The Memory Model Project

An investigation of three-dimensional models as triggers and monitors of recall

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Abstract

Three-dimensional models are a popular hobby and a useful tool in many disciplines. The Memory Model Project will explore a new application for models following the question:

> *Can models be used as a medium for the self-presentation, specification and communication of personal memories?*

Whereas the quality standard of models in commercial, scientific and hobby contexts is their verifiable agreement with an objective referent, no such verification is possible in case of the *memory model*. It is based entirely on the subjectivity of a person's memory. Since the referent remains inaccessible to the viewer, the feasibility of a new 'model of the model' is tested and investigated. Two more questions emerge:

> *How does the process of making a model influence the retrieval of a person's memories?* and
> *How does a model (as a spatial form of expression) relate/add to verbal (temporal) autobiographical practices?*

Autobiographical records tend to emphasise episodic events and translate spatial memories into a temporal (verbal) format presenting details seriatim and according to the author's chosen order. By contrast, models give spatial memories a spatial format and thus a new and perhaps more germane means of expression. To explore related questions, artists, architects, professional and hobby model-makers are asked to rebuild from memory a domestic space (or parts thereof) that they identify as their home. The choice of the topic also brings the concept of the *home* into the focus of the research. Thus, it is finally asked:

> *Will the works of the participants yield new perspectives on the concept of the home, respectively on what constitutes a 'proper', 'interesting' or 'presentable' home?*

From an artistic point of view, the models are expected to be conclusive results that, if successful, *embody* answers to the research questions. It is anticipated that memories (of home) will become *experienceable* for model-makers and viewers in a new format as a selective, constructive and narrative process. However, the models and the process of their production are open to further exploration. Model-makers may present them alongside verbal narratives (written or spoken; recorded or presented live) and researchers from disciplines such as psychology, anthropology or sociology may assess the models applying their own methods.

As a theoretical part of the research, memory models are situated within the context of art, philosophy and memory research. In practice and theory, possibilities and limitations of the material embodiment of mental images will come into focus just as the relation between subject and object in the mediation of memories. It is expected that with the model simultaneously being a *trigger* and a *monitor* of memories, further perspectives for research and practical applications are going to emerge. For example, the approach may be of interest within therapeutic contexts (e.g. trauma work) or, supplementing narrative-based methodologies, in anthropological memory research.