

Art/Fall

Abstract

Over time, memories can become layered, modified, or lost entirely. What does a moment look like after it has undergone these changes? To emulate this breakdown of memory and process of recollection, the artist has begun a series of oil paintings that uses polyptychs, or multiple-canvas compositions. The paintings reference new research in psychology and neuroscience that has found that memories are reconstructed every time they are recalled that causes the perception of a moment to become more and more distorted with time. Gaining inspiration from the artwork of David Hockney, Cubist painters, and Alex Kanevsky, these canvases form a single composition showing a figure repeated in slightly different positions to illustrate the fracturing of a single remembered moment. The movement conveyed expresses the passage of time and relates to the fleeting nature of memory. Loose, amorphous layers of paint juxtaposed against sections of detailed rendering to represent how some elements are remembered while others are forgotten. The disorder created through the polyptych format compiled with a sense of continuous fading from selective abstraction encourages viewers to mimic the process of memory recollection by reconstructing the moment in the painting.

Description of Research

The traditional idea of memory held that memories were made and then consolidated, similar to a file on a computer's hard drive. However, neuropsychiatrist Eric Kandel found that memories can actually be altered during the process of creation and will continue to fade with time. Sections become lost and can be subconsciously filled "through pattern completion, [which is] the use of preexisting knowledge to fill in an incomplete pattern" (Kandel). Furthermore, new research by neuroscientist Korim Nader suggests that a memory is reconstructed every time it is recalled through a process called reconsolidation (Miller). Sadly, this means that the more someone thinks about and recalls a moment, the more it differs from the actual event that happened. For example, a couple that is deeply in love and thinks about their first date every day will in fact remember their first date more incorrectly than another couple that met once and never thought of the other person again (Nader). These changes in memory cause gaps, disorder, and blurring that can distort the original essence of a memory.

In order to convey the breakdown of memory with oil paintings, I create each piece as a polyptych: a multiple canvas composition. Cubist paintings and photographic work by David Hockney inspired this format. The Cubist painters, such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, meld "different views of a subject...into one static composition" (Robertson and McDaniel 111-139). By displaying these multiple angles, they felt that their paintings provided a more truthful representation of human perception than the traditional technique of single-point perspective (showing a figure or object from one specific point of view). Artist David Hockney works off a similar concept with his photographic composites that collage multiple pictures of a scene from various angles, representing how a person sees a moment. By repeating and enlarging certain aspects more than others, Hockney's work references how a person's initial impression of a moment affects what aspects remain within memory. (*Hockney on Photography*; David Hockney and Paul Joyce 22-25).

Author Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics* explains that the multiple-panel format “acts as a sort of general indicator that time or space is being divided” (McCloud 98). Yet, the viewer is able to connect content between panels using their imagination. This ability to link information between panels is similar to the way people remember memories; even though aspects may be missing, they are able to fill gaps with knowledge from other memories. My series uses this polyptych format to mimic this process of recollection by asking the viewer to connect and complete the image that is formed across multiple canvases.

I begin by photographing a person from multiple angles and composing those photographs into a polyptych format as a reference for the painting. For example, one canvas may show a portion of the torso while another could depict the profile of a face. A single moment is expanded in a nonlinear, disordered sequence. As aspects of a memory fade, only certain parts of the memory remain. This leaves merely a collection of disjointed, snapshot-like images to represent the collected facets of an entire memory (Ghetti and Bauer). By physically splitting the images across multiple canvases, my paintings convey this fragmentation of memory. Different actions within a moment are separated, making the simple moments seem unfamiliar and confusing due to the jumbled and complicated nature of the polyptychs. However, since these multiple canvases still work together to create a single composition, the polyptych format also relates back to the notion that numerous images must be linked in unison to create a complete memory. The paintings play with the dichotomy of giving and withholding valuable information that is needed to form a whole memory; they provide enough information to generally understand the moment, but present it in a non-linear sequence so that the viewer must engage their own personal memory to complete the piece.

While the polyptych format creates fragmentation, I also use an intentional contrast of gestural, abstract imagery against more realistic sections to reflect the fleeting quality of memory; you can see this contrast in the detail photographs I have included of my work below. The rendered portions represent the specific elements that are recalled with extreme clarity. On the other hand, the abstracted areas seem to be fading away, representing the parts of memory that become distorted and lost. I allow the physical layers of paint to show through as a metaphor for the way memories become layered with time. This technique was inspired by artist Alex Kanevsky’s style of building up transparent, abstracted layers while painting, letting each layer represent a moment in time (*Alex Kanevsky: Heroes and Animals*). In this way, a dialogue is created between the artist, the painting, and the viewer; Kanevsky encourages the viewer to relive the painting process and experience the sense of time and motion involved (Kanevsky). I utilize this technique to show how the memory is in flux: energy and movement are infused into each brushstroke to highlight how a memory is constantly changes each time it is remembered. The viewer becomes witness to this process as they are asked to complete the painting with their own process of memory recollection.

This research will help mature my paintings so that they can better communicate the breakdown of memory. I will create 3 to 4 more painting compositions this semester using the polyptych format and selective abstraction to convey how memories become altered, faded and difficult to remember clearly. My senior exhibition will open this November in the Blowers Gallery of UNC Asheville’s Ramsey Library. I will complete a paper on my research and painting experience that I will submit to UNC Asheville’s Journal of Undergraduate Research. I will present at the 2012 UNCA Fall Symposium of Undergraduate Research. This grant will allow me to develop my research further, allow me to spend more hours working in the studio, and greatly help to pay for supplies needed for my work.

Examples of Work

Include Examples of Work Here
Figure 1. Example

Bibliography

Alex Kanevsky: Heroes and Animals. San Francisco: Dolby Chadwick Gallery, 2010. Published in conjunction with the exhibition "Heroes and Animals" shown at the Dolby Chadwick Gallery in San Francisco, 7 October to 30 October 2010.

Beer, Jennifer S., John F. Kihlstrom Beer, and Stanley B. Klein, "Self and Identity as Memory", Berkeley.edu, 2002, <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~kihlstrm/SelfIdentityMemory.htm>.

Berry, William A. "Motion and Changing Points of View." *Drawing the Human Form: A Guide to Drawing from Life*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1977.

Ghetti, Simona, and Patricia J. Bauer. "The Development of Episodic Memory." *Origins and Development of Recollection: Perspectives from Psychology and Neuroscience*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

Hockney, David, and Paul Joyce. *Hockney on Photography: Conversations with Paul Joyce*. New York: Harmony Books, 1988.

Hockney on Photography. Films Media Group. *Films Media Group*. Web. <<http://0-digital.films.com.wncln.wncln.org/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=5341&xtid=41689>>.

Hughes, Robert. "Time Recomposed of Shards: David Hockney's Painterly Photocollages in New York City." *Time* 1986: 94.

Kandel, Eric R. "The Biology of Memory: A Forty Year Perspective." *Journal of Neuroscience* 29.41 (Oct 14, 2009): 12748-2756.

Kanevsky, Alexander. Interview by George Walker. 8 January 2009. <http://rtspot.wordpress.com/2009/08/alex-kanevsky/>.

Le Poidevin, Robin. *The Images of Time: An Essay on Temporal Representation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

Loftus, Elizabeth F. 1982. "Memory and its distortions." In *The G. Stanley Hall lecture series*, Vol. 2, 123-154. Washington, DC US: American Psychological Association, 1982. *PsycINFO*, EBSCOhost.

Meany, John. "Hockney's Photographs, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin 4 October - 10 November 1984." *Circa* Nov. 1984: 24-26. *JSTOR*. Web.

Miller, Greg. "How Ours Brains Make Memories." *Smithsonian Magazine* May 2012.

Nader, Korim. Interview by Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich. *Radiolab*. WNYC, 8 June 2007.

Robertson, Jean, and Craig McDaniel. "Time." *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art after 1980*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005.

Selz, Peter. "Alex Kanevsky at Dolby Chadwick Gallery." *Art in America* January 2011.

Hockney's Photographs, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin 4 October - 10 November 1984

Review by: John Meany

Circa, No. 19 (Nov. - Dec., 1984), pp. 24-26

Published by: Circa Art Magazine

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25556925> .

Timeline

September-November 25th: Create 3-4 oil painting compositions. Goal of at least one painting composition per month.

November 26th: Hang exhibition in UNC Asheville's Ramsey Library Blowers Gallery

November 28th: Present research and completed series at UNCA 2012 Fall Symposium on Undergraduate Research

November 30th: Opening reception for exhibition.

Budget Proposal

Jerry's Artarama (Raleigh, NC) jerrysartarama.com – Note: Free shipping on orders over \$160

Canvas & canvas making supplies

1 – Jerry's World's Greatest Gesso 1 Gallon Pail	\$ 29.99
1 – Winsor & Newton Artists' Canvas - 6 yards x 63" roll	<u>\$ 84.48</u>
	\$114.47

Oil Paints

1 – Winton Oil Color 200 ml Tube - Cadmium Red Medium	\$ 24.71
1 – Winton Oil Color 200 ml Tube - Cadmium Yellow Medium	\$ 24.71
1 – Winton Oil Color 200 ml Tube - Cerulean Blue	\$ 24.71
2 – Winsor & Newton 37ml Tube - Naples Yellow Light (\$7.19 each)	\$ 14.38
1 – Gamblin Artist's Oil Color 150ml Tube - Yellow Ochre	\$ 20.21
1 – Gamblin Artist's Oil Color 150ml Tube - Ultramarine Blue	\$ 25.46
2 – Gamblin Artist's Oil Color 150ml Tube - Titanium White (\$20.21 each)	\$ 40.42
2 – Gamblin Artist's Oil Color 150ml Tube - Burnt Sienna (\$20.21 each)	\$ 40.42
1 – Gamblin Artist's Oil Color 150ml Tube - Sap Green	\$ 25.46
1 – Gamblin Artist's Oil Color 150ml Tube -Alizarin Crimson	<u>\$ 33.71</u>
	\$253.98

Oil Medium & Cleaner

1 – Gamblin Gamsol Gallon Can	\$ 30.99
1 – Master's Brush Cleaner and Preserver 24 oz Tub	<u>\$ 20.29</u>
	\$ 51.28

Brushes & palette knives

1 - Liquitex Small Painting Knife No.9	\$ 2.87
1 – Grumbacher GoldenEdge Oil and Acrylic Brush Series 630 Filbert 2	\$ 3.35
1 – Grumbacher Degas Oil and Acrylic Brush Series 630 Filbert 8	\$ 9.15
1 – Grumbacher GoldenEdge Oil and Acrylic Brush Series 630 Filbert 10	<u>\$ 7.85</u>
	\$ 23.22

Michael's (Asheville, NC) – brushes

1 – Royal & Langnickel Filbert size 4	\$ 3.99
1 – Royal & Langnickel Filbert size 6	\$ 3.99
1 – Royal & Langnickel Filbert size 8	\$ 3.99
1 – Royal & Langnickel Filbert size 10	\$ 3.99
1 – Royal & Langnickel Filbert size 12	<u>\$ 3.99</u>
	\$ 19.95

Lowes (Asheville, NC) – materials for building canvas stretcher bars

4 – 1"x2"x8' select pine (\$4.36 each)	\$ 17.44
3 – ½"x ½"x8' quarter round (\$4.56 each)	<u>\$ 13.68</u>
	\$ 31.12

total requested = \$494.02