

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN DIGITAL
RE-COLLECTION:
ART-BASED INQUIRY OF PERSONAL MEMORY

A Master's Thesis

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September 2017

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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

September 2017

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.



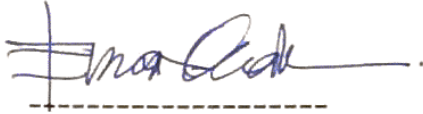
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Supervisor

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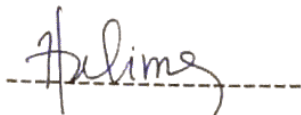
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ABSTRACT

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN DIGITAL
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M.F.A., in Media and Design

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September 2017

The subject-matter of this study is the researcher's personal digital collection that is recovered from his computer which hasn't been used for over 10 years and considered to be not functioning. With the help of digital file recovery procedures, the researcher shares his experiences on re-collecting digital items and the process of artistic expression that serves as the research question that is posed: What would be the potential approaches to a personal memory work - both in written and artistic/practical form- that grants its own reading. Suitable methodology for the researcher's endeavor has been considered to be autoethnography that prioritizes personal experience in qualitative research. The research that leads up to a practical project and a written study has been conducted simultaneously. Autoethnographic research methodology has been used to inspect and document in a way that aims self-reflexivity.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Personal Collection, Personal Memory,
Recovered Digital Files, Self-Reflexivity,



ÖZET

DİJİTAL HATIRLAMA/TEKRAR-SERİMDE BİR
OTOETNOGRAFİK ÇALIŞMA:
SANAT-TEMELLİ BİR KİŞİSEL HAFIZA YOKLAMASI

Kırkağaç, Egemen

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Yard. Doç. Andreas Treske

Eylül 2017

Bu araştırmanın konusunu, araştırmacının 10 seneyi aşkın bir süreden beri kullanmadığı ve artık çalışmadığını düşündüğü bilgisayarından “kurtardığı” kişisel dijital koleksiyonu oluşturuyor.

Dijital dosya kurtarma prosedurlerinin sayesinde, araştırmacının dijital parçaları hatırlama/ yeniden toplama ve bu sürecin sanatsal ifadesi boyunca odaklandığı soru; Kendi çözümünü sunabilecek, yazılı ve sanat nesnesi formunda oluşturulan bir kişisel hafıza çalışmasına nasıl ulaşılabilir/ elde edilebilir? Niteliksel Araştırmalar’da kişisel deneyimi önceleyen otoetnografi, araştırmacının çabasına uygunluğu bakımından elverişli bir metodoloji olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Araştırma, pratik ve yazımsal çalışmaların birlikte yürütüldüğü bir zeminde idame ettirilmiştir. Otoetnografik araştırma yöntemi; öz-düşünümselliği amaçlayan, araştırma sürecinin incelenebildiği

ve dökümantasyonunun yapılabildiği bir biçimde kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kişisel Bellek, Kişisel Koleksiyon, Kurtarılmış Dijital Dosya, Otoetnografi, Öz-düşünemsellik,



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank İpek Yalçın for her wholeheartedly support, patience and her commentary on the study. Barış Kennedy for his spirited guidance throughout the whole process. Recovering the data from HDDs wouldn't be possible without the help of Mehmetcan Sarıkaya. And the laptop that has been the key element for this project was thankfully guarded by Alper Yıldırım through the years and for his inventive feedback.

Throughout my study, Ersan Ocak's curiosity and ambition for the research process and his approach to teaching kept me motivated and ease the burden conducting a M.F.A research. I am also thankful to Andreas Treske for sharing his thoughts and advising me by the final parts of this study.

For their valuable comments I am grateful to Marek Brzozowski and Funda Şenova Tunalı. For their companionship and reflections on the study process I would like to thank to Mert Alperten, Can Yıldırım and Doğa Uslu.

Finally, I would like to thank to my family for their endless support as always.

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CHAPTER 1

MOTIVATION & INTRODUCTION

The collector is someone who picks up, gathers or hoards items and prefers to keep these items in their possession. The collector knows that these items might be lost, or lose its own qualities someday. For them collecting objects is collecting “moments”. Then, if we regard that the collector has the intention to find these objects that has been considered bygone, could the potency of allusion only be tracked by the owner of the collection?

The personal memory performs upon the personal history. By writing personal history regarding the years between 2001-2005 this study intends to investigate the manifestations of personal memory at work.

This study consists of two parts: the written and the practical. Throughout the research the conceptualization was tested by (going back and forth simultaneously between the

writing and the practical project) the researcher-artist, who carries out two fundamental doctrines of autoethnographic research.

Autoethnography -as a method of research and documentation- treats the indeterminable personal experience in an ethnographic frame. The subject of this study – the researcher-artist – lays out his own participation to the research recording his experience and act of remembering through the recovered files on his personal HDD. This procedure foregrounds the intention of recording personal history. With self-reflective accounts (the project and the thesis) the aim is to grant the observer with a tool to adapt to the conditions of memory traces. Such as the preposition “I” that has been used in the entries of the practical project.

The external position of digital memory apparatus stands as an object that the artist-researcher reflects upon to recall on personal memories evoked by mnemonic objects in his encounters with them. These have been composed in the body of the artwork that has also been functioning as an ethnographic site of personal records. While exhibiting these files along with autobiographical history writing, the visitor will be conditioned to see the memory work of the artist-researcher and witness it through the artwork.

In this autoethnographic study, Eisner's propositions (as cited in Duncan, 2004) on the utility of qualitative research will be instrumentalized. The aims of the research are categorized as followed;

1) Eisner's first point is that responsibility of the researcher is to clarify the situation or the problematic at hand for the reader. Within the context of individual's memory faculty, this study on personal "recovered" digital objects requires documentation of the research process since remembering is an "act". The reader is meant to witness not to the answers but to the struggles of creating a memory work of personal digital mnemonic objects that has been forgotten and recovered. Autoethnographic research is applicable to this case study since it gives priority to experience writing and process recording.

2) His second point is that the research should be open to the achievable future possibilities regarding the research's usefulness. Due to the problematic or discontents on when it comes to personal history writing and personal collection methods, the experience writing leaves self-reflexive accounts for its reader/finders. Thus, consulting the written and practical part of this art-based research could have the potential to grant the archivists a "tool" to be used on the collection itself.

3) For the third point, a qualitative study should also function as a guide, "highlighting particular aspects of a situation that might otherwise go unnoticed." (Duncan, 2004) This

could be considered as the start and the end point for the researcher-artist's aim both in the thesis (formally) and the artwork. This could serve as a call to whom that are willing to grant a new functionality or purpose to their personal collections. Those who has hoarded digital objects or items, "potential gleaners" or digital personal history writers.

The exposition of the research process covers the last/second year of the M.F.A program Media and Design. Working on the researcher's personal history within the personal digital records –mostly deleted or damaged digital-born data– has been presented as a point of departure in October 2016. These digital records have been extracted from the 3 personal computers of researcher-artist which were no longer being used by him. Following mentions of HDDs are the component of these laptops.

CHAPTER 2

COLLECTION

2.1. Recovery Process

Estimated lifespan of the HDDs are 3 to 5 years and environmental factors such as the humidity and heat shortens it. But in some cases data could be recovered from extreme conditions as well. After the 9/11 attacks, Convar® , a firm from Germany, has announced that they have successfully recovered all the data from the disks that were sent by the US Department of Defense despite the fact that “The fine dust that was everywhere in the area got pressed under high pressure into the drives” says Peter Henschel (Kirschenbaum, 2008: 12). This recovery process costs between 25.000 to 50.000\$ per disc. This would be an enormous resource allocation for the daily user although they have the option to prefer data recovery methods that are less demanding. Depending on the condition of the HDD they might chose to go with other data recovery services that cost less. Another option would be using software tools that could be used by the medial users, some of them being open-source as well. A freeware file recovery

software “Recuva®” is used for the recovery of the HDDs in this study. Despite the age of the first HDD (which is approximately 15 years old), most of the items were recovered, without any professional support.

First HDD, that is also the subject-matter of this study, has been used between the years 2001 and 2005. The laptop was kept for sentimental reasons and was not in use after that time. In its immediate visual contact, it is remembered as the laptop that is it taken with the researcher-artist to a foreign country where he conducted his studies in a university, a reminiscence. The laptop was not functioning due to the condition of the hardware including the HDD. In order to run the HDD, platters have been moved to a new HDD assembly. Additionally, a specific converter was required to transfer the digital files. (which was found on a local hardware store’s collection and was not in production line anymore) Due to this “hardware obsolescence”, recovery of the digital files lasted 2 to 3 months (files are recovered in December 2016). These files will be shown and discussed in the body of the thesis.

Second HDD has been used by the researcher-artist between the years 2006 and 2009. Covering from the last year of the high school to the third year of the university studies in graphic design department. This is the only HDD that had been found formatted by the family members for their own use. Recovering files from an “emptied” HDD comes with

results different than transferring files from one storage to another. Firstly, it is not possible in every occasion to recover the file folders (or clusters) along with the files. Secondly, information of “date created” gets lost, showing the date that it is recovered. Depending on the “fullness” of the HDD, the amount of the files without a “birth certificate” increases.

Third HDD was used from the 3rd year of the Bachelor Degree until the first year of the M.F.A program in Bilkent University. HDD was in a good condition and since the storage was almost full, the amount of recovered deleted files were relatively lower than the first 2 HDDs.¹ (In total 260 GB, more than half a million singular digital objects containing video game files, projects, sound records, multimedia software packages and screenshots). These recovered files from this HDD were clearer to the owner’s memory as it was the one that has been recently used. What makes this second HDD different from the other two is that this computer has been actively used for entertainment purposes by other family members while the researcher was no longer using it. As a result of that, files saved by them were reachable after they have been recovered. Shifting the study to a tripartite position, between the conductor of the study, family members and the mutual collection in the HDD.

¹ Digital files are stored in fragments, in different “tracks” that are on the surface of magnetic disks. When a digital file is re-called, it is collected from these tracks to generate the file as a whole. For this reason, when a track is damaged (physically) or it is overwritten with another fragment of a file, it becomes challenging if not impossible to recover these files. Additionally, when a file is deleted by the user, due to the materiality of the disks, fragments may be left. By reconstituting these fragments with the help of a recovery software, it is possible to recover a deleted file.

We should also mention the files that are semiotically not significant, such as system files, temporary files and artifacts which came along with these. The files that are considered semiotically not significant, have been used for following modalities in this study;

1) When digital files do not have an automatically generated file name: Since the collection consists of mostly recovered files, it is not always possible to get the “date created.” Also, file names are either automatically generated or bear no semiological quality for the human viewer i.e file names are non-descriptive.²

2) When they have evidential quality: Should be related to the collector’s personal history or records of “things.”

3) Temporary files, such as those stored by auto-save or recovery programs, mean that a drive can contain multiple versions of identical files, many of them beyond the management (or even awareness) of their creator, creating duplicates. The type of files are excessive and they are eliminated.

² Descriptive metadata refers to information about an digital object's content such as title, creator, subject, date etc. (Deegan & Tanner, 2008: 502) Determination of the elements used to describe an object are facilitated by the use of a metadata schema (also referred to as an element set). Another common type of file identification is the “filename”.

4) When a digital file requires a software environment to render it / posing threats to the survival of the content, "digital obsolescence." For the preservation of software as digital content; the original hardware and/or software context needs to be emulated.³ Any file format that was not compatible with prior environments, were discarded.

Contentwise, send and received files consists of visual and audio files. These files were either ready-found on the web or made by the owner of the computer. As a result of being a graphic design student and amateur musician at that time on university, personal music records and graphic design projects along with the "screenshots" taken to be send to other actors for communicative purposes were among the recovered files. These screenshots were produced either to get a feedback or an opinion on a graphic design project from classmates, or to keep a record of what was happening on the screen in its totality at that time being. In total, semiotically significant items were nearly 1/100 of the total excavated collection.

³ As an addition another modality for the 4th group is the "mistakenly" saved files. The cause is the illiteracy of the user. Few folders contain image and icon files from various websites. As it is known, viewing a web-page -regarding its functionality- "offline" is not possible without the help of third party softwares. If one uses "save as" function in their web browsers, he/she only saves artefacts from that website. The intention is constituted with the help of the technical limitations of a web-browser.)

2.2 Excess Data

After the recovery of the digital files from 3 different HDDs (that have been used sequentially between the years 2001 and 2014) , total amount of recovered data was equal to almost 1 TB, consisting of more than 1 million digital files, although semiotically significant items were nearly 1/100 of the total excavated collection.

Even though after the discarded non-descriptive digital files from the collection, there was still excessive amount of data roughly 10.000 unique pieces present. As a result, the study has taken a different path due to the excessive quantity of the digital files that are recovered. The main aim, as for every study and artwork, is to be communicable. When it is considered to be a memory and personal history work, “thick descriptions” were the primary concern for what is remembered from the mnemonic objects to be recorded and the record of the process was the necessity for this autoethnographic study. First HDD has chosen to be the subject-matter due to its compact unity and as a matrix that has a critical distance for the conductor of the researcher, timewise. The conductor’s digital records from the first HDD span over for 4 years, corresponds to the ages between 15 and 19. Starting from the December 2016, for 6 months, this limited time-span was under scope when the elements of the practical project (autobiographical entries, composition, material decisions and so on) and the written part of the project has been conducted.

CHAPTER 3

RE-COLLECTION

3.1 Gleaning

Recovered digital files were not under any hierarchical distribution due to the nature of file recovery procedure. As a result of that, the recovered files composed a collection similar to a pile of personal items. In her essayistic film, “Les Glaneurs et La Glaneuse” (The Gleaners and I, 2000), Agnès Varda documents the daily routines and practices of the gleaners in the provinces of France, while commenting with her own voice over.

Gleaners, by definition, are marginal characters –such as artists– who gather the surplus of the harvested crops from the fields. In a modern sense, city dwellers who are gathering food or other items -that have practical value- from the “ground” are considered as gleaners as well. Here the act of gathering and selecting something left-over from a pile that has a use value for its finder is the binding point for gleaning.

Inspired by the painting of Millet “Les Glaneuses”(1857) and Breton’s “La Glaneuse” (1877), the movie of Varda begins with interview of an elderly glaneuse talking about her childhood memories related to gleaning. Jumps between her figure and the figures in the painting that we have mentioned, constitutes the first scene. For Emma Wilson (2005:106);

Varda creates a thread or link between past and present; the woman’s words her memories, and the mobile images of the film footage, work to animate the past painted pictures, to allow the past, the image, the replica to be brought forward, recalled and retrieved in the present. Varda’s work depends on this refusal of the ossification (or exhibition) of the past; its objects are, through her film, retrieved, reworked and salvaged (given new use value).

The link here is “timeless”, that is the practice of gleaning. In order to represent this timeless practice to be an act, there has to be a moving force that should be conceivable in the present i.e it has to be actualized in the present. For this to happen, a moving force, a *momentum* is required. By the tools granted with the filmic expression, it is not only the images are set in motion (implying the “glaneuse” remembering his past and the visual connection made by the glaneuse on the painting and on the screen) but the act of remembering of the interviewed glaneuse. We are bound by the tools that the timeless practice of gleaning and the nowness of recalling represented in a self-reflective way.

As the title of the film suggests, Varda is the glaneuse, who picks up images – encounters, lucky finds, “trouvailles”- with her camera. An example could be given from the scene

where she finds a mixture of the *Les glaneuses* of Millet and Breton's *Glaneuses*. She adds "the painting had beckoned me because it belonged in the film". These lucky finds are not a mystical encounter, they are more of a "call" from the objects. As in Louis Bourgeois' understanding of "productive" nostalgia, they are a call to be heard. (Gibbons, 2007: 17) Here, we should remember the two elements of an essayistic work that Adorno points out: luck and play (Adorno, 1984: 152). The reason is that there is no prescription for essayistic works. It is a form open to encounters, accidents and involuntary connections or "unintentional moments of the involuntary" (McCole, 1993: 260). This phenomenon could be traced to the scenes where she adds the "dancing lens cap" and the heart shaped potato footage. She immediately films and adds them into the body of the work. These moments are captured from the first person point of view. While she holds the camera with one hand, she moves around the items that she has found with the other. This foregrounds the presence of the camera operator. By adding these records from encounters, they take the attention to the cinematic techné. The editor leaves out things in the editing process, makes a choice with an intentionality. These two qualities will be the vantage point to lay out self-reflexivity of autoethnographic research. The conductor of the research attempted to do this by;

- Foregrounding the modes of production for the artwork: The materiality of the artwork manifests the background of the researcher-artist. Being a graphic designer mainly worked on printed media, the digital collection is remediated and printed on a paper. The

act of printing, the performance part of the installation, representing the material conditions of production will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

- Personal voice in the entries: Autobiographical entries in the practical project are written in a personal voice. In a similar fashion, the researcher's presence of this study is not eliminated and makes references to himself as an actor/author of this art-based research.

- Documentation of the process: Parallel to self-reflexive quality of the art project, the process of the written and the practical part of the project are documented in the body of this thesis.



Figure. 1 Varda's hand while "capturing" images. Retrieved from: <http://www.ferdyonfilms.com/date/2009/12/>



Figure. 2 "Heart-shaped potato" [Video Still] Retrieved from: <http://weirdvegetables.blogspot.com.tr>

3.2 Dual Role

Both Varda and gleaners are marginal characters. In Greenfield's terms (2000), to conduct an ethnographic research, the suitable identity of the researcher would be "the culturally marginal person; these are people who have had important socializing experiences in more than one culture" (Greenfield, 2000: 233). This issue is problematized and discussed by autoethnographers in its relation to "the crisis of representation" moment (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000: 18-19) In this case, Varda is in "the combination of insider and outsider roles". Although she is not an ethnographer, her work has ethnographical tendencies, frames one particular group of people in their habitat namely gleaners and interviews them as a representation of lived experience. (An instant recognition could not be grasped when we consider the non-knowledge of the viewer about gleaning. Then, it is an pedagogic tool as well, it opens up what gleaning stands for the gleaners and for the potential viewers today.) She becomes the gleaner both the images and the ready-found objects or crops throughout the creation of her film. Being both a filmmaker / ethnographer mixing up with the group of people and the gleaner of the images. Also these dual role feeds each other by interweaving with each other during this process.⁴

⁴ Cine-écriture: Varda's style of expression in cinematic form. "The lotus of this wavering between the truth (documentary) and fiction is, as in Proust's novels, the "I", and Varda knows better than everyone how to use it as a vintage point to interrogate reality; its myths, its representation." (Bérénice Reynaud, n.d) Also "I" as in performative turn as it is used in ethnographic research in the moment of "crisis on representation". Varda also captures the artists who are working with the "trashes" or "thrown away" items such as Louis Pons. He expresses his practices of collecting items and his understanding about them. What he sees is not "a cluster of junk", instead "a cluster of possibilities."

As in a similar tradition to gleaning practices, the dual character of the researcher-artist will be dealing with this cluster of digital files (by adding, removing, reshaping and tidying up what is at hand)⁵ and also will be researching the phenomenon. Due to the dual role of the conductor of this study, the author has been named as a researcher-artist.

Additionally, the unity of “play” and “luck” stands for the “browsing the digital collection (through the creative process and wills to reflect it to the viewer as well through the body of thesis and the artwork)” and “the accidental nature of data recovery”, its success and failures in various levels related to its materiality.

3.3 Autoethnographic Artworks

In conventional ethnography, the data is collected through field notes, interview, artefact observation accompanied with “thick description” of a culture that is being examined to give an access to the text – both for the insiders and the outsiders. For analytic purposes the researcher has to use a distant voice. (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433)

In this study, the researcher-artist is an insider from the boom of the internet usage. He is someone treating his own personal memory. As an outsider, he is a researcher (coming from graphic design background) who aims to make his work communicable with others as well as for himself.

⁵ Varda talks with an artist named VR2000 who says that the objects he found had a life but will be resurrected by “bringing life to art”. (Les Glaneurs et La Glaneuse, 2000)

Apart from the conventional ethnography's field of interests, autoethnographic approach is applied commonly to education and art-based research. Most importantly, art-based research is not solely about "art", it is rather a research through the artwork. Creative modes of practices considered as a methodological framework ranging from the literary genres to visual/audial works. In his autoethnographic work, David H. Michels presents his data in video-form accompanying poems. (as cited in Guzik, 2013:267-283) Littman's "In Her Own Time", an autoethnographic film, is the result of Dr. Barbara Myerhoff's search for miracles related to Orthodox Jewish rituals after she was diagnosed with cancer. (Littman, 1985) This turn by ethnographers towards a narrative approach may be considered under the moment of "Crisis in Representation"⁶ that falls to the 80's (Anderson 2006:383). Then, the interrelation of artistic research and autoethnographic method lies on the problematization "in the subjective experience", since it is constitutively included in modes of creative act. On the other hand, this experience should be "negotiated intersubjectively in second order" (Klein, 2010), which is through within the artistic work. The need is merely for the sake of creating an artwork but the very formulation of the research questions that takes the researcher-artist "to the level of artistic experience itself...The discussion on artistic research is the liberation from normative restriction in a canonical system. (Klein, 2010)

"Moments" in qualitative research area could be considered as "influences". In the 4th moment of qualitative research, "The crisis of representations" is problematized. Specifically, the researcher and the subjects regarding the self-reflexive text. (Mid-80's to 1990)

3.4 Autoethnography as a Process and a Product

Working on the researcher's personal history within the personal digital records has been presented as a point of departure in October 2016. Unlike the conventional arcs in qualitative research, the researcher-artist has started with the methodology before hand, not as an attained tool only after the exposition of the research question (for a suitable research method.) Autoethnographic research method was suitable for 2 reasons;

- Autoethnography as a Process: Remembering as an ability, is the act of the retrieval of the organization of elements time, space and memory, a posteriori. The reminiscences are the manifestations of the possible manifolds of these elements that stands as a claim about the past states of affairs conditioned in their "nowness". Only then things can get recognized, as a prerequisite for the (exercized in the memory as a faculty) formation of the memory. In this cyclic model, memory is the recognition of objects of sensation, a priori. This whole process is performative, and reminiscences may stack, or lose their impact and power (their functionality) gradually.) Traumatic experiences are excluded here) The dual role of this human faculty consists of;

a) Organizations of element for the retrieval of reminiscences. In neuroscience and psychology fields this is capsulated under the term "autobiographical memory". Also this term is a founding element of "episodic memory" (Svoboda, McKinnon, Levine, 2006).

In the context of the study, since it is limited to reminiscences, this function of memory is narrowed down to its relation to recalling of reminiscences.

b) Prerequisite for the recognition of objects of sensation, namely “apperception.”

Autoethnography as a process, foregrounds the self-reflexivity of the method, by documenting the generated data as the researcher conducts the research. For Denzin, the records of the research process is for the readers to relive “the experience through the writer’s or performer’s eyes.”(Denzin, 2000: 905) For Ellis, “personal tale of what went on backstage during a research project” (Ellis, 2004: 50)

- Autoethnography as a Product: Since the subject-matter of this study is researcher-artist’s own collection and own memory faculty, the suitable academic research method/model is autoethnography. Autobiographical collection is a constitutive element in autoethnographic aesthetic fabrication, both for visual artworks and written works.

As Bongani Mkhonza (2008) mentions;

Eisner in “The Enlightened Eye”, presented the researcher as a connoisseur and instrument, whose personal schema and past experiences provided the sensibilities that cannot be separated from the investigation at hand. (Mkhonza, 2008:34)

3.5 Autobiographical Memory

The researcher-artist's digital records span over for 4 years, corresponding to researcher-artist's ages between 15 and 19. Starting from the December of 2016, for 6 months, this specific time-span was under scope when the elements of the art project (autobiographical entries, composition, material decisions and so on) and the written part of the project has been conducted.

The aspect of scraping artist's own memory is a widespread act, such as autobiography's canon. Pre-modern spiritual autobiography – in the tradition of Augustine's Confessions – "constructed its subject as exemplum, i.e. as a typical story to be learnt from" (Schwalm, 2014). Modernist writers experimented with chronology, plural subjects and foregrounding visual and scenic/topographical components which signifies ethnographic data. On the other hand Proust has taken another route focusing on involuntary memory recalls. (Proust, 1913)

Either way, autobiography tends to focus on the autobiographical subject as an individual. The artist (writer) records his/her ephemerals with specific intent and functionality showing how writers experimented and worked with the conventional forms in their historicity.

Wordsworth conducts his autobiography, “The growth of a poet’s mind” or “The Prelude” (this work doesn’t have an official title)⁷ throughout his life. The timespan he covers stays the same, however he goes back and forth over his work over the years. Naturally, as the time passes, he draws far from that static moment of his life. However, by using mnemonic records (his writings), he covers this distance. (While he encounters a different text from the previous one, new connections between the past events and affairs occur.) Then he also documents his contemporary experience in each of his encounters with his own text, in a broader sense, his own personal writing. By the comparison of the “versions” of his work, he marks across “signposts” that foregrounds the constitutive element of personal history writing, fictionality. (may also function as a self-reflective account) Then, it is not a given quality of the autobiography reader to consider the author to be a static agent as Lejeune proposes (Lejeune, 1989: 19-20).

Erkki Kurenniemi records his own voice, collects his personal photographs, videos etc. in the hope that he would revive/resurrect in some time in the future by the data he has left behind. His records (his external memory) “lives on” on the web for now.

Autobiography reader which Lejeune refers in his book considers the narrator, the writer and the individual -whose past-life is the subject-matter of the autobiography- as one

⁷ Name of the work; “Poem to Cloride” or “The poem on the growth of my own mind”)

source about a person's life. This stands as a pact, "A contract of identity that is sealed by the proper name is what defines autobiography for the reader." (Lejeune, 1989: 19-20)

Apart from this conventional literary genre, artists concerned with plastic arts in 20.th century, problematized the modalities of personal history and experience as a manifestation. One should be cautious before naming those works under the title such as "autobiographic art/plastic arts" since it has the potential to over-emphasize related terms such as "memory" (and its connotations) and its operational quality which is constantly at work as a human faculty. Although we might approach their works starting from their statements about their works and look for the ways for manifestations crystalized in the body of physical materials. That would grant us modalities and functionality of biographic information as an access to their work.

Autoethnography (as a method functions as process and product) signifies a research grounded in personal experience of the researcher -and in some cases, with others (Ellis, 2014) (Chang, 2008). By the "others" are the artists that are working with autobiographical fashion that are evoked by personal objects (mementos). As will be shown, a dialog meant to be established with them in this written text.

3.6 Nostalgia

In this study, as the project evolves, the mnemonic density of digital objects -or mementos- has differed due to the intrinsic value of remembering and forgetting, (due to their performative nature.) Modes of these faculties were investigated in the section “Reprise”.

In her retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, Bourgeois' announcement clearly states her longing to childhood for creative act;

"Everything I do is inspired by my early life...My name is Louise Josephine Bourgeois. My father was named Louis, my mother Josephine. All my work that I've done, and all the subjects I have ever worked on, find their source in my childhood." (Xenakis, 2008, p.11)

In her "Spider" and "Untitled" (1996) she utilizes found and used objects (some owned by her) as in many of her other works. The evocative capacity of the found/daily objects -or mnemonic objects- lies on its finders, reciprocated with the artist's work. In this sense, it could be argued that the viewer also participates when this object functions as a remembrancer that depends on the familiarity. This intention manifested by the ordinary quality of the used materials. On the other hand, this is not the necessity for the viewer to be able to read the artwork.

The word nostalgia is originally a medical term. (Boym, 2001) “Nostalgia” was considered to be a disease in the 17th century before being a conjoined term defines a psychopathological condition and its cure would be “inciting pain and terror” for Jourdan Le Cointe (as cited in Beck, 2013). In broader sense, a longing for a specific event or place (whether there may be symptoms or manifestation in different objects in Freudian psychoanalysis which is basically a longing for childhood), the potency of nostalgia could be considered as “desire”.

Although "nostalgia" -longing for childhood- is an intrinsic element of human desire, from a dramatic distance that surpasses 10 years, high school years could be the subject-matter of nostalgia. (In the third moment in the practical project of this study, “The University’s First Year”, has the potential of a nostalgic value. As the documentation of a desired position to be in an university department related to artistic practices.)

Bourgois' taxonomy on personal memory is binary, exercised as something that comes with a pragmatic value. On personal memory -regarding her artist role- she says;

They are my documents. I keep watch over them...To reminisce and woolgather is negative. You have to differentiate between memories. Are you going to them or are they coming to you. If you are going to them, you are wasting time. Nostalgia is not productive. If they come to you, they are seed for sculpture. (as cited in Gibbons, 2007: 17)

References to earlier phases of her life could be found in her "Cell" (Choisy) series. Unity of these words indicates where she grew up, "Choisy Le Roy" along with the house figure that she used in the sculpture, which is capsulated with a "cell" around it. What is under scope here is the indicators related to her personal history. Although there is no requirement for a priori knowledge about the artist's early life to read the work, the title suggests that personal memory is constantly at play.



Figure 3. "The Cell" by Louis Bourgeois

As for the ethnographers, "romantizing" the other is supposedly the pitfall for the research (such as mourning for vanished cultures, a "imperialist nostalgia" namely) (Kaplan, 1996: 34). For the autoethnographers, "nostalgia" functions in a similar fashion. As it is mentioned, personal experience is the starting point to grasp a social phenomena in autoethnographic research. (Anderson, 2006) Although, we are not looking for a truthful representation of experience. The performative aspect of remembering and re-telling of the past solely based on "how we relate to our constructions and re-constructions of the past as we are now." (Hayler, 2012:16) By recording personal experience, the researcher-artist always records his relation to his digital collection "here and now", that is in a self-reflexive ethnographic approach. Since the entries are written in different "moments" presented in a fragmentary fashion, the autobiographical entries brings into question the autobiographical pact that was mentioned. The writer's "voice" is not masked, it has the potential to openly address to the reader. In fragmentary writing the potential of nostalgic tension meant to be exposed. Digital files that are found in the HDD, similarly, are fragments. This is similar to dadaists and surrealists treatment for ready found objects. As Joan Gibbons (2007) suggests;

Alongside the management to the present through the past and vice versa that is central to *Nachträglichkeit*, the decontextualisation and recontextualisation of materials and objects in these works clearly harks back to Dada and Surrealist strategies whereby additional and unplanned associations are generated by news juxtapositions. In this, the objects and the spaces Bourgeois creates for them are more than illustrations of a life history and more than a making public of the private; they also allow for broader subliminal"

Following tradition of her works, from Young British Artists movement, popular names such as Richard Billingham and Tracy Emin position personal history as a subject-matter to their works. Emin uses daily familiar objects. The viewer may pre-suppose that her work has a subjective value as the title of the artwork suggests. Although, in her "My Bed" – along with "Everyone I Have Ever Slept With" installation- take no notice of the pact between the viewer and the artwork, that destroys the illusion -the viewer is conditioned that what he/she is looking at is an artwork, a priori-. In every re-installation of the work, Emin uses the bed to re-form it. Apart from the mimetic performative part of the installation, what differs the work of her from our previous example -Bourgeois'- relies on the manifestation and the "appearance" of autobiographical quality of the work. Around the worn-out bed, other items are marked by the artist's bodily fluids. Such as, empty bottles and condoms. Presumably, the artwork was meant to be shocking in appearance. It functions in this way since we witness the obscene quality of these personal items —although the decision to use these kind of items only considers the artist— On the other hand these are already heavily codified items. There is not a narrative quality nor a discursive artwork such as body and censorship and the exhibition of it. Similar to gonzo pornography, these qualities are an excess now, not their appearance. At this point, this installation has a significance as long as the viewer is interested in the personal items of the artist which renders the work to a fetishized, pornographic object.⁷



Figure 4. "My Bed"

**Retrieved from; [http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/tracy-emin-b-1963-my-bed-5813479-
details.aspx](http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/tracy-emin-b-1963-my-bed-5813479-details.aspx)**

⁷ Bourgeois' The cage – that draws the outer limits of the artwork as well- keeps away the viewer from the visual element at the center, keeps it under protection from any physical contact not more than it allows unlike the spreading impression of Tracy Emin's work. A couple -maybe mockingly foregrounds the performative part of the artwork (Emin uses the bed in every installation of the work)- starts pillow fight by taking the pillows from the work. In contrast, the cage also curates itself considering its function as drawing lines around it, not leaving any various choice to a potential even for the curator of the artwork, it positions itself in an imaginary exhibition hall beforehand.

The figures at the centre are already cut/ divided from their surrounding, Bourgeois is aware that while working on a biographical/personal memory-history work, mnemonic personal objects are re-contextualized / re-mediated, we shall remember the functional nostalgia she mentions at this point. Also takes the attention to the materiality of the objects.

While Emine is after a mimetic portrayal of her memory-work, with this “openness”, she hides the re-mediated quality of the work. These points are manifested also through the choice of material quality. In the studied project, by printing out- by re-mediating a digital objects (which has already tangible quality to them since they are inscribed on the disk on the HDD- self-reflexively shows the conditions the ways of “showing”.

To explain the aesthetics of disappearance in modern representative art, Virilio characterizes its theories as abstract, being concerned to acknowledge that it is vanishing. He adds,

...'modern art' was able to glean what communications and telecommunications tools now accomplish on a daily basis: the mise en abyme of the body, of the figure, with the major attendant risk of systematic hyperviolence and a boom in pornographic high-frequency that has nothing to do with sexuality: We must put out the excess rather than the fire, as Heraclitus warned (Virilio, 2003:35)

3.7 Re-found Objects

As it is mentioned in the section related to autobiography, while authors write their personal history, they also record and save it. Apart from the translation to written words, and their organization for the sake of the narrative, they also take care of their personal memory by saving them from ephemerality. In the previous examples, this phenomenon has been discussed through the plastic artworks. With a similar intention, the -saved- personal or found objects are organized and selected. In this sense, the speculative moments of saving personal objects are contiguous and two-fold. Either these items are kept for sentimental reasons or these were meant to be used in the body of the work. There are no records considering these artists' way of working apart from these two modalities. However, this study can add a third one: The thrown-away items delivered back by third parties such as family members or friends or by the collector himself/herself. These forgotten and then re-found items that are recovered, signify a different moment from the previous examples. Nonetheless, main factor that differs the researcher-artist from the broader definition of a glaneur is that he is the one who collects his own disregarded digital items. It should be emphasized that (with the use of found/daily objects) “Autobiographical art” in any form other than writings in material form, is only possible in industrialized, mass consumer production societies. Both in terms of the availability of items and the connotations they give rise to, almost automatically. The “surplus” of items (and junks) and their after-life will be the subject of the next chapter.

3.8 Encounter With Your Own Trash

Italo Calvino, in his work “La Poubelle Agréée” (“The Agreeable Trash Can”), (in *The Road to San Giovanni* (Selected work of his essayistic autobiographic stories)) builds his narrative around the transfer of trash from the kitchen garbage can handing to the garbage can on the street.

While the man (sanitation worker) who unloads the poubelles (garbage containers on the street) in the rotating crater of the truck, gets the idea of the quantity of goods from which he is excluded, which reach him only as unusable leftovers. (Calvino, 2013: 10)

An everyday activity (taking the trash out) which is instrumentalized as a narrative tool in the story that leads the narrator to use this action to relate to the city, Paris. “In the alienated panorama of late capitalism matter takes center stage, while humans, filling and emptying the garbage truck, perform an act whose rationale is established elsewhere” (Boscagli, 2014: 252) that due the division of labor where a political encounter rarely occurs between these two actors.⁸ In Elizabeth Royte words “People think there’s a garbage fairy, one worker told me. You put your trash on the curb, and then pffft, it’s gone. They don’t have a clue.”⁸ When sanitation workers go on a strike, then the garbages make their return.

Calvino also publishes the sketches and drafts to the final version of his book.

“With this Brechtian choice to make visible each and every phase of the aesthetic process, the author demonstrates his impatience with the smooth surface and sutured perfection of some art objects, which, like commodities, claim to have come into existence magically by themselves. The work of art, like the self, like social and personal order, depends on its traffic with waste and negativity. As Calvino makes clear, this exchange is never resolved” (Boscagli, 2014:253)

Expelled from their circulation in the market, “junks” are not equivalent to respond to the needs of their users. Even though the recovered digital files are not “junks” per se, the laptop⁹ however, was exiled from the daily use as a disregarded item, left in a friend’s house for over 8 years. When it comes to tangible objects, due to their material nature, physical space is the primary concern if the collector feels burdened by them. This phenomenon compels us to what hoarding stands for on a subjective level. Due to its

⁹ Compaq M700. Model name: AM7 P3850T4X20VC12898 (470006-421) with a Turkish keyboard. Intel Mobile Pentium III 850 MHz processor. 14.1-inch colour TFT XGA with 1024 x 768 resolution. 13GB Hard Drive. Originally 128 MB 100MHz SDRAM, upgraded to 192 MB, 8X DVD-ROM Drive IDE (Optical Drive) (Cd-Writer was an optional element although an external cd-writer were bought before going to the University in Rennes, which will be explained later) ATI Mobility Pro, 64-bit video graphics with 8-MB SDRAM and it weight 2.4 kg. Windows 98SE was installed on. Given that, it must have been bought in the year 2001 or 2002 with an expensive range of price (approximately 3500\$, that is roughly equal to 5.500.000.000 Turkish Liras at that time. This laptop also comes with a CD kit for “quick recovery (erases hard disk and restores manufacturer installed image) and software recovery (installs only selected standard software)” The information is taken from the manufacturer’s official website (now bought by HP Computers). Retrieved from; http://h18000.www1.hp.com/products/quickspecs/archives_Canada/10382_ca_v17/10382_ca.html

proportions, it is unlikely to speculate that the cause was its physical space it covers. Friend's attic has been used as a container for the hoarded items that belong to his family members. Therefore, this place was the first place that we look. It was kept -or left- regardless of that, it may have a value in the future (like any other hoarded items) This "interior-poubelle-agr ee" ("interior agreeable trash bin", for the members of the house for its functionality) was crowded with other hoarded items and these piles made it difficult to seek and find the object of interest.¹⁰ This act puts researcher-artist to a position of being both the consumer and the collector. Next segments will be the attribution of his collection to a new purpose.

¹⁰ To find it later: finding things may not be the primary motive, the facticity of knowing that they are there / or storage more than retrieving items (Kaye, Vertesi, Avery, Dafoe, David, Onaga, Rosero & Pinch, 2006: 3)

CHAPTER 4

REPRISE

4.1 Deleting Necessarily

No web-based content creators were used during the period of this laptop's active years. Considering the media creators were apart from this particular laptop the collecting practices of the researcher-artist is easy to track.

The items saved during the middle-school to the first years of the high-school (corresponds to the first two moments that is graphically implicated in the practical project – which will be mentioned in the next chapters) were when time 56K modem (that sends or receives 56,000 bits of information per second) to connect to the internet was available to researcher-artist. In other words, it would have taken more than 30 seconds to download a wallpaper for your computer (presuming the native resolution of the screen be 800x600 pixels) by that time.

By inspecting the screenshot found in the collection, it could be claimed that the HDD was almost full. This deduction (the instrumentalization of this image) comes from the traces that are found in the image, namely the shortcut icons. The function of shortcuts is to provide quick access to the often used software.



Fig. 5 Screenshot of the desktop.

Video-games' and related files were taking the biggest space on the HDD.¹¹ By this investigation, total amount of disk space covered is equal to 10 GB, leaving 2 GB of free

space (additional free space is required to perform multiple tasks during the use) for other purposes. To save up space on the HDD, deleting saved files was a common practice for the researcher-artist (and similarly for those witnessed this era.)¹¹

512K connection was available by the time these files were recorded (3rd movement, researcher-artist's first year in the university) However, while the internet connection technologies came with higher download and upload speed, the laptop's HDD that were being used was the same.¹²

Saving files on a HDD was to ensure that to be reachable whenever it is remembered, to see it again and to show and share it to others. With the pile of re-collected digital files, first visual contact of the files, first act was to browse them in a playful manner. Since there was no folder recovered, (although recovered files can be changed according to the needs, alphabetically etc.) ordered files were seen sequentially as a flow of images (printing), as in opening a parchment.

¹¹ Diablo II 1.9 GB, cs 500 mb, Arcanum 1.2 gb, Icewind dale 2 1.3 gb, 1.5 Ultima Online, plus save file profiles etc., Autocad 750 mb, The Playa 5mb, Shadowmaster 1mb, ACDSee (Trial Version) 310 MB free hard drive space (1 GB recommended), Imesh (no data on the version) may be between 4 to 14 mb, Winamp. (version unknown, must be version 3 or higher, since the winamp add-on was required to be this version or later) 2mb or larger, DFX (Winamp Add-on) 10 mb (version 6.3), Winzip (Version 8.0 or higher) 1mb, InterVideo WinDVD (no data on the version found). Windows 98 operation system takes 165 MB to 355 MB, depending on the preferences. Additionally, Autocad files, along with the save or related files to the video games were presumably taking few MB as well, any other digital files that have no any visual trace.) This screenshot only shows a capped instance. However, the softwares that were installed was still being used till the 3rd moment. For the preservation of software as digital content; the original hardware and/or software context needs to be emulated. These mentioned software were not saved completely, (only fragments were found) (The total storage of the HDD is 13 GB) thereby cannot be used in the project. (only image files and sound records were found)

¹² Additional storage units were used, mostly CD-Roms. Unfortunately, none of them found except the music CD's that were formatted to be run on stereo systems. Digital version of sound records were downloaded from peer-to-peer networks.

Browsing the digital collection, jumping between various time-lines, this digital matrix forms the memory place from multiple orderings. By generating the space/time on the way, by recollecting reminiscences from mnemonic objects, as a helper. Some images manifests about the physical locations that are captured in, while some “such as the desktop screenshot”, manifest about the screen

It should be remarked that the scope is not human-computer interaction but the screen phenomenon. Namely “screen essentialism”, treats “the formal representation of digital objects on a screen can have an outsized influence on their creation, management, and perception—an interpretive tendency that Nick Montford calls screen essentialism.” (as cited in Bailey, 2013) Additionally, Kenneth Thibodeau’s model is useful at this point;

...digital objects are compounds, composed of a physical, logical, and conceptual object... Respectively, those adjectives refer to the physical inscription on storage media; the logical suite of translational software and processes that access and “read” that inscription; and the conceptual object the user interacts with, such as the text, image, or interface on a screen. (as cited in Bailey, 2013)

While taking notes on these images about what they stand for as mementos – or as reminiscences-, what they evoked were recorded digitally or on paper similar to field notes, in a digital site. As a result of this memory-recording practices, re-calling these files were almost automatic. With this familiarity of the collection, researcher-artist could move dynamically within a digital collection throughout the operating system search. (Search, query, and tools like topic modeling also allows the user to build their own patterns and hierarchies for browsing the collection.) However, browsing through this re-

collection, *manually* granted time for reflection to the researcher-artist. (which was not a considered to be a practical problem)

In Windows Operating System, we see the recovered files on a plane, by opening up file folders, and by doing this back and forth we create a path, a spatial formation. Along the way, more the researcher-artist browsed the collection, the more he could find the objects easily as a result of this spatial formation with this repetitive act.

4.2 Browsing the Collection in a Playful Manner

Researchers from Cornell University (a multidisciplinary research) conduct an ethnographic research with 48 academics on “What techniques and tools they use to manage their digital and material archiving of papers, emails, documents, internet bookmarks, correspondence, and other artifacts” (Joseph Kaye et.al 2006: 1). They emphasize that recording practices are not only for retrieval and storage of information, but comes with symbolic interactions with their collections as well. Interviewing them in their habitat “how these rationales were mapped into our subjects’ physical, social and electronic spaces, and implications for development of digital tools that allow for personal archiving.” (Joseph Kaye et.al 2006: 1) One of the academic’s reflection of his collection is worth mentioning;

“I don’t mind actually having to rummage for stuff... I rather enjoy going through piles of old off- prints and reprints and stuff because I will find things that I’ve forgotten about and that I wouldn’t have come across if I had everything organized and alphabetized by author.” (Joseph Kaye et.al 2006: 7)

This playful act foregrounds the autobiographical quality of the research as well, ranging between the identity and the physical environment transmuted as an extension of his needs. “In this case, both the material’s display and retrieval built a story about the professor’s life’s work; a story that continued” (Joseph Kaye et.al 2006: 7)

Ordering in digital environment however may grant the browsing act to a more static grounds, especially for a “closed collection” as in the researcher-artist’s experience. (due to computational technology of ordering files) The familiarity that we mentioned is positional memory that is a spatial interrelational functionality of the items where finding them is the primary motive after they are posited for sometime. Since there is no forensic image or the original order of the collection (the metadata is limited to date modified due to the lostt of forensic image)

Their research ends with a remark: some academics don’t take the time to backup their analog files digitally, they tend to print their files. According to them “ the analog domain are not well-supported digitally” and despite the digital search tools in the computer environment, “subjects relied on the same techniques – a sense of where things ought to

be or where they last put them – in order to both store and locate files.” (Joseph Kaye et.al 2006: 10) Then there is a symbolic satiation going side-by-side with the practical need for finding an object. These values may affect structural decisions in designing the personal archive, and may be affected by institutional environments, but always reflect something about the archiver to whom they belong. Ultimate archiving methods can’t resist standartization in *in between* situations as it is mentioned under the playfulness where the motive may not necessarily be finding things. The browsing individual have the time and energy to invest, he/she may walk around the piles, encounter with the forgotten items may not be related or not remembered in the first place. Although these are situated chronologically and throughout the performance the reading is suggested to be linear, as long as the nodes start to appear, jumping from one part to another is possible. In other words, entries could be read as fragment after the performance, like browsing, but ordered chronologically from left to right. Not forcing the viewer to a linear reading.

4.3 Evocative

Evocative ethnographers mainly focuses on the narrative and the rhetoric since “systematic sociological introspections and emotional recall try to understand the experiences” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 37) is a necessity and focuses on “presentations as narrative conversations and emotional responses”. (Ellingson and Ellis, 2008: 445) While

analytic ethnographers aim for through-within the personal experience/knowledge, the research question is examined and attempted to be answered. In other words the analytic perspective in terms of the interplay between the researcher's self-knowledge and the sociocultural context. The entries on the practical project is written in evocative sense, the written part has the intention to create parallels between the artworks related to autobiographical tendencies. However, this is not merely writing an "autobiography". In any case, autoethnography is a qualitative research.



CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL PROJECT

5.1 Collected Items in the Practical Project

This installation and performance project/subject matter, is the collection of recovered digital files from research artists personal laptop hard drive. It has been used between the years of 2001 to 2005. The researcher-artist was attending to middle school at 2001 and used this computer till the first years of university.

These recovered files consisted of visual images and text boxes and positioned in a chronological order that presented as a single print out.(60 x 300 cm) The installation consisted of the laptop, a plotter and this print out. The recovered files are presented on a white background within the frames of Windows 95 window interface.

The records of creative acts of the researcher-artist: are “unique”, in the sense that even for non-digital born analogue copies of these files are to be found nowhere.

The re-collection of personal files consisted of 276 items, which is equal to 860 mb.

Some files have been either censored or discarded considering creative license and private life of other actors. Including the “send files” from other parties (friends, family members etc.). The rest were the images that were found on the web (whether it be digital-born or not) that has creative-common license, forbidding any presentation or representation of the afore mentioned objects. As a result, publicly presentable items downsized to 57 items. (10 of them being sound records and the rest being image files.) These digital items are not presented in their native resolution for compositional, narrative and aesthetic choices.

5.2 Composition

Instrumentalization of this study has been composed within the frame of the researcher-artist’s narrative and cognitive aims and assessments. As long as it remains in use and remembered, it functions as an enhancer between the object connections and brings momentum to these bonds. At this state, autoethnography follows/adopts the value of the presentable phenomenon of experience writing.

In Turkey, starting from the first year of the primary school, adults and other students very often ask the student “What grade are you in?”, as a way of knowing this student’s age as well. It is now clear to the researcher-artist that this practical use has made a mark on him. Similar to the autobiographical examples of developing character and the stories accordingly, within the items on this collection how he recalled and arranged them have turned out to be coordinated to the years of the attended classes.

Then, functionality for the use of the term “moment”¹³ is the result of how they are remembered and told to other actors and used for practical reasons. As mentioned that these items were organised in a chronological order. They are the fragments of 3 major periods of researcher-artist’s personal history within these years. These periods are also implemented in the print out by compositional decisions. (see figure. 6) First period being the pre-high the third one the first year of the university. By dividing the composition into 3 clusters the researcher-artists manifestation presents also how he remembers these files in his personal history. Even the viewer sees all composition in its totality at the installation, for our analysis we will explain the three period that are mentioned earlier separately.¹⁴ As it is expected the density of the first period is the lowest considering the manifold of time, space and memory. The study takes nourishments more than one

¹³ Should not be confused with Pierre Nora’s “moment-mémoire”, implying a globalized memory as a historical moment. (The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology, David Berliner)

¹⁴As a canon of rhetoric “divisio”, “brevitas”. The researcher-artist breaks up of a series into more manageable sets, in compositional manners.

moment simultaneously. Regarding the autobiographical entries, it aims self-reflexivity as an imminent quality that goes hand in hand with experience/experimental ethnography writing.

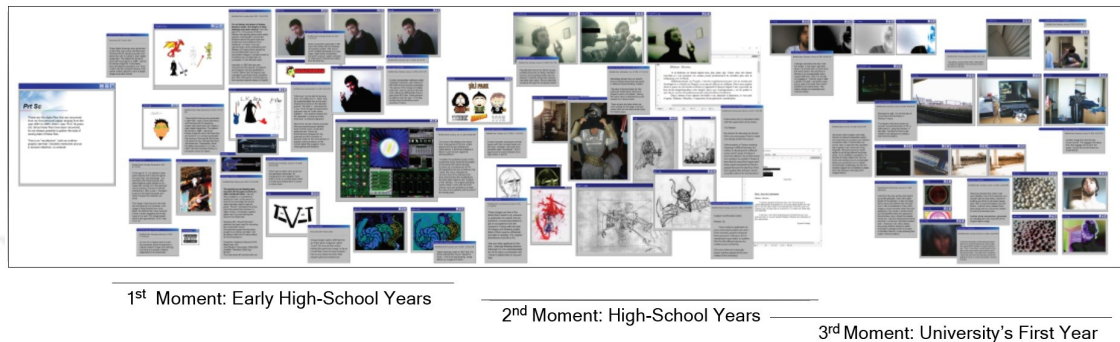


Figure. 6 “Moments” in the artwork

5.3 Entry Writing / Experience Writing

Throughout the study, the researcher-artist has taken notes of what he could recall and are evocated from the personal mnemonic objects. These texts are the personal records conditioned in the present however this is not an nostalgic work nor the animation of the past. The researcher-artist looks for the ways for the viewer to witness the back and forth moves of the act of remembering. With the use of performative “I” in the autoethnographic entries and the new functionality attributed to the digital personal items (by giving the found digital objects a new functionality apart from them being a “memento”), the researcher-artist aims to foreground the constructedness of the artwork.

When researcher-artist have remotely re-called a saved file from the collection but unable to ascribe any intention for the “why” it was saved or created, he used files from the cluster that are instrumentalized as a remembrancer for this remote saved file. Then, mnemonic objects don't function solely between them and its finders. They also function as leverages for the other digital files in the totality and the authenticity of the HDD.

5.4 Interface

Interface functions as a mediator between the data and the use, additionally as an information conveyor. In our case, the interface of the relatively old operation system is additionally a memory bearer of the past. In Margaret Hedstrom’s words, interfaces “are the loci of power of the present to control what the future will know of the past”.

(Hedstrom, 2002) Digital files -in their native environment as they are appeared, the screen- are conditioned by them. In Kirschenbaum’s terms, “the screen imposes its own logic...on how digital objects are interpreted or accessed, but also how they are described.” (As cited in Bailey, 2013)

Printed digital files are framed with the layout of Microsoft Windows 98 operating system both as a reminder of an aesthetic fragment for those who witnessed that era and

actively participated (they still may be using this version). As we also mentioned in the chapter “Re-Found Objects”, this is only possible in mass consumer production societies. Autoethnography emphasizes the researcher’s unique position within a shared social and historical perspective in relation to the topic of study (as in considering the interface as a remembrancer that users consume). In this regard, personal experience is considered to be a source of knowledge (Struthers, 2012:20). How interfaces might serve as a device for exposing the imprint that the owner leave for appraisal and evoking the site? (Hedstrom, 2002: 1) Hedstrom’s question also signifies this functionality of the interface as well.

Rhetorically, “the researcher tries to persuade the reader to accept a particular interpretation of data,” (Heckley, 2015: 107) as with any research paper, “but in conventional research writing this persuasive element is masked or silenced rhetorically through the textual performance of scientific objectivity” (ibid. 2015). If such is the case, “the ways in which the subjectivity, and the social and class position of the speaker, inflect the viewpoint, must be teased out and analyzed as part of the research process, rather than rhetorically silenced.” (ibid. 2015)

5.5 Printing Performance

While re-mediated digital files on a paper is the end result of what the researcher-artist’s graphic designer identity is manifested, the performance part of the artwork is examined under three aspects;

1) Firstly, as we have attempted to lay out the self-reflective quality of Agnes Varda's work, the material conditions of creating a printed work are articulated into the body of the artwork. By remediation, this process (printing on a paper) foregrounds the representational matrix unlike the pervasive closeness of presentation (as in Tracy's work) This remainder also functions as the very conditions of production. This is accompanied by the sound of the plotter with its low pitch, mid-tempo, repetitive rhythm. Nonetheless, a very familiar (agreeable) sound for workers in printing and graphic designers working with printed media, an instinctive element of the material culture.

2) Visibility, the ethnographic objects from the HDD are not in-situ. They are browsed and examined not in their authentic site. (as it mentioned before, this was not possible due to the condition of the laptop and its components) but in the researcher-artist's "present" personal computer. And not presented in their native medium. "In situ" stands for "in place", in archeology "in its original place", a use for the artefacts that have not moved from where they are found. In art, however, signifies an artwork made with an intention of exhibiting in a specific site, the opposite of creating an artwork in the studio and exhibit it in another place regardless of the artist's knowledge about this place (he may or may not know) In this project, it was known where it was going to be shown at, however the studio was basically the digital environment of the laptop (could be moved everywhere) As E.H Gombrich points out "It is the manner of detachment that makes an object ethnographic, historical, or artistic, a point underscored". (as cited in Kirshenblatt-

Gimblett, 1998: 286) Wilson points out that, for Agnès Varda's work "The art object does not lose its aura in reproduction, but gains value and life in circulation" (Wilson, 2006: 106)

3) Re-calling from the Plotter: Chronologically ordered collection being called from the plotter. Every movement of the paper, is another framing of the artwork during the performance. Every framing, conditions the interrelation of the images, entries and the looping sound records. Additionally, this grants the viewer with "a time for reflection" during the performance. An early example considering time and space, invoke Chinese painting's possible representative and practical offerings;

Chinese painting is an art of time as well as space. This was implied in the arrangement of the group by movement motif through intervals; in the extended relationship of groups, movement in time became the most memorable characteristic of Chinese design. [...] These early principles were later transformed and enriched until they reached their fulfillment in the supreme creation of Chinese genius – the landscape scroll. A scroll painting must be experienced in time like music or literature. [...] In the European tradition, the interest in measurable space destroyed the 'continuous method' of temporal sequence used in the Middle Ages and led to the fifteenth century invention of the fixed space of scientific perspective. When the Chinese were faced with the same problem of spatial depth in the T'ang period, they reworked the early principles of time and suggested a space through which one might wander and space which implied more space beyond the picture frame. (Rowley, 1959)

The overall performance lasts around 6 to 7 minutes (have the opportunity to change the duration depending on the time and place that it is exhibited by changing the quality of the print).¹⁵



Figure. 7 Printing “Prt Sc”

¹⁵ After a month from the exhibition (MFA Media & Design, GSTMF Art Gallery, 14th of April, 2017) the movement -the automated framing- has been seen as a memento of how the digital images were used to load on the computer screen during the time of 56k modems.

5.6 Reading

As this collection is fragmentary in its nature, the autobiographical/self-reflective entries and visual images are positioned in the similar fashion. Although these are situated chronologically and the reading is suggested to be linear throughout the performance, as long as the nodes start to appear, jumping from one part to another is possible.

Chronological order (from left to right on the composition) is constructed with the help of the “date created”. However, some of the files were only showing “date modified”, signifying they were moved to another file directory or some data changes has been made. Especially for the records belonging to the 3rd moment, researcher-artist had to depend of the factual memory regarding the successful events for the formation of narration. This signifies a trafficking between the chronological order of the digital files and the interpretation of the researcher-artist on the ordering of events.

While writing the entries and doing the research, more it is written, reminiscent goes back and forth, creating new relations for the researcher-artist laying out both voluntary and involuntary autobiographical memory. (Rubin & Bernsten, 2009) It is not so much that these objects only "stand for" particular events evoked in documentary fashion, as that they are the stimuli for an evolving network of vivid memories; that is, they "lead to" other memories in an interwoven net that grows rich in affect. The composition is applied by keeping this act, manifested in graphically composed work. These files are organized

in chronological manner, however, what is written as a reminiscence is involuntary, contains multiple relations created by the researcher-artist.

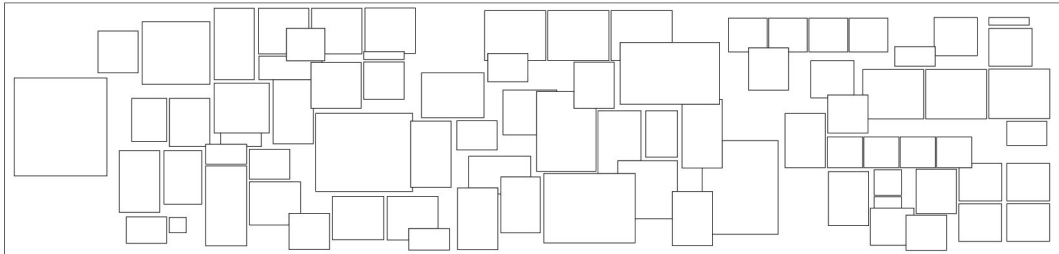


Fig. 8 Practical project's map.

The graphic above (see. Fig. 7) will be positioned under the frames to show where frames are in the composition.

5.7 Exhibiting

The personal laptop of the researcher-artist was exhibited along with a plotter. At the start of the performance, the viewers witnessed the printing process to emphasize the production of the artwork with the tools that has been used. As a result of the plotter's working principle, this composition reveals itself in a fragmentary regime. In every step of the printing process, visitors see different framings of the whole composition in each moment.

5.8 Framings from the Practical Project and Autoethnographic Entries



Fig. 9 – Frame from the first 30 seconds of the performance.

When the plotter starts printing out the project, first entity that appears is a brief information about the project and the project's title, "Prt Sc", followed by digital drawings that are made in MS paint, digital images found on the web. "Prt Sc" abbreviation of "print screen", also implying the material quality of the work and the material quality of "capturing the screen" foregrounds the arbitrary relation between recording in a digital and analogue manners. "Yet the screenshot itself as photo-object has

gone largely unremarked, its complex genealogy collapsed into a single button: PrtScn.”

(Gaboury, 2017)



Figure. 10 First seconds of the performance

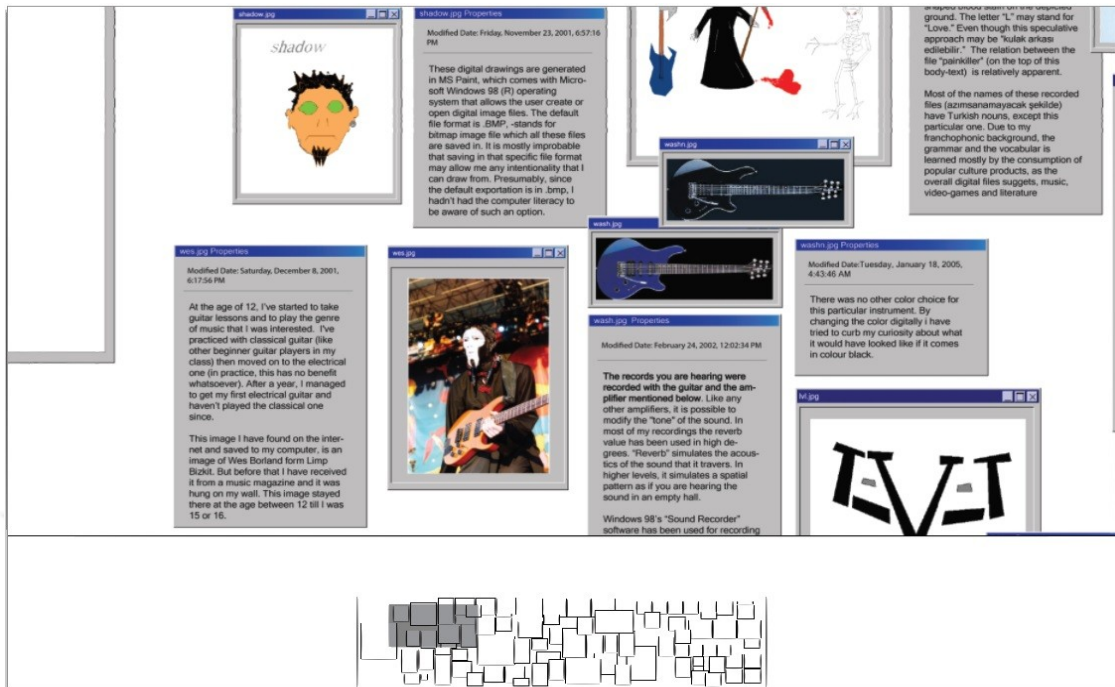


Fig. 11 Framing from the first minute

The referential quality of the guitar holding figure and 2 images of guitars are embedded in the entry. It reads;

At the age of 12, I've started to take guitar lessons and to play the genre of music that I was interested. I've practiced with classical guitar (like other beginner guitar players in my class) then moved on to the electrical one (in practice, this has no benefit whatsoever). After a year, I managed to get my first electrical guitar and haven't played the classical one since. This image I have found on the internet and saved to my computer, is an image of Wes Borland that I have received it from a music magazine and it was hung on my wall. This image stayed there at the age between 12 till I was 15 or 16.

These are memorials, the object of an acquired ability/skill that longs till researcher-artist's actuality. A photo manipulation software has been used (ACDSee, the name was

re-called from the screenshot of my virtual desktop) to resolve curiosity about how my guitar would look like if it was black.

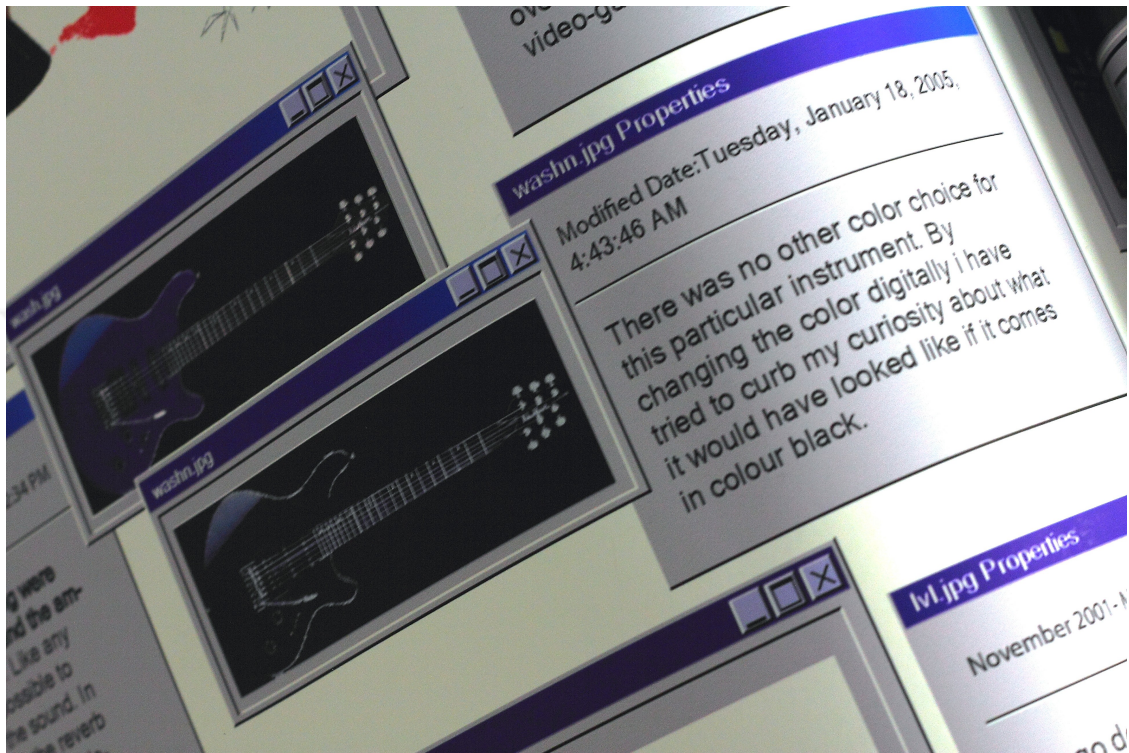


Figure 12. Framing from the first minute, on paper.



Fig. 13 Framing from the first minute of the performance

The entry reads;

These digital file drawings are generated in MS Paint, which comes with (Microsoft) Windows 98® operating system that allows the user create or open digital image files. The default file format is .BMP,- stands for bitmap image file which all these files are saved in. It is mostly improbable that saving in that specific file format may allow me any intentionality that I can draw from. Presumably, since the default exportation is in .bmp, I hadn't had the computer literacy to be aware of such an option.

These digital files from the early years are photo manipulations, digital drawings, a desktop screenshot and an image of a personal item that the artists researcher still keeps it to this day: his first electrical guitar. As this section was being written, Microsoft has

announced that “Microsoft Paint” is “not in active development and might be removed in future releases”. (Matthew Field’s Microsoft is Killing Legendary Paint after 32 years <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/07/24/microsoft-killing-legendary-paint-32-years/>). Meanwhile, using Windows 10, the researcher-artist realized that a newer version has been installed without his will, namely “Paint 3D”, adding 3D object rendering as a feature. It is unknown if this software will be continued in the future, “Microsoft Paint”, will be a memento which was introduced in Windows 1.0 in 1985. As it is shown, digital drawings were made in this program and saved in .jpeg format that was introduced in Windows 98, the operating system that was being used throughout in this re-collected digital collection. Also, it wasn’t until Windows 98 that Paint could save in JPEG format.

Additionally, on the right upper part of this frame, the researcher-artist mentions his FRP (Fantasy Role-Playing) experiences briefly, including a memorable event that relates to the censorship on certain FRP related books, a record of an event at that time in Turkey’s recent history.



Fig 14. Framing from the second minute

Grouping for this cluster is obvious, the manipulations from the native image forms a group. However, the “painkiller” image is also explanatory for the other members of the cluster. “Painkiller”, being the referential image -chronologically comes before- for the manipulated photographic images. As it is mentioned in the entry, using “Paint” was a common practice amongst the researcher-artist’s circle of friends.

As it could be seen from the upcoming sections of the project, these groupings could be gathered under 3 clusters. Firstly, either they are the manipulation of an original file, as it is seen above. or they are recorded in the same space time. Second, they resemble each

other aesthetically. Non digital-born drawing can be thought under this. Third, there is no correlation in aesthetical order to space time but they have a potential to reference to each other. The constitutive of this element is the relation of identity and memory. (or personal history) Like the relation between the cluster above and the images that are taken in the dormitory room. These are from different moments, however positioned in the same plane horizontally to show this relation.

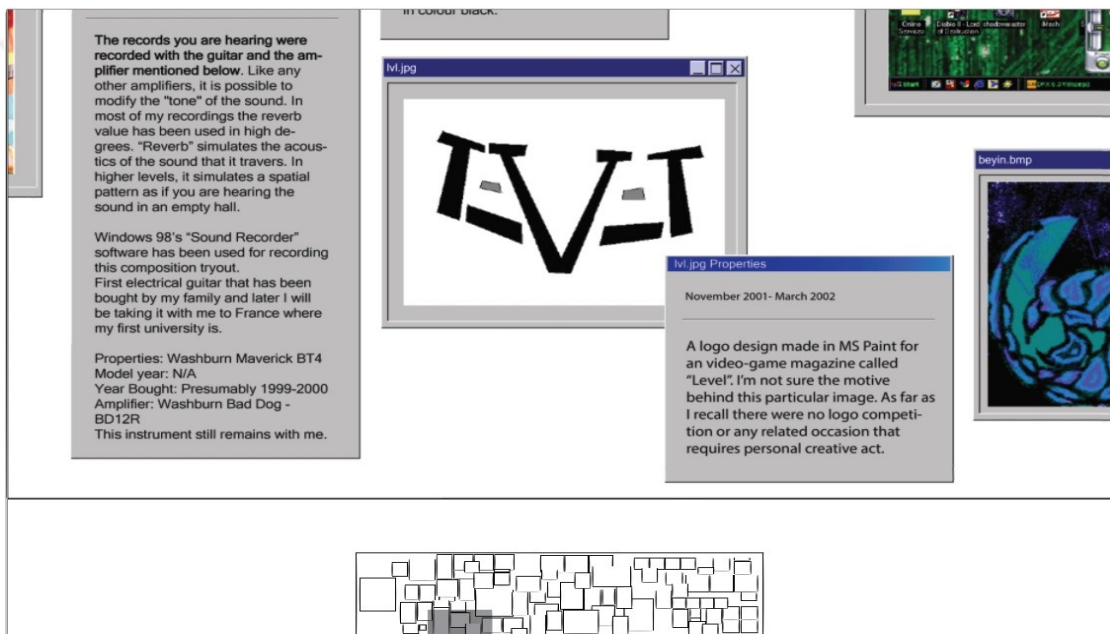


Fig 15. Framing from the first minute

A logo design made in MS Paint for a video-game magazine called "Level." I'm not sure the motive behind this particular image. As far as I recall there wasn't any logo competition or related occasion that requires personal act.

During the exhibition of the project, few visitors have pointed out that it reads as “Evet”, meaning “Yes” in Turkish. This could be attributed to the “zeitgeist” of Turkey in the Spring 2017. Related to the presidential elections, the campaign for votes of YES or NO was on going through media channels. Therefore, while the researcher-artist writes his personal-history, images and his mental faculties are conditioned in their “nowness”.

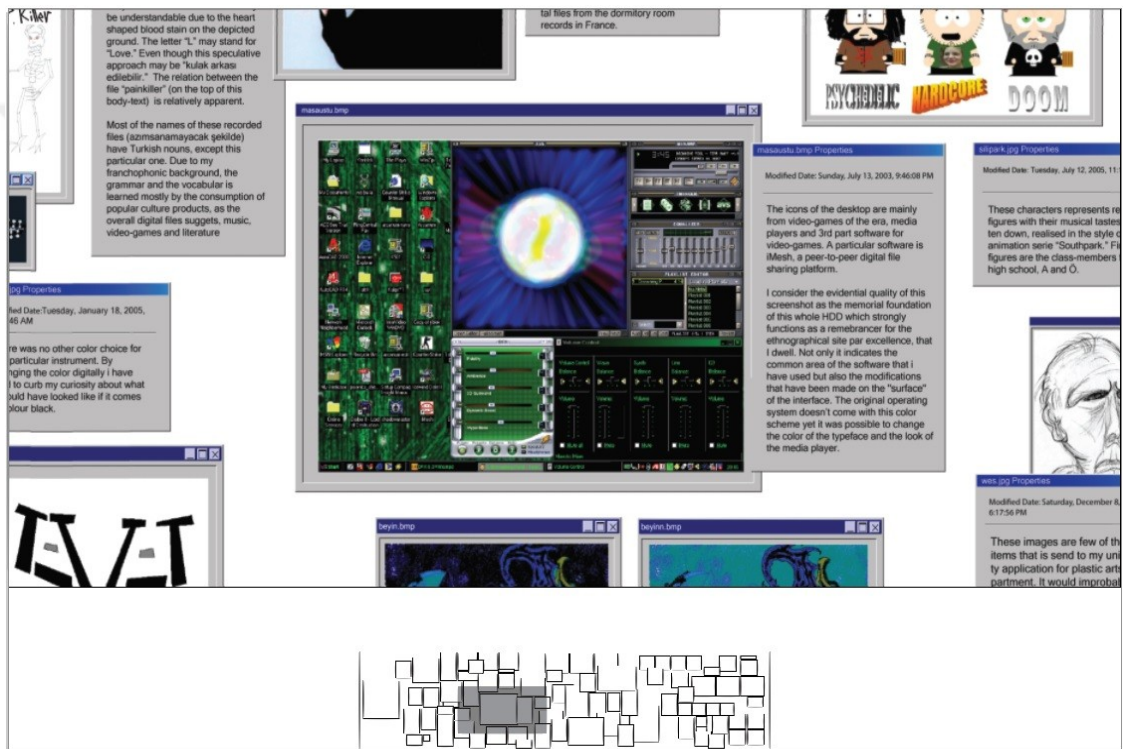


Fig 16. Framing from the second minute

The icons of the desktop are mainly from video-games of the era, media players and 3rd party software for video-games. A particular software is iMesh, a peer-to-peer digital file sharing platform. I consider the evidential quality of this screenshot as the memorial foundation of this whole HDD which strongly functions as a remembrancer for the ethnographical site par excellence, that I dwell. Not only it indicates the common area of the software that I have used but also the modifications that have made on the “surface” of the interface. The original operating system doesn't come with this color scheme yet it was possible to change the color of the typeface and the look of the media player.

The image that we have used for a heuristic procedure (guesstimate, specifically) to come to a approximate information about how much free-disk space there was. No matter what the intention was to capture the screen, the items on the background make their entrance to the frame. In this sense, portrayal of the virtual site, the desktop functions in an evidential fashion.

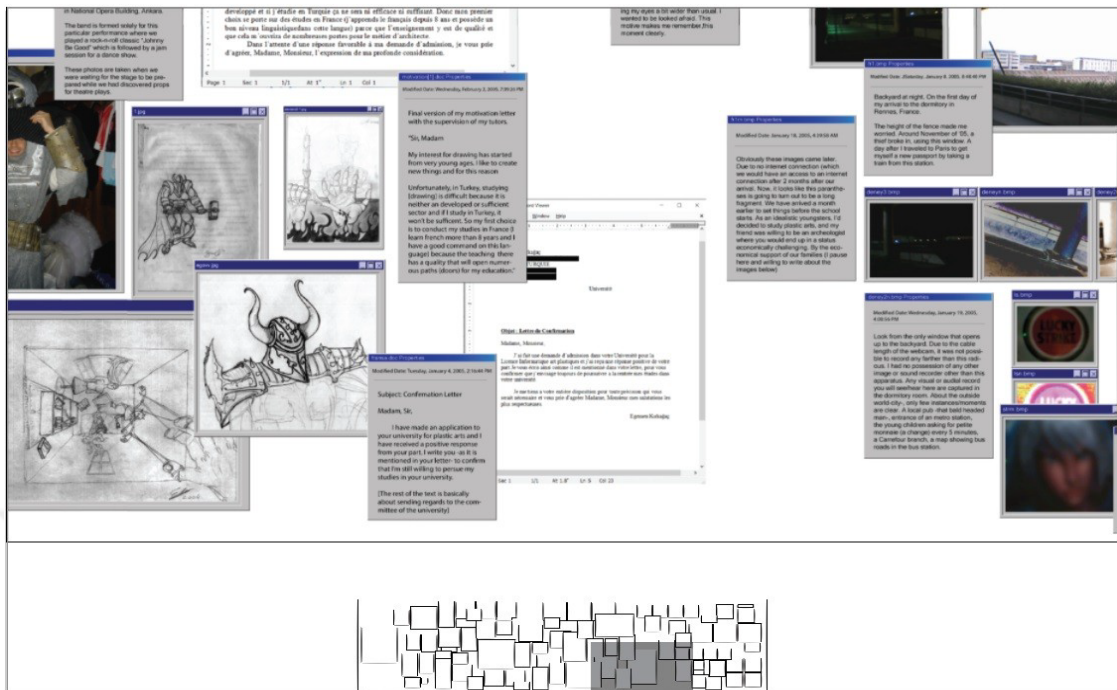


Figure. 17 Framing from the second minute

There are bridging moments in the project, such as in this example. from high-school years (the 2nd) to the university's first year (the 3rd). Exchange of letters for the process of application to the university are shown and this event is succeeded as it is shown in the 7th moment. This is a result of interrelated acts or a series of continuous successions (getting a visa, finding a dormitory, arranging bureaucratic issues etc.) A structured event is present nonetheless there are no records of these gaps. These can be called “event records”. On the left, the portfolio items required for the university application are presented. Another interrelation between this 2nd moment and the 1st can be constructed regarding the thematic likeness of the researcher-artist's drawings.



Figure 18. Framing from the second minute, on paper.

A record of a “reminiscence” that has a strong pull for the researcher-artist.

“I strongly remember the day I took this image. It was taken right after when I’ve arrived with my friend from the same class to the dormitory in Rennes in an unexpectedly warm August afternoon. After I’ve moved my luggage in, I had the urge to take a photo of myself. I remember opening my eyes a bit wider than usual. I wanted to be looked afraid. This motive makes me remember this moment clearly”



Figure 19. Framing from the fourth minute.

Time and space is woven strictly with the personal memory in this example. This is the only reminiscence that is its own object that is saved with an intention to be remembered by that. A “reminiscence bump” par excellence.

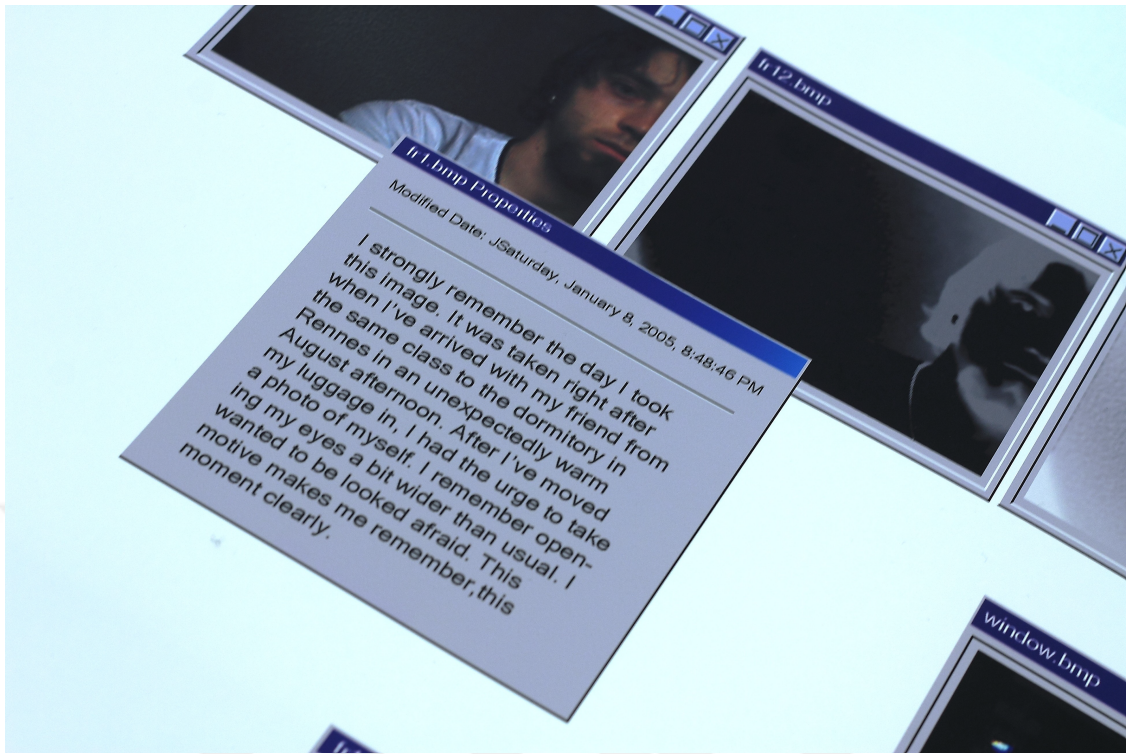


Figure 20. Framing from the fourth minute, on paper.

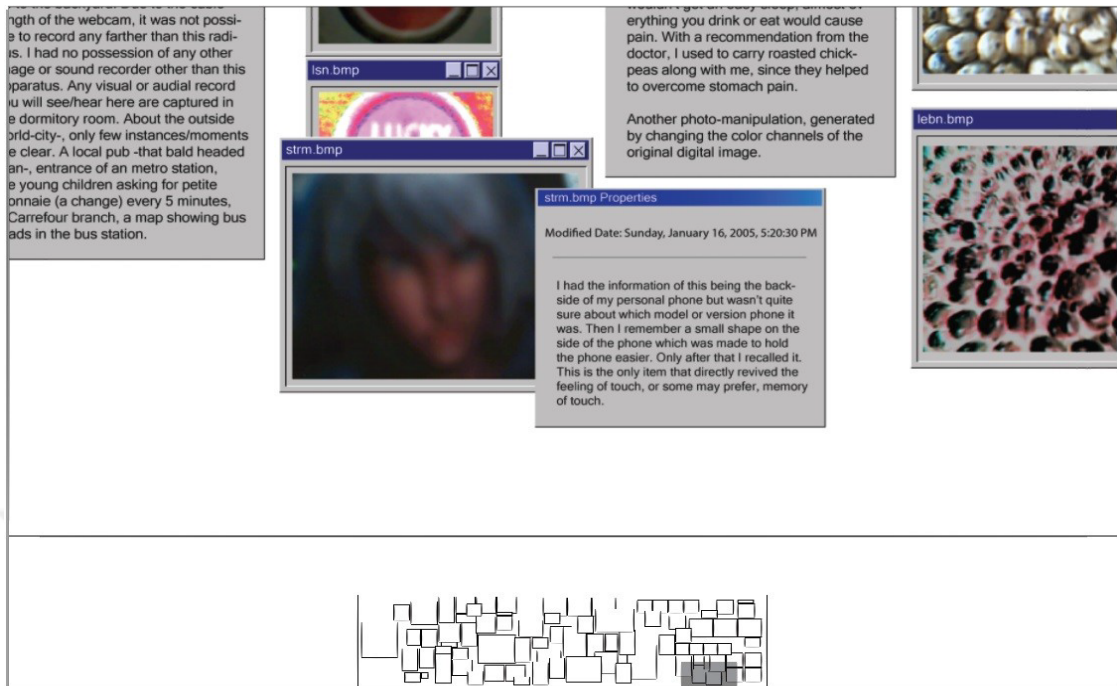


Figure 21. Framing from the fifth minute

The entry fully which is self explanatory showing the haptic memory (the only example of itself, the rest categories are basically on visual sensory and the visuality of the records);

I had the information of this being the back-side of my personal phone but wasn't quite sure about which model or version phone it was. Then I remember a small shape on the side of the phone which was made to hold the phone easier. Only after that I recalled it. This is the only item that directly revived the feeling of touch, or some may prefer, memory of touch.

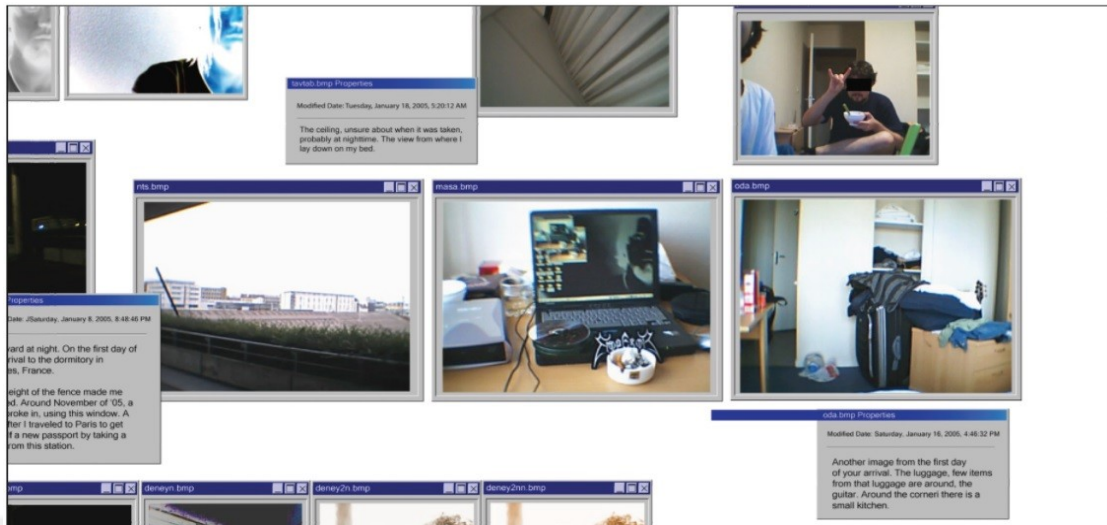


Figure 22. Framing from the last seconds of the performance

Composition wise, these files were situated to curate the dormitory room regarding time, space and memory and their manifold. One method that is proven useful in researcher-artist's experience is "The Method of Loci" since;

"When desiring to remember a set of items the subject "walks" through these loci in their imagination and commits an item to each one by forming an image between the item and any feature of that locus. Retrieval of items is achieved by "walking" through the loci, allowing the latter to activate the desired items". (Ciccoricco, 2015: 181)

Method of loci is used in linguistic terms, such as in organizing chronological order in narrative and the visual composition. The state of affairs are organized in this manner for communicative purposes. This allows the viewer to be able to compare the density of the

reminiscences, the rhetoric -in the written part- regarding to different moments (high-school, university etc.) all presented in a compositional graphic of choices. This mnemonic technique, instrumentalized for the records taken in this room.

For these reasons, some images are smaller or larger than their native resolution on paper. Stretching some items were required for the desired visual hierarchy (apart from their positioning on the frame.)

These captured objects are situated closer to each other in Cartesian matrix, implying their relative positions to each other, granting a panoramic view of the dormitory room. (There are few weeks between these three images) This composition also helped researcher-artist to orientate himself in the imaginary space, only after the position of the kitchen and bathroom were re-called. (thus there are no records of these segments of the room) Nigro and Neisser contrasts two ways of remembering personal experiences: “the individual may 'see' the event from his or her perspective as in normal perception, or 'see' the self engaged in the event as an observer would.” (as cited in Eldridge, n.d: 214) For this cluster, it was the first modality. Either way the communicative purposes were primary, for the viewer as well as for the researcher-artist with this curation of space. Helped him to remember things and to orientate himself while taking the mental wondering in the room

Laptop's external webcam was the only recording device that has been used for the documentation of the room. Technical limitation is the length of the webcam's cable, primarily.

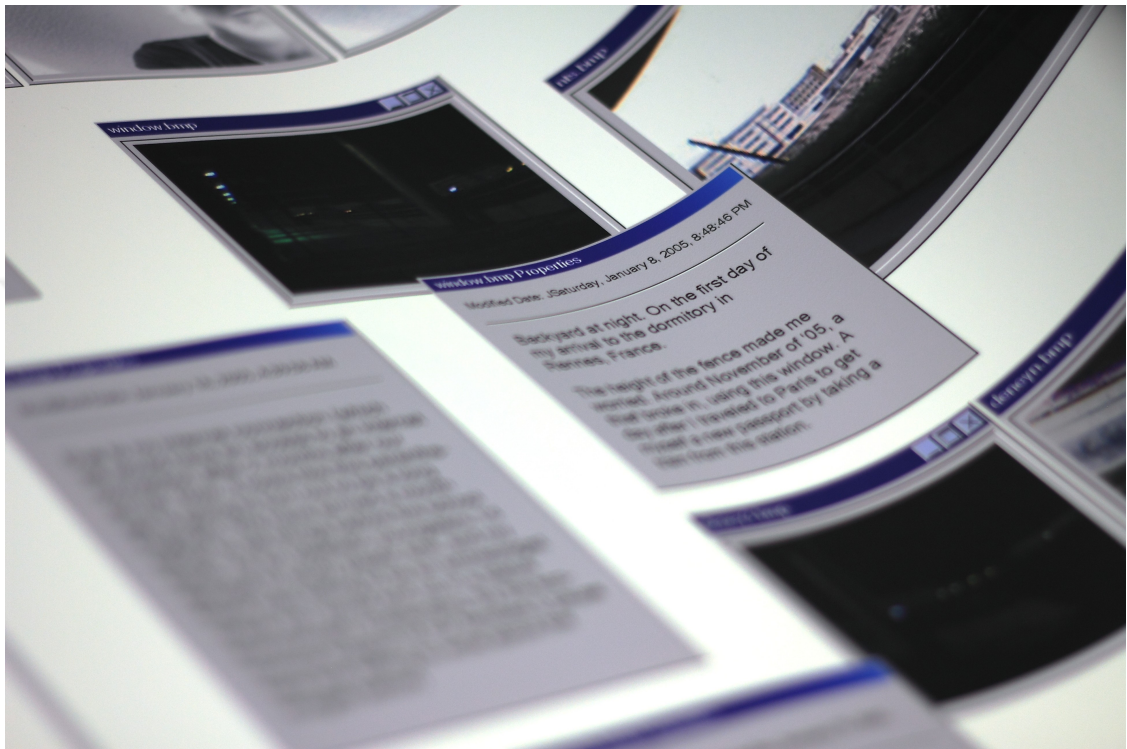


Figure 23. Framing from the lasts seconds, on paper.

In the 3rd moment, the laptop that has been used for recording purposes was not working due to a technical failure. During that 2 month gap, the researcher-artist couldn't record anything.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The act of producing a work of art and conducting a concurrent study on it, whether it be in written or visual form, is a form/modality of recognition/knowing the question at hand. The present work attempts to investigate how a personal memory study should be construed. The resulting work is intended so that it grants viewers a way to adapt to personal content, personal memories evoked by mnemonic objects. These mnemonic objects are immediately presented to the viewers' senses, while the composition mediates a personal narrative. This structure is intended to reflect the involuntary recall of the researcher-artist to the viewers.

By reflecting to viewers what these objects are for me, memories that would have been unavailable without the work of art produced as part of this project, I attempt to overcome the distinction between viewer and artist. This may seem, on the first sight, an impossible task, due to the central place that personal memory occupies in this project. However what makes the mediation possible, is the digital production and storage of content. We use, and for some time have used, personal computers daily, to create and view digital content. The PC, and its various interfaces and functions, bridge the gap between the researcher-artist and his viewers.

The mnemonic object is therefore the visualization of hard disk content. It recalls memories for the researcher-artist, while the narrative it evokes is for the viewers' sake, and perhaps for each viewer his/her own. In this, the researcher-artist, precisely due to his privileged access to his memory, joins his viewers.

The artwork, as the visualization of hard disk drive (HDD) content, is intended for a multitude of viewers approaching it with different motivations. They may be listed as follows:

- 1) The researcher-artist. His motivation for viewing the work is the recollection of times past.

2) The potential viewers (or other researcher-artists) who have an interest in producing similar recollections. Their motivation for viewing the work would potentially be more rigorous and focused on the path taken.¹⁶

3) Those who witnessed the boom of the internet, interacted with the digital environment and had access to a personal computer. Their motivation for viewing the work could be nostalgia about the past of the PC usage.

4) A layperson. Many considerations may bring a member of the public before the exhibited work.

Here, a few words are in order to impart the experience and motivation of the researcher-artist as a viewer of memories.¹⁷ Through the mediation of the artwork, memories of the researcher-artist that were not previously ordered (locally, chronologically, methodologically or semantically) were put in place for viewing (*mise en scène*). The artwork grants the artist researcher a rubric that he can reflect on. His reflection continues and echoes in the following processes: remembering, framing, reframing, displaying and reflecting, all with the intent to communicate.

¹⁶ Recall your first PC. What hue was the blue of the desktop?

¹⁷ The phrase “viewer of memories” is no accident, suggesting as it does a perusal of past images.

In the graphic artwork, re-collected items are remediated and given a new function that is different from what was intended at the moment they were saved on the HDD. “Re-collection”, as used here, has a double meaning. It denotes the intention of drawing items from a collection and the human experience of recall. Reminiscences and epiphanies are recognizable by their impact on the memory. Insofar as it provides the researcher-artist with structured access to his past, and other viewers with an invitation to the past, it promises to be a sustainable project. Sustainable, in the sense that the digital collections grow daily, both for the researcher-artist and the viewers in modern society. Disk space grows exponentially. Yet the faculty of memory remains limited to its same old self. Therefore the artwork provides its viewers with a device for recollection and time for reflection, hence a mnemonic object.

Although this was not specifically a political work, future researches may look at the role of personal history writing from different perspectives. For example a history work considering this re-collection’s content or save files of video-games, which were eliminated in this research for technical limitations, could be using these in an emulated digital environment. Anyhow, it should be remembered that this study positions itself in its field as a propositional methodology work.

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