

The relationship between photography and memory plays an important role in my work. How can photography trigger us to associate freely or recall events, in which way can it access our memories or even replace a memory?

In my work I loosely use neuro-scientific theories and different photographic approaches to explore various aspects of the subject. Three pillars are important in every project; the concept, the photography and the presentation. In different projects the emphasis is placed on a different pillar. One project stresses the conceptual, in another the installation of the work is most important for exploring the subject matter. I adjust my way of working accordingly and seek different types of collaborations with other artists and scientists. Collaboration broadens my scope and deepens my work.

The parameters of the exhibition space, like the height and direction of walking, are important to me. I take these into account while designing exhibitions. The size and the materiality of my work are as important to me as the photograph itself. I regard choice of image ratio, size and material and the way it is presented as being part of the work's content.

Regardless of the awareness of possibilities of digital manipulation and the often subjective approach of photographers, the general public still regards images as documents of truth, representing reality. News and social media are relied on to communicate the feeling of experiencing events, of being present at the site of events, a feeling of knowing what is going on.

For *Collected Memory* my approach is conceptual. I travel to locations where events of historical import have taken place, e.g. Ground Zero in New York or Tianan' Men Square in Beijing. On the exact month, day and minute of the passing of the events, I take pictures of the sky. Doing so, I use a reportage camera and carry a press pass to get as close to the site as possible. In essence, the working method is the same as a press photographer and like them I make representations of place and time. My images are abstract though.

The installation of *Collected Memory* consists of prints mounted on aluminium plates of various sizes, positioned on the floor in an upright position, distributed through the space. As the viewer's perspective changes while moving through the exhibition space, smaller photos can be concealed by larger images. Like the memory itself, the shape of the installation is fluid and dependent on the position of the viewer.

In contrast to the images we see by the means of mass media, I try to let the viewer depict the event and offer a possibility to project their own memories of events onto the photographs.

*IMG\_* is more picturesque. It is a growing photographic archive of abstract and semi abstract observations of 'the city'. During travels through Western Europe and Northern America I take photographs of grids, structures and generic details, using a compact camera. The images appear as if they could have been taken anywhere. To me personally every image represents one or more memories and the archive forms a new place, or city, if you like.

Ultimately I seek to ignite the process of free association and of shaping new stories. In order not to disturb this, I do not share my own memories connected to the images. Presentations of *IMG\_* emphasise the way of making associations and recalling memories. In order to do so the Kuleshov effect, from the eponymous experiment, is applied. This film experiment shows that the meaning of individual images and the way they are being interpreted by the viewer are dependent on their context. By repeating images and showing them in combination with other images, significance can shift and different associations are being made.

The transactive memory theory by philosophers Andy Clark and David Chalmers shows us that people working in duos or groups build up a larger collective memory than do two individuals. When two friends walk a city they remember things selectively, both subconsciously depending on their friend to remember the other things for them.

For *OTANI NIEUWENHUIZE* I collaborate with Japanese photographer Shinji Otani to experimentally explore this theory. Photographing the same subject at the same day, at both Japanese and Dutch cultural sites, we investigate the transactive memory developing between us. In exhibitions and publications we always combine one image by Shinji and one by myself. The prints, mounted on plates, are placed on wooden profiles on the wall. In this way we try to focus on the making of combinations, implying that we simply took one image out of a box and placed another next to it.

The upcoming *Extended Memory* is yet a different kind of collaboration. For this first artistic research project of mine, I work in close collaboration with researcher and cognitive scientist Robin van Emden. The project consists of a visual memory of the city presented in a site specific installation. We will examine the way in which viewers move through this installation and the gathered data is used to alter the installation. Big data as part of the artistic process.

With my photographic work and installations I aim to address the memory of the viewer, make them associate freely and recall their own memories. My work is not about what is, but about what can be.

Johan Nieuwenhuize, March 2017

For further reading: Mobbs, D., Weiskopf, N., Lau, H. C., Featherstone, E., Dolan, R. J., & Frith, C. D. (2006). The Kuleshov Effect: the influence of contextual framing on emotional attributions. *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience*, 1(2), 95-106. / Wegner, D. M., Erber, R., & Raymond, P. (1991). Transactive memory in close relationships. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 61(6), 923. / Sutton, J. (2006). Introduction: memory, embodied cognition, and the extended mind. *Philosophical Psychology*, 19(3), 281-289. / Kiverstein, J., & Farina, M. (2011). Embraining culture: leaky minds and spongy brains. *Teorema (Special Issue Dedicated to the Extended Mind)*. / A. Clark, D. J. Chalmers (1998) *The Extended Mind*. *Analysis* 58:10-23, Reprinted in (P. Grim, ed) *The Philosopher's Annual*, vol XXI, 1998. / Menary, R. (2010). *The extended mind: The MIT Press*.