

In the Presence of Images

Kriss Janik

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Abstract

I capture an image.

I forget the image.

I attempt to remember.

Nothing.

The image's sole purpose was to help me remember, yet it can't.

Has it failed, or have I?

I begin to speculate how the forgotten image functions in the present, liberated from its associated past.

Through the use of digitally archived images that have been forgotten since their capture, *In the Presence of Images* is a travelling exhibition that explores the digital revolution and its potential effects on memory. Through the processing of photographs and videos sourced from my personal digital archive, images are created to form a space for discussion, contemplation, and speculation, encouraging the viewer to question the capacities of forgotten imagery and to become cognizant of the technologies we entrust with more and more data everyday.

To Andy, Josh, Merk and Molly,
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Dla Mamy i Taty, dziękuję.

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Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed.

-Henri Bergson



Image 1: December 9, 2013. 10:06 AM.

IMG_0047.JPG. The motion blur that is made apparent by the towering trees reveals movement. A snow covered mountain peaks through the openings. The camera struggles with the low light, exposing digital noise. The sky is dark, which doesn't match up with the metadata connected to the file.

The sun should be up by now.

The Physical Form

My interest in photographic documentation began with the exploration of my family's archive. The visceral experience of navigating through an old photo album was enough to elicit what Marcel Proust would refer to as involuntary memory.¹ The characteristic smell of dusty photos paired with the crunching sound of plastic pages turning engendered a multi-sensory experience that never failed to evoke a sense of nostalgia.² Photographs that did not meet the curated standard of an album often wound up in a bright orange Nike shoe box from the early 90's that symbolized a long lost desire to play basketball professionally. Whether it was shuffling through a pile of scattered images stored in a box, or flipping through an ordered album, the embodied act of reflection and contemplation was an experience I was always drawn to, and one that I hope translates into my exhibition.

Though the images deemed important were often stored in an album, I enjoyed the sense of discovery offered by the box.

Unorganized

Scattered

Rotated

Unpredictable

¹ In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Proust details a story in which the taste of a *madeleine* (tea cake) triggers the unsolicited recall of his Aunt Léonie (Proust 36).

² The use of the past tense accentuates the fact that this is an experience that happens less and less as we move into the digital age.

I pull an image from the box. A young woman poses in front of a dense grove of spruce. Her hands gently pull a branch toward herself as she fiddles with the needles. The sun is shining bright, creating a stark contrast between her glowing white skirt and the shaded woods behind. Her expression lies somewhere between concern and curiosity. An evaluation of the visual properties of the image quickly leads to the realization that I have no recollection of the associated event. I turn my gaze to the physical properties. The photograph begins to show symptoms of decay. Edges start to peel — leaving a white tattered edge. A crease runs across the bottom right-hand corner. Scuffs and scratches create a linear pattern that stretches across the image, revealing the repercussions of how the photograph is stored and reviewed. I question my impact on the object. Surely just by interacting with the image, I have added to the defaced quality of the print. I then question whether or not these marks spoil the surface or enhance it, for if it wasn't for these marks, I may have never noticed these physical properties in the first place. Though the presence of the woman functions as a glimpse into the recorded history of an event, the physical imperfections are a dynamic recording of the object's existence. My perception of these traces oscillates between subtractions from the visual recording and additions to the physical object.

The unprotected and unordered nature of photographs stored in a box evoked an awareness of decay and time. Decay became apparent through the physical properties of the prints. Time became acknowledged through the physical decay and the fluctuating dates from one image to another, often indicated by the glowing red number on the bottom right-hand corner. The tangible nature of a printed photograph and its ability to respond to the durational effects of time yields a physical object that can be related to through the degenerative nature of living matter. “They document, while simultaneously compensating for, the passage of time, as they capture and retain that which is transient” (Boltanski 89).

The images did not always resonate. This was likely due to the amount of time elapsed between capture and review, or simply a side effect of a collaborative process. It is very possible that the box or album contained images taken by someone else, or images I had never seen. Being aware of this fact, I was less likely to feel disconnected from a photograph I was unable to associate a memory to. Instead, I would connect to the material qualities of the image, forming associations based purely off of physical and visual characteristics. In a sense, reviewing a forgotten image presented a new way of interacting with the object.

A useful theory for the comprehension of memory is the construction metaphor proposed by Frederic Bartlett in *Remembering : a study in experimental and social psychology*. “Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or language form. It is thus hardly ever really exact” (213). With each construction and subsequent reconstruction, genuine details may be lost, and false ones gained. This information loss is cognitive noise: the disturbance and obscuring of information between an event and its recollection. It is in this noise that novelty has the ability to manifest. Many of these characteristics of memory are involved with the process of navigating through an archive of images. The scattering, addition, and subtraction of information finds parallel in the physical qualities of images and the way in which they are stored. Reviewing the information contained within the images presents the spectator with a task to form associations in order to make sense of what they are seeing.



Image 2: *IMG-0001* & *IMG-0002*. 2017 (Digital Collage)

In my exhibition, the construction metaphor is visually explored most directly through a pair of screenprinted images on acrylic. Using an ambiguous forgotten photograph from my digital archive, *IMG-0001* and *IMG-0002* present an attempt to generate a construction, and reconstruction of the image, with as few inconsistencies as possible. The spectator is able to shift back and forth, searching for minor variances that render each image unique. The manipulation of the image through the screenprinting process reintroduces a noise pattern, distorting the image and creating an abstracted final image that is open to visual interpretation and appropriates the “principles of uncertainty and contingency that are the modus operandi or memory” (Hostetler 21). The pieces subtly emphasize the disturbance and obscuring of information during recollection.

Shifting into Digital

The shift from analog to digital photography over the last couple of decades has undoubtedly changed the way we gather and review images. Liberated from the anxieties of running out of film, or the cost associated with developing images, photographers are now able to take a seemingly infinite amount of photos, taking advantage of exponential increases in device memory and online storage capabilities. The ability to review images directly on the device that captured them, and to instantaneously share them through cyberspace, mitigates the need to print physical copies, and eliminates the gestation period occasioned by traditional forms of photography. The immediate reflection made possible by these digital devices creates a misleading impression of the ability to divert cognitive processing to a later time. This results in the creation of images that “capture and retain that which is transient” (Boltanski 89), while simultaneously altering the subject’s ability to process the information of an event from short to long-term memory. Ultimately, this fosters the creation of images that become quickly dismissed and eventually forgotten.

In an article published by the Association for Psychological Science, Linda A. Henkel conducted a study in which participants were directed to walk through a museum, solely observing some objects while photographing others. When questioned about the objects at a later time, the results indicated that the participants were far less likely to remember an object if they had spent time photographing it. “Despite the added time or attention required to angle the camera and adjust the lens so as to capture the best shot of the object in its entirety, the act of photographing the object appears to enable

people to dismiss the object from memory, thereby relying on the external device [sic] of the camera to “remember” for them” (Henkel 401). Why is this the case? From a young age we are trained to externalize information, forming retrieval cues to assist in the recollection of information at a later date. Note-taking is one such mode of externalization, enabling information to be processed through the brain a number of times. The subject is left with a written copy that is accessible for review, which has the ability to assist in the processing and retention of information. This method is problematic in that it is contingent on the subject having access to the written work. The ubiquitous accessibility presented by the digital device offers a solution to this very problem, one that becomes problematic in its own regard. In the article ‘*Memory*’, Bernard Stiegler considers this technical exteriorization of memory (hypomnesis), contrasting it with the embodied act of memory (anamnesis) (Hansen 64). Stiegler draws attention to what he terms “epi-phylogenetic memory,” proper to the human, a memory informed by technics that evolves by exteriorizing itself through tools. If this is the case, then the technical exteriorization of memory is a “gift that is also a threat (since dependence on artificial memory makes the training of our own memory less imperative)” (65). The more cognitive functions we delegate to service industries that control them, the more superfluous we will become (68).

“Selectively reviewing some items from a larger set of previously learned items increases memory for the items that are reviewed but may also be accompanied by a cost: Memory for the *nonreviewed* items may be impaired relative to cases where no review occurs at all” (Schacter 478). Daniel L. Schacter et al. show through a series of experiments that the implications of selectively reviewing certain past events can have

both positive and negative effects on information retention. Our ability to retain information about images we choose to review becomes strengthened at the expense of the images that are not reviewed. While we enhance our ability to associate with certain images, we simultaneously impair our ability to associate with images that are not reviewed. This leaves the subject with a partition of images that either function as retrieval cues, or do not.

When it comes to photographing objects, it becomes easy for the subject to dismiss the object from memory when they are under the impression that the image can and will be reviewed at a later time. This is because the subject is aware that the photograph has the potential to function as a retrieval cue. Where the issue lies, then, is whether or not the information is reviewed, an essential aspect in the process of information retention. One of the disadvantages presented with seemingly endless storage is the laboriousness required for thorough reflection. While digital devices seemingly increase the accessibility of photographs we take through the expansion of internal storage and ability to store data online, images become lost in an abundance of digital information. The user is presented with greater access to their collection of photographs as a whole, while simultaneously being limited from accessing each individual image, creating an environment where selective review is unavoidable. This is only perpetuated by features implemented by social media platforms such as Facebook, in which *memories* are presented to the user through a selective process determined by complex algorithms. 'On This Day' is a feature that was added to Facebook in 2015 in which the user is presented with past activity in their news feed. This addition was marketed as an easier way to look back at old memories (Gheller np). Memory of the images, posts and

updates shown to us through this feature may increase while impairing our memory for elements that are not reviewed, bringing humans one step closer to Stiegler's prophecy that "reliance on artificial memory aids makes us vulnerable to manipulation if the technologies of memory are controlled by industries intent on exploiting our desire for their gain" (Hansen 66).

The inevitability of selective review results in a collection of forgotten images that become the subjects of my creative practice. It is through this *mass photography*³ that a repeatable framework for my practice emerges. This collection of forgotten photographs allows me to analyze repetitions of imagery and subject matter, and to objectively begin to notice what I notice, finding patterns in the imagery I am drawn to capture. These discoveries assist in revealing the processes involved in the dismissal of information, and the creative capacities presented by images that are untethered from their associated pasts (see Image 3).

³ This is a term I will use for the manufacturing of a large quantity of photographs.



Image 3: *IMG-0004*. 2017. Serigraph.

For all intents and purposes, externalizing information becomes a solution rather than answer, but to what question?

How can humans free up short-term memory in an over-stimulating atmosphere?

In a paper written by George A. Miller, the idea that short-term memory is able to hold seven (plus or minus two) items of information at once was first presented (Miller 343). This means that the brain is able to process roughly five to nine pieces of information depending on the individual's performance, a problematic limitation in an over-stimulating environment. This limited capacity seems like a conservative estimation until one attempts to remember an address or phone number. In the case of a phone number, the brain is able to group bits of information together, so rather than having to remember seven bits of information (one for each number), the brain is able to divide the number into groups to expand short-term capacity (for example, grouping the first three digits as one number, and the last four digits as another). This process is known as 'chunking' and is helpful for information retention (Radvansky 67). Chunking begins to manifest itself visually in my practice through the creation of assemblages (Image 4). The grouping of multiple pieces reveals similarities that occur deliberately or by chance. The images may be grouped in terms of their visual content, material, or color, among other possible associations. In *IMG-0003*, the image is created out of fragmented chunks that visually mimic the visual presentation of photographs by many digital devices and online services. This organized grid creates an optical effect in which circles appear in the gaps of imagery. When the eye shifts to these circles, they disappear. This illusion parallels the *slippery* nature of memory. The missing information caused by the gridding of imagery invites the spectator to fill in the gaps to make sense of the image.

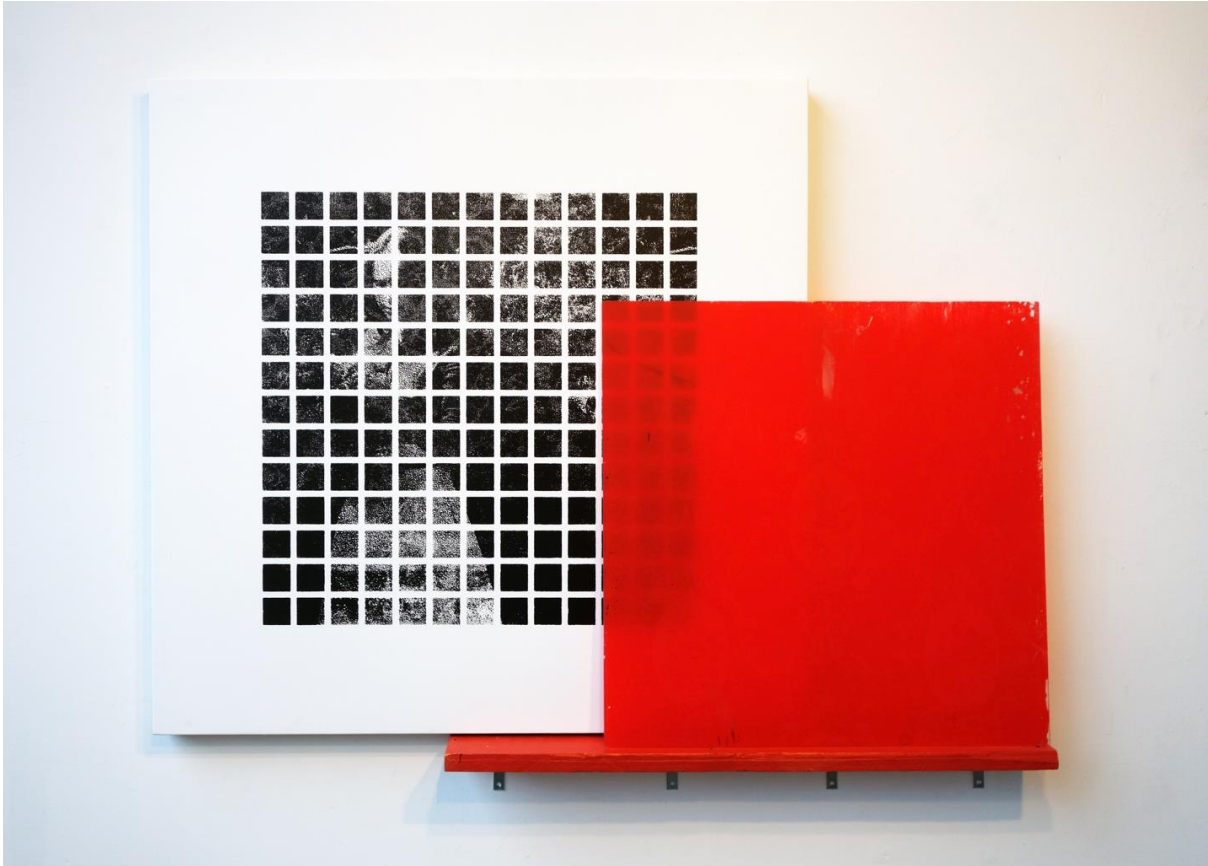


Image 4: *IMG-0003*. 2016. Serigraph.

Though the scientific community is still divided in its understanding of the relations between short and long-term memory, it is generally accepted that information requires active attention for approximately thirty seconds in order to shift on the spectrum from short-term towards long-term memory (Shaw 11). Though it may appear that digitally capturing photographs may present the user with an ability to divert short-term information processing to a later time, it is highly contingent on the user *remembering* to review these images, as information succumbs to decay and interference the moment that it is processed cognitively. Decay theory proposes that the deterioration of information (forgetting) is relative to the amount of time passed, whereas the theory of inter-

ference studies the obstruction of information by other information retained in the gap between capture and retrieval (Radvansky 69).

With a medium so closely associated (often conflated) with memory, it is important to become cognizant of the effects that photography has on information retention and the many ways that technological advancements can alter the way we capture and view images. The studies above demonstrate how limited our ability to process information can be, and bring into question how digital devices may contribute to the creation of images that do not function as retrieval cues for the specific event or object they capture. My art practice begins to examine the effects of digital technologies on cognitive behavior. The exhibition questions these effects through an exploration of forgotten digital media and how they function in the present by transfiguring their active capacities to create physical objects. These objects allow the spectator to explore the ideas freely, and to interact with them physically, to visually consider the inquiry through a tangible form.

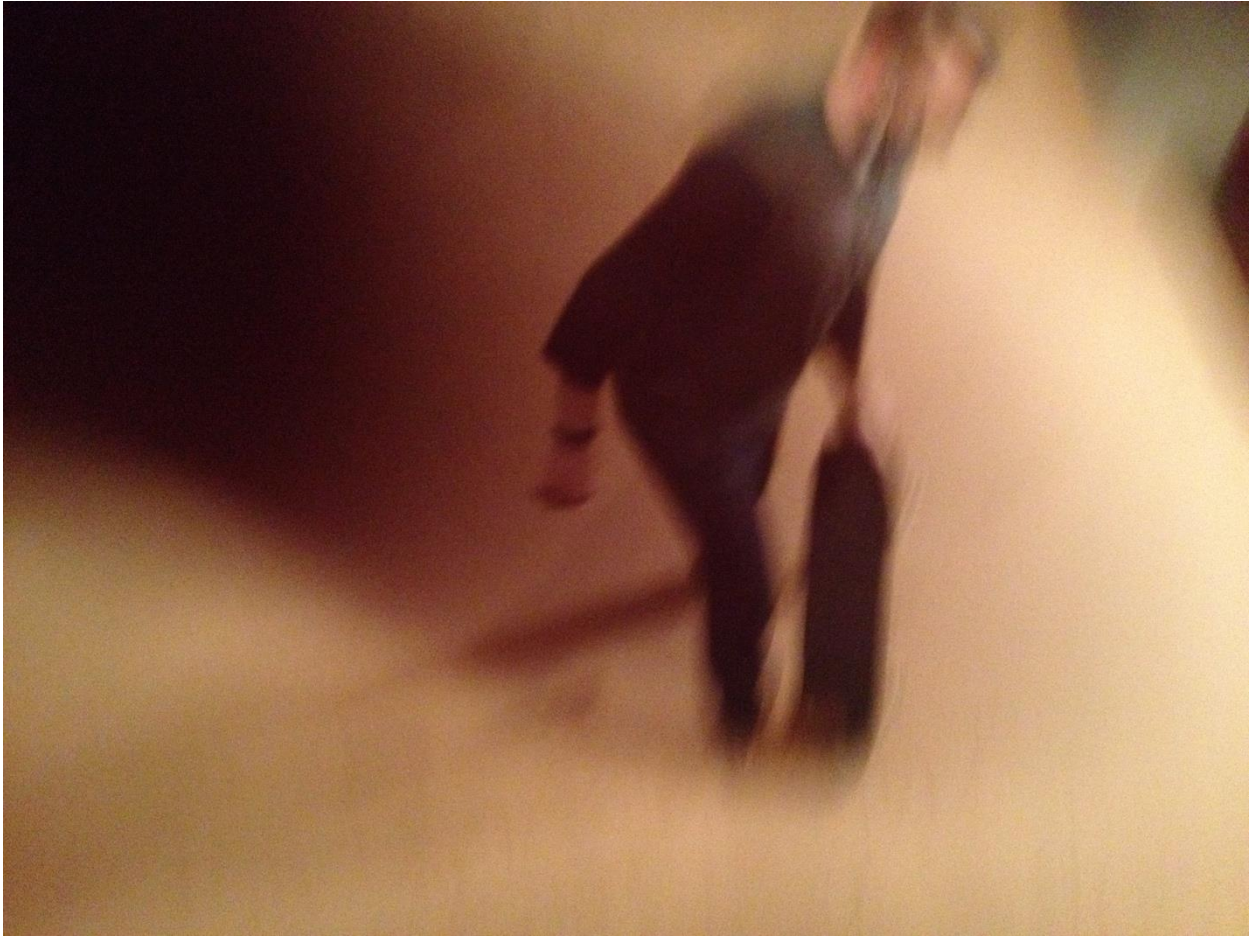


Image 5: March 21st, 2014. 10:21 PM.

IMG_0893.JPG. The figure blends into the background. It is impossible to decipher where the limb ends and shadow begins. A dark void looms in the corner, like a black hole swallowing any light that comes near.

Gathering / Conserving

“The more complex the sensory system of an organism, the greater the zone of indeterminacy that surrounds the incipient action. This results in an interruption of the reflex of stimulus response... This indeterminacy delays the automatic response, thereby opening up a horizon of choice” (Guerlac 108).

Suzanne Guerlac eloquently conveys French philosopher Henri Bergson’s notion of the brain as an instrument of selection rather than knowledge. This selection becomes expressed in the form of an action. Incoming stimuli are processed through the cognitive system, inducing a delay in which the subject has the capacity to respond (Bergson 21). This response is an action that has been shaped by memory (65). If we have learned from Bartlett’s constructive theory in which memory is “hardly ever really exact”, then one may deduce that the brain is a center of creation (Bartlett 213). This theory helps to clarify how the very act of photographing an object or event in an attempt to preserve memory is one that is simultaneously being informed and shaped by previous memories. Moreover, this is literally the case for mobile devices. “A representational mode of thinking photography is: there is something out there and it will be represented by means of optical technology ideally via indexical link. But the technology for the phone camera is quite different. As the lenses are tiny and basically crap, about half of the data captured by the sensor are noise. The trick is to create the algorithm to clean the picture from the noise, or rather to define the picture from within noise. But how does the camera know this? Very simple. It scans all other pictures stored on the phone or on your social media networks and sifts through your contacts. It looks through the pictures you already made, or those that are networked to you and tries to match faces and shapes. In short: it creates the picture based on earlier pictures, on your/its memory” (Steyerl np). Hito Steyerl, a visual artist well

known for her work with media and technology, expressively reveals an analogy between digital technology and the human brain. Though this may seem surprising at first, it shouldn't. After all, the devices used to capture and store information were created by the brains that they mimic. The physical act of taking a photograph introduces a history of the user's memory into the image, and once again through the technical processing of the device itself. The resulting image, then, can be seen as a collaborative creative effort between the user and the device. The image becomes a construction itself, rather than something merely captured (Hostetler 21).

Digital devices alter the resulting image in a number of ways. This alteration occurs through many complex technical processes including, but not limited to, noise reduction and high dynamic range. These devices also have the ability to alter the image before it is even captured, by influencing the way the user captures images. The social media platforms that the device instantly grants access to constitute a major sphere of influence in this regard. The user may feel inclined to capture an image or video that they would not capture otherwise, in order to share it on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or any other platform that rewards the user for uploading content. This reward comes in the form of likes, shares, and comments. An awareness of this reward stimulus and the capacity to capture an image at any given time results in the production of images whose primary functions are no longer bound to operating as retrieval cues. This results in an increased creation rate of images that no longer solely service the subject capturing them. It is possible that the user spends less time processing these images cognitively, allowing them to be dismissed from long-term storage. To the contrary, it is equally possible that the selective recall induced by the

platforms in which they are shared can increase the amount of cognitive processing, causing the user to build associations to images that were created for the purpose of sharing.

There are many reasons one may choose to archive digital information. A combination of technological advancements in smartphone technology, the potential for seemingly endless information storage, a limited short-term memory, and poor information retention abilities has made the construction of retrieval cues an integral part of everyday life. Information deemed worthy of remembering, or, of referential value, becomes photographed and processed into the user's digital device so that it can be reflected upon at a later time. (This often results in the dismissal of information and reliance on external devices as discovered in Dr. Henkel's study mentioned earlier.) The exponential increase in the capabilities of digital technology over the past several years has led to the creation of devices that allow users to carry a camera with them at all times, in the form of a smartphone. What becomes of interest, then, is the device's ability to reduce the delay of the capturing response to an external event relative to that affecting any preceding photographic technologies, increasing the convenience of constructing images. This reduction paired with a liberation from the constraints of data storage creates an atmosphere in which selective capture is no longer necessary. In this new environment, what criteria for taking images present themselves? There may not be a universal answer to these questions, but it seems that by isolating the forgotten images, the user may begin to objectively analyze what factors shape these criteria.



Image 6: November 10, 2013. 10:17 AM.

IMG_9405.JPG. The stairs lead down to a subway tunnel. The subject's shoulders are turned as if to face the camera. The foot is lifted and a forward motion can be presumed. Several lines run parallel towards the top right corner. The stairs reflect a purple hue not too distant from the subject's backpack.

Accessing the Image

The present superfluosity of the old techniques of the art of memory is due in part to the existence of some vastly sophisticated systems that are literally artificial and exist outside the mind itself. These range from traditional catalogued and perhaps more limited material archives to the potentially ever elastic and ever-expanding virtual storage space offered by digital technology (Gibbons 4).

As I open my computer and access my backup hard drive, I enter a virtual realm of chaos. Countless folders (whose names give little insight to their contents) contain yet another layer of fragmentation in the history of my digital capturing records. Created as systematically ordered files, the photographs captured on mobile devices and digital cameras are imported into this drive and quickly become muddled with those sharing the same file name in the same folder. Though it is possible (and quite frankly easy) to create chronologically ordered backups of the digital images I capture, I often find myself in a rush to free space from my device, quickly uploading a batch of images and placing them in whichever folder seems most appropriate at the time. Alternatively, I create a new folder, adding to the list of ambiguous folder names. I suppose I place less importance on the ordering of the images versus their conservation. Perhaps this is a subconscious response to an appreciation for the sense of discovery offered by unorganized storage, a virtual shoe box. It is also possible that this is merely a reaction to an over-stimulating environment. The digital images, however, are not susceptible to the same forms of decay as their physical counterparts. Instead, they become near-inaccessible, lost in a profusion of files and folders, susceptible to data corruption: digital confabulation. Since digital images only consist of a series of binary numbers, it is

possible to duplicate these images with no information loss. This said, decay may occur through generation loss, or when a file undergoes compression, in which “blocky artefacts and a general softening of the image” may occur (Crofts 9). These files are also susceptible to the physical corruption of the drives on which they are stored.

My digital archive exists in many forms. The external drive is home to the vast majority of the documents and data I have collected for over a decade. This contains information from a wide range of devices including cameras, phones, and computers among others. The rest of the archive is divided between my phone’s internal storage, and a variety of cloud storage services. Though mobile device storage accounts for a smaller portion of my digital files, these are the most convenient to access. Being able to scroll through my phone’s chronologically ordered internal storage, or searching through social media platforms, I am much more likely to interact with these images than those located on the external drive. In an article published by the International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, Simon Bowen and Daniela Perrelli study “digital mementos as technology that affords reflection on personal experience” (Bowen 27). The article focuses on how devices can utilize ‘human-centered values’ to design technology that supports personal reflection. Through analysis, it was determined that the subjects value tangible, serendipitously discoverable and easy to use devices (18). This is perhaps most evident in smartphone technology where ‘gestures’ are incorporated into the operating systems. Swiping the screen left or right mimics the gesture of turning the page in a photo album, or flipping through physical prints. Pinching to zoom among other embedded gestures enhances a virtual experience where the navigation of digital files becomes tangible. It should come as no surprise, then, that reflecting on past expe-

rience through a device and online platform occurs more regularly than sorting through an unorganized high volume external backup drive.

A strong push towards the creation of devices that utilize these values raises the question of what potentials may exist if a push was made in the opposite direction. These devices appear to contain the chaotic, providing the user with an overwhelming amount of information in a presentable form. However, a combination of increased capturing rates and vast external storage solutions tends to generate extremely large archives that become bothersome to browse: an ideal environment for digitally captured information to be forgotten.

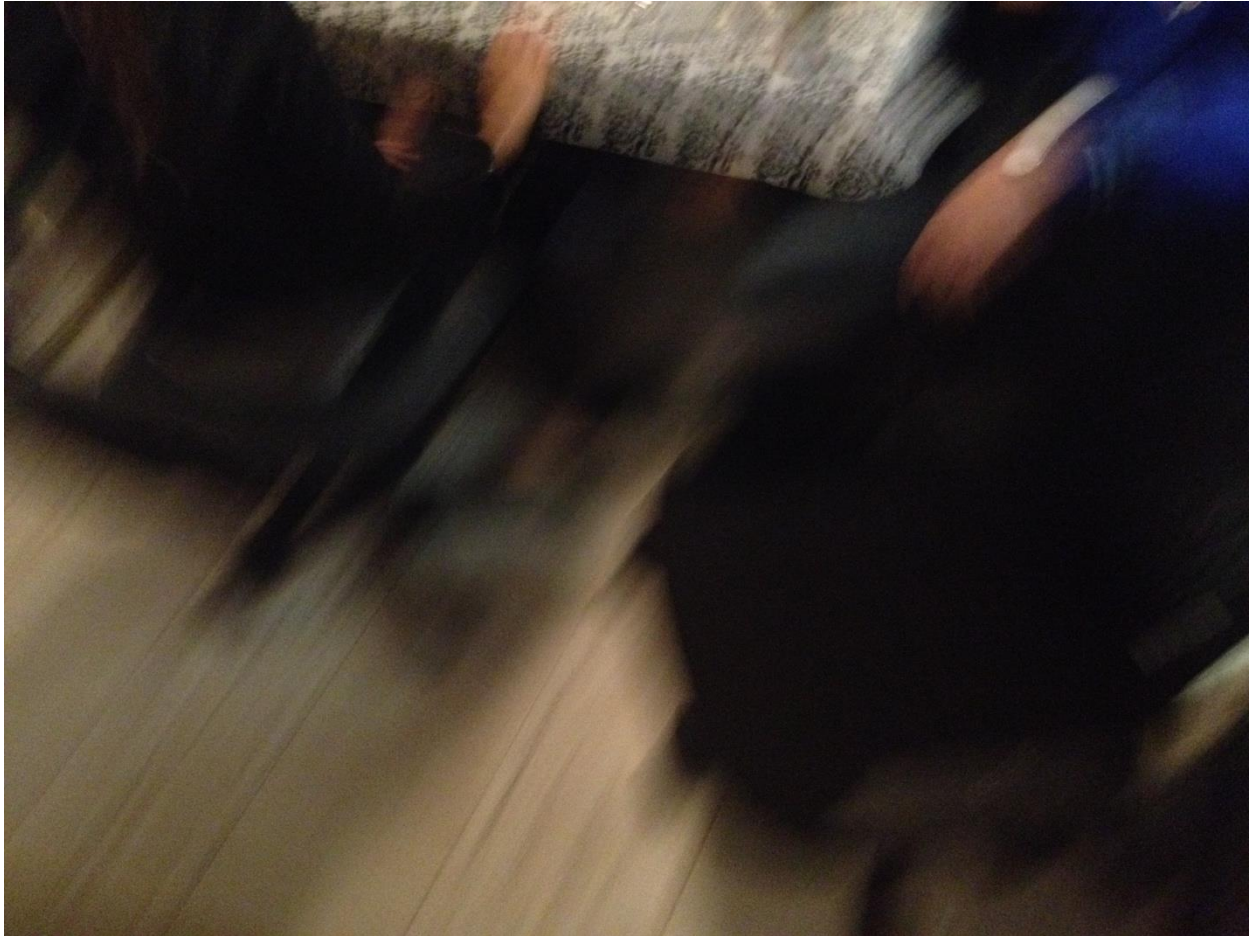


Image 7: October 12th, 2014. 1:53 AM.

IMG_2643.JPG. The image is blurred, and the bodies cropped. The direction of motion blur makes it apparent that the shutter was activated while the camera was moving downwards. Though the wrist watch on the individual dressed in blue is blurred, the digital information tied to the image reveals that the photo was taken at 1:53 AM on October 12, 2014. There is a black and white tablecloth reminiscent of vintage wallpaper. The figure on the left rests their right hand on the pattern.

Dissecting the Image

On October 12th, 2014, an image that was likely taken accidentally became a part of the digital archive I have been building for over a decade (see Image 7). It has been over two years since its capture and only now have I begun to engage the photograph. Though I cannot recall where the image was taken, or for what purpose, I cannot bring myself to delete it. What can the image reveal about my relationship with the device, and the world around me? If I can locate the image in my history, will I better understand my attachment to it? Several questions begin to race through my mind, leading to an investigation of the visual aspects of the image. Composition, colour, and pattern among other qualities become visual clues in the attempt to reveal a retrieval cue.

A majority of the images within my digital archive function as retrieval cues for a particular moment in the past; the rest become forgotten fragments, whose active capacities become concealed. How do forgotten images of the past function in the present? For many, they don't. Duplicate, accidental, and forgotten images become discarded, deleted, and never thought about again. By existing in my digital archive, these images prove to have had varying degrees of importance associated with them at some point in time. I find myself investigating in an attempt to uncover their lost significance, and to determine what took place during the creation of these photos to better understand why they were forgotten. It is only through this process, that an image can truly be deemed forgotten. Once this image has revealed an inability to function as a retrieval cue, new forms of interaction are discovered. This investigation normally follows a three-step process.

Step one

I attempt to locate the image by viewing the photographs that were stored both before and after. More often than not, the image will be one of many from a single day, and if it is saved properly in the archive then it should be stored among those photos.

Step two

I examine the metadata. The creation date may suggest roughly where I was when the image was captured. The file name often reveals what device it was taken on as most devices have unique signatures for naming files. The folder in which it is stored has the potential to group photos into a common theme. This feature is often overlooked during the storing process. Each respective bit of information is considered a clue. This is usually enough information to recall where or why an image was taken.

Step three

If I continue to struggle after steps one and two, I begin to search through messages and emails to garner my whereabouts at that specific time.

It is only through this investigation that I am able to rediscover an image whose purpose is unidentified. Once the image is classified as forgotten, the floodgates for creativity open. Liberated from any anxieties of information loss, this image presents an opportunity to invent. To reinvent. To activate new capacities in and for the image, beyond its representational function. As we know, memory is constantly distorting information, and any attempt to remember is an attempt to avoid this natural muddling. These images exist as objects that can be modified, fragmented and filtered, voluntarily. If these natural distortions are actively embraced, these images have the ability to function as ciphers in which the spectator is able to embed multiple meanings, and explore the complex relationships between forgetting and inventing.

The image which was constructed through a collaborative process between the user and the device, presents itself as an entity whose raw materials are up for reconfiguration. The event or object with which the image was once closely associated no longer exists as something that needs reconstruction, but can take on a new form entirely.

From Digital to Physical

“After receipt of new information that is misleading in some ways, people make errors when they report what they saw. The new post-event information often becomes incorporated into the recollection, supplementing or altering it, sometimes in dramatic ways. New information invades us, like a Trojan horse, precisely because we do not detect its influence” (Loftus 720).

In an article titled ‘*The Formation of False Memories*’, Elizabeth Loftus and Jacqueline Pickrell detail a study in which participants are shown a simulated crime scene and tested on their information retention. After watching the simulation, half the group receives written copies of misleading information while the other half receives nothing. The study shows that those who had read the misleading information had performance deficits between 30-40 percent, adopting false information into their own memory (720). Furthermore, just how malleable our thoughts can be, and how drastically suggestion can influence memory becomes apparent (725). The institution of false memories can be thought of as a creative process. Where holes exist in the memory of an event, the brain actively works to insert information. We are constantly being bombarded with ‘post-event information’. This information may come externally through word of mouth, digitally through our social media platforms, or internally through interference and decay. A majority of the time, we have no control over these informational distortions. If post-event information is able to induce false memories, one may begin to question how much of the information contained within the images is accurate, and how much it really matters.

In the Presence of Images is an exhibition in which I embrace distortions and voluntarily apply them to forgotten digital photographs. A retrieval cue can generally be

thought of as something that is intended to bring clarity. My artwork functions alternatively. By digitally manipulating the images, I reduce the perceptibility of their content, abstracting it into forms that require careful attention to make sense of. These images exist on the brink of recognition. This spectator must spend time with the images in order to form associations. The gestation period subtracted from the process of digital photography is thereby reintroduced. The active capacities of images created out of spontaneity, and ultimately forgotten, are revisited and constructed to function in new ways.

My art practice utilizes mass photography to generate a repeatable framework for creation. From images disassociated from their original context, physical objects are created that allow both artist and spectator to interact tangibly with the subject under investigation.

Upon entering the gallery, the spectator will be confronted by several 4' x 8' dry-wall panels that function somewhere in-between an artist panel and a framed wall section removed from another location. These panels are covered in wallpaper and support screenprinted images. The viewer's focus is meant to shift between the abstracted content of the framed imagery and the material quality of the wallpaper. These framed images interfere with the recurring pattern of the wallpaper, while introducing the spectator to similar patterns and imagery found in my archive of forgotten photographs. This engenders juxtapositions between the familiarity of wallpaper and unfamiliarity of the imagery. These interferences will also be explored in the context of the *visual chunking* bringing together wood panels, acrylic sheets and televisions (see Image 8).



Image 8: Assemblage 1 (IMG-0003 / IMG-0004)

By creating physical objects, the forgotten images are transformed into a state in which they are vulnerable to the same physical effects of time as those who are viewing. These works have their own material reality, independent from their capacity to function as retrieval cues. These images act upon the spectator, as the spectator acts upon them. How these images act upon each other will depend on their presentation, and the space that they inhabit. For this reason, the exhibition is scheduled across three consecutive galleries (with a possibility for additional spaces in the future), each one smaller (in square footage) than the last. This constraint will compel an editing process; the removal of certain pieces will in turn generate new associations between pieces, further exploring the notion of information loss between reconstructions. Each space will also extend the concept of selective review. Adopting a chronological naming system, the spectator may become aware of a missing piece from the exhibition, conscious of the possibility that they are only experiencing what is being chosen for them to experience.

Conclusion

This writing is not meant to encompass the body of work, or the practice from which it was made. Rather, it is meant to function as a verbal supplement to the concepts under investigation.

In the Presence of Images is intended to explore the active capacities of forgotten photographs, while contemplating both digital and cognitive processes involved in their creation. Moreover, just as our perception of photographs changes over time, so will our perception of the pieces within the exhibition, as the human relationship with digital technology develops. The images invite the spectator to form associations, recognize patterns, invent context, and to act upon them in a manner informed by their own memory.



Image 9: In the Presence of Images (Installation: SPG, York University)



Image 10: In the Presence of Images (Installation: SPG, York University)



Image 11: In the Presence of Images (Installation: SPG, York University)



Image 12: In the Presence of Images (Installation: SPG, York University)



Image 13: In the Presence of Images (Installation: The Black Cat)



Image 14: In the Presence of Images (Installation: The Black Cat)



Image 15: In the Presence of Images (Installation: Pushmi Pullyu)



Image 16: In the Presence of Images (Installation: Pushmi Pullyu)



Image 17: In the Presence of Images (Installation: Pushmi Pullyu)

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