

“Graham (aged 8)” Memory box demo

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ABSTRACT

“Graham (aged 8)” is an attempt to explore the notion of photographic memory, or lack thereof. A demo installation, in the form of a Victorian viewing box, housing a digital display. The author presents this work as a personal journey, an autobiographical undertaking, which formed part of his research and practice during his Masters study in Digital Imaging and Photography. The work as a result could be interpreted as a viewpoint of one individual, but the intention is that through engaging with the piece viewers are encouraged to reflect on their own histories and archival habits.

Author Keywords

digital imaging; archiving; work in progress; conference demo;

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2. Prototyping; H.5.m. Miscellaneous;

“GRAHAM (AGED 8)”

My childhood was heavily documented through amateur photography, with album after album of prints displaying my journey from birth to university graduation. I can recall all of these images now with no need to return to the original source. I struggle however to recall any of these moments taking place. I have no actual memory of meeting Mickey Mouse, but I have a photographic record that tells me otherwise and this is true of all other occasions captured from the momentous to the mundane.

It's only when I tasked myself to recall distinct moments of my past that 8 moments, 8 scenes and locations arose. There are no photographs of these locations in the albums, and yet I can remember these places, these moments. Are these actual memories? Without evidence how can I be sure?

Presented as a viewing box (*Fig.1&2*) designed and constructed by my father and myself, individual viewers are granted permission to look inside where they are confronted

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with a series of 8 images that depict the only remaining memories of my childhood. The validity and truth of these scenes are presented as a question through digital manipulation. The work is accompanied by a collection of annotated sketches (*Fig.3*) that talk of change, loss, and reflections on the past. The box is an empty space, absent, trying to map / diagram this phenomenon of capturing memories, prompting us to reflect on the basic paradox of archival culture, archive fever, where we become appendages to the archive, our purpose in life is to produce, record and store.

I'd like to use this opportunity to demonstrate this piece as an intervention into my practice, affecting how I develop the piece further. The piece was created through catharsis, and as a result is incredibly personal, and by sharing this work with an audience the main goal is to gain feedback on the work itself, but to also to trigger thought and conversation on the subject of archival memory procedures.



Figure 1. The Memory Box

With the current climate of digital capture of the fantastic to the mundane and everyday, we are all creating our own memory archives, and with the prevalence of ‘sharing’ we are adding to the global record of human existence, but through this act are we losing our attachment to our own narratives? In my case, the analogue process of the family album, this archival act, was decided for me, and has had an affect on my own ability to recall the events of my life. Are we now voluntarily sacrificing our memories, without real thought or consideration to the future?



Figure 2. The Memory Box Version 1.0



Figure 3. Drawn from memory, one of the sketches that accompany the installation.