

## Nostalgic Pavements



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*Nostalgic Pavements* is a travel in time, an investigation on the mellow intertwining of objects and memories. Inspired by the untold stories behind secretive ambassadors of lived past it is a journey through personal belongings and bearers of material culture – objects that are most often surrounded by an invisible aura of loss and desire. The emotional and memorial value of these memory crutches is not captured in their function, material or shape, yet there are reasons for their special appreciation and ways to distillate and underline their preciousness to emphasize the value of the object and to communicate and capture a certain mood. The result is an interplay between the past and today, between materials and reminiscence. As *Nostalgic Pavements* the resulting objects and pieces of jewellery tell in a quiet wordless language of bygone times. They invite their wearer and beholder to be immersed into their own past or catch a glimpse into another history.



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*fig.1* Anna Sophie Fink (2018) photograph



# 1 Introduction

As a product of the mellow intertwining of objects and memories, personal belongings become visual and tactile tradition of our lived past. In a quiet, wordless language, they tell the very personal stories of their owners and allow them to be immersed into their own past and reminisce on times long passed. Mostly all of us own these secretive ambassadors of lived past. They are surrounded by an invisible aura of loss and desire and memorize latent reminiscence. Thereby it is mainly irrelevant what shape or function these objects hold, their appearance is diverse, nearly unlimited. Worthless appearing waste, banal objects of daily use, found objects or loyal childhood companions, all of these objects are bearers of material culture. They are capable of becoming things with hidden meaning, precious holder of memories containing personal messages. Enriched with these individual meanings, objects gain sentimental value and therefore stand out of the crowd and loose anonymity. They oscillate between the tangible neutral object in the mass and fleeting, emotionally charged and very personal memory objects and become a detectable representation of something abstract. It is less the object itself we see, but more our personal connection. Without displaying a particular scenario, they are able to open up images of passed lifetime in our minds.

But are we able to manipulate and force objects to become witnesses, containers of memory that conserve special moments and make them accessible over and over again?

Are there objects that are particularly suitable for the storage of lifetime?

How important is their recognition, their communication and their relevance for the collective?

I wonder how simple objects can take us back to a different time and place and how it is possible that one object can so deeply touch an individual, whereas another person might not even notice it.

If the value and memory of an object is not captured in its function, material or shape, how can it be communicated?

Especially pieces of jewellery have always acted as memory bearers and are of great importance in this context. Made of precious metals they are resistant and are therefore often passed through generations containing lots of memories and narratives. Other than paintings or sculptural artworks pieces of jewellery always carry personal stories and emotional attachments that are usually unrecognizable to the public but important to the individual. As jewellery

comes closer to a person than any other object it can become enormous powerful to its owner. Worn as a talisman or amulet, pieces of jewellery are given magical and spiritual power. They act as faithful companions, but also age with their wearer, get marks and scratches - traces of life that tell about their former journeys.

Jewellery itself often acts as a communicator, it tells of social status, wealth and affection. But it is also the wearer that gives meaning to the piece of jewellery, by attributing stories and personal memories.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> den Besten, 2012: 24

How can I create jewellery that meets these requirements from beginning on? - Objects that trigger our memory, even though they have not travelled with us, or anyone before?

Is it possible to create something new that already holds memorial value?

*Nostalgic Pavements* is an investigation on all these questions, an exploration of the mutuality of objects and memories. It is a travel in time - an interplay between the past and today, between materials and reminiscence.





*fig.2* Anna Sophie Fink (2018) layered photograph

## 2 Memory

### In Search of Lost Time

According to Proust we cannot retrieve our past into present solely through mental efforts:

*„And so is it with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die.“<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Proust, 1979: 63

Proust Phenomenon is how memory science calls those involuntarily occurring memories that take us on a journey to our youth and childhood. When particular details arise in front of our inner eye. Long forgotten details, or such we were not aware of ever before. Past becomes present. Present becomes past. Everything is interconnected. The psychological mechanics of remembrance is immense complex and makes use of mostly everything constituting human existence: emotions, consciousness, spirit, mind and poetry.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Schüle, 2011

Proust distinguishes *mémoire volontaire*, intended memory and *mémoire involontaire*, unintended memory. By *mémoire volontaire* Proust means a „*rappel de l'intelligence et des yeux*“<sup>4</sup>, which is providing a solely dull image of the past. Whereas a retrieved scent, like the one described in the Episode of the Madeleine, revives the past vividly. This is what Proust calls *mémoire involontaire*.

<sup>4</sup> Proust, 1913

This act of remembering is not made by an active recall, but by passive support on sensory level.

In brain research the ability of retrieving situations long passed through unpredictable gentle indications is known as episodic or biographical memory. It is part of the explicit memory, which includes personal memories, the autobiography, as well as marked incidents of public life, that do not necessarily affect us personally.

In fact, the ‚locality of memory‘ cannot exactly be pinpointed within our mind. Memories seem to occur and disappear placeless.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Schaffner, 1997

Remembrance is an involuntary process, that triggered by certain stimuli sends us back into long faded situations, stored in the depths of our memory. Until today it remains unclear how exactly we remember. However, research agrees that all the senses can be a source of inspiration. The trigger is different, but the psychology of remembering is the same.

We remember by recognizing something in us - words, phrases,

scents or images that offer occasion to associate.

Remembering is an enormous subjective action. Personal experiences, physical and emotional state and other parameters influence our perception which means that our autobiographic memory sometimes has less in common with the real past than we expect. It rather helps us orient ourselves in the present and future, it is storage of our personal history.<sup>6</sup> Also, the reproduction of memory processes has a big impact on how and what we remember. Brain research confirms that memories are changed and restored each time they are retrieved.

<sup>6</sup> Rollin, 2006

Some of these changes cause that what is remembered barely agrees with what has actually been experienced, what has actually happened. Remembering becomes a creative process.

## Collective Memory and Cultural Identity

It is not only the individual person who has a memory. Even entire nations are capable of common memory: families, denominations, ethnic groups. This is called collective memory, meaning a communal form of memory in which the past is kept present and internalized over generations. Our memory is shaped by our very personal memories, but we are not alone with them. We are influenced by long-standing, long-forgotten events, by the grandmother's stories, by rites and traditions, by history lessons in school.

Historiography as a collective memory - a subjective apprehension of the past, the passing away - is essential in a world in which we constantly try to assess and classify ourselves.

The desire to determine one's own position has always seemed to be a basic human need. This desire comes with the hope of acquiring a piece of the world, of reminding oneself, of owning oneself.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Herzog, 1992: 3

There are two ways in which we try to satisfy this basic need. On the one hand, there are the forensics who are doing their memory work based on writing and traces, and the material collectors who stick to the memory image of the magazine or the accumulated storage space.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Haus der Kunst München, 1997

If people had not at some point started to collect objects of all kinds, even those that seemed superfluous and puzzling to them, our world today would probably be much triter.

We would have a more sober look at it and above all, we would have missed out a lot.

A work of art can transcend the boundaries between individual and collective memory in order to secure a memory and an identity by using objects and documents as witnesses of our history because there are memories that can be shared in personal execution among everyone.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Saladini, 2011: 341

<sup>10</sup> abitur-kunst.de, n.d. engl.: „securing of evidence, forensics“

The tendency of art to deal analytically with the construction and reconstruction of memory and history is called “*Spurensicherung*”<sup>10</sup>. It is a form of conceptual art, an art movement in which the artist combines elements of the past in such a way that, in subjective interpretation, these elements pick up on their own childhood or on the life story of a stranger. The fundamental difference between an operation of archaeological recovery and an operation of an artistic recovery resides in the metaphorical language, in the poetical capacity that is thereby revealed, thanks to the style of the artist. The reconstruction can thereby have a real background, or be fictitious-historical data or events.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> abitur-kunst.de, n.d.

By staging objects of everyday-life into the museum context, or by installations or assemblages initiated by the artist, object associations turn into objects of cultural artefacts that form a story. They form a new abstract yet objective language and convey a picture of our culture and history. The task of the artist is to carry, assemble, combine and collage objects together. It is the transformation of a common object into a piece of art.

The German artist Anna Oppermann (1940-1993) creates in her artworks ensembles of objects, photos, paintings and text (*fig.3*). Each ensemble emerged from found objects, images and ideas that in her eyes become metaphors for the diversity, absurdity and contradictions of personal and public life. She described them as observational and insight exercises, which in principle are infinite.

In an open process, the complex arrangements evolved through collection, expansion, and aggregation, association, reflection, and analysis over long periods of time. Each one revolves around a different topic.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2018

Oppermann herself described the ensembles as a compilation of various objects that rather represent the processual character of the art object. She sees it as an offer for communication.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, 2015



fig.3 Anna Oppermann *Einerseits – andererseits; sowohl als auch...(M+M) (1988-1992)* installation view SMAK 2017, various materials







*fig.4* Anna Sophie Fink (2018) photograph

### 3 Objects

#### Memory Crutches

<sup>14</sup> Turkle, 2011: 5

„We think with the objects we love,  
we love the objects we think with.“<sup>14</sup>

Souvenirs, mementos, keepsakes, gifts - all these objects, often pieces of jewellery, serve as carriers of feelings and emotions, they give experienced materiality and touchability and seem superior to the transience of a word or memory impression. The essence of these objects, however, only comes to light through the history with which it is interwoven, with the personal view of the owner.

Especially for people living in a foreign country, these objects are of great importance, since they make the connection to their homeland, their identity. They bear witness to their own origins and ultimately contribute to the consolidation of their own identity.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Offenes Kulturhaus des Landes Oberösterreich in Linz, 1997: 150

We want to preserve memories, carry them with us and leave our own mark in places that are important to us and in the hearts of those we call our loved ones. This phenomenon has long been known and runs through all eras and cultures. At the same time we stick to what we can hold in our hands what we can touch, to which we can hold on to. There is that need of possessing objects with which we make our home a safe space, make it our personal place.

<sup>16</sup> Schüle, 2011

Our whole life consists of remembering. Without our personal memory, our own identity formation is not possible.<sup>16</sup> As the memory researcher and psychologist Daniel I. Schacter briefly summarizes: „Wir sind Erinnerung.“<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Schacter, 2001

That is why it is so important for us to surround ourselves with things that tell a story, our story. They are a part of us because part of our identity is dormant in them.

In the following, I will go into various types of those memory crutches and refer to artists who have created works that appreciate and emphasize the essential character of these objects.

The souvenir, whether in form of a postcard or exotic plant, always serves memory - of travelled places, special events or friends. A travel souvenir underlines the peculiarity of the place where it passed into the possession of the traveller, part of what was there is now different. It travels to tell other places from its place of origin, it acts as a witness and as a representative - as part of a whole.

In the best case, it does not just embody a place, but transports it - the spirit, the aura, the feeling of light-heartedness at that moment. It is in the logic of the thing that something that is now here - in my apartment, on my wall, in my case - is gone elsewhere.

As souvenir bearers, we leave a kind of negative mark on places whose memory we want to remember. We intervene in space and time. The object of our desire becomes a testimony that something is missing in another place, the place that makes this souvenir come alive. The souvenir is removed from its context and becomes an indicator of profit and loss in its new environment. So an indication of another time and place, the imagination of space and time is implanted in the object.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Offenes Kulturhaus des Landes Oberösterreich in Linz, 1997: 63ff

Another type of object with personal or emotional attachments is the memento. Mementos are steeped in history as the inherited family jewellery. Its material and ideal value are determined by personal parameters, and then grow or disappear over time. Sometimes the memento is given as a present, in that case the donor inscribes him- or herself in the memory.<sup>19</sup> The present becomes an expression of affection; it carries a high personal value and becomes an emotional link between the persons involved.

<sup>19</sup> Voss, 2011: 8

*“Sammler Eheringe.”*<sup>20</sup> In 1985, the Swiss jewellery artist Otto Künzli (\*1948) advertised these words in Munich daily newspapers. His yield was 48 wedding rings from the years 1881 to 1981: a story of 100 years. As far as the owners shared their story with him, he also collected these in short entries that expressed a whole life story. An example: *„The father-in-law fell in Stalingrad in the fall of 1942; the ring was returned by a comrade many years later.”*<sup>21</sup> Each of these rings is closely linked to one human destiny. And even if the individual personal fates remain hidden, yet all rings differ in their shape, which has adapted to a finger and an engraving, with which the lovers immortalized themselves in the material. Well, most of the ring sellers did not primarily have the money in mind, but rather to get rid of such a memorable object, to hand over the responsibility. Künzli connects individual stories in *Kette (1985-1986, fig.5)* and shapes them into a new one. By cutting and assembling the rings, Künzli creates an *„archetypal necklace“*<sup>22</sup>, which, however, becomes *„untragbar“*<sup>23</sup> to the viewer with the knowledge of its origin. Formally, the chain seems to meet the usual requirements, but the jewellery on a semantic level becomes intolerable. In any case, the *Kette* points to a previous separation, be it through death or external and internal distance, it is a complex story that Otto Künzli knows how to tell in this simple *Kette*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Friedler, 1987: 148 in english: „I collect wedding rings.“

<sup>21</sup> Friedler, 1987: 150

<sup>22</sup> Friedler, 1987: 15

<sup>23</sup> Friedler, 1987: 159 in english: „unwearable, unbearable“

<sup>24</sup> Friedler, 1987: 148ff

Künzli's approach is conceptual, it is not its visual attraction that makes this piece powerful. He places the emotional value, the history of the material in the foreground, he raises questions, almost provokes them. How many antique cult and art objects are hiding today in trivial jewellery? How much gold of victims of concentration camps? It seems the gold is freed from history with every melting process.<sup>25</sup> With the simple realization of the chain at first glance, he points out

<sup>25</sup> Friedler, 1987: 149

what a powerful emotional effect a piece of jewellery can put out to us, how much we identify with it and how strong our attachment to it can be. In return, however, we also write down our story in the material itself.



fig.5 Otto Künzli *Kette* (1985-1986) necklace, golden worn wedding rings, length: 850 mm

<sup>26</sup> De Waal, 2011: 26

It is not uncommon to assume a certain responsibility by accepting a memento object.<sup>26</sup> We treat them with the utmost care and keep them carefully. Or as in the chain mentioned above we feel the burden of that kind of memorial object and refuse to decorate us with it.

How objects are passed on always has to do with stories and the gesture that goes with it: I give it to you because I love you; because I do not want you to forget about me, ... It creates a connection between the people involved.

The British jewellery artist Mah Rana (\*1964) is doing an on-going, public-participation project creating a record of people's personal connections to the jewellery that they wear. In *Meanings and Attachments* (2001-present, fig.6) she asks people to share their stories of their favourite piece of jewellery. The Pictures of the jewellery and the stories behind are collected and published online.

„Eavan

*Claddagh ring set with garnet.*

*My mam bought it for me in Galway, her home county. It's set with a garnet, my birthstone. Not much of a story but it means a lot: Irishness, history, family, myself, my mam!*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Rana, n.d.



fig.6 Mah Rana *Meanings and Attachments* (2001-present) website screenshot, Eavan bottom left



Similarly to *mementos*, it is with objects of people who were once close to us, but of which we had to say goodbye. I call these objects murmuring objects: Everyday objects that once belonged to this persons create a different perception if they are not around anymore or even more after their demise. When such an object breaks away from ordinary use and „jede Nützlichkeit verliert, erhält er sich und erstarrt als Gegenstand eines privaten Kultes.“<sup>28</sup> As a relic it is „Zeuge für eine Sichtbarkeit des Verborgenen.“<sup>29</sup> The deceased, whom we can no longer visually identify with in our world, has also parted ways with his or her objects, and now it is these that enable us to keep part of the dead visible. The objects remain in their materiality as what they are, but our approach is changing. Often they are overwhelmed with memories that bury the object as such.

<sup>28</sup> Pontalis & Férida, 1972: 375

<sup>29</sup> Pontalis & Férida, 1972: 375

In *Reconstruction, A Portrait Of Erfurt (2006, fig.7)* the French jewellery artist Monika Brugger (\*1958) collects pieces of clothing and uses these garments as artistic material. The clothing becomes a relic, indicating the absence of the body. Through their proximity to the body, these garments carry the odor, body fluids and dander of its wearer. They show signs of wear and tear. Each of them carries a personal story. With confidence in the material and its expressiveness, she gently strips the fabrics, depriving the garments of their universal character. It's a slow rapprochement, a respectful deal with the material. And although clothing as such no longer fulfils its purpose, the emotional value is now even more in the foreground.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Broadhead & Vigarrello, 2009: 100ff



fig.7 Monika Brugger *Reconstruction, A Portrait Of Erfurt (2006)* installation detail, wood, clothes

Over time, items may undergo a change in their memory content. As we relate to them, the images and worlds they open up within us change as well. Children's toys, for example, are faithful companions in childhood. Dolls and cuddly animals share life experience with us. Let's meet them years later the patient companion becomes a greeting from the past, which gives us long-internalized access. I call them grown souvenirs, we grow with them and at the same time their memory content grows with the years in which we collect life experience apart from them.

Memories of childhood days often seem to us the most powerful and vibrant. If the childish is conveyed in such a way that it is comprehensible to us, we are carried away, back to our own childhood days and visualise details that had long been forgotten. Sometimes we can even find ourselves rediscovering our own childish thoughts again. We are reminded of how much child or childhood is still in us today and how important and formative the childlike memories are for us. In us, a new old world opens up, if only we dig deep enough and ask questions, because these memories do not come back effortlessly, they demand our attention.

*Jeu ju* (2000, fig. 8/9) is a conceptual art piece by Monika Bruggner dealing with fragments of still-vivid memories. It is an installation-jewellery piece that projects a daisies chain onto the viewer/wearer standing at a certain position in the installation. In fractions of seconds, the viewer becomes the wearer and vice versa.

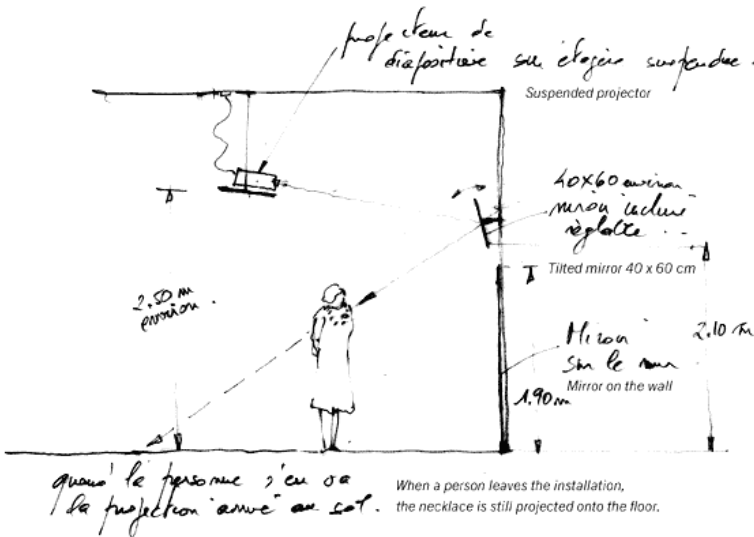


fig.8 Monika Bruggner *Jeu ju* (2000) sketch



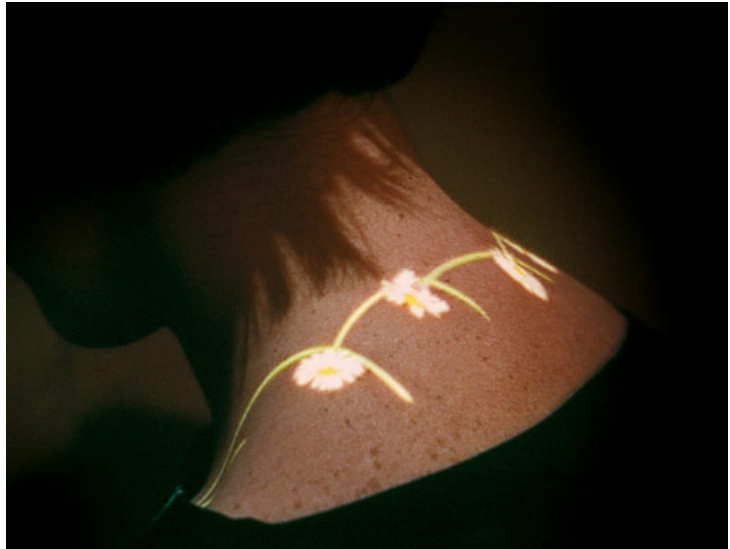


fig.9 Monika Brügger *Jeu ju* (2000) installation detail, projector, slide, mirror

With this work Brügger manages to take us back in our childhood. While conveying the feeling of the fragile and ephemeral daisy, she indicates that precious moments pass and at the same time underlines the wealth of memory.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Broadhead & Vigarrello, 2009: 38ff

We remember the tears we cried when the daisies chains got rotten or broke and how satisfied we were when we put the finished wreath on our head or around a friends' neck. Fragments of personal memory are often the trigger of Monika Brügger's creative work. She succeeds in evoking a sort of sudden enlightenment in the viewer, through unconscious and often hidden meanings and discoveries in her works, which often move between the tangible and the immaterial, between the visual and the sensual.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Broadhead & Vigarrello, 2009: 4ff

All these objects have one thing in common: they all appear metonymically, as representative objects, 'placeholders' for places or events, or rather for our personal memory of them - embedded in a certain time and a certain feeling.

This also applies to fragments or abandoned memorials, where the leftover, the preserved representatively stands as part of what is now no longer there. These fragments create a connection between today's reality and what must have been. They are leftover and evidence of past, forensics and track-laying at the same time. The present refers primarily to its own past, to the absent. In them lies the imaginative potential of the gap.<sup>33</sup> These gaps are required to be

<sup>33</sup> Assmann, 2009: 309

filled by the viewer, in this way the viewer is actively involved in the memory process. Their reconstructions often reveal more of the now than of the past since the memories come with feelings from the present, like yearning, humility and loss.

Objects of belief and superstition are present in our life since generations. We were raised with them, and so did our ancestors. Belief and dedication are closely linked to a ritual use of objects. These objects formed habits and traditions, whether religious, private or sentimental. We rely on their power and protection in the form of a talisman and carry these wearable objects as a sign of belonging to a community that is often deeply entrenched in our roots and thus forms the basis of our own identity and origin.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Elenskaya, 2016

The necklace *Ossa* (2011, *fig.10*) made by Dutch jeweller Ruudt Peters (\*1950) could be seen as 'reinvention' of the commonly worn golden cross as a religious symbol.



*fig.10* Ruudt Peters *Ossa* (2011) necklace, aluminium, cotton, 250x150x12mm

Which of these objects eventually moves us, what exactly we remember, and what feelings they spread in us, is as individually different as our story itself. Collecting these objects enables us to face the future with the help of the past. They give us support in dealing with our environment.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Herzog, 1992: 6

In the small, personal chambers of wonder of our memories are unreadable keepsakes in addition to commercial memorabilia, supposed kitsch next to finds from natural material. With our collection of memory crutches, a part of our inner world returns to the outside. In them there is cooperation and confusion of things and times. Yet these object arrangements seem to follow a logic that is not necessarily visible or tangible.

## Safekeeping of Keepsakes

According to personal preference, we present our keepsakes visibly in showcases, on shelves or in letter cases. However, some memory bearers are deliberately hidden in a safe place. Be it to protect them because they are particularly close to our hearts, or because they tell of painful experiences. Decisive is the knowledge about their existence. The fact that it is possible to touch them is almost secondary; often the knowledge of their presence alone is enough to revive memories. Sometimes we even veil some objects, we do that mostly in an act of appreciation. The things we cover up, we want to preserve, protect from external influences and from the eyes of others. By covering an object, putting a veil over it, we deprive it of the eyes of our environment and, in a mysterious way, we draw attention to it at the same time. The act of covering and revelation can become a ritual, a constant through which we strengthen and nurture our connection to an object. The mantle underscores appreciation and dignity of the content. The play with visibility creates a special tension of physical presence and hiddenness, of showing and concealing. Just as some memory crutches deprive of the readability of the collective, the shell deprives the observer of the actual nature of the veiled and is thereby sharpening his or her senses. Our imagination is awakened, challenged.

Thus, ancient reliquaries are often ornately decorated, as an expression of awe and respect to praise the content. They set a visual appeal that does not directly reflect their inner core, but testifies to its sublimity. That it must be an extremely precious and rare item with special meaning is thus still clearly visible. Is the elaborate design of such reliquaries also related to the fact that their content is usually a transient? The casing is therefore also used to prevent its oblivion in order to preserve it or the memory of it. Accordingly, the reliquary does not have the pure function of concealing, but instead becomes

the surrogate of the relic itself. It serves to substantiate its sacred content. Even a de facto empty reliquary never reflects absolute emptiness. Rather, it testifies in his existence of the certainty that a content must have existed. The fact that the content is no longer there, in a sense, proves that it is now no longer there, but certainly existed.

The jewellery series *Keep* (2016, fig.11) made by British jeweller Lin Cheung (\*1971) is an ironic look at how she stores and protects her own jewellery, it is about the private and public life of jewellery, a glimpse into the personal life of jewellery, to witness how value and meaning are made manifest through objects.

*„Unceremoniously tucked in corners of plastic grip seal bags, wrapped like a slice of cake in kitchen paper, scrunched up in a tissue, folded in a handkerchief or secured with paper and an elastic band are just some of the ways the jewellery I own and wear is stashed and stowed.“*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Cheung, n.d.



fig.11 Lin Cheung *Corner of a Plastic Bag* (2016) brooch, carved rock crystal, gold

In a commissioned piece (2018 fig.12) Australian jewellery artist Helen Britton (\*1966) gave a new home to an antique brooch that the client was going to trash. Not only that the brooch was saved from the trash, it got a new stage, a new contemporary garb and is now worn again. The original brooch is still removable for wearing alone and also the shell can be worn ,empty‘.

Helen Britton often adds metal to objects and puts them together

in skilled crafted jewellery constructions to bring them back to the body.



fig.12 Helen Britton commissioned piece (2018) brooch, silver, antique brooch

## Photographs and Nostalgia

Moments of bygone present can be photographically frozen, and we hope that the sight of this photo will allow us to reactivate that moment in any future present. Unlike the narrative, or when read, the photo is realistic; our imagination is claimed much less. We have that last moment literally on paper, in our hands. In Proust's reflection on portraits of loved ones, it is less about the aesthetic appearance, the presence of the sitter, but it reveals its absence.

The picture, though it shows something concrete under certain conditions, that we may not even be aware of, this picture is inspiring our memories of something unrepresented. Photographs unfold a complex life of their own, they are by no means simply transparent media, they appear narrative and dumb at the same time, are document and track.

In fact, some photographs do not open up to us at first glance, it is rather that they convey a basic mood and put our imagination into effect. Often, this is a game with the blur or an image detail that suggests a large whole.

Outline recognizable image objects, that in their full form elude the viewer, yet give the impression to know the nature of each image subject, its appearance and feel.

Through an intermediate state of presence and absence, the impression of the whole is communicated much more vividly than the exact observations of the details would. They are not directly accessible to the eye of the beholder, thereby provoking a moment of remembrance, calling for associations. The image provides a basic mood, what each individual sees in those pictures is based on his or her personal experience and knowledge, their own memory treasure.

*“And it is in this gap between resemblance and identity that nostalgic desire arises. The nostalgic is enamoured of distance, not of the referent itself. Nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss.”*<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, 1993: 145

Nostalgia itself is often not based on actual memories, but rather an expression of yearning. Often it springs from sad, lonely moments. The nostalgic revelry goes hand in hand with a glorification, an idealization of the past. Drafts of the past and visions of the future merge with our wishful thinking into a unity.

Nostalgia longs to fill in spaces that open up between our present and remembered past; gaps, as they exist between experience and object. Nostalgia itself generates these gaps again and again. It does not strive for the fulfilment of its longing, but for longing itself. Susan Stewart speaks in this context of the „*desire of desire*“<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Stewart, 1993: 23

Objects act as bearers of nostalgia only when they also awaken an emotional connotation in the viewer, to the memory impulse. So a photo is often what we put into it, what we want to see in it. Does the question of authenticity of photography arise in this regard? Photographically recorded material is often portrayed as a document, whereas our memory is a subjectively experienced view of things. Photographs are pictures of reality; Memories are Stories, a sequence of abstract images in our head. But are not these two idealized symbiosis? Does the magic of photography not live from our remembrance, and is the memory vice versa often accessible to us through the photo as a window to the past?

Memory crutches become blenders in a positive way. Like mirrors, they reflect images of our past our cultural habits and religious beliefs, as individual as our reflection. In the final analysis, we are the ones who hope to preserve their past and identity in objects. And equally within us lies the genius that is aware of its past and its transience, and freely avails itself at the counter of memory.

German jewellery artist Bettina Speckner (\*1962) is known for creating nostalgic narratives often by gently altering ferrotypes and translating them into jewellery (*fig.13/14*). Ferrotypes are simultaneously image and object. Unlike the digital images that flood our everyday lives they cannot be duplicated; since there is no negative, they are unique objects.

The ferrotypes that Speckner has integrated into her jewellery have, from today's perspective, more of a graphic than emotional value. The meanings and associations that the image had for his previous owner and his contemporaries are no longer in the foreground. Bettina Speckner's jewellery pieces are objects that carry pictures; and while she recognizes the symbolic potential of her chosen components, she deliberately keeps them open to multiple readings.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Roberts, 2019



*fig.13/14 Bettina Speckner (2010) brooch, ferrotype, silver, baroque pearls, garnets, 89x57 mm*



*fig.15* Anna Sophie Fink (2018) photograph



## 4 Nostalgic Pavements

The following chapter is focussing on my own work and the artistic implementation of *Nostalgic Pavements*. The title *Nostalgic Pavements* can be seen as a metaphorical transcription of what objects with emotional and memorial value are capable of – they send us on a journey back in time.

After looking at the different approaches of other artists and gaining a deeper understanding of the different groups of objects and the various aspects that make them valuable it seemed important to me to start within the material. So I started collecting things - objects with history. I went to second hand markets to get some material to work with. The objects I got had lost their ownership probably out of different reasons, they could have gone lost or stolen, or they may have been abandoned following the death of their owners. But they have been rescued and whatever their backstories are, they recapture the past. I chose objects that arouse my interest, that reminded me of something familiar, scurrile objects that made me think of their former life, their origin and purposes. Mostly all of the chosen objects have 'jewellery size', they are somehow already related to the body and can be carried on the body. I cannot say why exactly the different objects have addressed me, but what is certain is that I was attracted by them and I trust this resonance. I'm probably connected to them in some way, have seen something similar in a different context before, and that's why this object awakens memories, stories and, at best, feelings and emotions in me.

The objects I found are memory crutches to me, artefacts that tell of another time. They serve as props and bridges to understand and learn and even though I cannot read them as mementos or murmuring objects they still have shared lifetime with their owners. Some have religious background others show a familiar scenario of a family portrait. The history and time these objects shared with their owners make them more valuable in my eyes. They tell me about another time and another home - another life story. It is not important if the pictures that come to my mind fit with the actual history of the object, what is important is that they make me think, that I am triggered to remember and feel.

First there was an accumulation of things, chaotic and with no superior order.

Which objects are worth preserving?

How do they interact with one another?

What would be a sensible arrangement?

How important are aesthetical aspects?

I collected, preserved, combined and revealed, to generate an overview out of the everyday of another time and life and to understand and see what I was actually searching for. I started to create an atmosphere of an appreciation of the past. Often it takes attentive eyes and a close observation to see the things that chance plays into our hands, to recognize what lies within them and what can lead to their transformation. The objects can be considered to be beautiful, curious, rare, or to support a special relation with our experience, our past. It is the value of remembrance that is particularly relevant and can be interpreted only by imagining and thinking about time and history in a fragmentary way.

## Traces of Lost Time

Some of the objects from the second hand markets, especially the ones with religious content I barely touched. I was intrigued by the traces on the material in which you can see and read the former everyday life of the object and the interaction between the object and its previous owners. These objects with religious origin are often used in daily routines and rituals and therefore constitute an inherent part in their owners life. In my investigation I took away parts of the object. The most visible and important parts, so the only thing left was its carrier, its frame and the traces of what used to be there. These traces emerged through time, the bleaching out of the wood, the peeling of colour. The object itself is not complete anymore, but somehow the parts that are taken away are still visible, maybe even more impressive than before. It is again the play with the unseen and seen, the absent and the present, imagination and reality. So by taking away and fragmenting the object I added attention. It was important for me to make these traces visible and to show that they contribute to the actual value of the object

Traces are witnesses of time, the steady flow, the inevitable progression and aging of objects. Concrete, visual traces on objects are perceived and captured by our eyes and then act as catalysts. The sight of them stands as part of what is now no longer there or what has happened before. It can touch us and revive memories of the interaction with these objects in us; we are actively involved in a memory process, an investigation of circumstances.

I see these objects as inspirations, in them the absent is present and the traces of usage seem still vivid. *Traces of Lost Time (2018, fig.16)* directly tells the beholder of its everyday, the interaction with people and its origin and activates their imagination.



fig.16 Anna Sophie Fink *Traces of Lost Time* (2018) holy water vessel, 200x115x10 mm

### Objects of Another Time, Another Home

A large part of the chosen objects were taken from the domestic area, decorative and homely objects. Objects, that were eventually selected according to certain criteria, according to a particular taste. Not purely functional objects, rather decoration, significant for a special time and cultural and regional context.

The space of the house is a symbol of comfort, security and memory

and therefore a perfect place for accumulating objects, it could be seen as the personal museum of ones life. People select and arrange objects in their home. It could be said, that any grouping of objects is a type of exhibit, a portrait and statement of identity.

My own treasure of memory is filled with images of the domestic, especially with patterns. I spent much of my childhood with my grandparents in the countryside. The patterns from this same farmhouse, patterns of my home, are very familiar to me: There is the pattern of the teacups, the tablecloth and the hand-made embroidery and knotting of my grandmother, as well as patterns on curtains and the couch (*fig.15*), on the covers of the corner seat in the dining room, the colourful cooking aprons of my grandmother and the nice and delicate patterns of the wallpapers. These are patterns from my personal environment, but I am sure that some of these specific patterns or related ornaments can be found in the memory treasure of many other people. They are a bit cheesy, dusty, stale, yet familiar and warm, with a touch of nostalgia. They tell of a certain time and environment and spread feelings of a special period. Ornamental elements, patterns and surfaces can serve as memory crutches too and since their language is more universal, several people can read them.

*Domestic Whispers (2019 fig.17)* are combinations of layered photographs of the domestic area: surfaces of furnitures, patterns of curtains and tiles, framed in a cross section of an old glass lampshade. The cosy and precious atmosphere of a secure home captured in material, surface and visual appeal. The layering of the images creates space and depth and is an allusion to our memory that keeps recalling and overwriting memories again and again. I decided to create necklaces and brooches to bring the wearable objects to the torso, the chest of their wearer. The brooch still has an object character and is brought to the body in a more spontaneous way, for a jeweller the brooch is the piece of jewellery that gives the most freedom, since there are almost no restrictions. A necklace gives the feeling of carrying something. Both groups of jewellery have two sides, one that is close to the body and more intimate, the other side is communicating and open to the public. I like to play with these two sides and focus on their qualities.

Most objects are given a specific relevance by their usual function. The act of detaching these objects out of their everyday existence and their functional context gives them the power to stand on their own and act in another function. Attention and devotion of objects alters their significance. In this way I am able to underline and highlight objects by making them wearable treasures and putting them in a different light.



fig.17 Anna Sophie Fink *Domestic Whispers* (2019) mock-up, glass resin, ink 75x78x8 mm

## Souvenir Photographs

Among the finds of the second hand markets were some framed private photographs, of which I put together a small photographic collection (*fig.18*). It is impossible to trace the provenance of these photographs. The photographs seem to have become homeless orphans. They are anonymous now and therefore speak rather of a time a certain reality than of a private history. These pictures tell and record situations on a family level, but in their anonymity convey a general interpretation.

There is a relation to reality; the photograph acts like a document.



But it also opens up fictional pictures and stories in the viewer. By editing found images through selecting details and layering them I create collages and montages of memory traces. I engage with the past through recalling, retrieving and recycling and by doing so I create a fictional reality. These fragments of others people's lives also provide a potential basis to create new stories, compilations and impulses. The refound photos are made to speak to us again, but their significance is not in the image itself more in its context and the actualisation as material object. It is a play with historical material, from a personal family portrait belonging to a specific family to a generally valid historical and cultural trace.



fig.18 Anna Sophie Fink (2019) found photographs

By combining these images with an old pattern making technique called guilloche I create an antique and nostalgic atmosphere (*fig.19*). Guilloche is an old decorative technique that was mainly used for ornamental purposes on surfaces. In this case, however, it becomes the carrier of the photos, image and support flow into each other and favour each other. Depending on the viewing angle, the photography or the reflection of the fine guilloche lines comes to the fore. In combination with the portraits the guilloche patterns gain a wallpaper character and add depth to the photographs, which makes them more appealing. It is not the pictured per se that is important to me, but rather the aura and the mood of the photograph in combination with the metal and the shimmering guilloche pattern that shows different reflections depending on the perspective of the beholder.



*fig.19* Anna Sophie Fink (2019) brooch, copper, ressin, ink, tin 75x80x8 mm

The 'guilloche photographs' are set in a roughly casted tin frame that adds an ancient character. Tin is a metal that has a low melting point, which makes it a material that can be used almost spontaneously. This spontaneity and the capturing of the moment are visually transformed in the frame. The frame itself is known for its restraint, it is attracting attention to its content, but is not subject itself. In this case however the frame is heavy and visible in contrary to the shimmering image.

## Metaphorical and Symbolic Elements

In examining the different objects, I asked myself how to translate them, how much 'new' material to add or whether it would also be possible to start from a blank page. Since memory crutches are pictorial representations of something abstract, they release feelings. So I started to have a look on the handling of objects and how we deal with memories and with the feelings they evoke, in order to translate that occurrence into jewellery or objects.



*fig.20 Anna Sophie Fink (2019) mock-up, fabric, fabric-hardener 250x110x75 mm*

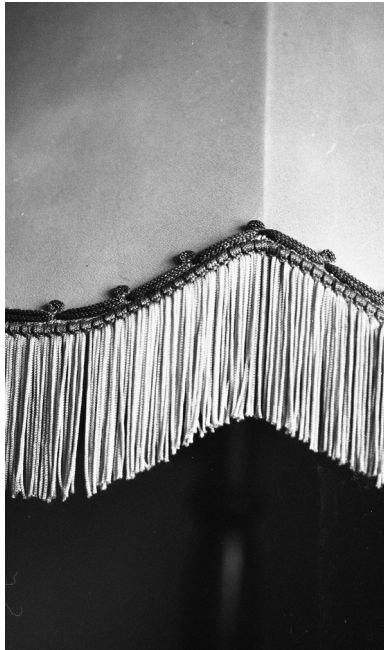
Inspired by reliquaries whose contents is often not or no longer existent, I came up with the idea of creating glass objects that formally suggest a specific shape, a specific content, but are de facto empty.



The transparency of the glass allows the interior and exterior space to flow into each other, revealing the viewer of the void inside. In their transparency these objects are dealing with the ambivalence of showing and hiding, of the intimate and public. The Madonna as an icon of Christian art is ubiquitous and recognizable in Western culture and therefore universally binding. As the primeval mother, the Madonna is the holiest figure of all religions, but she also stands for matrimony in the mundane. For me, she radiates gracefulness, familiarity and protection, and raises questions about origins and identity, and about the role of women in the mirror of time.

The net as an element can be understood as a metaphor for our memory. It is a light, permeable web that collects and holds stories and images and at the same time filters them out. A net keeps together and is open, it is fluttering and stable at the same time and represents aspects of showing and hiding, holding on and letting go. It forms a container without creating a real boundary between inside and outside. However, there are a lot of different associations that a net can trigger. In the sense of a safety net, it can be reliability; fishing nets or spoil nets of spiders stand on the one hand for brutality but also as a sign of survival. The making process of a net, the knotting is also related to our memory; we tie a knot to remember and by repetition a special pattern, a network is created. Also, the dualism, the contrast between the two poles of remembering and forgetting, holding on and letting go; between inside and outside, showing and hiding can be found in my work. Be it the combination of two materials, the duplication of elements or in the inclusion of front and back.

Another fact that inspired me a lot is, that memory always comes with a loss; it tries to close the gaps that the passage of time brings with it. And we try to escape this circumstance by forcing objects to preserve lost time. At the same time these gaps create spaces for interpretation, they invite the beholder to have a closer look, to question. Blanks point to something that has been, but is no longer, or has changed, they always tell of bygone time.



*fig.21* Anna Sophie Fink (2018) photograph

## 5 Conclusion

During the writing and browsing I realized how important and wholesome remembrance is for us and for our society. It helps us to orient ourselves in the present and in understanding our identity and origin. We remember by retrieving a stimulus - a familiar scent, image or situation that triggers something in us. This makes remembering an enormously subjective action. Without the stimulus of an object there is hardly an impulse to remember – a memory crutch is meaningless unless it is linked to memories. Similar to photography, these crutches unite proximity and distance and embody the feeling of having and of loss at the same time. They keep memories that could be in danger of being lost without them as a tangible object. In this way, they create a calming connection between the present and the past of their owner, tell of their owner's person and confirm their existence to themselves and their environment.

In order to understand in which way and for what reasons certain objects grow in importance and value for the individual I have distinguished the memory crutches in different groups.

Some objects are naturally evocative out of their common ground of everyday experience, they remind us of our childhood, or times of transition, of our homeland and culture. These objects create a sense of coreminiscence. Sometimes the value is determined by personal parameters, these objects make aware of relations or people that have passed. Others tell of travelled places or are fragments that relate to something that is no longer there. And then there are these who play with a visual and graphic language – patterns and antique photographs that evoke nostalgic feelings.

The emotional and memorial value of these memory crutches is not captured in their function, material or shape, but there are ways to distillate and underline their preciousness, to emphasize the value of the object itself and to communicate and capture a certain mood. Sometimes, however, the attempt to capture this spell alone is enough to drive it out completely.

Memory crutches are always representative of something abstract, of personal emotions, feelings and memories. It is about the importance of the object for a certain person.

But how far is this value in the material, in the object itself?

How much of this personal story still needs to be told in the objects I create?

When is it too personal to be traceable?

Or does that special relation, the value only arose with the confrontation, processing and contextualisation of the object?

In my investigation I dealt with these questions and scrutinized the objects themselves. As a jeweller I am able to enhance the objects through craftsmanship and emphasize their personal value. However, I am not primarily interested in giving significance to objects, but rather reveal it. Traces from the everyday handling of objects for example, point to interaction and memorial value, so by focussing on these traces, the value behind the purely visual façade of the object is highlighted. In the end it is about reading objects, in the sense of their origin, personally as well as temporally and culturally. I would say that I have not received concrete answers to all of the questions asked before, but what I realized is, that it is not always about pointing directly to something, sometimes it is even more insistent to subtly emphasize something.

Jewellery, like other personal objects, is particularly suitable for meaning something that is hidden from others. Only initiates know the biographical and personal references of a piece of jewellery. In my exploration of the connection between memory and objects, I recognized that this very aura of the familiar, the secret and the magical is essential for objects with memorial value. While at the same time I became aware of that it is not important to reveal the actual stories behind the objects, but rather to create an incentive. I will not be able to reveal the secrets of memory crutches, since in their essence they are connected to a personal story, but I can face them with appreciation and give them a stage and create an abstract mood that invites to associate.

*Nostalgic Pavements* brings memory crutches in form of jewellery back to our world, directly to the wearer's body, where they can continue their story and connect the wearer with his or her past, identity and culture. It was important to me to make wearable pieces out of these memory crutches or pieces that are inspired by them, to bind memories and the associated feelings to the body. So they are securely connected to the wearer who does not have to worry about forgetting or losing them.

The pieces I created do not follow ideals of beauty, and they will not appeal to everyone. Maybe they will not only evoke good memories, but I think that does not matter. Rather, it is about the lives that are in them, identities and stories, the memory and the interconnectedness of the people who were or will be interwoven with these objects. *Nostalgic Pavements* is an interplay between objects, their stories, their materials and contexts and the decisions and choices I made based on my own memory and experience. But once these *Nostalgic Pavements* enter the public space they are open to any interpretation and are reactivated by the wearer and the viewer.



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