

The Invention of Memory



5-30 May

At Rathfarnham Castle

**Benedetta Casagrande
Leonardo Falascone
Lucie Khakhoutian
Clare Lyons
Yvette Monahan**

**PhotoIreland
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“I have more memories in myself alone than all men have had since the world was a world... My dreams are like your vigils... My memory, sir, is like a garbage disposal”

— Jorge Luis Borges, *Funes the Memorious*, Ficciones, London, 1993.

Funes was a man who remembered everything, such as the shape of a cloud on a particular day, or the direction of the meandered path of a marbled book bind. Yet he was a man “almost incapable of ideas of a general, Platonic sort”. His mind was a depository of accurate precision memories. For the average human, and as the title of this exhibition suggests, the mind is a prolific generator of memories, not a credible archive. While retaining the ability to feel complete and authentic, our memories are very much inconsistent, and easily manipulated.

We can say that the sheer act of remembering has oftentimes a bias purpose in itself, and it is this purpose that affects how we recover memories. As our identity is shaped by these memories, a recollected memory may help us understand our current

ideas and perceptions, what we wish to achieve with this recollection and what we already know. Clare Lyons on the other hand proposes an identity composed of absences and scarcity of memories. Recording visual triggers from her childhood, and epitomising them as delicate sculptural prints, Clare shares her personal journey into forgotten and repressed territory. The pieces from *Back Into Your Mind* whisper strength and frustration, from the fragile and ephemeral material of choice, to the hand-manipulated obscurity hiding the secrets beneath the folds, begging the question - what identity does a non-memory make?

With *Beyond the ninth wave*, Yvette Monahan further uncovers inherent, and deep-rooted memories from the wounded Irish landscape. Using an early photographic process, she directly transmits the knowledge and data of the collected turf onto paper and to

the viewer. The presented triptychs, these direct screams from the cut land - almost like an open-heart surgery, reveal thousands of years of trauma, colonised, sexual, and religious repression, anguish and strain. Yet the images produced feel sympathetic, creating some beautiful, mysterious melody, a lyrical scream, a crescendo for a landscape ready to shed its past.

Taking advantage of the malleability of memories and embracing her multi-cultural background, Lucie Khakhoutian confidently takes charge over her history and ancestry, composing vibrant and powerful scenes. Scenes where traditional references from her childhood exist in harmony with her current Western life, in a vigorous celebration of her history and past. This surreal imagery and Parajanov-esque photomontages, though at times wonderfully kitsch, are punctuated with a serious cultural and political agenda, that in these days of turmoil and ambiguous definitions of national identity seems most apt.

Considering collective memory, duo Benedetta Casagrande and

Leonardo Falascone put forward the misrepresented character of Saint Mary Magdalene and how her myth, composed over time by a patriarchal society, still to this day has clouded our perception of women. Benedetta and Leonardo have began a considered journey to trace her odyssey, weaving the surreal and parabolic with the tender, mirroring the multiplicity of her identity. Tracing the history of Mary Magdalene, they are tracing the history of the female identity. Telling her story, they are telling the story of women everywhere. As a figure of stigmatisation and fabrication, the story of Mary Magdalene illustrates how vulnerable not only are our individual memories, but how this vulnerability finds strength in numbers and puts down solid roots into our collective, social, and political memory.

With these susceptible memories and unreliable influences, would becoming Memorious be a blessing or a curse?

Julia Gelezova

Benedetta Casagrande & Leonardo Falascone, Maria Di Magdala

Maria di Magdala (working title) investigates the creation of the myth of Saint Mary Magdalene. Reflecting on the complex relationship between memory and faith, authenticity and fiction, the project questions by what means imaginary narratives shape and transform substantial reality to the point of making them indistinguishable.

Established and represented as a symbol of penance and salvation, the figure of Mary Magdalene is deeply rooted in our collective memory and still exerts influence over society's expectations towards women.

Once the myth has been created, we forget to be its creators: culture goes unquestioned to such an extent we fail to recognise our being its own masters. Retracing the Saint's passage into Southern France as narrated in the medieval "Golden Legend" - which tells the story of Mary Magdalene's

journey by boat from Jerusalem to the Camargue - the project examines how the myth was constructed and adoperated to establish the local landscape as a post-biblical Holy Land, transferring from Palestine to Europe not only the cult and the vestiges of the material presence of the Saint, but the pilgrimage experience itself. Adopting the boat without oars of her legendary travel as a symbolic carrier of the self - a vessel of histories, myths and traditions - Maria di Magdala hopes to unveil the constructedness of culture in order to question its very origins and revive the lively multiplicity of her historical identities.

Lucie Khakhoutian, The Tapestry In My Room

My work, wavering between collage and photography illustrates the constant dichotomy of my vision of the world. The topics I approach as well as my practice are fed by the binary influence of a childhood in a multicultural household. Orchestrating a discussion between

Armenia and France, I feed an exquisite cadaver narrating my story while resonating with my artistic influences. Involving both my background and elements of my current life, I weave a visual tapestry of my surroundings and aim at offering a complete and subtle visual universe in which occident and orient coexist smoothly.

My images approach a wide range of topics while being very focused on religion, spirituality, and mystical matters. Most of my images involve women of my family. Cousins, aunts, grandmothers are celebrated in a playful setting, putting on them -at last- the light they deserve. Going back and forth between collage and photography I play with the idea of illustrating the magic or the ungraspable. In a constantly evolving practice I like to renew the tools used to narrate my story and twist the truth here and there, the same way time distorts my memory.

Almost illustrating the tales we heard when we were kids I have now room to embellish some stories or rewrite

the ones that made us sad. Constantly changing the background I force the stories and its characters to travel, the same way my family did, renewing again and again the setting we were evolving in.

From all these changes one memory remains brighter than the others: the tapestry in my room at my grandmother's house. Every layer of my collages becomes a period of my life, a person met, a language spoken, a place we lived in or a mood I was in.

More than ever in a global context of identity confusion and political blur I believe it is essential to celebrate our different origins and focus our practice on the foundation of our identity, whether it is as human or artist, and on an individual or collective scale. I am proud to illustrate, through my work, the wealth of a cultural migration and bring a little bit of Armenia on an artistic scene that seems to have given the cold shoulder to this part of the world for too long now.

Clare Lyons, Back Into Your Mind

It can be said that we are composed of memory, and that our personality, values and sense of self hang together as a mesh of collected memories and experiences. This would therefore mean that a loss of memory results in some fundamental loss of the self, but what if the formation of one's sense of self is less about what we can remember, and more about what we have forgotten - that which has been either consciously or unconsciously blocked? What if the inevitable systems of repression and suppression form a different kind of identity, one composed of gaps and absences? We may be constructed by our memories and thoughts, but we can also be products of what has been forgotten.

Back Into Your Mind is a cathartic exploration of my repressed and suppressed memories. An attempt to fill in the gaps of a fractured personal history, this project is a demonstration of the process of recalling and recollecting seemingly irretrievable childhood memories as an adult.

I sought out locations and objects, and recorded visual triggers, that relate to these foggy experiences. In revisiting these memory sites, I began to piece together the formative impact my childhood experiences have had on my adult self.

The folding, obscuring and manipulation of the images demonstrates the mental process of uncovering and recalling, of bringing these lost memories back into your mind. The manipulated prints allow for the construction of a narrative that tells a story of lost and found. The exposed but broken image conveys a fragmented trauma - the parts of myself that have been forged as a result of my experiences. That which remains concealed behind the folds represent that which might never be recovered - or the parts of myself I might never know.

Yvette Monahan, Beyond The Ninth Wave

The title refers to the islands of peace and eternal life that lie beyond the ninth wave in Irish mythology. These Arcadian islands are thought to lie in the North Atlantic. These images are rooted in a real place but hope to bring the viewer closer to the island beyond the ninth wave.

In the 1980's, a group called the Atlantis Community moved from London to Inishfree, a remote island, off the coast of Donegal in Ireland, to practice primal scream therapy. The main motivation of this therapy was to release deep rooted imprinted pain. The predominantly female community was labeled The Screamers by the Irish media.

The images from this series emerge from viewing this Donegal landscape as a metaphorical biography of the Screamers psyche, one where trauma has played a significant role. Beyond the ninth wave explores this wounded island landscape.

This thought process led to a period of experimentation as I tried to find a way to express the physicality of this traumatised landscape.

On the island, I collected turf for the fire in a wheelbarrow daily. This Irish fuel source also known as peat is created from dead and decaying vegetation accumulated and compressed over millennia. One of the properties of turf is that it preserves all that is held within its environment; there is an inherent memory that is trapped within.

I started exposing the turf onto darkroom paper during the daylight hours and then fixing them late at night to create Lumen prints.

When presented as triptychs, the patterns started to resemble sound waves.

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