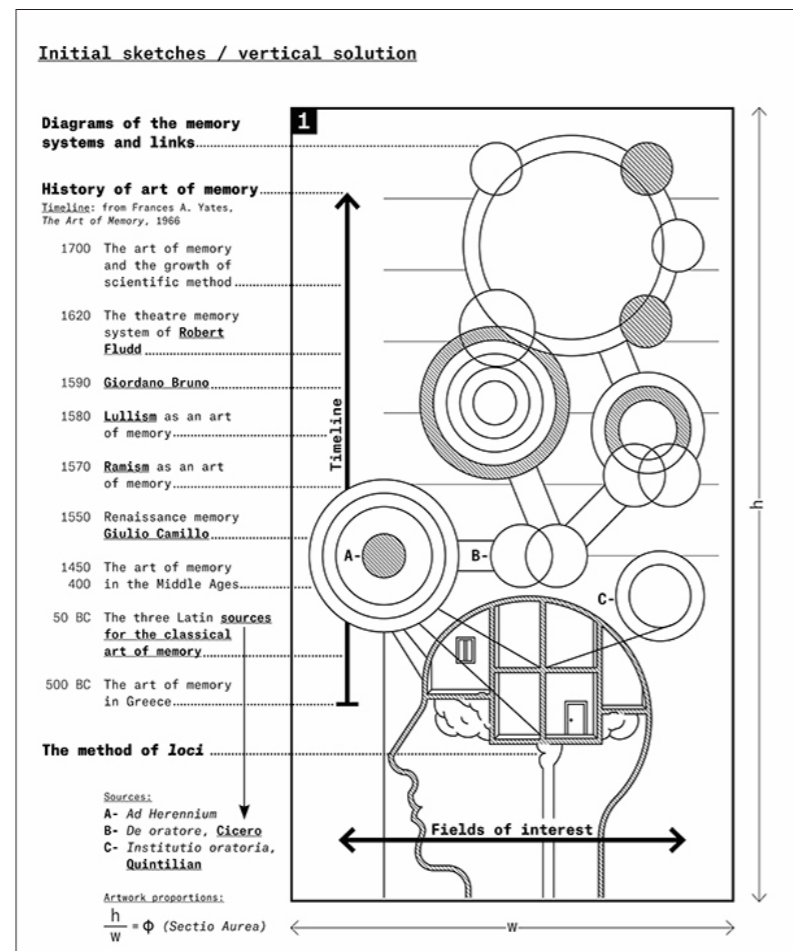


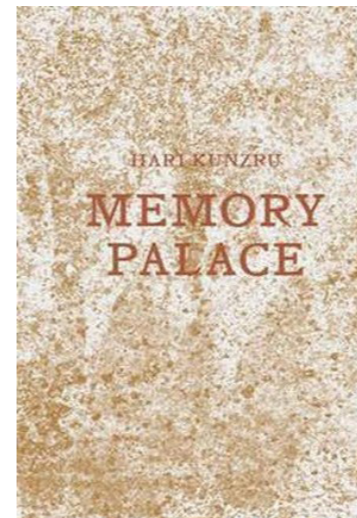
# Memory Palace

Malgorzata Socha



Untitled

Francesco Franchi, 2013



Memory Palace

Hari Kunzuru, 2013

Sky Arts Ignition: Memory Palace is an immersive exhibition presenting a dramatic version of the future as described in specially commissioned by V&A, 10 000 word novel written by British author Hari Kunzuru. This highly innovative exhibition was a successful attempt to create completely new and interesting way of reading a book. V&A Museum also commissioned 20 talented and internationally acclaimed illustrators, graphic designers and typographers to interpret and visualize different fragments of the novel, in their own unique way and style.

“If you could only keep one memory what would it be?” - visitors get to know this sentence before even entering the exhibition, whether it's on the website, trailer or a leaflet. The mysterious phrase itself helps to make a person curious about Memory Palace created in one of the rooms of the V&A.

All exhibits in the exhibition were put in chronological order to help the viewers to get the sense of the story. The viewers are also required to read extracts from the book placed on the wall, each next to the piece of work representing it. As viewers walk through the story they slowly get to know the narrator and the misremembered and misunderstood by him fragments of the ancient for him past. They begin to be able to put together different pieces of the story and get a good sense of Hari Kunzuru imaginary world of post-apocalyptic future.

The story is set in future London, hundreds of years after magnetization where the magnetic storm destroyed the city and brought about the Withering. The new society, which emerged after magnetization, has banned memory, art, writing and recording in order to bring about wilding where humans would live in complete union with nature. The technology and knowledge of our civilization has all been lost. On the other side, the narrator of the novel is a member of Memorialists, a banned sect whose members try to remember as much as possible of the past.

One of the illustrated on the exhibition fragments was: ‘The doctors performed great feats of surgery and roamed the cities, looking for the sick. It was a time of great wonder’. In contrast, this post-apocalyptic world where the knowledge of the past is not available in any way it is obvious that even basic services including medical help will appear as something extraordinary.



Untitled

Le Gun, 2013

Le Gun is a London-based illustration collective, founded in 2004. They communally execute large-scale drawings, murals and three-dimensional 'drawn' installations. For fragment of the text where narrator talks about the miraculous services provided by hospitals, Le Gun created an amazing three-dimensional drawn installation representing the misremembered ambulance. At the back the artist put the detailed body map and many artifacts that haven't actually been in use by hospitals. "Are you suffering from the spiritual growth" says one of the eye-catching posters showing how narrator misunderstood the actual role of hospitals.

"Photoshop-A ritual conducted before going out into the world, in which the face and stomach are anointed with a powder called pixels."

Every incorrect definition on this extraordinary exhibition somehow has the ability to make the viewer rethink the real meaning of the given word. I believe that in some cases disordered and misunderstood definitions given by the author can help the viewers to uncover the real truth about the world around us that we don't pay enough attention to. This kind of disordered memory which stimulates viewers imagination can help realize that people should never take everything in their lives for granted it also helps them remember that they should always value what they've got.

Elsewhere in the exhibition Erik Kessels responded to two fragments of the story at the same time. He merged narrator's ideas of advertising and recycling. "At the height of the Booming, sign was so plentiful that it fell from the sky like rain.



Untitled

Erik Kessels, 2013

Memory Palace shows the viewers one of many possibilities of how our world might look like in the future. It gives the chance to see the world from a completely different perspective. The viewers can walk through this imaginary world, be part of it for a little while and come back to the present with a new approach.

It rustled underfoot in autumn and rose and fluttered about the palaces and hospitals like apple blossom in spring. This was called advertising." He created a huge sculpture-a palace made from recycled newspapers and advertising leaflets that the viewer can walk inside. Hundreds of somewhat readable news show how these days we are bombarded with information and images. Another fragment related to this temple-like structure is "In the time before the Withering, there was a religious practice called Recycling (...) It was a ceremony to celebrate the cycle of life and the turning of the seasons (...) Men and Women would chant: I am not a plastic bag".

Memory Palace shows the viewers one of many possibilities of how our world might

However, the exhibition itself doesn't seem to be very coherent. For someone who has not read the book before coming to see it, it's hard put the pieces of work together without going back and forth a couple of times, rereading different fragments. But on the other side it shows the viewers many different ideas and interpretations, somehow stimulating their own imagination.

At the end of the exhibition the viewers finally get the chance to answer the question: 'If you could keep only one memory, what would it be?' They are asked to draw or write one of their own memories. In this fun activity they are encouraged to think about the importance of memories in our lives and therefore it helps to understand the previously seen story.

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Untitled

Johnny Kelly, 2013