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# Struggle for Your Story

Memory Studies and Contemporary Art in the 21st  
Century

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## VI. Theses

1. A typical tendency among contemporary artists over the past 11-15 years has been the production of research-based projects, which are created using methodologies of other scientific fields, in collaboration with experts of social or natural sciences. Some of these can be interpreted within the framework of the interdisciplinary scientific field of memory research.

2. With its fact-based yet intuitive statements, the corpus of knowledge thus generated serves to refine our ramified historical consciousness and collective memory that evolved under postmodern influence.

3. The raw material of the memory researcher artist is factual data obtained by means of a choice of methods and technologies.

4. The reason artists turn to memory research is that they want to more profoundly understand the systems of relations within and among the communities living around them. The artist participates in the process as not just a medium who merely channels the stories of communities in the limelight, but rather as a creative agent who, owing to the studied community's confidence, opens up doomed-to-be-forgotten moments of personal memory towards collective memory and also contextualises these moments. The compulsion of conservation is thus coupled with a democratic selection in the artist's praxis.

5. Over the past decades, artists that made research-based works not only used the devices of other sciences, but also combined practices from their own neighbourhood, associated with the roles of the art historian or curator, thereby

further transforming the image of the artist that had become fully fledged by the Romantic era and maintained until modernity, to be gradually deconstructed starting in the early twentieth century, and apparently, owing to the activity of artist-researchers, it has shifted even further from the Romantic ideal.

6. The activity of memory researcher artists is unequivocally associated with technique of memory-political production employed by populist governments, in the course of which a country relies on events and rituals arbitrarily selected from the past in constructing its own national consciousness, while the traces of alternatives emerging to oppose it are dispatched to institutional oblivion. By drawing attention to unofficial memory, art poses questions regarding the content of official memory.

7. The memory researcher artist uses memories of the past as arguments, but evidently phrases statements, or creates frameworks that accommodate independent statements, for the present and the future.

8. Mnemonic systems, in other words, the methods and devices of remembering, have continuously changed over the centuries, in accordance with the world view of society and the technology of preservation. With the help of immersive virtual media we can represent the past in more and more spectacular ways, it is getting ever so easy to become all but witnesses to past events that form our identity. World view, technology and identity are closely related factors that endow the memory researcher artist with responsible possibilities. By the authentic interpretation of the past and the refinement of official stances, art can facilitate the peaceful coexistence of communities.

9. The facts used by the artist are not a risk to artistic autonomy, on the contrary in fact, they serve as a basis for the artist's corpus of knowledge, which is conscious, and not inconsistently influenced by other media, and this is the appropriate starting point for autonomous creative work in the post-truth era.

10. The creative artist is responsible not only for the analysis of facts, but

also for ensuring that certainties reach their audience. Today's institutional environment, even if devoid of direct censorship, sometimes prevents delicate information from reaching its visitors. The way for memory research to become a critical artistic practice is for the institutional system to also accommodate artistic contents that may touch on sensitive spots of the political-economic structure. Until the freedom of communication is not total, we must make do with 'minority-petting' and isolated awareness-raising campaigns that end with a sense of lack for author as well as in terms of the thematised phenomena.

11. Practice and realisation are tied to a budget, and the budget is integrated into the economic environment in a complex manner. We might say that budget is related to toiling the land, to conservative structures, for you reap what you sow, or (resorting to false etymology with some poetic license for the sake of the English translation of the metaphor) 'the bud you get' depends on the seed you plant. The projects presented in my dissertation are relatively low-budget and self-financed, and thus only loosely connected to the institutional framework, thereby preserving their autonomous and uncompromising nature. In this they differ from those productions that otherwise reach wider audiences, as those are distributed in the form of feature films or documentaries, and they also differ from the practices of addressing the past specific to big museums. These interdisciplinary art projects are normally not conformed to the political-economic infrastructure in their production period. They need not directly take into account viewer numbers, visitor numbers or financial aspects, and so they can leave more room for creative freedom. Still, the social impact of these works is closely connected with the political and cultural field, as press appearances promoting popularity integrate the projects into their narratives through the particular filter of current events and perspectives.