
Introduction

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In the *Theaetetus*, Plato compares the human soul to a ball of wax. Our experiences, he reasons, leave impressions upon our soul just as something like a signet leaves an impression upon wax. Memories exist not in the wax nor in the signet but in the negative space of the impression. According to Plato's analogy, when we recall we are seeking to fit some image of the past into the space left by that experience, something akin to fitting a jigsaw piece into a space within the puzzle. Plato recognized that this process was fraught with potential difficulties since the conjuring of images of the past involves the same faculty of imagination that is responsible for creating fictional, poetic, and speculative images. It is also worth recalling that the mother of the Muses who were thought to inspire the arts was Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. This interrelationship between speculation and recollection is the source of much of Western civilization's anxiety around issues of memory and remembrance, whether manifested around questions of whose memory counts, how these memories are made visible to others, or how we can preserve these memories in perpetuity.

The essays collected herein largely operate within this complex space between remembrance and representation and between historical fact and artistic expression. The authors represent a variety of scholarly and artistic practices and their topics span the globe. But, whether exploring the artistic use of diatoms mined from guano in Africa (Barrar) or commemorating victims of oppression and injustice around the world through portraiture (Huber), each of the essays in this volume seeks to examine the connection between cultural practices of remembrance and artistic efforts at representation. By collecting these essays together, we hope to expand upon an important dialogue regarding the ways in which these practices are intertwined and implicated within broader global currents of ideology, commerce, and politics. Kendall Phillips and Mitchell Reyes coined the term 'memoryscale' to suggest the global movement of memories and memory practices across national and cultural boundaries. This collection of articles adds to this broader dialogue around the movement of memories by focusing particularly on the ways that artistic practices are instigated, contested, and mobilized along these global lines.

Memory Connection Volume 3 is a combination of selected papers developed into articles from the 2015 *Triggering Memory* symposium (Wellington, NZ) and the 2016 *Memory Works* symposium (New York, US). Both these symposia were part

of a broader interdisciplinary and international consortium known as The Memory Waka, which began in 2008. Throughout the journey of the consortium a focus on the connection between the artistic, cultural, and rhetorical practices of memory has emerged. The two symposia that provided the articles collected here attended to two important dimensions of this connection: the effects of bringing forth, or triggering, memories; and, the kind of work done by, in, and through these memories once brought forth.

During the 2015 *Triggering Memory* symposium, participants inquired into what initiates the willed or involuntary process of recall when memories are, as A. S. Byatt describes, ‘taken out, burnished and contemplated’? Sensory experiences, places, objects, images, language, rituals, and therapy are some of the means by which memory is evoked, and the participants in the 2015 symposium investigated these means in relation to various cultural and artistic practices from locations around the globe.

Following up on this theme of evoking memory, the 2016 symposium attended more directly to the work done by the memories that emerge. With the theme *Memory Works*, the organisers sought to ask a series of related questions including: how does memory work? What kinds of cultural/political/psychological work does memory perform? Drawing together scholars and artists from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and with a variety of perspectives, the symposium sought to foster further inquiry into the dynamic nature of public memory and its relation to art, culture, and public rhetoric.

Importantly, both conferences hosted not only the presentation of scholarly work but also exhibitions. These exhibitions were curated by Heather Galbraith and Andrew J. Saluti, in the case of *Trigger Points* (NY, 2016), and *reflex, figment* (Wellington, 2015) curated by Galbraith. According to the curators, the former drew together ‘contemporary and historical works from New Zealand, the United States, Australia, Finland and the United Kingdom to explore the potent and slippery nature of memory’. The exhibition explored

(without a hierarchy of value) triggers of smell, touch, submersion, psychoanalysis, incantation, the act of drawing, juxtaposition/collage, and acts of repetition. It also presents works that address the politics of remembering (and forgetting). Akin to a braided river, dark, traumatic, violent and bleak threads intertwine with humorous, sardonic and political gestures and moments of romanticism in the exhibition.

Hosted at Massey University, *reflex, figment* continued a focus on, as Galbraith put it, ‘ways that encounters with tangible and intangible materials, objects, images, sensations can trigger memory’. This exhibition examined not only the ways that memories manifest but also the limits of our very conception of memory and the ways we encounter and understand the failure of memory, the moments when memory is overwhelmed or repressed.

These two exhibitions provided a crucial foundation for the presentations and discussions that occurred during the conferences and some of the images from those exhibitions are included in the present volume.

Of course, staging these conferences and exhibitions was a large, costly, and complicated effort and the editors of this volume wish to acknowledge the invaluable support of the many individuals and institutions who provided it. In particular, we wish to express our gratitude to Massey University's College of Creative Arts Toi Rauwharangi and to Syracuse University's College of Visual and Performing Arts. Without the support of these institutions, the present volume would not have been possible.