

The trace mark

Why is there a proliferation in preserving objects as representations of memoirs in modern times?



Carlota Rubí Hernández

I have been collecting worthless material for almost ten years now, taking good care arranging it, documenting it, indexing it, and preserving it from any possible damage. This material it constituted of cut outs from local newspaper, photographs, interviews, news stories, excerpts from television programmes, objects and other things... Today I possess what resembles an archive, or let's say I possess a real archive that relates only to me: a kind of added memory that occupies different corners of my domestic space, despite the fact that I do not actually need it. It is an invented memory that is exhausting me, and which I cannot liberate myself from. For this reason, I will uncover some parts of my archive, hoping that -by making it public- I can get rid of its weight. This will be my attempt to destroy a memory that doesn't know how to erase itself. (Mroué, 2012)

*All that is past we seek to treasure here,
All that may make the past a thing of life;
And we would save what else in wordly strife
Might perish, though the present hold it dear.*
(Wadmore, 1882)

Thank you to my mother, who is been trying to teach for 22 years to get rid of my things and set me free from unnecessary emotional attachments and live a free present.

Thank you for my father, who have permitted me to use his personal an appreciated objects of memory, and who has teach me how relax one can live surrounded by memoirs.

Thank you to Giovanna, from Disability Support for give me structure.

Thank you to my tutor Caitlin Shepherd for her advice.

Thank you for all the people who answered the survey.

Thank you to my flat mates and friends for the support and infinite patience.

Thank you Jennifer, Oscar and Josep for proof writing.

Thank you to everyone that has ever gave me something to remember.

Thank you to all my things, that keep me close to the ones that are far, and allow me to remember what escapes to my mind.

An exploration through my father and my personal objects of memory will be used in order to discover why do we enclose meaning to our appreciated objects and more precisely, why do we enclose memories. It is an exploration that takes places through the processes that the memory and object suffer to become memoirs. It also explores the necessity that we have to turn the ephemeral and the uncertain into tangible and endurable. Mental health and of fear to experiment or feel into oblivion but also the unknown future are the reasons discussed. The relation between the industrialization of the manufacturing process of objects will be discover as the responsible of this practice with the help of a survey.

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
What is this doing here in this space?	6
Their function is to remember and validate	7
<i>The importance of memory</i>	8
The endurable memory	9
<i>Photography for geography</i>	10
<i>Objects matter</i>	10
What for?	11
Do not forget me	12
From collective memory to individual memory	13
<i>A unique memory for history</i>	13
<i>Consuming memory</i>	13
Buildings can talk	14
Conclusion: the trace mark	15
Bibliography	16
Figures	17

INTRODUCTION

I had come to a state of high awareness on how this world is crowded with objects and specially when I look at this room full of objects that I live in. Everytime it needs to be cleaned I experience a pensive moment when I have to get rid of something. By something, I must clarify, I mean things. The word things here includes all sorts of different examples; from furniture to clothes, newspapers to cinema tickets. These can include things that do not work anymore like a clock or an old phone as well as dry plants and beach shells. The room is almost like a museum. However, the physical space that such objects fill is not the main problem but the mental space they occupy as well. Even the smallest things feel heavy when trying to get rid of them. These innocent objects are actually objects of memory that hold a live experience that returns to one's mind when looking at them. How and why this phenomena occurs is one of the questions that arises and will be solved in the chapters that follow. The journey that is about to start it is one that will go through personal objects that have attached meanings and will be revealed in order to find the reason why we keep accumulating them. Why do we feel the need to create memoirs? Why do we need to validate our existence marking our experiences and casting them into objects almost like trophies?

Susan Stewart's book, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, The Gigantic, The souvenir, The Collection* will serve as the main body of reference for the investigation of this topic. Other authors whose work focuses on memory, memoirs and materiality will serve as well in order to answer my question. Why do we need to mark the present to be remembered in the future in the form of objects of memories?

The space that memoirs occupy in the house and why will be revealed in the first chapter. Paul Ricour's theories about the necessity of being surrounded by familiar objects of the past because that makes one feel safe and comfortable will be explored.

I will be exploring my father's objects of memory that are mostly stored in a room in the cellar of his house waiting to be revealed to start a journey to past memories and life experiences of the past. I will also be revealing some of my objects of memory.

Once the objects have been located in the house, I will argument how memories are material proofs of the past and they serve as samples of authentic experiences. The object of memory is not an object that its function serves for use value but instead it serves to remember. The function of the object has been left behind and now it serves to be contemplated and to review moments of the past. It is through the abstraction of a part from an authentic moment that the memoir is created as a sample. The object of memory has to be removed in time from the authentic moment of experience in order to become a real memoir that serves a longing of nostalgia.

Memoirs exist to validate an experience from the past through memory. The reason why memories need to be subject to objects will be investigated in the third chapter. I will draw from the creation of the book as an example to explain the process of materialization that the memory has to experience in order to become endurable and tangible. The memoir is now ready for the realm of immortality and not subject to change; it will live forever, unlike the human body, and will be available to be remembered at any point. The materiality of the object plays in advantage against the wickedness of the human memory that is subject to change and mortality. Different mediums in how memory can be placed will be explained; such as photography, the souvenir as the purchased object and the objects found spontaneously.

But what is the purpose of all this? Why is so much effort and material being employed to create these archives that are the objects of memory that are available to remember what has been experienced; this is the question Freud raises in the fourth chapter.

The placement of the objects in the house will be understood as well as their new function that is to remember. The process of how that happens and the reason why we need to make our memories endurable will also be discussed. What remains is a situation of houses full of objects that have us attached to the past. Is this a practice that has been performed forever in humans?

This investigation goes along two different discussions. First it will be investigate the erase of real memory that history has caused and how this caused the necessity to create places of memory. Secondly, it will be analyzing a survey of 30 people from a range of ages 15 to 74 that will give a great understanding on how this practice of possessing has started in a particular time complementing these arguments with different authors that discuss the paper of industrialization and mass production on manufacturing and its impacts in the way we consume and has transformed necessity into desire.

To finalize, the work of John Ruskin in memory and architecture will serve to demonstrate how humans have always been marking their present time with the help of materiality.

WHAT IS THIS DOING HERE IN THIS SPACE?

To open certain boxes, wardrobes, drawers, to go downstairs to the cellar or perhaps check upstairs in the attic gives one the feeling of starting a journey into memories. It is the encounter with these objects filled with narratives from past experiences that starts the journey. Objects from the past that have been kept away, but kept, waiting for the moment to be reviewed.

The journey starts by going downstairs to my father's cellar and the first meeting with what it seems like an untidy room that is exuberant of things and dust. Those objects that inundate the room mean for my father a reunion with his past, a reunion that is possible because all those things that he has accumulated through the past years. The emotional journey has commenced by developing and unwrapping all the stories and memories that are enclosed in these objects. Far from the cellar, another box is opened and that box is in my own room. This time, my objects are the ones revealing stories and experiences. These objects have been moving with me and have never been abandoned. Sometimes they are displayed on a shelf, or a table, and sometimes stored in boxes, kept away from my sight but still near me. I could make an assumption about their future about how they will end up in a cellar just like my father's objects or in a cabinet in my future living room. The same impossibility that has deprived me from getting rid of them, even the ones that do not perform any function or are hiding under my bed, will follow me until the end of my days. It is almost as the longer an object stays with me its value will increase, and so does the impossibility of abandoning it. The overwhelming feeling from the abundance of these objects that fill my room and my father's cellar does not come from the space that they occupy but the meaning they unfold. It is not the fact that they have been kept or perhaps saved that feels heavy but the impossibility of getting rid of them.

I have to anticipate some information that I consider that has to be now clarified. When I look at these objects they reveal to me some stories of the past, they are not objects that function but instead, objects of memory, also called memoirs. This new function that they have acquired, which is to remember, will be explained on the next chapter as the aim of this chapter is to understand the space they occupy in the house.

The space that is given to memoirs in the house is rather curious. This collections and accumulations of souvenirs and objects of memory are all together in its own shelf or kept away in an untidy room. Susan Stewart refers to the collection, on the book *On Longing* (1984), in which she develops a whole narration around the topic of souvenir objects of memory and collections, as the creation of a new context and the representation of an hermetic world. While common objects like kitchen utensils or furniture, which respond to a function, are tied to the temporality of the everyday life, their existence in the kitchen, or the living room is subject to change since they may break or be replaced by a newer version. The cellar, the room where my father keeps his memoirs, or the shelves and the boxes where I keep mine, are spaces tied to the temporality of the past, so they have to remain the same almost as if by altering their order, one is was altering the past. Aesthetic rules that one may follow when decorating a room will not influence the placement of these objects and by consequence, the appearance of the shelves, the cabinet or the cellar are eclectic and its context is not subject to a time, a concept or a theme.

The untouched room tied to the past may suffer when one has to change from one house to another. Moving to a new house means empty rooms and blank space. The empty wall and the empty space is naked from existence. This emptiness has to be filled with stuff. Objects from the past feel familiar so one feels a necessity to have them in the house. There is actually a relation between mental health and the things that surround us and it is explained by the philosopher Maurice Halbwach in the book *On Collective Memory* (1925). Mental illness, he writes, is accompanied by a breakdown of contact between thought and things. The breakdown means an inability to recognize familiar objects and so one may experience a feeling of uncertainty, the same as when one is obliged to move into a new place that is lacking familiar reference points. In the book Halbwachs reinforces his argument with the help of Auguste Comte who also argued how mental equilibrium is affected by the objects of our daily life. The room that remains unchanged provides an image of permanence and stability as well as sense of non passing time that its inhabitants experiment. The mirror that is on my wall (fig 1) can be easily removed or replaced, however, these two small mirrors (fig 2) that I found on the street 4 years ago have been following me ever since. A feeling of betrayal visits me if they do not have a space on the visible side of the room, When the room they inhabit now was an empty space, their presence suddenly made it comfortable because of my familiarity with the object. This familiarity and knowledge of these objects on the space can also have negative consequences, if the object carries a painful narrative. I had a flower jar that I had to throw in the bin though it was not broken, but it was narrating a broken relationship. The jar was not a jar, but the person who gave it to me. The painful feeling of the friendship that does not exist and the memory of the person that I was when that happened impulsed me to get rid of it, to not having it in my room or in my house. If the flower jar represents that person whose presence is not worth to be memorized in my room, what the other objects, the ones that I am keeping, represent are in fact the people that I want to memorize in my room and so, my everyday. According with Halbwach, the objects are filling the empty space that family and friends have left. The emptiness that exists when one lives far from the family home and hometown is filled by things that remind us of that place and the people. The presence and abundance of such objects that in appearance do not serve is excused by Halbwach. The intensity is due to the high amount of narratives that becomes present in objects that are actually memoirs.

In the previous chapter we entered into the abundant house of objects and the motive of their presence has been discovered. The object occupies its place in the house under the requirement of the inhabitants to create a safe and familiar environment. The displayed objects have abandoned their use value, they do not need to serve a functional purpose. Here lies the difference between the objects and the objects of memory that coexist in our houses.

Stewart argues the invention of the souvenir as an object of memory that validates the experience in the moment of its acquisition, how these objects have to suffer a temporal and spatial distancing from the authentic moment in order to become an object that remembers it and validates it. The authentic moment or original experience is the one that the object is remembering, representing and symbolizing. This new acquired value of nostalgia and validation of the authentic moment, says Stewart (pg. 139) increases with the past of the time as this temporal distance becomes bigger.

My old clocks (fig 3) that do not tell the time have been emptied of function and are far from the moment when they were given to me as a birthday present. In these cases, both clocks evoke past experiences and are making me victim of my own nostalgia. The coin (fig 4) represents luck only when it cannot be used to pay and has been emptied from its function. The lighter that my father forgot he had on a box that contains more memory will never light up a candle, a cigarette or the stove because it has forgot its function and use value. The bedroom where my grandmother used to sleep is now a room where my father puts everything that he does not know where else to put. The room presents a combination of objects with no connection. They are found inside the dressers and laying on the chair and bed. The room is located in the middle of the functional house, however it has lost its function just as the things that are laying inside. There is a pile of hockey t-shirts (fig 5) inside of the wardrobe that have been accumulating dust for a long time. Unlike my sister's basketball t-shirts that she wears every weekend to attend the match, these old pieces of fabric are not to be worn anymore, but instead they are the proof of my father's childhood hobby. The passing of time has erased their function and they are far in time from the moment they were performing their innate function and so, they have become an object of memory. Similar to what happens with the shells (fig 6) that are in my room. They have been collected from the beach where I go to every summer to then be placed on my shelf. The shells, out of their place of origin, have become memoirs. However, this time the distance the memoir has experienced is spatial. The shells on the beach are part of a whole but my room is far from where they belong. They entrance in the shelf is to symbolize and represent that place of origin, the beach, and also the experience of going there.

As far as the objects of memory are remembering and validating the authentic experience, they are always incomplete (Stewart, p. 136). The shell as an object of memory has been abstracted from the beach, a place where it is only a part of the whole, therefore a sample. The sample does not only work as a part of the whole, but also as a representation of the original, as we can see with the Tour Eiffel key chains (fig 7). And because they work as samples from the authentic moment that is far in time or perhaps in space, the memoir will only evoke and resonate but never recoup (Stewart, pg. 136). If the memoir could recoup the experience, remarks Stewart, then it would not be a memoir, because the aim of the memoir is to remember not to revive.

The experience of going to a festival is not tangible so a physical validation is required if it wants to be remembered. The plastic coins (fig 8) that were used inside of that festival narrate the experience. The value of the coins is now attached to the experience rather than the material or original function. The narrative of the coin is not from the coin itself but from its possessor. The coin has become a memoir or an illusion. These objects, as Eco noticed in *Theory of Semiotics* (1975, p.225), have no value attached to its materiality but instead to a location and experiences that are not for sale, as with the plastic coins and the festival.

Because the function of memoirs is to validate an authentic experiences, it can be understood it is the reason to keep two identical Tour Eiffel key chains instead of getting rid of one. The moment they are validating is not the same. One is a present from a friend and reminds me of the stories she told me about her trip to Paris, and how she felt like it was her place to live. The second key chain is an object from my own memory from the time I went to Paris when I was traveling around Europe on trains with my friends after we finished high school. I was looking for a statue when I found this key chain on the floor. I needed to find an object to remember each city we were visiting and since Paris was at the end of the trip, I did not have much money left and this finding was a stroke of luck.

The importance of memory

Everything we do, we do it because we have the capacity to remember. Reality does not exist. Everything are mere perceptions and things are only physical supports, that is what Eduard Punset explains in one of his talks in *Redes* (2013). Since this are rather scientific arguments would not get discussed in deep, however they help to understand the relation between objects, memories and narratives. All the things are to hold a meaning, a meaning that will escape from our reality if a tangible support is not given. What Punset says about the function of memory in this case is that it serves to remember the general impression of things. The reason why the table can be identified as table is because that has been learned at some point by doing the connection between table as a concept and its physical support. What the brain is actually doing when recognizing a table is an action of remembering. However, as Punset points, we cannot trust memory for the details as memory is wick and imprecise. What it can be understood from Romos investigations that are explained in an interview by Punset in *Redes* is the reason of the importance of memory that relies in the fact that without it the world will not exist as everything we do, we do it from memory. But not just the world will not exist, also our identities. It is through the saved experiences that we store in our memory that we can build them. Since Romos explanation of the present as already the past, we need to store the experiences in our brain and from there we can exist and do things and understand who we are for the future.

It is through memory that we and our environment exists and it is through materiality that this existence can be validated but never through our own human memory since, as Romos and Punset had highlighted, it is wick . Also Paul Ricour alludes to fact up in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) how it is a perilous decision to leave the task of remembering to the human memory. Memories come to humans in images and they are easy manipulated by imagination. In order to be available to distinguish this image-memory that Ricour talks about that lives in our mind and the actual memory, the one from the authentic moment, what we need is a material support. As far as it has been discovered on the previous chapters, objects of memory are emptied and have lost their function of use value and now serve to remember. To be memoirs, they need to be far in time and space from the original experience. Despite the different approach these two authors take, being Punset , a scientist and Ricour a philosopher, their studies around the human memory both conclude on the weakness of it and warn us not to full rely on, the reason why objects are the chosen and trusted medium is to hold experiences that need to be remembered in the future.

When the memory is casted onto an object it becomes an object of memory, a memoir, and so the memory will be available in the future, untouched. Whereas if the memory remains in the mind it will only exists there, and not only become victim of the imagination that Ricour fears, but also of time and change, the memory will perish. Once the memory has abandoned the human and mortal body, it will enter into the realm of immortality and long life. Stewart explains how it is through materialization that the ephemeral concept becomes static, tangible and enduring. The static, non animated and identity less condition of the object, denies the possibility of death (Stewart, p. 133). It is through this materialization that the human experience is prevented to fell in oblivion.

Speech unfolds in time and writing unfolds in space, writes Stewart (p. 21). What is the creation of the book if not the materialization of the word? Once the speech has been said, it lives in the mind of the audience and the speaker and when passing time erases it from their minds, it will not exist. It needs to be printed and held by the covers in order to exist forever. The white notebook (fig 9) is always carried in my bag. It holds all the ideas that were once only existing in the mind, intangible, ephemeral and in movement. The action of marking the words with pigment in the paper is ensuring its availability in the future. Materiality gives an end to the story. The memory remains untouched subject to the object.

Although a process of materialization has occurred and the memory has been casted and frozen to exist in the future, some narratives will always escape to us. With the abandoning of the human body, the experience is attached to an object, not a subject. It is attached to a non animated body. It only speaks to the possessor of the authentic experience. The majority of the objects that I found in my fathers cellar appeared non legible for me. To be understood and for their narrative to be discovered, my father, the possessor of the object and the authentic moment has to unfold their narrative. As Stewart points, the narrative of these objects is not given by the manufacturer but actually by the possessor.

The memories will be remembered because they have abandoned their ephemeral nature. The attachment that one feels to their memoirs, is an attachment to the past. This necessity of living attaches into the past was explained in the first chapter when we saw how the familiarity of the environment helps mental health. But there are more reasons that will be explored later.

The objects of memory in possession may vary depending on the way they are created. As Stewart differentiates, there is the souvenir of exterior sight that are the purchasable ones that represent the experience through materiality often reducing the authentic experience and goes from the public space to the private cabinet. The souvenir makes possible the purchasable experience. The other kind of object of memory is the one of individual experience and thus not available for general consumers. This is often the found object, an spontaneous souvenir.

Photography for geography

Better than any object, that as we have seen earlier are always incomplete because they work as samples of the authentic experience, exists photography. Having the power to capture the present in an enduring format photography works as preservation of the present time, says Stewert (pg. 1389). The smiling faces are forever exposed on the picture (fig 10), the good old days have been casted. The picture was on a box for a long time and then rescued and framed. Messages of nostalgia where send when the possessor of the moment that the picture was serving to remember to the friends that appear on the picture. Everything has changed, but nothing has changed, and the picture serves as a proof of that. In fact, Susan Sontag notices in *On Photography* (1977) how little by little photography is gaining territory in the field since, at least in North America, every time more people have more photographs than objects. What it was said earlier about the need of staticity for the memory to remain untouched is more affordable with photography. Because the picture cannot talk but only show what was decided to be captured. Whether this arise of photographs as the favorite medium of the lasts time comes from is discussed in an the article *Immemory* (1997) that talks about the homonyms book by Chris Marker. It is with the democratization of the image that photography has started to serve more and more to guard memories. Photography can be used by the most and is not anymore an exclusive practice for the artist or the professional. Yesteryear art and photography was not used in the personal field but more to serve a higher function than was being the link with the other world, says Marker. The public feels for the work of an amateur photograph more emotion that for a great photographer. The domain of the second one partakes to art and the first one is a souvenir-object that partakes at the level of personal history. Marker preoccupation comes from acknowledging how only by being available to capture the subject of his memory will leave trace while the memories hold on one's mind will not, because of what it has been said about the wickedness and mortality of human memory. By collecting and purchasing souvenirs and memoirs, Marker is available to establish a Geography that gives structure to his memories instead of existing only on his mind in a chaotic way as islands and places with no name. By placing the memories out of the mind the possibility of arranging and organizing them becomes available.

Objects matter

In *The Cultural Biography of Objects* (1999), Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall discuss how for some time, objects have been widely regarded as mere functional items, and have only received attention from the field of archeology. Anthropologists, historians and sociologists have tended to neglect their study, and it has only now become a subject of social analysis. The investigation tries to inform how human and object stories inform each other. One shouldn't confuse the presented staticity of an object under the glass of a cabinet, displayed in a museum. The narrative it holds is in movement, and informing about their possessor or context of origin. Despite Stewert's vision about the staticity of objects, they have to be seen as also apprehendable, as Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart defend in the introduction of their book, *Photographs Objects Histories* (2004). They can be smelt, tasted, touched and heard. Objects cannot be reduced to mere fetishism, but they have a complex and fluid relationship with people. The reason for accumulating them speaks not as much about them as it does about us, the possessors. My choice to display certain objects in my room is never a spontaneous one; it is meditated, albeit unconsciously.

In the anthropological discussions about materiality in Edwards and Hart's book, authors like Daniel Miller— his ideas will be looked into later—, argue that objects are an active motor in social relations. As Gosden and Marshall noticed, such objects are not only important in our everyday life and interactions with others, but in fact constitute a representation of the sum total of our agency. Their effects will endure after our death, suggesting that objects are actually active agents that help us shape our identity. Through them, we can be read. The vestiges of me to be found in the future will not only validate my existence and memories, but will also speak about my existence and memories, almost as an archaeological founding. Is it not the vestiges of old civilizations, recovered through archaeology, which have told us much of what we know about a distant past?

WHAT FOR?

Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1955) analyses the concept of the archive through Freud's theories. It draws a connection between the creation of the archive and the object of memory (or memoir). The function of the archive is to find a physical support for speech, or in Derrida's words, an exterior place. The speech is understood as inside (the human body) and it has to be taken outside or the exterior (physical support) and only with that exterior physical support can the archive exist and be reviewed at any time. The same thing happens with memories and memoirs. For an experience to be available, to be remembered in the future, it needs to be in the material world. The action of writing on paper or printing is already creating an archive or a memoir for the physicality and materiality, which implies a lasting existence. To have access to the archive is to read the past.

If a given event or moment in the past is not recorded, we are left to rely on our own memory of it — if we were present — or someone else's. Either way, it will require re-creation through memory.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929-1930, chapter VI,) Freud averted the futility of the invested disbursements in the production of the archive: the machine mobilization, printing press and print released, the ink and the paper. Freud dismissed the benefits of the archive as useless, and therefore its production as a waste of time and materials. What for? Freud asks. To have printed histories in a disproportionate material support, histories that everyone already knows. The destruction of the archive that Freud aspires to commit comes, in Freudian terms, from a death drive. A drive that works to erase its own path, and rejects its documentation and representation. For him, there was no interest in printing what can be said in words. A parallelism is shown between the destruction of the archive and an imagined state of amnesia—without a physical support, ideas and memory fall into oblivion. Since a material support and an exterior place is required for the creation of the archive, there is an accumulation and capitalization of memory. This is the economic principle of the archive. The exterior is understood as the plasmation and impression of the memory into an object or paper as a representation of it, while the interior is the creation of the memory in one's mind. For the memory not to be forgotten it will have to be annotated. The annotation of the memory needs to be done for its own sake but its endurance will not be eternal but only until a new annotation is needed to be done proposes Freud as an alternative to the archive introducing the magic board. The paper is a finite material and once something has been written down there is no more space for new annotations. The annotation will be temporal in the board and erased only leaving some traces and giving space for the new annotations. Translated in the world of objects of memory, the abolition of the archive by the magic board would mean a world without memoirs thus without legacy. There would be no attachment to the past but only to the present. Neither would be much perspective of future since new annotation would be made considering its endurance. The utility or futility of the archive can be discussed although is not the subject of discussion of this thesis. However, Freud's point on how the creation of the archive was from the result of an unnecessary amount of labor and waste of material was right since both archives and collections of archives leads to a situation of material overwhelmness. The point of the archive and memoirs are to be available to revise old moments and memories but what for? If that is already somewhere in one's mind.

The practice of preserving and archiving memory is treated almost as a religion where its devotees have to store the material vestiges of what we cannot possibly remember, thereby amassing an unfathomable collection of things that we might someday need to recall to fulfill our nostalgia. The historian Pierre Nora, in his book *Realms of Memory* (1984) a collection of volume which aims is to discuss the separation of collective memory and individual memory as well as the places of memory that are the same as the objects of memory for the need of history, asks rhetorically; who does not feel called upon to record his reminiscences or write his memoirs? In this question he is pointing at the human desire of leaving a legacy, a visible vestige because there is a fear that everything will disappear and there is anxiety about the significance of the present plus uncertainty about the future. Unlike the past, the future is not clear and unknown. As much as it is true that collecting or capturing the past in form of objects is in a way not living a free present but instead a present where everything is being thought on how it will be remembered in the future, nostalgia needs to be feed and that is possible through remembering the past and by the transcendence of the past into the future. In order to be commemorated there is a need of metaphorically mark the ground. This urge to commemorate, according to Nora, comes from the fear that everything is on the verge of disappearing, coupled with the anxiety about the precise significance of the present and uncertainty about the future. But there is also a terror of unmarked grave (Stewart pg. 31), of an existence without legacy. The mark is determined by these objects that will secure our transcend, and we are accepting what this material world is offering to us, and therefore we live attached to them experimenting an impossibility of getting rid of this possessions. There is sadness without the object, writes Stewart. To throw the object is to throw a memory. If there is no material evidence, the memory will be soon erased from the humans mind, and if it is not, our own mortality will make it. There is a fear of longing in the present far from the past that has already been and expectant to what may the future be. The scenario presented is rather desperate and what we do is to attach ourselves, come closer, to the known. The importance of the physicality of this attachment is due the intimacy that one experiences with the contact of the object of memory and the feeling of relieve from the impersonal and looming present. (Stewart, pg. 139). It is through the past that we venerate ourselves (Nora, p. 16)

Real memory or environments of memory have been vanished, sweep away by history, that, according to Nora, following its duty that is to secure a past with no lacunes and with continuity creates a true or general memory. If instead, a society tries to live purely under memory what happens is that it disappears. An example is given by Nora explaining how the groups and societies that has try to prepare their passage through the past to the future through reserves of memory but little or no historical capital have in fact gone to their end. But not only entire civilizations but as well in the families it can be noticed how the genealogical tree is impossible to build without evidences. The objects found on my father house and the little objects that my grandmother had make me able to build a family narrative but earlier than my grandmother there is no heirloom nor personal objects. That part of my family do no exist no me or exist only partially with the stories that can be told but because of the intangibility of the spoken stories they will not transcend and for the next generations they will simple not exist. That breaks the needed continuity that places of memory and history serves to. Being the physicality of objects of memory the trace of our ancestors we can access to know to who and to what we owe our existence (Nora, p. 16). It is What Nora arguments as a need of objects of memory is to understand the past and to whom and to what we owe our existence.

What Bernar Stiegler suggests in *Techniques and Time, 2* (2009) is that nothing happens except what is covered. Very similar to Marker points on the importance of capturing the memory to leave a trace. What Stiegler means is that what it is not covered will fell in oblivion and its destiny will be anonymous.

The postcards (fig 11) from a trip to Menorca are the only proof from that trip. The possessor of the authentic experience are no longer here to validate that moment and there are no photos either. Now it only exists on that piece of paper. If the postcard did not exist, the trip, erased from everyone else memory, will fell on oblivion. That postcard is the only narrator of the story of that vacation. Memoirs serve to memory, but not only for us to be available to remember experiences that may

FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY TO THE INDIVIDUAL MEMORY

There are two reasons that explain why memory has become an individual practice and that can be explained through Nora's writings about history and memory and how history has erased memory so places of memory had to be created by the individual but also consumerism and industrialization as a driving motor or this individuality that is possible through objects that shape our identities and also the desire behind it.

A unique memory for the history

While yesterday to collect was a practice for the monarchy, the church or the ones with purchasing power it has now become a duty for society as a whole. Nora evidenced the erased distinction between the history of popular and high culture. That happened when figures from the first are dignified with the same significance as the ones from the second. Nora exposed examples such as street names holidays or phrases with historical allusions. It is then when a world crowded by objects is found, when it is at hand for most of us to memorize and to make those memories enduring with souvenirs. But it is also the acceptance of the general memory in form of history explained on the previous chapter that makes the individual needing to create its own memories. While the nation builds its legacy through history, individuals build its own through the personal objects of their memories to ensure their own histories.

Consuming memory

When did this urge to possess personal objects arise? According to a survey that was answered by 30 people between the age of 15 and 74, it is noticeable how the participants that their ages go from 47 to 74 answered that they do not are in possession of much objects in contrast by the answer of the younger ones which ages are compressed between 27 and 15. While the first group attachment to objects is more for necessity the second group presented a different approach to the world of memoirs. What most people seems to have as objects are those ones of pure material value but high sentimental such as souvenirs, letters, tickets, notes, old clothes and some are in possession of heirlooms. There is a tendency on the older participants in having less attach to the objects finding easier for them to get rid of things and that is a sign of perhaps practicality and maybe if it is put on historical context, the participants are from Spain and this older sector have grown up in a post war and transitory political situation while the younger participants tend to create emotional attach and in general to accumulate more objects explaining that they are memories that they like to keep as a sign of what happened. This younger generation has, in contrast, grown in a situation of more abundance and possibility of acquisition. And while my grandmother small collection is cared as is the only precious object she possesses, the abundance of objects in my collection makes difficult to identify a hierarchy of importance.

Stewart (p. 148) refers to the book of Nelson H. H. Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* (1979) to explain how the 'civilized societies' are more depending to the standard mass produced artifact that makes available for one to meet distinctiveness by building its own identity. To have certain objects on the cabinet will increase one's prestige arguments Graburn. Since my parents gave me for my eighteenth birthday a gold medal with my name printed on it I always wear it and that is part of my character. The necklace (fig. 12) speaks not only about the birthday as an event but also about how my family decided to celebrate. Without the necklace I feel less me. It is also Daniel Miller who claims on how population, now being able to appropriate industrial objects, help themselves to create their own image, are discussed on *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1991). The offer and the accessibility to objects open the possibility to acquire all different kinds of objects that shapes one's identity and objects commence to enter into the house in a frenetic rhythm until they create a narrative and it becomes impossible to throw them. The variety on the offer it is not for the benefit of the manufacturer as it is augmented in the book *The Design Experience* (2003) that was written by a group of students investigating in that field, but it is for the benefit of the consumer that through this variety can, as said, shape its identity. It has been discovered along the chapters that the need of object of memory is to remember and transcend. But the need of the object is also feed by the desire that the person experiences in front of the designed object. The design of the objects is the action of the invention of the myth (Stewart, p. xii). Through design the object can also hold a narrative without the need of a memory.

As long as Baudrillard in *The System of Objects* (1996) explain how objects and material good are no objects of consumption if desire and myth has not been placed to them, but instead they serve to cover needs, there is a change on the relation human object since as it can be observed from the survey and in general the previous chapters, objects do not only serve to cover needs or for a function of use value but also to symbolize and represent thus to remember. As Alex Williams writes in *Inventing the Future* (2015) it is capitalism the responsible of this endless cycle of accumulations. Again, Miller highlights how the advance in material forms of culture has created an external world almost as if all we are is what we possess. In consequences, what it is found is what claims the introduction of *The Language of Things* (Sudjic, 2008), that we are living in a time where most of us have in possession more than what we ever had in the history of humanity but the use given to those objects is less at the same time. Under Sudjic opinion and observation our generation cannot help to consume being everything treated, collected, categorized, organized, possessed and owned. Everything is being fetishized concludes Sudjic.

BUILDINGS CAN TALK

However, the necessity of leaving a mark of our existence to transcend was not born with the arise of consumption, it is actually been always practiced. History has been written with the discover and analyses of architecture and the vestiges of old civilizations. In *The Lamp of Memory* (1849) John Ruskin presents his rhetorical doubt about how cold and lifeless is the history and imagery of the civilization that does not have writings or buildings? It is in fact through the crumbled fragments of the sculptures that we have learned from the Greek culture, explains Ruskin. Ruskin ideas of preservation for the profit of knowing the past or for the joy in the thought of being remembered is opposite to Freud's wish to destroy the archive and the magic notepad that will not allow the past and the future to exist at the same time. However the restoration or, as the same for Ruskin, destruction of the buildings it should not happened because they belong to the past and the ones who made them and we have no right to touch them. Ruskin's defend for the old building glorification relies on the fact that it is not done because of the material used but for its age and the narrative they hold in an apparent voicefullness. Therefore the buildings from the past speak to the present and are for the future connecting the forgotten and the ages that follows to each other constituting the identity of nations. In Nora's terms, a need of memory is a need of history.

CONCLUSION: THE MARKED TRACE

The memories have been casted into objects so they pass from an ephemeral to a tangible state because memory is weak. Once a moment has passed, it is gone. It is only kept in one's mind. The probability to remember every passage of one's life is almost impossible. But if there is something tangible that takes you back to that experience then the moment will be forever. Our bodies are mortal and with them, our memories too. If my body dies but my memories remain I then become a little bit immortal. That is my legacy so that the world will not forget my existence. However, even in a shorter period of time e.g. in 10 years time, a trip, a movie I saw in the cinema, a book or just an experience, having photos, tickets or texts will mean these experiences will be remembered. And because there is an emotional attachment to these objects; it is hard to throw them away. To throw an object is to throw away a memory. The creation of the memoir is therefore the idealization of a moment.

The possibility of recalling the good old days makes the present and the future worth it. The past is a metaphorical crutch in which we hold ourselves to reaffirm that it is worth it. We do not know what does the future hold but we know what has happened already. To cast memories into objects and keep them, creating an accidental collection of the past is in a way, to live in the present by not experiencing the moment but instead thinking how that moment will be remembered in the future. Although the collection of memories is to not face the liberating present there is too much fear of an existence without legacy and looming on the present.

We cannot blame ourselves, because as we see on the last chapter, the human has been always looking for transcendence. The old buildings and vestiges of old civilizations are legacies that let us read and remember how we used to be. Materiality has always been the medium in what humans have passed the message to the future generations as well as the present civilizations have been able to discover where do we come from and reveal the past through materiality.

The problematic comes when the memory goes from collective to individual and the mark that is left behind is not only one from a community or architecture like an emblematic building and selected archives. When the individual starts to collect, an abundance of objects appears. Objects emptied of function of use value that only serve to remember. This situation is in part a consequence of the industrialization and mass production of the process of manufacturing that allows to the individual to afford and acquire personal objects.

We are leaving a massive vestige that speaks about the personality of each individual. Through the intimate objects of memory we are ensuring our transcendence and marking the ground: I have been here and that is what happened.

This thesis only exists because of this material support. Without the materialization process that it has suffered from my mind into the computer and then being printed in any sort of physical support, it would not exist. These reflections will be erased with the past of the time if they were not retained. If humanity do not retain their experiences, it would be as if they did not happen. The need of memory is a need of history as Nora claims. I am yet creating another object of memory. But I have to get rid and hand it. The day I forget about this piece of writing, being the material proof archived in a dark room, it will not exist.

History needs a continuity that only the material world can secure because of its lasting condition. Marking the present is ensuring that it will endure in the future in form of past. The past is history and the proof of existence. The future can be anything but the past is already something. By creating memoirs the past becomes a tangible and transportable proof of what has already happened and can be remembered when it is needed whenever the anxiety that an unclear future may cause. The legacy is a world is crowded by objects that serve for memory. When there is none left to remember them, what would happen?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hudek, A. (ed.) (2014) *The Object*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. Documents of Contemporary Art.
- Farr, I. (ed.) (2012) *Memory*. London, England : Whitechapel Art Gallery. Documents on Contemporary Art.
- Stewart, S. (1984) *On Longing : narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. Baltimore, Md. ; Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sudjic, D. (2008) *The Language of Things*. London : Allen Lane.
- Forty, A. (1995) *Objects of Desire : design and society since 1750*. London : Thames and Hudson.
- Kracauer, S. (1995) *The Mass Ornament*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Nora, P. (1984) *Realms of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Beckett, S. (1961) *Happy Days*. New York: Grove Press.
- Boradkar, P. (2010) *Designing Things*. New York: Berg.
- Serttaş, T. (2012) 'Foto Galatasaray: Anti-Memory', *M-est*. Available at: <https://m-est.org/2012/02/12/foto-galatasaray-anti-memory/> (Accessed: 4 November 2018).
- Baudrillard, J (1996) *The System of Objects*. London, England: Verso.
- Baudrillard, J., S, Lotringer., S, Lotringer., B, Schütze., C, Schütze (1988) *The ecstasy of communication*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Stiegler, B. (2009) *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricouer, P. (2004) *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Make me Stop Smoking* by Rabih Mroué (2006) [Darat al Funun].
- Bennet, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Derrida. J. (1995) *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*.
- Ruskin, J. (1849) *The Lamp of Memory*. London: Smith, Elder and Co.
- Coole, D. and Frost, S. (ed.) (2010) *New Materialisms. Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Duke University Press.
- Graburn, N. (1979) *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rose, G. and Tolia-Kelly, D (ed). (2012) *Visuality/Materiality. Images, Objects and Practices*. UK: Ashgate.
- La Ciudad de las Ideas (2017) *La Importancia de Nuestra Memoria*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epnrUHpg1JU> (Accessed: 11 February 2019).
- 'El Mundo No Existe Sin Memoria' (2013) *Redes*, TVE. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do6MSDp-F4OI&t=20s> (Accessed: 11 February 2019).
- Mroué, R. (2012) *Memory*. London, England : Whitechapel Art Gallery. Documents on Contemporary Art.
- Freud, S. (2002) *Civilization and Its Discontents*. London: Penguin.
- Edwards, E. and Hart, J. (ed). (2004) *Photographs Objects Histories*. London: Routledge.
- Gosden, C. and Marshall Y. (1999) *The Cultural Biography of Objects*. UK: Tylor & Francis.
- Marker, C. (1997) *Immemory*.
- Sontag, S. (1979) *On Photography*. London: Penguin.
- Stiegler, B. (2009) *Technics and Time. 2, Disorientation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Miller, D. (1991) *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Press, M. and Cooper, R. (1953) *The Design Experience: the Role of Design and Designers in the Twenty-first century*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

FIGURES



fig 1.



fig 2.

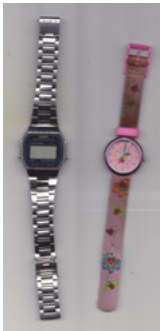


fig 3.



fig 4.



fig 5.



fig 6.



fig 7.



fig 8.



fig 9.



fig 10.



fig 11.



fig 12.