project.

How would you describe the memory of the people you interviewed?

I interviewed 15 people, I really like the work of recording voices and I think artistically it is very interesting. In general I think that the people who experienced the civil war are still in the trauma, they don't have the distance from it and you get the feeling that they forbid themselves to think about it. Concerning the Algerian war the people between 40-50 years old can talk about it easily, the younger generations have no connection to it and the older than 60ies don't want to talk about it, but they experienced it directly. The memory is not precise. In Algeria there is an official story existing about the wars - it is a dictatorship - and the people don't want to rethink another version. Even people that are intellectuals or university graduate are not accepting other versions of French historian for example...I realized that there is a very strong nationalism. The memory goes first through that nationalism and there is a deferment between what I know and what the people know who never left Algeria. And I have the feeling memory is a subject that is not cultivated, officially it is not encouraged they don't talk about it in public, maybe in families, in a closed space. The persons were shocked by my questions, it is not natural like in Germany for instance, that is an exemplary country concerning the work they did about the memory of the second world war. Here people are used to talking about it, they know that people ask questions, some are open to talk about it, some are fed up, but there are open.

interview by *katia hermann* / french-german independent curator, writer & translator / berlin

north/south cultural mediation

christine eyene / french-cameroonian art critic, independent curator, consultant & visual arts co-editor of *africultures* / london

NORTH/SOUTH CULTURAL MEDIATION

THE LEGACY OF BLACK CULTURES IN TODAY'S BRITISH-BASED PRACTICE

A few years ago, I was sitting at a café with artist Ingrid Mwangi. It was during Africa 05, Mwangi had been invited to London as part of “Africa Remix” in which her work featured. She was also one of the speakers at the symposium hosted by the British Museum.

We exchanged on our dual cultural heritage and although hailing from altogether four different African and European countries (Kenya-Germany/Cameroun-France), we shared as a common ground this interstitial identity also known as “other” identity. Not passive “others” but ones enthused with a strong will to reshape, or adapt to its own reality, the cultural space with which we interact daily.

The context that saw Mwangi and many African artists come together for this exceptional event relied on a number of parameters. That Africa 05 managed to galvanise the whole community shows that we all responded to the same identity call, or rallying cry. We were also driven by a sense of belonging. Crucially, that this festival was able to take place at all, I strongly believe, owed to the fact that the way to access such platforms was paved by the Caribbean community that preceded the vague of African migration to the UK.

Migration is not merely a geographical or economical phenomenon. It is also cultural. It is often assumed that African migration to Europe or North America results in forms of acculturation marked by western influences. What is overlooked here is that African migrants engage with cultures bearing similarities to theirs. This is all the more obvious in the visual arts. In the UK for instance, two influential movements have not only brought a new aesthetic vision in the arts, they have also contributed to shape UK's artistic landscape as we know it today. I am referring to the Caribbean Artists Movement (1966-1972) and the Black Art Movement (1979-1989).¹

The Caribbean Artists Movement began as a literary movement instigated by Kamau (later known as L. Edward) Brathwaite and John La Rose (1927-2006). Visual artists who engaged with this movement include Ronald Moody (1900-1984) and Aubrey Williams (1926-1990).

These writers and artists were conversant in the tenets of black intellectual thoughts ranging from the Harlem Renaissance (1920s-30s) to Negritude (1930s -1960s/1970s),² creating both the trans-channel and trans-atlantic links that form the Diaspora experience in a broad understanding.

Indeed, the African artists who practiced at that time, like Nigerians Uzo Egonu (1931-1996) and Ben Enwonwu (1921-1994), were thrown into this cultural environment.

Both Enwonwu and South African painter Gerard Sekoto who befriended the former on a stop-over to London before settling in France, engaged with the cultural debates and contributed to the publication that served as a vehicle to black cultures, notably "Présence Africaine".

As Stuart Hall observed, in the 1960s, as the difference between American Black Art and the Caribbean Artists Movement:

"For African Americans, the key factor has always been slavery ... In the Caribbean case, in the 1950s and 1960s, the central issue seemed to be, not slavery per se, but colonialism."³

Interestingly, for the second generation of black British artists, notably those who pioneered what was to be known as UK's Black Art: Eddie Chambers, Keith Piper and Donald Rodney (1961-1998), the main concern revolved around politics of identity, or more precisely, about expressing themselves as British-born artists in an exclusive art scene and a conservative country.

It is noteworthy that the history and the memory of slavery were a distinctive trait in the black art iconography. As for the African link, it has been acknowledged by Keith Piper who mentioned, as an influential figure, South African artist Gavin Jantjes whose silkscreens contained strong political statements against the apartheid regime.⁴

To practice in Europe along the lines of the North/South paradigm as proposed by Savvy Contemporary and for this project to be borne by German-based Cameroonian-born curator requires that our history, our memory, in other words our cultural heritage be taken into account. This, regardless of the multiple complexity in which it offers itself in the North, to cultural professionals originating from the South.

The invaluable legacy of the Caribbean Artists and Black Art Movements, which, it has to be highlighted, were artists-led initiatives, is that it compelled subsequent generations of artists, art critics, historians and curators to look at the history of Africa – and its Diaspora – from Antiquity, through to slavery and colonial times, up until post-colonial debates.

Globalisation, it seems, cannot wash away our collective memory.

christine eyene / french-cameroonian art critic,
independent curator, consultant & visual arts co-editor of africultures / london

- 1 Front (1979) and its wear off at the junctio of “The Other Story”, the Black Art exhibition curated by Araeen at the Hayward Gallery and Jean-Hubert Martin’s “Magiciens de la Terre” (Centre Pompidou; La Villette) both in 1989.
- 2 Although there is no consensual date on the end of Negritude, I choose to highlight the decades where this philosophy came under criticism from Englishspeaking writers like Wole Soyinka and South Africans Kerapetse Kgositsil and Ezekiel Mphahlele. For more on Kgositsile and Mphahlele’s views, read: Christine Eyene, “Skoto and Negritude: the Ante-room of French Culture”. *Third Text* 105, Vol. 24, Issue 4, July 2010. pp. 423-435.
- 3 Stuart Hall, “Assembling the 1980s: The Deluge – and After”, in Bailey, Baucom, Boyce (eds.), *Shades of Black. Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain*. Durham, London: Duke University Press; London: Institute of International Visual Arts (inIVA), African and Asian Visual Artists’ Archive (Aavaa), 2005, p. 3.
- 4 For more on the memory of slavery in the black arts, read Christine Eyene, “De l’esclavage dans l’iconographie du black art”, *Africultures* n. 67, juin-aout 2006, pp. 76-79.

dominik lejman

artíst / gdansk, poland

MEMORY PROJECTION, DOMINIK LEJMAN, IN ANSWER TO...

How does memory influence your art work or your process of creation?

It has something to do with repetition... for me painting as a painted canvas plays the role for placing the projection. I think memory of certain events, or certain traces that we encounter in certain situation often need to be reconstructed on the basis of an abstract space. As long as it is abstracted, it becomes present again.

For example I remember an event, I remember the situation, but I don't remember the background, I just remember the fact. We just acknowledge the fact of an event without the background. So if you want to bring back the memory of a certain event you get closer to it - for me - when you represent the event as a projection and you actually recreate the conditions or make the conditions being in time and in place of the viewer, like with a painting which is absent or projection-less. Without the projection, you consider it as an abstract field for the memory to be brought back, and of course it is not the environment where the event happened, but then because it is the environment which is very specifically created for the event to be brought back, it brings back the whole situation much closer even though image comes for us as a phenomena or representation of a projection rather than as an event in itself.

Which notions of memory could your pieces procure?

The tactile notion of memory is quite linked to my work. If you think about the sensual notion of memory it is not only the way how you see, but how your senses remember touch, for example. If you have lost an object or a person, suddenly you realize the surface of the lost object happened to be phenomenally recorded in your fingers, you can feel the texture of the surface of the object that is lost, and without loosing it, you would have never been aware of the phenomenal texture ...

In a primitive drawing, when you think for example of totemic art, you deal with the way how certain type of representation becomes the complete image, which you can perceive only if you realize that what is visible is not the whole representation that you look at, but you need to apply your own projection into the given structure. So it is not a passive image anymore but a framework for your own projection.

The endless amount of drawings I do in my work is a repetitive process of memorizing, but those drawings are completely hermetic and unrecognisable for anybody else, hence they are basically diagrams for things that I imagine rather than descriptions. A scribble, which is satisfying just for me, as a sort of frame which communicates only with my own memory and nobody else's.

How will you define your representations in relation to memory?

If you relate to memory, you may think of the origins of painting, this story from Plinius, the idea of the Corinthian bride who makes the drawing-outline from the shadow projection of her beloved one who is about to leave. So you could say painting has always been about memory if you think of it as a projection. My paintings are about using that sort of phenomena of representing something that is already not here. It is a representation of the memory of the object rather than the object itself. That also explains the way how I perceive painting, something that is quite recurrent in all my work, when I don't see very much difference in all my paintings whether there is a projection, or there is no projection. "POProgramie (the Newsroom)" is a painting showing TV-Studio as a dark blank space, just the spotlights, and the whole space does really look as if it is made for the projection like in other paintings with projection included. For this one, projection never happens. But there is this expectation which lasts, this desire for the image to appear, on the basis of comparison, but also on the basis of a stronger desire of something to be completed so it lasts never being completed. So it is still a painting which contains that potential. I am more and more interested in that, in creating a space which could have the potential for our memory to reappear.

Your video-painting "Harnessed swimmer" is exhibited for the first time, how will you define this piece in your artistic path?

It is a very important work for the reason of my experience with this particular type of work where I am using a performative space, as I call a canvas, and video-projection which is a part of the work itself. But in this work what happens is the fact that the projection is not there all the time. It comes back with a rhythm of a swimming figure, an old man. He is nearly in his late 60's, but he is fit enough to look like one of Saints from Ribera paintings. What happens is that he swims in this crawl rhythm in place.





He swims in a diagram of the painting which more or less looks like a kind of an abstract piece, which shifts when the projection appears on the surface, so it comes to us as a pool or a tomb or a place which could be somehow recognized as shape made for this figure. He appears and disappears in the dark water, or the dark space, or the dark surface in the rhythm of his swimming. But what was really interesting for me is actually that the viewer is confronted with memory of that rhythm. When you think about the memory and the repetition, then very often the shock comes in the moment when something which is used to be repeated, doesn't repeat in the same rhythm that you got used to it, the projection appears like half a second later, but that time is enough for us to somehow feel this really strange sensation of expectation of an image to appear when its still is not there. It provokes of course this whole series of reflexion, what is happening with this man? Is he going to appear anymore or never again? This half a second makes a huge difference. So I think it is somehow related to the phenomena of memory. Our memory is also a set of the rhythmical structures, we need to repeat certain things to remember, and otherwise we forget, we need to repeat numbers of our credit cards, we are tied up with all that little details that we have to remember and we need to remember them in a repetitive way, otherwise we forget. In "Harnessed swimmer", like in the "Afterparty" or the piece "Let me jump", there it is not that obvious that we remember the person on the projection, we easily forget the figure, and when the projection comes back again after a few seconds, it turns out that we forget quite a lot in this interval. What makes the story complete in "Harnessed Swimmer" is the notion of swimming in place. You have the old man - it is based on the real story of the father of my ex-girlfriend whom I used to visit quite often. I was fascinated by his idea of building a swimming pool which was more or less the size of my painting - maybe a little bigger. He had this ambition to swim in his house but his house wasn't big enough to build a real pool, so he decided to build a pool where he could swim in place. He harnessed himself there every weekend so he was swimming in place. So it is quite a metaphorical situation of an old man swimming in place, without reaching the end of the pool because of his harness, which again, keeps him swimming.

Are there specific moments in your career that you will remember forever?

Do you believe in something like a clear cut? In terms of artistic vision, when you do not negotiate, because it is perfect? We are dealing with materializing things, making things become new entities, when

vision becomes an image which confronts the physical world, so you can touch, you can see. Before that you have the vision, an image you imagine. Sometimes it is too bad to have this image too clear, too perfect. That is my professional experience. As long as I have a perfect vision, it will never have the same shape in real life, it is always a catastrophe, always something happens which doesn't allow me to make it that perfect. It must always be something that is a little bit... not as I imagined, as if when I imagine too much it would destroy it... So speaking of my best achievements, there are these pieces, works that I couldn't imagine totally, so they became even more than what I've expected. I remember them as great successes, because I didn't really visualize them in advance. That happened with the "Breathing Cathedral". On contrary, in public projection I did in Warsaw two years ago, I had imagined everything, so it was a clear cut.

Planned as a field of projected figures filmed from above covering the main square in Warsaw near the old town, my work was meant to be projected from the high tower nearby. Footage was recorded every day, made to overlap with the footage from the previous days of the project. In Warsaw it was the biggest public projection I ever did, 8 video-projectors covering the entire square of big pavement area. When I installed the work the night before opening, it looked great: I saw a black cat jumping over these figures trying to catch them! I guess to fool an animal is a bigger achievement than to fool the human. So it was my clear cut for that moment, with the black cat which was my only public... the next day it was raining, then somebody build this huge tent in the middle of my projection, then basically nothing worked. And it is not the first time when after I had imagined everything perfectly it just didn't work out... So now when I work I really try not to make everything perfect in terms of my artistic vision, hence as long as a vision is complete, it is never going to happen the same way. So if it is really perfect as imagined in reality it can be only worse...

interview by [katia hermann](#) / french-german independent curator, writer & translator / berlin

memory errors and the here and now

by steffen borgenstein / philosophical maverick / berlin

MEMORY ERRORS AND THE HERE AND NOW

Memory is such a fascinating topic because it is closely related to our individuality and identity. We are what we remember.

Thus the question: how reliable are memories in general? Nietzsche famously quipped in “Jenseits von Gut und Böse”: “I have done that, says my memory. I cannot have done that says my pride, and remains adamant. At last memory yields.” As it turns out this isn’t far from the truth. A well – established result of psychological research is that our memory works reconstructively.¹ Information doesn’t get stored the way it is stored on a computer hard drive where it can be retrieved fully at any point in time. In human memory every retrieval is an active reconstruction out of fragments. And the older a memory is the higher the likelihood that the reconstruction is distorted because the brain imaginatively fills in the blanks left by faded fragments.

The Californian Elisabeth Loftus became the most influential female psychologist of the 20th century thanks to her research on the reliability of memory. One of her classical experiments called Lost in the mall is described in most introductory textbooks on psychology. Each test person was asked whether they could recollect four childhood events described in note form by some relatives. They were then tasked to remember some additional detail, unaware that one of the four stories was completely fabricated. The fake story was about them at age 5 or 6 being rescued by an adult after getting lost at a mall. The test persons were interviewed again at different points in time to provide some more details if possible. At the very end one quarter of the participants claimed to be able to remember the fictitious event and many added freely imagined details to the story. As this experiment and subsequent ones showed it is quite easy to implant memories into a large proportion of people. For example, the conviction to have been left-handed as a child or even implausible ones like the memory of an encounter with a Bugs Bunny figure at Disneyland although the Bugs Bunny character is from arch competitor Warner Brothers. In the latter case simply showing a manipulated picture of this alleged childhood event to the test person led many people to have fictitious recollections. And when false memories are really accepted, they can elicit strong emotions and thereby mimic real ones.

Research has discovered over 40 different types of systematic errors, so called cognitive biases, which affect the recall or change the content of a memory. How important knowledge about the suggestibility of memory is, can be seen in the many case of innocent people who where wrongfully convicted because of an erroneous eyewitness memory only to be cleared much later by new DNA evidence. A grotesque case of false memory happened when Australian forensics expert Donald Thomson was participating in a live TV show devoted to exploring the unreliability of eyewitness testimony and ironically “not long afterward was summoned to a police precinct, put in a lineup, and identified by a woman as the man who had raped her. Though he had an incontrovertible alibi – he was on national television at the time of the attack and seen by hundreds of thousands of viewers – he was charged with the crime on the basis of her unwavering eyewitness testimony. It was only later, when an investigator discovered that the woman’s television had been on during the assault, that it became clear that in the midst of her trauma, the woman had conflated Thomson’s face with that of the rapist.”^[1]

The unreliability of memory is not only an immensely relevant topic for our legal systems but pops up even when we ask ourselves how we should live. The Israeli-American psychologist and Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman became a pioneer in the field of happiness studies in the later part of his career and while he tried to find ways to measure happiness he soon had to confront the huge impact of memory biases on subjective reports of well-being. In one fascinating study by Kahneman he measured the pain of colonoscopy patients by letting them rate it every minute on a numeric scale. Additionally everyone was interviewed afterwards about their experience. It turned out that the remembered pain and unpleasantness afterwards was not the same as the one reported during the examination. Those patients that underwent a longer procedure remembered paradoxically afterwards less unpleasantness than those with a shorter examination, although during the experience they had all the instances of pain that patients with the shorter procedure had plus some additional pain from the extra time. What was happening here? Again one of those fundamental cognitive biases of our brain, in this case the peak-end effect. Humans don’t remember the sum of an experience but mainly the dramatic parts, especially how it was at its peak and how it ended. The pain of those with the short procedure was at its peak when it ended and therefore provided a bad story to remember whereas for

the other patients the ending was gradual with lesser pain.

Kahneman points out that this forces us to distinguish between two different subjects, the experiencing self and the remembering self. The experiencing self is the one living always in the psychological now.^{III} The remembering self is the one narrating a story about oneself, passing judgment and making decisions. And as the colonoscopy example shows sometimes the judgments and decisions of the remembering self are not in the best interest of the experiencing self. So a natural question comes up: for which self should one care? What is our priority: the actual experience or what I can “remember” about it? Would I prefer being happy right now or prefer feeling good about what I believe were my past few weeks, months or years of my life?

As it turns out the distinction between the two selves is also crucial for measuring happiness which was Kahneman’s concern in the first place. Being happy with one’s life or being happy about one’s life is something entirely different from being happy in one’s life. What established well-being indices usually measure is only the former one, hence what one thinks and remembers about one’s happiness. Studies suggest goals and income are of importance for the remembered self but play almost no role for the experiencing self. What counts more than anything else for being happy in one’s life is being together with friends and people one likes.

Consider the following thought experiment: you have to choose between either the most amazing holiday experience you ever had in your life, though at the end of the trip all your memories about the vacation will be erased or some average holiday experience of equal duration including all the memories. What would be your decision and for which reasons? And would the same reasons also be applied if the scenario is changed to one with negative experiences? For example your dentist offering you a choice between an extremely painful drilling session but with the bonus that you won’t remember any of it later on, or a less painful procedure but with your recollection intact.

Then imagine that the covered time-frame is expanded from a single vacation to your whole life span.

When one is dead one can’t have any recollections, so the arguments in favor of the choice option with intact memory are no longer valid. Why not concentrate on pure experience from the beginning?^{IV}

The fact that we put so much weight on memory instead of on our actual experiences is probably determined by our neurobiology to such a degree that we will never be able to fully escape.^{VI} But trying with the right practice and a lot of exercise to mold our neuroplastic brain in the right direction is certainly worth it. Lets start to cultivate living here and now, in the perfection of the moment. Everything else is rather unimportant.

Except perhaps the question: will you remember this essay?

Recommended for memory enthusiasts:

- 1 talk: The riddle of experience vs. memory. Daniel Kahneman. TED 2010.
- 2 essay: Gehirn und Gedudel. Warum die Fussball-Europameisterschaft das Leben verlägert, der Musikantenstadel aber nicht. Thomas Grunwald. Springer-Verlag Wien. 2008.^{VI}
- 3 artwork: Zerkalo (The Mirror). Directed by Andrej Tarkovskij. 1975.

steffen borgenstein / philosophical maverick / berlin

^I Humans have several different memory systems. I'm referring in this essay to the episodic and autobiographical memory.

^{II} Translated from Sue Halpern, "Memory!", dtv Verlag, München, 2009, page 78.

^{III} The psychological Now is between 0.5 and 3 seconds long, dependent on how it is defined.

^{IV} On the other hand perhaps memories can be part of the experiencing self as well, for example when we nostalgically daydream.

^V When we choose we never can choose between pure experiences but only between remembered experiences, so our remembered self will become automatically involved as long as we make decisions.

^{VI} Though Grunwald is either not aware of the distinction between the two selves or he has made another choice. The point of his book is an advice on how one can reach a life full of rich memories.

rebecca toyche

artist / new york, usa

ANOMALOUS MEMORY

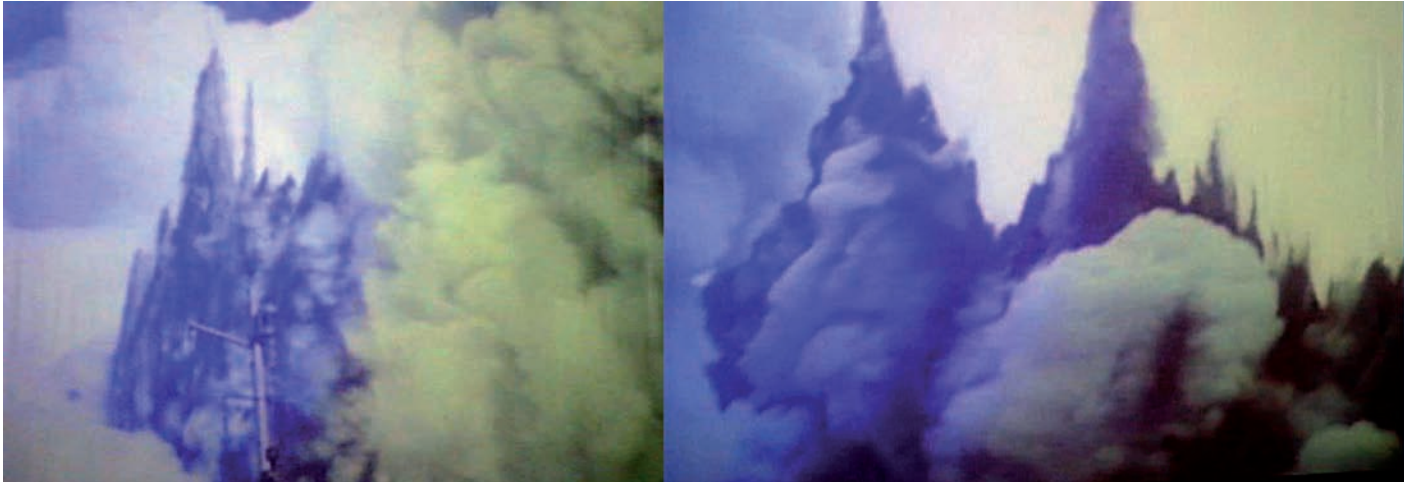
“The folly of mistaking a paradox for a discovery, a metaphor for a proof, a torrent of verbiage for a spring of capital truths—and oneself for an oracle—is inborn in us.” - Paul Valéry

In her art work, whether it be realized in sculpture, installation, photography, sound recording or video (or some combination, thereof), Rebecca Loyche explores the contradictions inherent in the aspects of what we encounter visually, with the hidden psychic and emotional affects of those objects, the visceral feelings of what they might evoke. This is apparent, for instance, in the latent hostility, the coiled, quiet threat of potential destruction and dismemberment of a pre-detonated handmade bomb in her photo series, “Minds/ Mines Don’t Care.” Or, in the twisted sinister-looking pieces of burnished metal meant to lodge in the soft gums of a mouth in her sculpture series, “Bits” devices of control and mastery, glowingly lit and displayed as in a high-end S&M catalogue, cruel and beautiful. The words and images that might dislodge memories and recollections from the labyrinths of the human psyche, like most deeply subjective ephemera, are fickle “objects,” as well. For her four audio-visual pieces presented in this show, Memory #1, Memory #2, Memory #3 and Memory #4 (2008-2011), the protagonists speak, by turns, eloquently, poetically, gutterally, viciously-shouting, whispering, wheedling, conniving—as various flickers and tatters from limbic regions emerge.

Each performance is riveting, deeply affecting. The oft-repeated signifying words in each piece are recited like magical incantations, seeming to hold deeply embedded meanings for the speakers. And yet, concurrently, each repetition of these mundane phrases—Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome, Thank You, Wish You Were Here – can also become so much aural wallpaper.

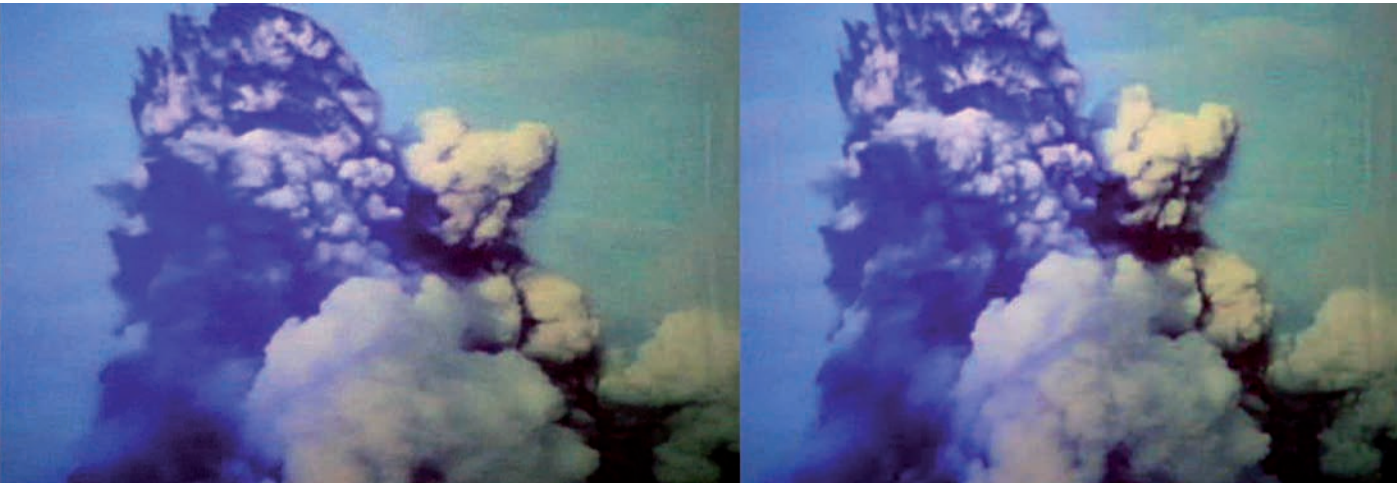
For can we really ever wholly accept any kind of long-repressed utterance as a reliable and valid entity—particularly when the speaker is so imperiously correct in the narratives he or she recites “from memory”? It is in the unspoken spaces where we might need to tune in with a finer ear.

In Memory #1, the man who “could not remember,” this man who “could only forget,” implores us – we “ladies and gentlemen”—from a stance of deep-seated frustration, some visceral fear caused by overwhelming



disorientation, as he clamors for our attention like an unhinged carnival barker. We see eruptions of volcanic ash representing synapses rapidly (mis) firing. “Ladies and Gentlemen!,” he beseeches as if from some long-ago radio melodrama, describing “tiny black holes of memory loss”, a voice crying out for his mislaid streams of consciousness.

The woman that bids “Welcome” in Memory #2 can only rely upon “bestowing my body and all that it’s capable of giving because ... I see things true,” the timbre of her voice by turns seductive, secretive, a bit playful, as if to say, I know what you really want is some of what I have, isn’t it? “What a burden self-love is, always out of reach no matter how much I welcome you in. ... I never lie, at least only to myself and, of course, that is easy to deny.” The third speaker, profusely thankful but utterly distraught, tells a tale of obsessive love (mis) remembered, who sends “best regards and thanks ... for my memory’s resourcefulness of fantasy and delusion,” his voice accompanied by hazy refracted light, vaguely shaped penumbra



moving to and fro. As if in a fugue before a fainting spell, an epic struggle takes place with one's own inability to ever triumph over fantasy and delusion, and "the rolling thoughts begin."

As stars glide by in the night sky and the planets align in reliable tides of push and pull, we hear the oft-repeated incantation of someone someplace so evocative, so memorable, that she "wishes you were here." What are the memories to keep, which ones to embellish, which ones to pare down, she asks. Which ones to eradicate completely? For "there are two types of people here. ... Those with images and those with none. Those that can vaguely remember and those that can slowly forget. Wish you were here. Wish you were here." In each artwork, as an image repeats and repeats with only slight variation, the rigors of reminiscence come through in an avalanche of words. "Is there control in memory loss?" Yes, for there is something deliberate in the act of accurately remembering something when one might have spent, perhaps, quite a lot of time trying to forget it – as if the last things one should ever rely upon are one's own recollections.



In order to remember, it seems we just need a place of communion with the familiar, for what is a memory if not an amorphous testament to something which existed or has occurred? In her pieces filled with words that might signify a whole universe – or signify nothing at all – Loyche pulls us into the deep end of the pool, the murky depths where we teeter on the edge of the real and the imagined, where we live outside of the realms of what is perceived as real, a liminal plane where things become more open and malleable and can be repurposed depending on ever-shifting contexts and states of mind. The visual aspects only but lend a surface tangibility that doesn't have the heft, perhaps, of listening to untethered voices acting out internalized passion plays. They describe interior events that are well articulated, but always, somehow, less than reliable, all of them ending in eerie radio silence.



In Loyche's works, the visible, in continual flux, becomes fugitive; it is no longer what confronts the eye in two dimensions. It is the totality of possible views taken from the various points of entry and departure that reside in our own unconscious minds. The images act more than as records of interiority, serving to kickstart submerged memories. When the camera reproduces an image, it destroys the uniqueness of the image. When a word or phrase is repeated until it is just a barely - identifiable top note, it can undermine significance altogether. As a result, meanings change, multiply, fragment, and diversify into many meanings.

pamela cohn / film & media producer, writer & freelance curator,
specializing in nonfiction & experimental work / author (blog called still in motion) / berlin

the remembrance of dreams

by frédéric dalléas / french writer & translator for chinese / berlin

THE REMEMBRANCE OF DREAMS

“Do you remember your dreams? While you’re under the shower or putting your clothes on in the morning, do you think about them? Or do you forget them as soon as you wake up?”

How should we understand the fact that remembering dreams needs an effort? Why don’t we remember our dreams naturally? Is the fact that dreams thus escape from memory natural, or is the tendency to forget our dreams to be seen as an effect of the lack of interest of our civilization toward them, despite the emergence of psychoanalysis since more than a century? In the case where this tendency would be reversed, if we were paying a closer attention to our dreams, i.e. if this attention would become a top priority socially and politically in the same way as, for example, education, could we then possibly imagine that technological progress would lead one day to connect a printer to our cerebral cortex so that every morning, we would get the narratives of our dreams neatly typewritten on a few DIN A4 sheets?

I don’t think so. Of course, the lack of interest of the contemporary world toward dreams that ca 7 billion human beings who live in it have each night is regrettable, and certainly influences the difficulty we have to remember them. Nevertheless, I feel that dreams by nature have characteristics favoring their tendency to escape from memory.

Dream is the language of the unconscious. An eccentric language made out of images, but also out of words and sentences that are specific to the unconscious, such that narratives forming the dream appear to consciousness as a foreign and enigmatic language... Jung wrote that he could never admit to Freud that dream is a mere façade that conceals its actual meaning. For him, dream doesn’t have any misleading intention. It tells what it has to tell as well as it can.¹ I feel pretty close to this conception of dream as a “natural process [...] devoid of any intention of conjuring”.² Nevertheless, I think that the messages provided by the unconscious through dreams are encoded. This does not signify that the unconscious really wants to trick consciousness. This encoding would rather be the result of a constraint imposed to the unconscious: the unconscious would be as an undercover agent, who would have infiltrated the enemy, and who would have to send sensitive information to his superiors. But, of which enemy this undercover agent

exactly would have to circumvent the vigilance? The only one I can see is consciousness itself. In other words, unconscious would communicate some information to consciousness through dreams, without letting it be known to a certain part of consciousness for one simple reason: these information would have been classified “top secret” by this very same part of consciousness, that wouldn’t allow them to come back to conscious.

The relationship between dream and the information obliterated by consciousness (or one of its facets) is better known since Freud’s exploration of the mechanism of repression. The information forgotten by consciousness does not topple over into nothingness, is not disintegrated, lost forever, but moved, shoved into unconscious. Before Freud, Nietzsche had already explored these notions in “The Genealogy of Morals”, where he defines forgetfulness as an “active capacity [...], whose function resembles that of a concierge preserving mental order”.³ Forgetfulness would thus not be a bottomless abyss, but an agent of consciousness, that would lead to unconscious elements that have been banned from consciousness. Such an outlook is reminiscent of the figure of Lethe, who personifies forgetfulness in Greek mythology. Daughter of the goddess of strife and discord, and granddaughter of Nux, the Night, Lethe is often merged with one of the five rivers of hell, also called Lethe. But, instead of being the river itself, isn’t Lethe rather the “ferry-woman” conveying the banned elements from the bank of conscious to those of unconscious?

Therefore, two factors explain, in my view, the fact that dreams escape from memory by nature: the encoded language in which they are expressed, and the fact that their contents act out situations that are “classified”, marked as “forgotten” by a certain part of consciousness and, for this reason, can’t easily come back into memory.

To make the effort of recalling, which allows us to reach the contents of our dreams, is like bringing another facet of conscious into play, a facet that is ready to reach out to unconscious. But why should we have to recall our dreams? If a defensive mechanism of our consciousness has repressed information that threatened its integrity, why would we want to pull them back from forgetfulness by fishing them out from unconscious? Simply because if those elements reappear in our dreams, it is that they can’t stay forgotten. They’re calling for their come back on the banks of conscious. Recalling one’s dreams means to be ready to

face those elements banned in unconscious, and to try to decipher the meaning of their return. In some, if not all cases, this approach is essential when one wants to avoid that these unconscious contents use other means to be heard.⁴

The effort of recalling is all the more effective than it is steady. From a few scraps in the beginning, one gradually improves until eventually catching oneiric narratives that present a continuity. This exercise could be compared with physical strength training, but I would prefer the metaphor of juggling: each recovered scrap of a dream is like a ball; with some training, it becomes possible, having caught one when it passed among the morning's thoughts, to not throw it in the air but on the paper, to catch a second one, then a third one, and to juggle with them, without letting any of them crashing to the ground, getting lost into oblivion, going back to unconscious.

Our dreams are talking to us. Hence the interest of recalling them. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the recalling of dreams is only the first step in a process that involves subsequently to decipher their meaning and, above all, to take into account the implications of their messages in our daily life.

frédéric dalléas / french writer & translator for chinese / berlin

¹ C.G. Jung. Memories, Dream, Reflections, "Sigmund Freud".

² Ibid.

³ Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, Second Essay, "'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience' and Related Matters".

⁴ Recalling of dreams allows furthermore to reach other types of contents of the oneiric narratives, that we don't have enough space to examine in depth here, but that are as much interesting, either for development of personal balance (for example, the narratives acting out compensations of attitude of the conscious characterized by their lack of balance) or for knowledge of humanity (see the conceptions of Jung according to which unconscious would have kept the characteristics of the original human spirit in Man and his Symbols) and even evolution of humanity (some new and creative ideas could emerge from unconscious, *ibid.*)

francisco rozas balboa

artist / temuco, chile

THE FREEDOM OF AMNESIA

The lived-in spaces - be they architectural ones or so-called natural landscapes - and the things inhabiting them, deliver the framework for Rozas' investigation of spectatorship and the politics of showing and looking. In Untitled (2008) a six-meter long piece of timber is leaning into the corner of a room, at its bottom end a wheel suggesting mobility or manoeuvrability of this unwieldy object. At the height of two meters a small monitor is fixed to the wood, showing a video. The monitor faces towards the corner. Despite the setup suggesting that the work can be freewheeled throughout the space, visitors lean in an awkward position - for most people the screen is placed too high and the space between corner and timber is restricted - getting only a sideways and low-angle look onto the screen. Reflecting on the passivity and sometimes inability of the onlooker to control their own viewing situation, the work invites to question how our everyday looking experiences are designed and controlled by others. The work also functions as a minimalist architectural intervention. The red line of the painted timber reaches from the bottom corner to the ceiling, measuring the whole height of the room and turning our attention to the space we are in. In the video work "Paradies/Paraiso (2011)" this happens in a mediated form. The contained nature is part of a re-enacted natural landscape in the main greenhouse of Berlin's botanical garden. We see people walking through a thick forest of exotic plants, but it is obvious that they do not stroll through some kind of rainforest but something much closer to their usual urban context. The logistic architecture of tubes and lights is camouflaged to blend in with the plants, guaranteeing as undisturbed a visitor experience as possible, but the soundtrack of the video - birdsong and wind - runs in a loop and accentuates that this is not a 'super-natural' experience. The scene setting and the attempted illusion of being somewhere else, a place that may even be uninhabited, is reflected through the work's title, evoking the human utopia of paradise as something untouched, unmade and unseen.

In "Outer Space (2010)" Rozas turns one of the exhibition rooms into a greenhouse itself, which this time is not accessible to the public at all. The room is insulated with aluminium tape, except for a row of windows facing the corridor. When exhibition visitors pass by, a motion sensor sets off the lights inside the room and illuminates the windows. The spectators initiate their viewing experience, but inadvertently and thus have no control over whatever will be shown to them. Using the windows as a frame for the seemingly two-dimensional tableaux of the plants' silhouettes against the light behind them, Outer Space also

points to Roza's interest in traditional presentation formats in art. His plinths, objects usually designed to show off something else, negate a practical function when turning into artworks themselves.

"In Speculation (2011)" he uses what he finds in situ in the exhibition space – i.e. the exhibition space itself, that becomes the tool and object of the work when he takes out one of the floorboards and positions it in such a fashion that visitors have to surround it to see the gap its displacement creates. Covering up original features that are usually considered as more valuable than the material used for hiding them – is this an economic choice and buying, installing and painting these boards less expensive and time consuming than renovating the old wooden planks underneath? Is this a political choice and rejection of the period architecture that is so much in demand and maybe one of the reasons for the gentrification of Berlin, district after district? Is it an aesthetic one – would the old floor distract too much in what is meant to be a neutral stage for the exhibited art? The opening of the gallery floor allows us to see what has been covered up, whilst the remaining floor acts as a frame for the exposed and diverts our attention from other aspects of the room. Considering that the process of our decision-making is based on what we know and see, thus based on our memory, the manipulation of what we look at and the way it is shown to us is a direct manipulation of the degree of autonomy we have over our own lives. Amnesia – it may be beguiling as a fantastic utopia: the untouched paradise where being freed of our memories means being free to make experiences that are all our own, free from making decisions and the responsibility that goes with them – for most of us happens on an everyday basis, where we have little control over or even awareness of the manipulations of our attention.

bettina wenzel / independent curator and writer / cornwall, england





memory in african american culture

short piece written for here and now ... amnesia

by dr. mark naison / professor of african american studies and history / nyc, usa

MEMORY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

SHORT PIECE WRITTEN FOR HERE AND NOW ... AMNESIA

"it started with that slave ship that set the journey flaming."

Akua Naru, "The Journey" - The Journey Aflame (2011).

The lines between past and present in African American culture, consciousness and experience are rarely clearly drawn. The past is alive in African American discourse, sometimes as trauma, sometimes as heroic example.

Images of slavery and Jim Crow, sexual assault and rape, mass incarceration and lynching can be found in virtually every form of cultural production and political agitation Black Americans have created, from songs like "Strange Fruit", to art and photo exhibits highlighting lynching or convict labor camps, to campaigns for reparations from slavery or compensation for 20th Century pogroms like Tulsa Riot of 1921 (which has been the subject of several books), or the Rosewood massacre of 1923, which was the subject of a feature film.

But heroism and endurance have been as powerful a force in African American memory as trauma. The popularity of Negro spirituals in the early and mid twentieth century, whether performed by Black college choirs or concert singers like Paul Robeson, the persistence of songs and folktales honoring late 19th Black strongmen like John Henry and Stackolee, the constant invocation of Malcolm X and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr as standards against which current Black leaders are judged, all are testimony to the power of heroism in the African American imagination. Even hip hop, widely condemned as a historical, is filled with ghosts of heroes past, sometimes in the form of jazz and R&B samples, sometimes in explicit tributes to individuals who paved the way for or inspired the artist, such as this one on Tupac Shakur's "Thugz Mansion":

*"Seen a show with Marvin Gaye last night, it had me shook
Drinking peppermint Schnapps, with Jackie Wilson, and Sam Cooke
Then some lady named Billie Holiday
Sang sitting there kicking it with Malcolm, ,til the day came"*

You cannot live in the African American community, or study African American culture, without encountering historical memory on a daily basis. Sometimes it is in the form of ghosts from times past as literary characters, as in Toni Morrison's novel "BeLoved"; at other times in titles of historical works such as Worse than Slavery, or Slavery by "Another Name"; occasionally in the form of "symposiums & panels" discussing whether African Americans are still suffering from "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" as a result of their slave experience. African American feminists have extended historical memory globally, by claiming Sarah Bartmann, a Khosian woman from South Africa put on display in museums throughout Europe in the 19th Century under the title The "Hottentot Venus," as a metaphor for the continuing humiliation of Black women, and exoticization of Black women's bodies, in all spheres of popular culture. Bartman has been the subject of books, art exhibitions, plays and academic lectures which see the way Black women are depicted in advertising, film, and hip hop videos, sometimes under the direction of Black males, as continuous with the way Black women were viewed by white men in the heyday of European colonialism.

This fusion of past and present, fiction and history is likely to remain a defining feature of the African American experience for some time. African Americans not only see the past as shaping the present, they feel they must honor their ancestors in order to sustain integrity and self respect in a world that still too often denies them power and recognition.

No work better exemplifies the power of the past to inform the present than a song called "The Journey" by a contemporary African American poet and hip hop artist named Akua Naru who was born and raised in New Haven Connecticut and now lives in Cologne Germany.

Listen to the song and the text, whose stories and images cover four hundred years of African American history in an explosion of poetry that invokes Black women's endurance and resilience and pain, a pain which, unfortunately, is not yet fully honored, much less fully healed.

maryna markova

artist / berlin, germany

IN BETWEEN

Does leaving your homeland also mean the loss of safety and orientation?

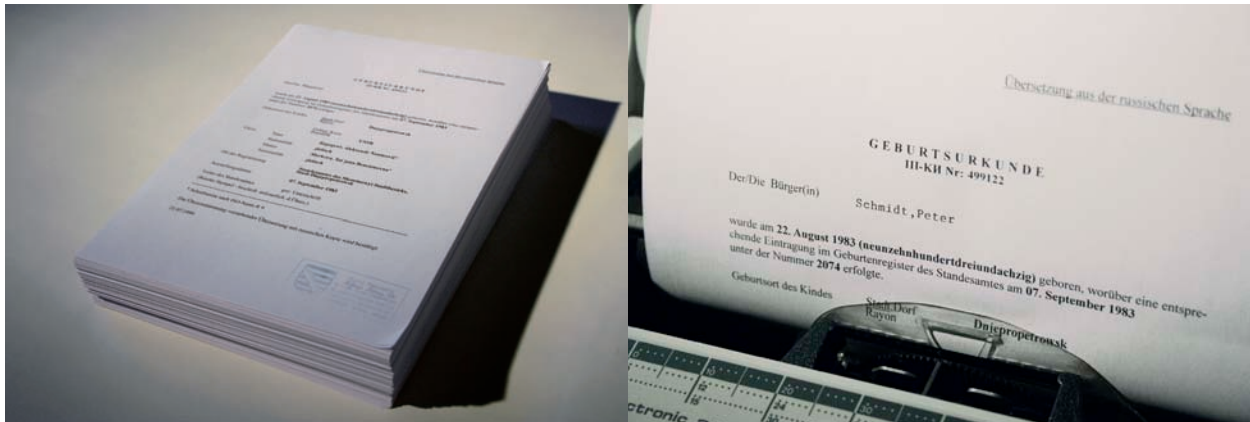
Who are we in between places? When giving up on the emotional connection to one place, do we also lose a part of our identification? Is there the possibility of a second or even a third homeland?

Travelling enriches us, visiting foreign countries inspires us, learning about different cultures broadens our horizon and helps us taking up new perspectives. But, do we find the same grade of accomplishment, when leaving one home for another?

Having emigrated from the Ukraine to Germany almost twelve years ago, Maryna Markova describes herself as being somewhere in a process of adjusting. Between a vague understanding for her environment and somehow adopted ideas about herself, this very day she still feels in search for some certain identification, still looking for a sense of belonging. As a teenager there had been no other option, but to follow her family into that new, that unknown world and that is how Maryna Markova arrived, filled up with ideas and fantasies, about how her German life is going to develop. But leaving a place and relocating to another country very often comes with irritation. You'll have expectation and of course, what you will find is very different from what you have hoped to find. "(Dis)embeddedness" to Maryna Markova, specifies exactly what happens throughout an irreversible process of change and transformation. Vital to this process of adapted manners and the actual need to hold on to familiar routines, is a growing fear to lose any spiritual accommodation and the sense for places. "Besides the effort to emotionally survive, my memories started getting mixed up. Almost like distant stories I would hear of another person, the outlines of my perspective and the people's opinion about myself, seemed to fade like a forgotten dream. And suddenly, one day it hit me. It became clear to me; this was no longer a question about who I am. This wasn't about where I stood, indecisive between my old and my new home. I simply had to accept that within all that assimilation and the changes, I already become someone else. Someone I did barely know."

AMNESIA

A table, an old typewriter and a pile of documents. Born August 22nd, 1983. In fact, uncounted copies of the birth certificate Nr. 499122. Though we find the names of a mother and a father, a birth place and a note saying “Jewish”, there is no hint about the person behind. It could be anybody writing their name into the blank space, putting on another identity like a stranger’s coat. Or it might be the result of someone having lost parts of their inner homeland, in search for an outside reminder.



The gnome in front of the viaduct

from Frankfurter Anthologie 9,

written by Marcel Kröner

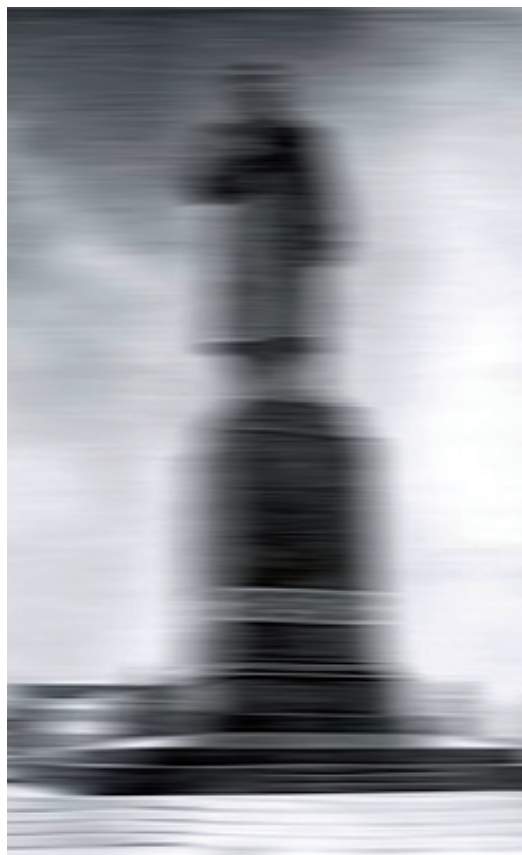
Forward to the city of winds
I see the hero in resistance
Who carries the can everywhere
And from time to time a vase
To proof it with a little hammer.

The long way home,
To him a bit of self - liberation,
He expected a welcoming to a hero
But had to be careful
Because memorials are invests
To be questioned.

Did thrift had been the requirement of the hour
For the preparation of concrete,
Useful for a new wonderland?

Transforming into antic shape
He is not really cool anymore
But a picture of misery
In the floor of historiography.

How can I rescue from time and dust
What is so breakable?
Who will count the bugs
And bring into order the owls
In Athens?



homo sapiens: an animal made of memory

by dr. alan richardson-klavehn / experimental psychologist & neuroscientist & dr. björn h. schott / medical doctor & neuroscientist

HOMO SAPIENS: AN ANIMAL MADE OF MEMORY

The biological name of our species means “wise man”, and indeed, human intelligence is defined by the ability to adapt our behaviour and accumulate knowledge in the light of our experiences, in other words, by our astounding individual capacities for learning and memory. As artists well know, our perception of scenes, objects, and people is shaped by information stored in memory, such that what we perceive is much different to the raw information that impinges on our senses. Furthermore, what we attend to in our environment and what we ignore reflects priorities governed strongly by information stored about past experiences. Our ability to use language—one defining feature of being human—depends on a vast memory-warehouse of words, meanings and concepts. When we make choices and solve problems, we must hold a representation of the current situation in memory, and compare it with information from relevant past experiences, in order to make a prediction about the best course of action. Thus, our ability to imagine the future depends on our ability to remember the past. Finally, learning and memory are central to personal identity, and to emotional and social functioning. Our sense of who we and other people are is distilled from autobiographical and factual information in our memories. Maintaining successful social relationships, for example, depends on remembering what friends and family said and did recently, and their preoccupations and plans.

Memory is, in effect, the “glue” that holds our intellectual processes together, and makes us uniquely human. The study of learning and memory, therefore, plays a central role in the scientific field that now goes under the umbrella term of cognitive neuroscience.

The science of human learning and memory began in 1885, when German psychologist and philosopher Hermann Ebbinghaus published the results of objective tests of his own memory capabilities in the ground-breaking book “Über das Gedächtnis” (On Memory). In the brief timespan since then, psychologists and neuroscientists have made great strides in understanding how learning and memory work. A central scientific tenet has been that learning and memory reflect physical changes in the brain. The Spanish neuroscientist Santiago Ramon y Cajal proposed in 1894 that synapses—the communication junctions between nerve cells (neurons) in the brain—can be modified by experience. The electrochemical processes by which neurons influence each other’s

patterns of activity can therefore change as learning occurs, thus supporting changes in thinking and behaviour, and the storage of autobiographical experience and facts about the world, that can persist for a lifetime. Research of the last 30 years has strongly confirmed Ramon y Cajal's hypothesis. We can now describe how activity patterns in the living human brain change with experience, and characterize the molecular mechanisms underlying the relevant synaptic changes.

Meanwhile, experimental psychologists made important advances in classifying memory at the level of mental processes and behaviour. Long-term memory is not unitary, but takes different forms. For example, episodic memory refers to our ability to remember personally experienced events, semantic memory refers to our ability to recognize objects and words, and to remember facts and concepts, and procedural memory refers to our ability to learn skills such as playing the piano. Procedural memory, in contrast to episodic and semantic memory, is virtually impossible to access consciously and communicate with language, but instead can only be acquired by practising the relevant skill. A further form of memory, implicit memory, occurs when information stored during a past event influences our current thinking, or our perception of the outside world, without our necessarily being able to remember the relevant past event consciously. Neuro-psychologists have shown that these different forms of memory can be differently affected by brain damage and by degenerative disorders of the brain, which are known as dementias, thus tying these forms of memory to different brain systems.

One important principle to emerge is that memory traces—the synaptic changes that underlie memory—are stored by areas of the brain that specialize in dealing with particular kinds of information. For example, traces underlying procedural memory appear to be stored by the basal ganglia, subcortical areas whose major function is the initiation and control of body movement. These areas are affected in patients with Parkinson's dementia, a disease primarily affecting motor control, and these patients show corresponding deficits in procedural memory. Traces underlying implicit memory appear to be stored, in part, by brain areas involved in the recognition of visual and auditory information from the outside world. Traces underlying episodic and semantic memory, on the other hand, appear to be stored more widely throughout the neocortex—the most evolved areas of the brain that differentiate us most strongly from other animals. A second important principle is that of mass action, which was pioneered by the North American psycholo-

gists Karl Lashley and Donald Hebb. That is, although memory traces are stored in areas specialized for particular kinds of information, within those areas, individual memories are represented by changes in large networks of synapses, rather than by individual synapses. This principle explains how neurons, whose individual responses are relatively slow and unreliable, can collectively accomplish fast and accurate memory retrieval. If memories are not stored at discrete locations, there is no need to search these locations sequentially in order to retrieve information, and the reliability of individual storage elements is not essential to the behaviour of the network as a whole. Thus, for example, the brain supports the recognition of a particular known face from among the thousands of known faces stored in memory within a few tenths of a second, a remarkable feat.

A third important principle is that there is a brain system that is specialized for the establishment of new episodic and semantic memories. At the core of this system is the hippocampus, a structure deep inside the temporal lobe of the brain. Damage to the hippocampus and connected structures, which can occur, for example, through viral encephalitis, leads to anterograde amnesia, a profound inability to acquire new memories, particularly new episodic memories. Such amnesia often leaves procedural and implicit memory relatively intact. Although episodic and semantic memory traces are stored in wide areas of neocortex, the hippocampal system plays a critical coordinatory role in establishing the relevant widespread synaptic changes. Other animals like apes and rodents have sophisticated hippocampal systems that support complex learning and memory capabilities, but the human hippocampal system appears to be particularly evolved, establishing episodic memory traces that allow humans to travel back in time and reexperience their past.

Developments in cognitive neuroscience have been strongly fuelled by the evolution of neuroimaging, which allows us to measure and visualize brain activity in living humans in a noninvasive way. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a technique in some ways similar to radar, takes advantage of the fact that the brain channels blood to support the metabolism of brain areas with actively firing cells, thus giving active brain tissue, compared with nonactive brain tissue, a different reflectance of radio waves emitted by the fMRI scanner. Electroencephalography (EEG) and magnetoencephalography (MEG) measure brain activity more directly, by measuring the electrical (EEG) or magnetic (MEG) fields generated by the electrochemical activity of large populations of neurons.

Such neuroimaging techniques give us a unique window on the brain systems involved when memory traces are formed. Brain activity can be measured while research participants engage in a cognitive task, and memory for materials encountered during that task can later be measured. Brain activity during exposure to the materials can then be compared between materials later remembered and later forgotten. Such measurements are revealing how the hippocampal system connects with neocortical structures to coordinate the establishment of new episodic and semantic memories in synaptic networks.

At the other end of the scale, researchers like the Nobel-prize-winning neuroscientist Eric Kandel have elucidated how the formation of new memories manifests at a cellular and molecular level. Synapses are junctions between a presynaptic and a postsynaptic neuron. Electrical activity in the presynaptic neuron is translated into a chemical signal that can be picked up by the postsynaptic neuron. The chemical released by presynaptic neurons is called neurotransmitter, and this chemical binds to receptor proteins in the membrane of the postsynaptic neuron that can trigger a response in that neuron. This response, if sufficiently strong, is conducted electrically to the presynaptic sites of the activated neuron and, again via neurotransmitter release, is transmitted to further neurons. But a neuron in the human brain has not just one, but hundreds or thousands of pre- and postsynaptic sites. And when it receives coordinated input from multiple presynaptic neurons, it not only transmits the incoming signal further, but also undergoes long-term changes in its own synaptic response properties, a phenomenon known as synaptic plasticity. That is, synapses that are activated in a strong, coordinated, manner will show stronger responses to subsequent activations. By contrast, continuous uncoordinated activations may yield the opposite—a long-lasting decrease in synaptic responses. At a molecular level, synaptic plasticity consists of an early stage characterized by quick redistribution of postsynaptic proteins and a later stage during which new proteins are synthesized. The protein synthesis stage underlies the formation of memories that can last a lifetime. Strikingly, synaptic plasticity reflects kinds of intracellular processes that are conserved throughout evolution, occurring during seemingly unrelated phenomena as blood sugar control by insulin, immune responses to bacteria and viruses, and formation and growth of tumors. Such processes are even found in organisms that do not have a nervous system, like yeast or bacteria. Similarly, what exactly these proces-

ses do in the nervous system depends on where a neuron is located. Thus, common neural mechanisms ultimately underlie memory formation, whether episodic, semantic, procedural, or implicit memory.

As we grow older, our metabolism slows down—and it does so in all cells, including neurons. It is therefore no real surprise that our ability to remember new events decreases somewhat with age. But sometimes it goes beyond that. People with Alzheimer's dementia not only fail to form new memories (anterograde amnesia); they also gradually lose their old ones, that is, they experience retrograde amnesia. Sufferers are thus ultimately stripped of their very identity, as in the case of Ronald Reagan, who eventually forgot that he had been American president. In Alzheimer's dementia, neurons die progressively, and the information they have stored disappears. Because hippocampal neurons are particularly vulnerable, anterograde amnesia is the first sign. The relevant molecular mechanisms are increasingly well understood. Misfolded proteins are deposited massively in the brain, and either these deposits, or other molecules involved in the process, are toxic to neurons. A cure, however, awaits to be found.

The memory loss in Alzheimer's disease and other conditions involving amnesia - catastrophic to the sufferer and their loved ones - illustrates all too well the centrality of memory with which we began.

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exhibition

here and now...amnesia

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Maryna Markova, Francicsco Rozas
curated by Katia Hermann

picture

Dalila Dalléas Bouzar, Dominik Lejman, courtesy ZakBranicka,
Rebecca Loyche, Maryna Markova, Francicsco Rozas

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