
Introduction

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General Editors, Memory Connection Journal
Volume 1, Number 1, "Contained Memory"

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“Contained Memory”, the first volume of the *Memory Connection Journal*, takes its title from a conference held in Wellington, New Zealand, in 2010.¹ At the inception of the idea for the conference the question was asked: What is contained memory? Although there are distinct forms of memory containment, from the outset we acknowledged their capacity for porosity, enabling encounters between different expressions of memory. We proposed an (extensive) list of “knowledge sources” from where papers might originate, and listed broad themes to which presenters could respond. In doing so, we did not seek to delimit the possibilities of how contained memory could be understood by attempting to define the term we had coined; rather, our intention was to signal our aspiration for an expansive interpretation. We wanted potential participants to respond to contained memory from their own perspectives. In the end, it was the contributors to both the conference and the publication who have defined contained memory in these contexts.

The inspiration for the multidisciplinary nature of the conference came from two sources: the *Visible Memories* conference held at Syracuse University in the U.S. in 2008; and *Memory: An Anthology*, a collection of writings about memory edited by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (2009). What was striking about both the event and the book was their markedly multidisciplinary nature, emphasising that memory is explored across a wide range of practices, branches of knowledge, and modes of expression. One of our fundamental aims was that the *Contained Memory Conference* should embody this characteristic. With this in mind we cast our net wide. Putting out a call for papers to conference listings across the disciplinary spectrum, we waited to see what would be the nature of our catch. Would there be interest in a non-discipline specific—or rather multidisciplinary—conference on contained memory? Could we entice, inspire, or provoke potential contributors by providing the opportunity to intellectually “rub shoulders” with different ways of thinking?

The abstracts came flooding in—enough for three conferences. What was more important was the authors represented our aspiration to encompass a wide variety of ways of conceiving memory through different cultural and theoretical orientations and disciplinary backgrounds. We were confident that the *Contained Memory Conference* could provide a nexus for multidisciplinary perspectives,

discourses, and expressions of memory. Another aim was more ambitious and its success will take a longer time to measure: to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue that might lead to different ways of “seeing” and the creation of new knowledge around memory.

The participation of key people—along with key words—can engage interest in a conference. The leading memory thinkers, writers, and practitioners (representing a diversity of fields) who agreed to participate in the conference were equally inspired by the concept of contained memory. Their presence helped to define how the theme might be expressed, as well as attract conference participants to experience their scholarly and creative contributions. James E. Young, Dame Claudia Orange, Sir Mason Durie, Paul Broks, Dr Hans-Michael Herzog, Humberto Vélez, and Jenny Bornholdt would bring to the conference their expertise across many fields: memorialisation; cultural and national histories; psychiatry, health, and social policy; neuropsychology, film, and theatre; art practice; exhibition curation; and poetry.

Establishing a partnership with institutions which have a pedigree in memory work was also essential in defining the nature of the conference: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa—possibly the foremost repository of the nation’s memory—and Syracuse University both collaborated with Massey University on the *Contained Memory Conference*. Syracuse has been heavily involved in the study of public memory and visual culture for the past 10 years. It has hosted three major interdisciplinary conferences devoted to the themes of *Framing Public Memory* (2001), *Contesting Public Memories* (2005), and *Visible Memories* (2008). Syracuse has also established the “Public Memory Project”, a hub for collaboration among scholars supporting specific memory-related projects within the university’s community.

The 30 peer-reviewed articles in this publication developed from *Contained Memory Conference* papers originate from a variety of disciplines and perspectives including: anthropology; architecture and architectural history, theory and criticism; art history and criticism; communication studies; cultural studies; customary knowledge; design; digital media; ethnic studies; ethnography; feminist media studies; film and television studies; geography; history; landscape architecture; literature and literary theory; marine biology; Mātauranga Māori; material culture studies; memory studies; museum studies; performance; philosophy; photography; psychiatry; religious studies; rhetorical studies; visual art; and visual culture studies.

One of the defining characteristics of our current academic era may be its focus, almost obsession, with the question of memory. At least since the mid-1990s and the publication of James E. Young’s seminal *The Texture of Memory*, notions of public and/or collective memory have become central to a staggering number of studies in a remarkable number of disciplines. In addition to its wide transdisciplinary reach, memory studies has also expanded geographically to become central for scholars working in almost every corner of the world. The

countries represented at the *Contained Memory Conference*, both in terms of scholars and their objects of scholarship, provide ample evidence of the global reach of contemporary memory studies.

The proliferation of memory studies appearing in academic communities around the world adds some impetus to the theme of this volume as the prospect of containing memory becomes increasingly difficult. Thought of in terms of studies of public memory, the efforts to contain memory are not so much about limiting its prospects as a topic for scholarly and artistic inquiry, but seeking to create a network through which these various scholarly endeavours can be connected. The efforts of Massey University, and the organisers of the *Contained Memory Conference* and this volume, have taken an important step in facilitating this type of network and laying the foundation for the kinds of connections that might move the study of memory forward on a truly international scale.

Thought of in terms of the concept of memory itself, the desire to contain memory seems to not only precede the formal reflections on memory, but perhaps to date back as far as the earliest experiences of collective remembrance. Evidence of this desire to contain memory, to confine it to a location and in some kind of form, appears in ancient objects like burial mounds, sculptures, and epic poems. The essays collected in this volume suggest that this primordial urge is retained in the contemporary age and, in some ways, may be even more pronounced. In artefacts ranging from car crash memorials—hastily constructed on the sides of roads—to formal national memorials to the dead, and from photographs to literary works, we continue to seek to contain memories. The scholars whose work appears in this volume provide us with insightful ways of thinking about not only these remembrances, but also the containers into which they are infused.

Reflecting on remembrance in terms of the ways we seek to contain memory provides a useful framework for memory studies, and the essays in this journal recommend some of the parameters of this approach. Throughout the pages of the journal we are urged to reflect on the forms through which memories are contained; to think about the ways these forms both shape our representations of the past and guide our experience of the acts of remembrance. Further, given the increasingly globalised world, it should not surprise us that these forms of remembrance and the memories they contain are ever more mobile. These “migratory memories” trouble our traditional notion of localised remembrance not only in the ways that the migrating forms of remembrance introduce new practices, but also in how we seek to carry our local forms of remembrance as we move into new locations and then encounter unfamiliar forms of indigenous memory.

Recognising the mobility of memories, and their containers, also asks us to attend to the spaces where memories reside. In what might be thought of as a haunting, we know that the memories contained in a particular space linger. Thus, we are called to see the relation between space and remembrance through the ways we remember in space and the ways that our recollections are also acts of “remembering spaces”. Taken to a broader level, the nation-state provides another

spatial frame for memory, and the connection between remembrance and “national identity” has been the object of numerous studies including several important works here. This geographic line of inquiry moves to another level in the studies attending to landscapes, such as the scarred mining country of the Appalachian Mountains or small islands off the shores of major cities. The scholars in this section ask us to consider the practices of “siting memory”.

The spatial logic pursued in the sections considered above provide useful ways of thinking about public memories, but taken too far we might begin to imagine remembrance as settled, contained, and stagnant. While the essays in these preceding sections avoid this mistake, those that follow in the remaining three add impetus for seeing the dynamic and fluid nature of memory. The memories that linger in spaces and objects require us to activate them. This sometimes occurs through ritualised and formal practices, and at other times through informal and vernacular activities. In this way, the containers of memory invite (indeed at times demand) that we engage in the complex actions of “performing memory”. This intersection between spatial/material containers, and the human performances called upon to enact them, points our attention to the careful work done to design these memorial interfaces. Whether through artistic media, architectural design, or technology, our encounters with remembrances are guided by the designs of our “mediated memories”.

The study of memory suggested thus far asks us to reflect on the formal, spatial, cultural, performative, and mediated dimensions of remembrance, but such an effort would be remiss without recognising the crucial interrelated dimension of forgetting. Thought of in relation to the preceding, forgetting can be conceived of through the ways that the spaces, objects, and technologies of memory are obscured by new spaces, objects, technologies, and memories. The processes of these occlusions are familiar to us as every locality has seen its memorial to the war dead become a place of teenage skateboarders to gather, or the sacred burial ground is forgotten and becomes the site for a new suburban development. The final section of the journal asks us to reflect on this aspect of contained memory; to think about the ways that memories are covered over and also how they can be excavated, and the important lessons we can learn from the inquiry into “recovered memory”.

Taken together, the essays in this issue of *Memory Connection* draw our attention to the complex ways in which memories are contained and the complications entailed in every effort to confine ephemeral, fluid, and dynamic memories within concrete and cultural containers. In the end, these containers will fail; the objects will decay, the people will move on, the spaces will be repurposed, the performances will change, and the technologies become obsolete. This does not suggest the futility of containing memory, or the inevitability of oblivion. Rather, the work of containing memory is ongoing, as too must be the careful efforts to reflect on the forms of its containment.

¹The *Contained Memory Conference 2010 Pupuri Pohewa* was presented by Massey University, School of Visual and Material Culture, College of Creative Arts, NZ in partnership with Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts, New York, U.S., and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. It was located in a number of venues including: Te Papa; City Gallery, Wellington; and Massey University. See <http://www.containedmemory.org.nz>

Biographical notes

Kingsley Baird is a visual artist and the Director of Research in the School of Visual and Material Culture in Massey University's College of Creative Arts. His artwork—concerned with memory and memorialisation—includes the design of commissioned public memorials and making artefacts that investigate new conceptual, aesthetic, and material ways of creating memory forms. Examples of his work in this field include: New Zealand Memorial (Australia, 2001, with Studio Pacific Architecture); Tomb of the Unknown Warrior (New Zealand, 2004); *The Cloak of Peace*, Japan, 2006; *Diary Dagboek* (Belgium, 2007); and *Serve: A New Recipe for Sacrifice* (New Zealand, 2010-2011). He was the co-convenor of the *Contained Memory Conference 2010* (NZ), and General Editor of the *Memory Connection* Journal, both roles shared with Kendall Phillips.

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Kendall Phillips is the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts and Professor in the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Syracuse University in the U.S. His research attends to the intersections between citizenship, rhetoric, and culture with particular interest in issues of memory, film, and controversy. He has published several books including *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age* (2011), *Framing Public Memory* (2008), *Dark Directions: Romero, Craven, Carpenter and the Modern Horror Film* (2012), and *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture* (2005). His essays have appeared in journals such as *Literature/Film Quarterly*, *Communication Monographs*, and *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. Kendall holds a PhD from the Pennsylvania State University and has taught at Syracuse for the past 12 years where he has received several awards including the University Scholar/Teacher of the Year (2008) and the Judith Greenberg Seinfeld Distinguished Faculty Fellowship (2009).

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