

Abstracts Conference Changing Platforms of Memory Practices
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Edwin Carels

“Homeless Movies”

What happens with home movies once they leave their original context, traditionally the warm nest of a family? Often enough professional filmmakers have incorporated such amateur footage in their work. More recently these so called ‘orphan films’ are also frequently adopted by the art world. What are possible implications when they are transported from their original biotope to the heterotopia of the museum?

As a curator affiliated with the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA), I recently instigated a series of exhibitions that systematically took their cue from the Vrielynck collection. In 2003 the M HKA assumed guardianship of this private collection, that can be classified under the archaeology of the media and illustrates part of the development of film and projection apparatus by means of historical objects such as the magic lantern, optical toys, film camera’s, all the way to early video recording technologies. The museum likes to see this collection as material for researchers and artists, and thus I invited three artists to interpret it and create a large installation, drawing on materials of this collection.

Julien Maire operates at the point where installation, performance and media art meet and has for years been involved in reactivating old projection techniques with the aid of modern technology. His manipulations are driven by questions regarding current visual conventions and visual strategies in the digital era. For his *Mixed Memory* (2011) exhibition, Maire integrated large sections from the Vrielynck collection into his own installations.

Zoe Beloff looks for ways of visualizing the mind’s unconscious processes and tries to connect them to the technology of the moving image. She is not interested in the technology, but in the psychology that underlies it – which she calls ‘the dream life of technology’. The basic idea behind her exhibition *The Infernal Dream of Mutt and Jeff* (2012) was found in a super8 version of a Hollywood cartoon in the Vrielynck collection. Beloff seamlessly combines newly filmed passages with historical documents.

David Blair has developed a special, site-specific chapter of his ongoing project *The Telepathic Motion Picture of The Lost Tribes* (2013) to the Antwerp context. His expansive research takes us in a flashback to the reconstruction of a lost film production in Manchuria. Blair juggles with archive images, animation and live action to create a pseudo-scientific film in which he explores the boundaries between fact and fiction, truth and invention. His intention is to show that history is always a construction that is never definite but always changing and which requires new interpretations. In addition, the project is an allusion to the effect of nostalgia on our consumption of information.

The three selected artists share a common interest in media-archaeological concerns: digging up the past, they focus not only on iconography, but they also thematize the historicity of technologies of representation. Although all three artists have a very specific practice and each of them demonstrates a distinctly different approach to integrating installation work with the parameters of the museum, all three typically foreground their own dispositifs, and prefer experimental prototypes of display to conventional media for presentation.

BIO

Edwin Carels is a teacher and researcher in the arts at the School of Arts KASK/HoGent (University College Ghent - Faculty of Fine Arts). He holds a PhD in the arts, for which he wrote the dissertation 'Animation Beyond Animation: A Media-Archeological Approach to the Use of Animation in Contemporary Art.' He is currently working on a post-doc project under the title 'Counter-archives.' Since more than a decade, Edwin Carels is active as a film programmer and curator for the International Film Festival of Rotterdam. As a writer Carels publishes essays on media-archeology, visual arts, film and animation. Carels is also affiliated with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp, the M HKA, where he has curated thematic shows such as *El Hotel Eléctrico* (2014), *Graphology* (2011), *Animism* (2010) and *The Projection Project* (2006). Recent exhibitions have involved collaborations with Dora Garcia, Luc Tuymans, Chris Marker, The Quay Brothers, Robert Breer, Jan Svankmajer, Zoe Beloff, Julien and Ken Jacobs, among many others.

“Home Sweet Home Movies”

The *Home Sweet Home Movies* project, initiated in 2014 by Simona Monizza, Bernhard Andre and Onno Petersen with funds from the municipality of Amsterdam, aims at bringing closer together the private character of memories, as captured on home movies, to the collective experience of sharing those visual memories with an audience in an ‘intimate’ and safe cinema setting. For this project, the cinema settings were a few selected elderly homes in the center of Amsterdam. The audience was composed by their residents and assistants, some of whom actively participated by giving us access to their private home movies, which we collected, prepared and projected in its original format on site, accompanied by the commentary provided by the owners of the films. Recreating the original projection setting was an essential part of our approach as well as the involvement of the different family members, whose presence we considered essential in such an emotional experience.

To realize this project we collaborated closely with the activity organizers of the elderly homes who assisted us in the difficult phase of approaching the right people and in promoting the project internally. This mediation proved to be necessary to gain the right trust from the people involved and their families.

Thanks to our long term experience and involvement with **home movie day** in Amsterdam and similar events we developed a strong belief in the universal power of home movies to relate to several generations and their ability to unlock emotions and memories long hidden away. This inherent power of moving images is even stronger when it deals with aging people, suffering from memory loss and from de-rooting from their familiar environment. This project has shown us that there is a lot of potential in the approach we used and we hope that this can be further developed in the near future.

“Soldiers, Amateur Media and the Unbearable Intimacy of War Memories”

Is it possible that new media recording technologies could generate specific kinds of memory? This paper will explore the ways in which contemporary amateur media made by soldiers challenges existing memory studies through issues of visual ‘immediacy’ and

re-imagined collective war memory. It will address questions of 'memory authenticity' across in-depth analyses of several soldiers' first-person visual narratives, from mobile phone uploads on YouTube to vines, vlogs, Skype recordings and online visual crowd-sourced political activism. Issues of recording, representing and (mis)construing professional or guerrilla military identities and events will be discussed in close relation to theories of memory studies pertinent to the intricate and ongoing relationship between cultural frameworks of media recording technologies and recent interpretative perspectives within digital humanities. A particular attention will be paid to the role of the soldiers' amateur media in confirming or challenging visual narratives specific to military instructional films, documentaries, TV news programmes and feature films about particular conflicts, whether the U.S. 'war on terror', the Palestine-Israel ongoing conflict, the Arab 'Spring' uprising or the recent Syrian civil war.

Defined by visual theorists as 'an amateurized media universe' (Zimmermann 2013), the current visual culture and its by-product literacy are constantly shared and shaped by a synchronous global network of producers- cum-audience. While analyses of the rapid revisions in popular visual and digital culture have already been published (Koltay 2011, Hunter et al. 2013), and scholarship addressing amateur film culture is gaining a durable momentum (Rascaroli et al. 2014), the study of military amateur media as a 'text' able to contest conventional critical methodologies is still an uncharted territory for most media scholars.

This paper will advance the thesis that the study of soldiers' amateur media available online defines a new and almost ubiquitous visual literacy informing, negotiating and interpreting today's trends in understanding military identities, war memories and global histories. A comparative analysis of wide-ranging examples of amateur media will help highlight how common narratorial conventions of military reality-building patterns are most often challenged or even cancelled by the intrinsic (non-)logic of fortuitous visual narratives found in military trophy-films and mobile phone amateur videos of munitions testing, military training demonstrations, surveillance, mapping, and leisure activities during tours of duty in the front line. Attention will be paid to charting the role of military amateur media aesthetics and practices in the construction of particular collective war memories and their relation to issues of message veracity, interpretative immediacy, and documentary authenticity.

It will also be argued that the allegedly unmediated testimonial authority of the

soldiers' amateur media functions as a primary source-text in constructing and confirming specific military identities and events – a *text* that challenges dominant understandings of private and national visual records of war memory. Thus, in the current global digital network, the soldiers' amateur media that is available online – the open-source equivalent of traditional letter-writing practice – is shifting towards a new collective and tightly connected biographical visual syntax. This is a syntax that often relies on reactivated tropes of nostalgia, loss, absence and separation. Lastly, such examples of amateur media propose rich examples of *live military myth-making* and build a present continuous tense of displaced combat identity and of politicized and gendered traumas. The paper will conclude with a discussion of how in today's digital space, the anonymous global online audiences of the soldiers' amateur media witness and consume a mutable, open-ended collective war memory – the new social media's grand-narrative of plural and synchronous military storytelling.

BIO:

Dr. Annamaria Motrescu-Mayes is Associate Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Cambridge, Centre of South Asian Studies, since March 2009, where she researches the Centre's unique visual collections. She is also a Research Fellow at Clare Hall College, University of Cambridge. Her principal research interest considers the construction of racial, gender and political identities in colonial visual records and their relevance to current European imperial studies. She furthermore explores new research methodologies by using theories of visual rhetoric in exploring modern South Asian history for the British A-level and Higher Education curriculum and for the Indian National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi and Bangalore. In 2013 she has launched - in collaboration with the Centre for Research in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CRASSH) at the University of Cambridge - a yearly conference program dedicated to visual studies and South Asian history.

“Tagging, Titling, Describing, Liking, Commenting, Sharing, or, the Sociotechnical Practices of the ‘New Memory Ecology’”

The promise of participation advocated by Web 2.0 has left its marks on memory work. On platforms like Facebook and YouTube users produce their own semi-autobiographical timelines, are part of groups in which personal and mediated memories converge, and (re)create historical traces on their channels and playlists. Once content is uploaded, users curate (tag, title and describe) and interact with (comment on, like and share). These practices increase the searchability and visibility of content on platforms. Thus, through these sociotechnical practices – inscribed in social media platforms – users are engaged in structuring potential memory objects.

Precisely on the levels of curation and interaction the politics and agency of platforms in the construction of memory become visible. In algorithmically favoring – based on the curating and interactive practices of users – particular content over other content, platforms reveal themselves as agents of memory. These practices are sociotechnical, because, dialectically, the platform steers and enables certain practices vis-à-vis content, while these practices shape the content of the platform. Hence, the platforms on which potential memory objects are uploaded and shared are anything but neutral tools for storage and display.

The conclusions of two case studies will empirically inform this exploration. The first focuses on the visibility of witness videos, uploaded to YouTube, of a chemical weapons attack on Ghouta, Syria, in August 2013. Uploaders curated this material with different degrees of success – in terms of ending up in search results. Results show, for example, that legacy and web-native media are more successful in ending up in search results than activists and witnesses themselves, partly because they curate their material effectively. Hence, these actors and their ways of framing dominate – in terms of visibility – on YouTube.

The second case study provides an analysis of the usage and production of imagery on the Facebook page Justice for Mike Brown. On August 9, 2014, 18 year-old African-American Michael Brown was shot dead by white police officer Darren Wilson, instigating protests in Ferguson and other cities in the US. The open group page became one of the many social media hubs that helped organize and document the protests. On

it, many users commented on events and commemorated Brown by uploading photos and videos, covering both the present and the past. The visibility of certain visuals is dependent on the algorithmic ‘edge’ it generates, which is generated through the practices of liking, commenting and sharing.

By means of these case studies, this paper aims to demonstrate how sociotechnical practices simultaneously enable and shape mediated memory in a time in which potentially ‘everybody’ can participate in its construction – leading to a ‘new memory ecology’ – yet in which only certain voices are heard.

BIO

Rik Smit is a junior lecturer and third-year PhD candidate at the center for media and journalism studies at the University of Groningen. His PhD research focuses on changing and emerging memory practices in contemporary digital culture. Additionally, he is involved in a project that investigates media practices and rituals of historical audiences.

Christine Lohmeier (absent: Christian Pentzold)

“Mediated Memory Work: Conceptual grounding and empirical analysis of media-related remembering practices”

The mediated environments we live by are both, oblivious and observant. On the one hand, too many messages, images, tweets and comments compete for attention and nothing attracts concentration for long. On the other hand, all activities done in, with, and through digitally networked media are recorded, archived, and retrievable and in that sense cannot be forgotten.

Under these circumstances, how can we possibly think about remembrance and memory in current mediascapes? In other words, how can we understand the ways, personal and public memories are enacted in environments that have become increasingly digitally networked? Following this fundamental question, we first develop a concept of mediated memory work. Building on theories of social practices, accomplishing remembrance and commemoration is thus understood as happening in sets of sequenced activities done in relation to media and geared into personal as well as collective memories. Capitalizing on such an understanding of mediated memory work, the paper demonstrates how and to what ends the enactment of memories can thus be

empirically studied by example of the Cuban American community in Miami.

As an exile community, the experience of migration has made some of the analyzed practices particularly apparent. Then again, they are not specific to the Cuban American community or migrant communities as such, but rather can be observed in a variety of settings and communities. Building on participant observation, in-depth interviews and (media) ethnography, we outline practices, cultural artifacts, communal bonds, compassionate relations and a media manifold that have been employed by different segments of the diasporic collective to shape what and how the country of origin and the exilic experience is remembered. Within these examples the diverse strategies and practices of individuals of the community become apparent. They vary in terms of approach, intensity of engagement, the media employed in the process and the degree of institutionalization sought. In addition, by analyzing these dynamics we demonstrate the ways of passage memory objects undertake from moving to individual to collective realms and possibly back again. They also travel between analogue and digital spaces, for example, when they are described in a blog post as part of a memory practices or become digitized to enter a museum collection.

BIO:

Dr. Christine Lohmeier is an Assistant Professor at LMU Munich. She is currently also a guest professor in the Media and Communication Department at the University of Bremen. Christine's research interests are located at the intersections of communication, identity and belonging. Current projects look at the dynamics of mediated memories, the connections and ruptures between online and offline environments and their materialities and the impact of mediatization on everyday life. Christine serves as the managing editor of the ICA-journal Communication Theory.

Melinda Blos-Jáni

“Children. Moving. Image. The history of the Complicity Between Children and Recording Process in Home Movies”

Introducing the discussion of the filmic portrait, Paul Arthur makes a brief but relevant observation about the Lumière brothers' *Le Repas de bébé*: “the performative exchange between observer and observed, this fleeting glimpse of domestic life can be regarded as

film history's primal 'home movie'" (2005. 24). *Le Repas de bébé* emblemizes the way in which images of children came to represent ideas of medium specificity at the beginnings of cinema history and also the performative exchange characteristic to home movies. The purpose of this paper is to examine what has become of these genealogical traits of the primal home movie during home movie history. What kind of 'real'/immediacy concept is represented by the corporeal images of children from different eras of home movies?

Amateur media dispositifs have become accomplices of the adult filmmaker¹, and at the same time they have influenced the experience of childhood as well. The camera has become a third party: parents are perceiving, paying attention to their child medially, and children meet them, interact with them (and even imagine themselves) in an increasingly mediated environment. That is why the emphasis will be on children's performances before and for the camera. How do children participate in the creation and mediation of their own image?

In family films the human figures very often turn to the camera and look at the camera, as if this makes them even more alive and more visible. According to my own research the look into the camera occurs more often when children are pictured. The recurrence of this behavior was noticed by the first how-to-do-it manuals, later in the 1980s by research as well. Roger Odin (1995) considers the frequent look into the camera a figure, and uses it as an argument to explain that home movies are fragmentary, and are "bad films" on a textual level. Richard Chalfen describes it as "a repetitive pattern in the on-camera performance" (1987. 67). The almost continuous acknowledgement of the camera was recently re-evaluated by Liz Czach as a distinctive feature of home movie performance aesthetic (2006, 2012). Through the survey of the ameliorative literature of home movies, which (in former times) negatively interpreted the direct address as "poor acting" or "acting unnaturally", Czach reevaluates it as a unique attribute of home movies, a sign of crafted behavior, of "acting naturally" (cf. Czach 2012. 154). As I see it, direct address reveals more than just a type of performativity/acting, a way of breaking the fourth wall into the lives of people. Looking into the camera includes the viewer in the familial intimacy between people and their

¹ As Heather Norris Nicholson notes it: "only with changes in parental attitudes and camera technologies have children begun to picture themselves" (Norris Nicholson 2001. 130).

media. The viewer gets invited into the way others experience media and feels included as a part of this media.

Pursuing these ideas, the following analysis looks into children's portraiture, with emphasis on the details when the actors are facing the camera, or accost it with their gestures. Do today's children look towards the camera like the Lumière baby used to? What has become of the performative exchange between the filmed bodies and the camera that has undergone so many technological changes ever since its invention? Departing from these questions I will be focusing on the filmic portraits of children/childhoods as seen in local (Transylvanian) home movies originating from different periods of (media) history: the 1930s, the 1980s and the present.

BIO:

Dr. Melinda Blos-Jáni is assistant professor at the Photography, Cinematography and Media Department of Sapientia - Hungarian University of Transylvania where she teaches introductory courses in film history and film analysis. In 2012 she finished her PhD thesis entitled *The Domestication of Moving Image Technologies and Media Practices in Familial Contexts: An Anthropological Research*. Her **research interests include:** home videos and amateur films, autobiographical documentaries, silent cinema, media genealogy. She is currently a member of the research project entitled *Re-mediated Images as Figurations of Intermediality and Post-Mediality in Central and East European Cinema* headed by Ágnes Pethő (Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca).

Tom Slootweg

“Re-Shaping the Home Mode Dispositif: Using Home Video Away From Home”

With this paper I want to share several of my explorations and findings related to the topic of home mode (Chalfen 1987) filmmaking with the arrival of consumer video technologies in the Netherlands. I do so with a subtitle that is indebted to the work of Dutch film historian Nico de Klerk. In an article written for the well-known edited volume *Mining the Home Movie* (2008), De Klerk charted the visual construction of pre-WWII Dutch colonial everyday family life in the former Dutch East Indies through home movies by describing it as a practice primed towards making filmic memories of a “Home Away from Home.” Taking a leap to the mid-1980s, the central case study in this

paper will revolve around the Dutch expat W. family who similarly strived to mediate their new “home away from home.” Gerrit, employed at the multinational Royal Dutch Shell, his wife and two young children had left Europe for a five-year posting in Oman, an oil-rich Sultanate on the Arabian Peninsula. Different from the expats in the 1920s and 1930s who used small-gauge technologies, he was fascinated by the possibilities and features of one of the first consumer VHS camera-recorder units, or camcorders. As the family was about to leave for the Middle East, he decided to purchase this still rather bulky and expensive camera to capture his family’s everyday life abroad for the extended family and friends back in the Netherlands.

Rather than relying solely on traditional discourse analysis of written sources, my exploration will be based on an oral history recounted by the family in question. This methodology has allowed me to explore how some of the members of the W. family, in retrospect, reflected on the symbolic role of this early video camcorder as a “technology of memory” (Van House and Churchill 2008) on the one hand, and home video’s status as a “mediated memory” (Van Dijck, 2007) artifact on the other. As to the former, Gerrit regarded the camcorder as a new technology that allowed him to capture moving images with synchronous sound: without the need for laborious post-production processes such as separately recording his audio commentary or editing and splicing the reels. Daughter Anita, however, regarded her father’s use of the camcorder as tiresome and intrusive; something her off-screen presence on the audio track still bears witness to. In retrospect she nevertheless acknowledged the highly symbolic value of the device and videotape, were responsible for mediating the “rose-glass tinted” memories of her childhood in terms of what can be described as an idyllic “never home” (Motrescu-Mayes 2014).

In a concluding reflection I will point at how these insights give strong indications of the changing dispositif of the home mode with the arrival of video. Firstly, the use of video in the home mode resulted in another dynamic of recording and performativity during production in which the possibility of synchronous sound and extended recording time resulted in a different “material articulation” (Moran 2002); especially compared to home movies as mediated memories. Secondly, I will broach the home video screening context, which implied another media environment for the conveyance of mediated memory artifacts altogether. Whereas the small-gauge home mode dispositif relied on the ritualized screening in a darkened room with a carefully placed projector

and screen, home video relied on the television set and a VCR – gradually becoming the standard media ensemble of the living room during the 1980s.

BIO:

Tom Sloopweg is a PhD candidate at the University of Groningen. His research focuses on the (often utopian) hopes and expectations surrounding the introduction of consumer video technologies in the Netherlands, with a specific interest in video's appropriation by amateur users as an audio-visual technology of memory. Tom is also a board member of the Dutch Foundation for Amateur Film. His research is part of the NWO-funded project 'Changing Platforms of Ritualized Memory Practices: The Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies.'

Diego Cavallotti

“Le Dispositif Introuvable: Amateur Analog Videomaking as Everyday Audio-visual Production”

This paper aims at addressing two theoretical aspects of amateur videomaking. The first one refers to the development of analytical tools for “everyday life-centred” productions in the analog video- era (1970-1995). The second one refers to the connection between “everyday life-centred” productions and the amateur analog videomaking apparatus as an “unfindable apparatus”: functional and technological obsolescence marks the limits that restrain every apparatus reconstruction attempt. Functional and technological obsolescence establishes a third typology, the practical obsolescence, which represents the core of our issues.

On the one hand, the definition of apparatus/*dispositif* by, for instance, Kessler and Tortajada insists on the immaterial side of the apparatus, underscoring how the apparatus forecasts its possible uses; on the other hand, the practical interactions between technology and “everyday analog-videomakers” are almost impossible to trace, concerning the widest range of uses that video-devices allow. Videomakers' agency was connected to the development of empirical protocols that had left traces only in the memories of the videomaker and her/his friends and relatives. Everyday analog-videomakers appropriated the apparatus, negotiating on their side the terms of technology usage and their interrelationships with the institutional framework, whose

main emanations are, e.g., manuals, magazines, and advertisement. How can the researchers make visible those invisible traces left by the apparatus appropriation? Can they acknowledge the invisible structures of the everyday analog-video *dispositif(s)*, which appears to be, in a Bellourian way, “unfindable” (the problematic status of this concept will be argued in the paper)? At this point, what are the interrelationships between the “everyday analog-videomakers” and other untraceable and unfindable *dispositifs*? How can we scientifically investigate this protean fieldwork?

Our attempt refers to an archaeological approach in which the main task is to make visible “buried” traces. We propose to start from the surface of our archaeological site: what has survived until now as a discursive/strategic item. For instance, magazines offer an interesting point in making visible *le dispositif introuvable* on the strategic side. Two concepts will be at stake here: the apparatus as a functional beam that shapes the interrelationships between technology and everyday life media environment (in which we can find both amateur videos and films, etc. – the apparatus as an interconnection level between different technologies); the apparatus as integrated system for shooting and watching audiovisual materials.

This kind of approach entails several problems. The major issue is connected here to the relevance of the strategic sphere that casts a shadow on the tactical sphere (related to the agency of the videomakers). The paper will propose two different solutions. The first one is making reference to the *erratologie* theory by Chéroux (shooting tips for rookies as a catalogue of mistakes): the videomaker’s performativity/agency comes to visibility between the lines of these texts. The second one is the comparison between the strategic/discursive prescriptions and the only tangible traces left behind by videomakers, their videos. We will briefly analyze some extracts of two videos from the collection of Antonio Cabrini (an Italian everyday analog-videomaker) and verify which guidelines had been applied or discarded.

BIO:

Diego Cavallotti (1983) is a PhD student at the University of Udine. He received his MA in Communication Studies at the University of Milan with a thesis about amateur film theory. His doctoral research aims at conceiving new theoretical tools for analyzing the outbreak of the amateur video phenomenon and the coexistence between amateur film and amateur video practices in Italy during the 1970s, the 1980s and the early 1990s. He

published several papers concerning these topics: among them “Archivio amatoriale e rimediazione digitale” [“Amateur Archives and Digital Remediation”] (*Fata Morgana*, n. 24, February 2015); “Produzione discorsiva e tecnologia: note teorico-metodologiche per una ricerca sulle riviste per videoamatori” [Discursive Production and Technology: Theoretical and Methodological Proposals for Researching Amateur-Video Magazines] (*Cinergie*, n. 7, March 2015), and many others. He also attended the 22th International Film Conference of Udine – FilmForum2015 (March 2015) with the paper “To the Anonymous Home-Videomaker: Subjectivity Construction in Italian Amateur Foto-Film-Video Magazines Between 1975 and 1985”.

Tim van der Heijden

“Hybrid Amateur Media *Dispositifs*: Historicizing Periods of Transition in Home Movie Practices”

Past media technologies and practices have long been historicized by either constructing narratives of continuity and discontinuity (‘media history’) or reconstructing alternate and non-linear histories (‘media archaeology’). Alternatively, this paper proposes a form of media historiography that approaches media as ultimately “hybrid”. Building on the insight that media never exist in isolation of other media, but always relate, remediate and interact with each other, I will argue that scholars interested in long-term media historical developments should consider hybridity as an analytical category for studying past media technologies, user practices and discourses. Drawing on empirical findings from my research on the cultural dynamics of home movie practices – including examples of hybrid media artefacts enabling for the projection of 8mm film reels on television devices (e.g. Canovision); hybrid discourses (“moving photographs”); and hybrid media usages (e.g. Vertical Video Syndrome) – I will show that looking at ‘periods of transition’ in amateur media *dispositifs* is particularly fruitful for studying amateur media practices and user generational shifts from both a diachronic (succeeding in time) and synchronic (interacting in time) perspective.

BIO:

Tim van der Heijden (1984) is a PhD candidate at Maastricht University, the Netherlands. He holds a RMA degree in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam

(*cum laude*) and a BA in Cultural Studies (Erasmus University Rotterdam / University of Essex, UK). In his research, which is part of the NWO-funded research project “*Changing Platforms of Ritualized Memory Practices: The Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies*”, he investigates the relation between changing amateur media technologies (film, video, digital media) and memory practices in home movie making and screening from a long-term historical and user generations perspective.

Michael Geuenich and Sebastian Thalheim

“Stored Memories: Practices of Watching and Sharing Small-Gauge Home Movies”

In the past small-gauge home movies, developed and undeveloped, were stored in attics and cellars. Nowadays digital private film material is used and stored in similar ways: rarely viewed after the production and primarily saved on chip cards, hard drives, and in “clouds”. Yet at the same time private imagery is mainly produced as a kind of “cultural memory”, relying on its continual comprehensibility. How can the function of producing and saving memory be connected with just an occasional screening? What functions play a role in the reception of home movies beyond the function of memory, and can any changes be detected in this?

This presentation presents possible answers to these questions, reflecting the usage of analogue, small-gauge home movies (Super 8 and its predecessors). According to Chalfen, home movies have to be understood rather as acts of symbolic communication and the function of usage is every bit as important as the cinematographic text itself. The study of production and screening processes is vital for understanding home movies in their entirety and the everyday practices of using small-gauge film equipment. Using qualitative, guided biographical interviews we try to illuminate these practices of recording and screening home movies in post-war German families on both sides of the Wall.

We assume that the reception of private substandard films was not a regular activity – the images were consumed a few times and then stored in the attic or the cellar. A possible reason for this paradox may be found in a gradual functional change in presenting home movies. The main reason, according to statements by many of their producers, was the production and recall of memory – but especially in its contemporary usage (shortly after recording) “sharing” the films with friends and

neighbors plays an equally important role. So Odin's definition of "film de famille" requires a slight revision, as an audience that seems to include more than the actual family influences the social functionality of the home movies. The function of storing memory still remains important, yet beyond that the sharing of private imagery particularly served self-representation. First and foremost it was shared to present evidence of a good and happy life as well as the wealth and leisure time to pursue this hobby. The function of memory is then reinforced by the time that has passed – the longer the time between recording and screening the more the movies become a nostalgic treasure. From a historical perspective it has to be discussed whether sharing is a motive unique to digital imagery, as suggested by José van Dijck (2008).

We assume that (like digital images nowadays) the contemporaneous audience of analogue movies was characterized by friends, neighbors, relatives and the family. In fact some everyday practices of analogue and digital private imagery even appear to be similar: for example movies shot on cellphones are rather produced for a direct and sharing usage and are equally seldom viewed, as recent Swiss investigations on production and use of mobile-phone movies suggest.

BIO:

Michael Geuenich, MA, research assistant at the Department of European Ethnology of the University of Muenster. Since 2014 Geuenich is working on his PhD thesis concerning private substandard films during the "Wertewandel" (change of values) in West Germany. He is responsible for several lectures and articles in magazines and anthologies on different aspects of the usage of home movies. Sebastian Thalheim, MA, is lecturer at the Department of European Ethnology of the University of Muenster. Since 2014 Thalheim is working on his PhD thesis concerning the usage and function of home movies during the political and social changes of the 1970s in former East Germany. He teaches practical film seminars and courses on ethnographic films besides freelance work in many professional film productions.

“Google Earth: A Site for Remembering and Erasure”

This paper focuses on how websites can constitute a new kind of discursive historiography that structures actuality in ways that both construct/mediate a situation or event as both present and absent, and which also prescribes the erasure of that event in public memory. My paper refers particularly to the media cultures inherent to the *dispositif* of the vast geographical visualization platform known as Google Earth. This massively accessible website allows for both amateur (citizen) and professional mapping projects. Google maintains a program associated with the site called Google Earth Outreach that caters to a huge and ever increasing number of Not For Profit organizations and also to individual users. Google Earth allows the individual to access and contribute to massive amounts of information based on personalized conjunctions between time and place. For example, you can easily track your walk through a particular countryside and save a video clip of a map showing your journey to your own Google Earth home webpage. Google Earth acts then as a multi-layered cultural artifact. It offers geographical information gleaned from satellite images to institutions, governments, organizations, militias and also to the individual for personalized use.

For my discussion I draw on the Google Earth embedded site ‘Crisis in Darfur’ as a case study that I have researched extensively for my book *Google Earth: Outreach and Activism* (Bloomsbury Academic, New York, 2015). My writing for the book had its own research parameters; I now plan to research further two cultural aspects of Google Earth that are highly significant for understanding the ways in which new social memories are both produced and erased by digital media platforms. This paper firstly examines the way in which ‘Crisis in Darfur’ - with all its archaeology of web links, images and testimonies - contributes to society’s tertiary memory of the Darfur conflict. Secondly, I discuss how the site’s placement on the World Wide Web inevitably makes this new kind of web-based history, either institutional or personal, vulnerable to an abyss of forgetting where erasure is disguised as closure at best and irrelevance at worst.

BIO:

Dr. Catherine Summerhayes is the author of the recent books *Google Earth: Outreach and Activism* (Bloomsbury Academic, New York 2015) *The Moving Images of Tracey Moffatt*

(Charta Edizione, New York and Milan 2007) and co-editor and chapter author of the book *New Documentary Ecologies. Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, Palgrave Macmillan 2014). Her main research areas are in documentary studies, performance studies and digital media studies. Her work has been published widely in national and international journals and anthologies, and in 2012 she convened the Visible Evidence Conference in Documentary Studies at the Australian National University and the National Film and Sound Archives of Australia.

Richard Vickers

“Remembering the Future: The Vernacular, Technology, and Memory”

This paper traces the impact of technology on vernacular media, first on still photography and then the moving image, exploring technologies relationship to culture and memory. In the mid-19th century, the era that saw the birth of photography, the poet Charles Baudelaire wrote a portrait of the flâneur as a reconnoiter of the city. In the 1920’s Walter Benjamin proposed that Baudelaire’s flâneur was significant in the developing concept of modernity and urbanization, and that the rise of consumer capitalism in the early 20th century signaled the demise of the flâneur (Benjamin 1983). Today we may challenge Benjamin’s proposition, as nothing signifies current consumer culture than the smart phone, the ubiquitous symbol of the era: these devices with GPS geotagging, utilized by many, perhaps make contemporary flâneurs of us all.

In the 1990’s the Web began to facilitate a participatory media sharing culture that has become increasingly realized in the early 21st century with the development of social media platforms, combined with the ever-increasing media recording abilities of the smart phone. These devices may signify the final stage in the process of the democratization of photography that began in 1900 with the release of the Kodak box Brownie camera that first made photography affordable to the masses. The nascent amateur photographer, capturing scenes of the everyday and the prosaic, began a new genre of photography: the vernacular of the snapshot.

Today social media networks such as Facebook, micro-blogging service Twitter and media sharing platforms including YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Flickr and more recently the short-form video sharing service Vine, facilitate the instant sharing of the vernacular (still and moving) to family and friends or the public at large. As Rubinstein

and Sluis (2008) state: “the networking of the snapshot provides something which vernacular photographers have always lacked: a broad audience.” However in this age of immediacy, without the need to process film, these snapshots (still and moving media) are easily deleted and increasingly ephemeral.

The networking of media and the exponential development of digital technologies in general, may pose a challenge to remembering in the future, especially the vernacular, the nuance of the everyday. Vinton Cerf (2015), one of the pioneers of the Internet, recently warned that the 21st century may be the ‘digital dark age’ [3], and that humanity’s first steps into the digital world could be lost to future historians. How will we remember the future?

BIO:

Richard Vickers is the Deputy Head of the Lincoln School of Film & Media, University of Lincoln, United Kingdom. His research is at the intersection of media, culture and technology, focussing on the area of networked convergent/emerging media. He is exploring the creative opportunities and societal/cultural impact of expanded documentary and participatory media. He has produced projects that explore participatory culture and the digital vernacular.

Niels Kerssens

“Engines Retrieve, Humans Seek: Remembering the History of Online Search Practices”

We are in love with the information that is stored, processed, and transmitted to us by the Internet. It is the state of information being in fingertips reach, yet stored outside of our own minds, that we have come to cherish, and can no longer do without. With us satisfying basically all of our immediate information needs by consulting this massive information repository, the Internet now increasingly seems to function as what McLuhan would have referred to as an extension of the human faculty of memory. Importantly, to be able to call something from this exogenous mind, the information that it archives has to be retrievable through search. For the sake of efficiency, the online search has been outsourced to a memory machine.

The search engine is in charge of information retrieval, and does the searching on behalf of its users. Sophisticated algorithms determine what is brought back into their minds from the Internet as archive, hence what is remembered. While the rise of non-human agencies in search raises important questions concerning the politics of algorithmic mediation, it also assumes the marginalization of human agencies in the act of information inquiry. Search increasingly appears as attribute of the machine rather than the human. It seems that while we are in love with information, we don't want it to take up much space cognitively. Are we losing our inquisitive minds to machines? This paper attempts to bring back the mind in search by remembering two historical *practices* of online searching in which computer technology integrated with its human and ideological surroundings.

BIO

Niels Kerssens (1982) is PhD candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and lecturer at the department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. After completing his BA in Art History in 2009 and his RMA in Media Studies in 2011 at the University of Amsterdam, he was awarded a PhD fellowship by ASCA in the same year. The title of his dissertation is "Cultures of Use: A History of the Integration of the Computer with the Everyday", and is supervised by prof.dr. J.F.T.M. (José) van Dijck and dr. B. (Bernhard) Rieder. Research interests include (new) media history, media archaeology, software studies, and the history of computing.

Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna

"Video-Capitalism Revisited: The Experience of VHS Collective Screenings in Contemporary Poland "

In my paper I will present findings from the research on remembering and replaying the "VHS experience" among contemporary Polish viewers. I will focus on the case of the very popular periodic screenings entitled VHS HELL (organized in Poland for the last five years). VHS HELL organizers call their initiative a "nostalgic tribute to the American double feature grindhouse cinema, as well as to the Polish reality of the political transformation period back in the 80s and 90s. We want you to recollect the times, when after the fall of communism, video rental agencies ruled the districts of the grey blocks-

of-flats architecture whose inhabitants blindly relished in the West”.

My aim is to analyze narrative interviews conducted with these screenings organizers and their regular audience members. In my paper I will juxtapose the outcome of the interviews with material and discursive efforts undertaken by organizers to meet those nostalgia-driven promises (i.e. programming issues, questions of dispositif and intertextual relay). I will also dig into questions of spectators identities and different modes of viewing experience (including Alison Landsberg’s (2004) notion of prosthetic memory), since among the audience members one may find various ideologies representatives (diverted not only by age but also by symbolic and economic capital). Then my goal is to enrich research on the VHS nostalgia with political dimension represented by somewhat disturbing longing for the imagined unfettered free-market capitalism of the transformation period.

BIO:

Pabiś-Orzeszyna teaches at The School of Media and Audiovisual Culture (University of Lodz). His PhD thesis concerned changes that took place since the 1980s in cinema history methodology including the influence of media archeology. Currently I am working on the social history of Polish media industry.

Mirosław Filiciak

“Medium as the Local Memory: Pirated VHS Tapes and Remembering the People’s Republic of Poland in P2P Networks Era”

Technologies mediate memory practices. But there is more than that - because of continuous format changes, the media themselves become the memory objects. It is particularly visible in the case of analog, physical media, disappearing in the immaterial files era. In my presentation I would like to talk about the media archeology project devoted to the social life of video recorders in the People’s Republic of Poland. The project, conducted with Patryk Wasiak, is based on the archival studies, but also on the interviews with people in the video market of the era. Using the obtained knowledge, I am analyzing VHS cassettes as the material manifestation of complex video industry of those times. Those cassettes embody the processes of pirate modernization (Ravi Sundaram), being part of local media stories. Still they can be the impulse for

contemporary thought of media practices, because the memories they carry are present in Polish public discourse selectively. They are part of the narration about weird, but funny times. The other possible discourse seems to be erased - and it is about the continuity between media practices of Poles in the socialist VHS- era and the contemporary, digital Poland.

Ruined cassettes, with the home-made stickers, symbols of illegal entrepreneurs distributing them, low-quality recordings with amateur dubbing, were the part of Polish bottom-up distribution industry. They were the proof that even modern global technologies work differently in local, especially peripheral contexts; that even in the times of easy copying, access to the media is not evenly distributed. Those local differences are still valid in P2P networks era. The process of “colonial sublime” (Brian Larkin), based on the tension between media seen as the connection to the mythical “West” and media which work imperfectly, lacking “Western”, high quality support for the users, have not disappeared with the physical media. I propose to look at the VHS tapes as the evocative objects (Sherry Turkle), mobilizing memories about history of social media practices and video circulations opposing the dualistic distinctions between legal and illegal, formal and informal, amateur and professional. At the same time video cassettes collectors and producers of contemporary Polish music videos, who use characteristic, VHS-like blurry images, show us probably the biggest risk for not-so-far history media research: a little too comfortable mode of remembering the past, nostalgia.

BIO:

Mirosław Filiciak is Associate Professor in the Cultural Studies Department at University of Social Sciences and Humanities SWPS, Warsaw (Poland). He is interested in the theory of media studies, archeology of media and the relations between media technologies and cultural practices. He led many research projects, including „The Circulations of Culture” (2012) and „Youth and Media” (2013).

“Between the Intimate and the Consumer: Changing Perceptions of Personal Media Platforms”

One of the most essential features of the capitalism, as György Lukács argues, is the process of commodification. The latter transforms every realm of conscious human activity into a product of consumption or an object of a bargain, which could be sold and bought. Market relations not only run the show of all public correlations, but also gradually and implacably intrude into the purely private and intimate spheres. Domestic photography, earlier clearly opposed to market-based fine art photography and photojournalism, seems to suffer this very fate. Taken out of the personal archives, a photograph was pervaded into a product of the mass culture; a better proof of that than a personalized mug and a T-shirt printing could scarcely be afforded.

Some critics have of course problematized the impact of the modern culture on the photographic image (cf. Rose Gillian, Frosh Paul). However, no studies have considered the complicated relationship between the media as a platform of image and the image as such. Therefore the purpose of this research is to examine cultural consequences of the diversification of media platforms, containing photographs (from photographic paper to digital frameworks, glass, wood, canvas, mugs and T-shirts, mentioned above), and the change in our perception of the image depending on its representational form. We do know that the consumer politics of the society changes the treatment of things; we hope to find out how. The necessity of such analysis becomes more obvious if we recall the initial goal of personal photographs is to keep the particular moment save and/or visible. Yet does one actually pay more attention to the photo printed on the mug or hung on the wall? Does the latter two examples become “invisible” and thus overlooked as a part of the wallpaper or consumer culture? How does the status of the photo as a memory alter when it comes to commodity fetishism? These are the questions of the supreme significance for me in this paper.

This study employs a mixed methods research strategy. Cultural analysis, on the one hand, is used with the intention to explore changes and adaptations of the culture to the new technologies and market trends. Next to that, we also need a phenomenological exploration of aspects connected with the personal experience of (non-)looking at the photographic image and (non-)remembering through different media platforms. In

other words, this method is indispensable in scrutinizing the technologies of memory and perception. The findings of this research may be useful for cultural studies and history of arts, as it aims to reflect on the personal archival practices of the present.

Domingo Martinez Rosario

“Contemporary Art Worlds as a Platform of Memory: From Analogue Resources of Memory to Digital Art: Walid Raad”

This paper is situated in the context of Contemporary Art practice and its links with cultural memory. In it I will explain how Contemporary Art has become a medium within which to hold current discussions and debates about memory, paying particular attention to the changes in platforms of memory and how they resonate with artistic practice. Traditional storage mediums of memory, for example analogue amateur photograph and home video, have become important resources for contemporary artists working with memory. Such approaches can be used to revise or reassert historical events, epochs of social change and the way in which people record and pass on their memories. This process often involves the digitisation of analogue mediums and results in final artworks comprising videos, photographs, video installations, images projections or online archives.

This paper will explore the work of Tacita Dean, Kristov Wodizcko and Shimon Attie, predominantly focusing on those of Walid Raad, in particular his online archive of photographs, videos and artworks which merge old and new ways of recording, retrieving and broadcasting memory from the private realm to the public life. Raad’s work confronts the atrocities of the recent Lebanese conflict. Although his exhibitions feature present his work in different disciplines, together online they constitute one virtual archive. The action of curating and online archive of work creates a reflexive space for the contemplation on how history is constructed, with the archive’s artwork commonality being human affect and the capturing of everyday events. In the case of the Lebanese conflict, this is recorded in notebooks, oral testimony, amateur photography and home videos. Due to this, the archive is situated in both the private and the public, occupying a liminal space as every piece of the project has been created from fragments of personal archives that, eventually, become public the moment they are uploaded.

The contrast between analogue and digital platforms of memory in contemporary artworks make the viewer be aware of the ever evolving ways in which we record and document our everyday life, as well as the huge impact that the digital and the virtual have on it.

BIO:

Dr. Domingo Martinez holds a PhD in Fine Art from the University of Valencia. He was awarded a BA in Fine Art from the University of Salamanca in 2006 and a Masters in Artistic Production from the University of Valencia in 2007. He was awarded an Erasmus Scholarship to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and has been the recipient of a Fellowship at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Martinez's thesis *Artwork as Countermonument: Representation of the Unheroic Memory as a Resource for Contemporary Art* explores the theory and practice of contemporary art, utilizing cultural memory theories to analyze the methods through which twenty artists use 'memory' in their work. The artists' works contribute to contemporary debates around notions of cultural memory and question the traditional idea of history of something that is absolute and unsusceptible to change. Martinez is also an accomplished artist and has been the recipient of several prestigious scholarships, including the Francisco de Zurbarán award (Junta de Extremadura, 2008), a residency at the Antonio Gala Foundation for Young Artists (Córdoba, 2007) as well as participating in Living Art Terra IV Sanxenxo (Pontevedra, 2006). As a practitioner and academic, Martinez's work often crosses boundaries, uniting theory with practice and resulting in several solo and group exhibitions in both Spain and the United Kingdom. He is currently working as a secondary school art teacher, artist and independent scholar in London.

Carmen Viveros Celín

“Cartographies of Memory Through the Audio-visual: Autobiography, Home Movies and Amateur Practices”

As an educational strategy in the course of Audiovisual Narrative Theory of the Social Communication program at the Universidad del Norte (Barranquilla-Colombia), I have introduced my students (between 17 and 25 years old) to audiovisual forms that appeal to the use of film-video footage, home movies and photographs. From writing their own

autobiographies by using these materials, the students produced a series of new audiovisual stories that in its entirety formed a collective memory of the Colombian Caribbean; a kind of a collective and subjective map.

This paper analyzes and synthesizes audiovisual texts resulting from this academic experiment, by identifying emerging issues, focusing on the story and how these personal narratives relate to social and political reality of the country. This experience is part of a current collaborative research project with my students, which aims to develop what I call "pedagogies of memory" through the audiovisual. It combines an experimental form autobiography, with the help of audiovisual archives and amateur practices. The main objective is to incorporate these practices into the training processes of contemporary audiovisual production in Colombia in order to raise the level of involvement of audiovisual narratives produced by students in the reality of a country with such strong political tensions: through the appropriation and recycling of these materials from their own audiovisual archives. The final results of this process will be presented in an online platform called "Cartographies of Memory".

BIO:

Carmen Viveros Celín is born in Barranquilla, Colombia (1972). She graduated in Systems Engineering with a minor in Projects Management from the Universidad del Norte in Colombia (1995). She holds a Master degree in Theory and Practice of Creative Documentary at the Autonomous University of Barcelona – UAB (2001). Currently, she is a full-time lecturer and is also working in her doctoral dissertation entitled "Family film archives in the Colombian Caribbean as devices of collective, public and private memory" at the Universidad del Norte. As part of her work in the Master's program at the UAB, she participated in the production process of almost one hundred of documentaries that have been broadcasted by different TV networks. The documentaries also have participated in and received awards at film festivals worldwide. She is the co-author of the article "The Master in Creative Documentary at the UAB and the New Ecology of the Documentary", published in the book *Realidad y Creación en el Cine de No-Ficción. El documental catalan contemporáneo*. (Casimiro Torreiro ed. Cátedra 2010). (Reality and Creation in the non-Fiction Film. *The Contemporary Catalan Documentary Film*).

“Constructing Conjuality: Reading the Marriage Videos in Delhi”

Despite their seemingly intimate and private nature, weddings in India are usually extremely performative public events whose afterlife as memory resides in technological forms and formats. From the wedding photograph album to VHS marriage videos and now YouTube channels, the genealogy of the marriage video allow us to explore the relationship between event, memory and mediation as it moves between public and private spheres, and between technology and affect. While photography had served the traditional role of documenting a wedding, the introduction of video and along with it the ‘liveness’ of an event, led to the emergence of a new form of intimate spectatorship that has transformed the experience of familial and conjugal spaces.

In 1984 the emergence of video technology in India through grey market circuits also transformed the home made marriage video into a media cottage industry populated by aspiring filmmakers, established photography studios and entrepreneurs. My interviews with videographers of this period indicate that most of them were amateurs with no formal training in film, but who very quickly adapted and developed an audio visual language and aesthetics for the marriage video. The aesthetic grammar of the marriage video has a direct relationship to technological forms and specifically to the formal and material limitations imposed by video technology. Thus even as the marriage video sought to become an intimate mnemonic document, the memory of these events were also actively produced by incipient technologies including analog mixers, titling, editing hardware etc.

The ubiquity of the marriage video is underwritten by a complex affective infrastructure moving between home movie, the ethnographic movie and the documentary. It also shared a mutually constitutive relationship with Bollywood films: on the one hand using songs and music from popular Hindi films to create a heightened emotional experience, at other times mimicking the pomp and glamour of Hindi film, but eventually mutating into a genre of Hindi films itself (One of the largest all time blockbusters of India has in fact been described as three hour wedding video). This crisscrossing relationship is a fertile site from which we can explore the status of technology as a mnemonic assemblage. The digital moment has a led to reconstitution of the private/public audience for the marriage video. From an audience constitute of

relatives and close friends who watched these videos in the living rooms of the wedding party on a VHS player to a wider general audience that consumes this marker of a recorded memory of familial rituals on platforms such as desktops, mobile phones, laptops etc. on which YouTube can be accessed.

My paper will explore these myriad lives and forms of the marriage video through the oral narratives of videographers who shot these videos in the city of Delhi. Beginning with the moment of video, I trace the genealogy of the marriage video and its long afterlife arguing that as a form, the marriage video reinvents weddings and creates a new techno-social template through which it is remembered.

BIO:

Ishita Tiwary is a PhD candidate at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She is also a Research Associate on the Media Information and Infrastructures project with The Sarai Programme, Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Her research interests include informal media economies, the role of technology and media cultures and amateur film production.