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Floating fantasy

The work of art on the border of memory and fantasy

DLA thesis

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Introduction

My paper is focusing on the question how transgressions between memory and fantasy are incorporated in the concepts of art and creative processes. Further discussions in the paper are dealing with the changes in the relation of memory and contemporary art beyond the scope of media context.

I discuss in the first chapter the main results of memory research primary treating the works of Daniel Schacter and Alan Baddeley as the generally accepted statements on the field of memory-related studies with a closer view on those extension of those memory functions which mainly related to processes of phantasy and creativity. I also mention a new category, which is described as Google-memory and presumably will lead to major changes in the concept of memory.

In the second main chapter I treat the concepts of cultural memory as described by Jan and Aleida Assmann. In Assmanns' concept of cultural memory he includes also the methods of communicative memory. Therefore I start by examining those cultural traditions which are responsible to create and to maintain patterns of cultural memory. In further analysis I deal with those concepts wherein the idea of cultural memory appears in the form of metaphors in both ways, in the abstract sense and in the sense of concrete, physical references.

In the third main chapter I describe my own artistic works, in those I was treating different representations of memory processes. My interest in these works concentrated on different kind of experiments, how the projected feature of my works can trigger processes of common memory in the audience. Hereby I was using different media patterns to activate recall processes on designated target fields of cultural memory.

Discussion

Basic ideas on the concepts of memory

The forms of stored memories are largely determined by those stimuli which were present at the moment of experience. The different sensory processes such as vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch are the different ways of gaining information using those areas of the brain that conduct these senses. These stimuli in the brain create the information that will be recorded as memory traces the

moment of perception. Different areas of the brain are responsible for storing parts of information obtained from the external impression of reality thus creating the stored memories. These parts of information are finally stored in several different neurons, these neurons are connected into a complex system which will be activated to reconstruct the memory during the process of recall by gathering all of the available elements in the memory. These stored elements of memory contain not only parts of information, but also emotions.

Remembering, or the recall of memory is an intimate personal experience that will be controlled by supporting pivots included to the memory traces. These pivots can be formed by external influences so the recalled memory can be formed as well. In the cases of retrospective memory there is a direct link between past and present, the once coded memory traces and the impacts of today.

The recall will be determined by the way of coding of memory traces and by the actual circumstances of recall. During recall the memory processes will be directed to an area where the core of a memory trace had probably been encoded. If the actual context of recall changes it can cause a failed recall or it can lead to change in the contents of the recalled memory.

On cultural memory

Jan Assmann developed the concept of cultural memory on basics of the idea of truth which emerged by the appearance of monotheism. According to his description the concept of one-and-only truth is based on the belief in the existence of God and its birth lies in the time of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. Jan Assmann suggests to treat the so displayed truth-concept as the core of the modern concept of cultural memory. Thus the beginning of the cultural memory based on a common consensus that is set by the members of a community in the sense of a reference group.

For the discussion of those processes which maintain the implementation of creativity beyond concept of memory I apply the studies of Jan Assmann on cultural memory. The basics for the methods of analysis will be extracted from the category system set up by Aleida Assman, and which already presupposed in the time of its publication the contemporary frames of interpretation of cultural memory. Further this methods are also applicable for new kind of memory concepts in networked media of today.

In order to complete the representation of creative processes I discuss three of my own works wherein different concepts of cultural memory came to application. These works has been created with foci on contents of encoding and recall of memory in a mapping relation of creative functions.

Originally one of the most important function of memory lies in the recognition of danger and in the appropriate response so the matching of feelings and emotions to the processes of memory seems to be obvious.

Therefore, during my theoretical and practical work one of the key issues was that emotions emerge because of the evoked memories and so the emotional reactions are solely caused by the recall itself, or the emotions can also be stored just as the information coded in memory traces. A fairly obvious conclusion could have been drawn during the examination of memory functions that lead to the recognition that the activity of certain brain areas that are responsible for memory storage might also be responsible for the feelings of them.

This kind of power of mind serves also the survival of individuals and community just as memory itself but this function what is profoundly something like a strong belief in God can overwrite rational decision conflicting by this the interests of individuals. This extremely powerful emotionally based decision-making process therefore might make an assumption that emotions are also anchored in the mind in the same way as information. The described assumption is particularly important in those cases when the memory traces are not fully available or are incomplete and if so, they must be completed. In order to complete the memory traces the performance of fantasy and imagination seems to be essential as well. The process of completing these traces will be carried out by the sense of logical addition of those stored traces which shows related details to the missing ones. How these additions will be selected depends on which emotions will be triggered by the process of recall or which emotions are related to the particular memory trace. Along these basics can be concluded that remembering is not only a similar process to creative activities but also linked to them as a movement of creation, which serves as basics for artistic work.

To examine this relationship I apply the concept of cultural memory, which allows reviews on the fields of diachronic overview and on the different genres as well. The diachronic overview shows that the concept of memory leads to significant manifestations in creative processes which differ periodically throughout the history of art. The changes in the concepts of cultural memory emerge as addition to encoding processes of short and long-term memory libraries according to the actual expectations of an era and they might establish forever lasting art works to be encoded which shall undergo the recall with the same cultural value in consecutive generations. The continuity of coding process has changed as the mass media has lost its priority by the expansion of the networked media causing transformations in the culture memory and in the methods of memory processes. The new form of memory, the google memory uses of the information network no longer as a library of memory changing the usual coding methods between short term and long term memory. The retention of permanently encoded memories is often done by using an already recorded web site and

other indirect reference systems. Therefore the memory trace stored in the long-term often not includes the remembrance itself, rather the references to the storage location where the corresponding data are available. The analysis of this new type of memory function will be carried out on correlating contemporary examples of the genre of monuments. The examples to examine represent a new significant presence of media concepts which show a new kind of usage of the monument using this element in its encoded sense in cultural memory. This concept appears as grant of certification for the represented by each of these art work or creative activities.

The message included in the media content will be overwritten regularly within a time-frame of one day posting the new and the original hits on the list of the search engines. The so-called Google memory earns by this a dual reference, preventing the utterly original content of long-term encoding in the collective memory.

Accordingly, due to the excessive amount of data and the continuous accessibility of events the memory processes seem to gain a new, selective function that may also be associated to decision making driven by phantasy and emotions besides its main controlling patterns like memory traces and location-reference of information.

Thus assumable, the influence of networked media on creative processes becomes more pronounced by processing the experiences into the short-term memory.

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