



# The Moment of Capture |

Annette Warner  
MA Sculpture  
Royal College of Art  
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## Abstract

'The Moment of Capture' explores how traditional notions of 'The Self' have changed in the era of autobiographical capture within digital technologies. Underlying the dissertation are questions concerning what a 'moment' grasped in consciousness might be and how we apply meaning to it. Further questions become unearthed in this exploration concerning embodiment, time, and the plasticity of mind. This text aims to develop conversations approaching how our visual technologies are altering and aiding our changing concepts of reality and identity.

The writing has naturally moved towards an autobiographical nature, mimicking that which it attempts to interrogate in our normalised recording behaviours. My exploration of capturing the moment has inevitably become an exploration of capturing myself. In this, I have realised the extent to which my personal context is important to the subjective understanding of 'The Self' in contemporary society. This context, necessary in grasping the nature of my writing, is founded in a dissociative amnesia that spans my childhood years. Resulting in forgetting much of my early life, this has led to continued difficulty with memory since. As a result, the increased reliance I have placed on my devices has encouraged a concentrated level of empathy towards how they aid my life.

**Keywords:** *Presence, Self, Plasticity, Image, Technology*

## Introduction

Placing the perspective of lived experience alongside examining contemporary societal behaviour, the text aims to investigate how we understand ourselves inside this age of digitality. Considering the ways our devices may help and hinder our daily existence is to understand that they are an integral part of it.

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Sep

Divided into 4 sections, the text begins with *Absence*, addressing how the self is externalised for our own reflection. *Absence* considers us as onlookers to ourselves in the collaborative nature of archiving our memories inside our digital devices.

*Presence* follows to consider our impulse to capture these moments that add to defining us and reviews our changing notions of authenticity.

*Capture* delves into the autonomy of our documented moments as their own reality, considering how our storage changes our experiences and how we define ourselves in them.

*Release* finishes to explore how this documentary process may relinquish the pressures to retain information, and considers how this opens to new modes of thinking about our identities.

This text ultimately aims to leave open an array of questions that draw excitement from the malleability of identity construction, and embrace the strengths and weaknesses of human existence.

## Absence

### Seen/By Me

- Not to see myself in me, but to be seen by me  
 - Luigi Pirandello *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand*.<sup>1</sup>

Within our grasp, our devices allow us to peer into the window of ourselves. To see ourselves at arm's length and on the same surface as others. We see our performances of self, frozen in time as we individually and collectively continue to change. This normalised recording of daily life creates new perceptible memories that are altered upon every re-encounter. It allows us to be othered by ourselves, offering new interrogations to who we might be, how we want to be seen, and where we fit inside contemporary society. Fascinated with this form of connection, we persist in sharing our lives and watching others'. The communities we now reside in span globally, allowing us to mould and be moulded by others previously unreachable in unprecedented ways. By seeing ourselves in these fresh perspectives, can we now consider ourselves with renewed clarity, in the hands of ourselves? Do we bear witness to our own changing inside and alongside our devices?

### *I stare*

*I stare at myself in fascination.  
 I stare at myself in the mirror,  
 in the video call,  
 in the zoom meeting,  
 I stare at myself in the shop windows,  
 I stare at myself in group photos,  
 Is it in the act of existing  
 to be fascinated by  
 ourselves  
 reflected back to us?*

*Engulfed in versions of myself,  
 Engulfed in versions of others  
 I am changing  
 Imaginary eyes  
 Imaginary perspectives  
 how may they perceive me*

*I get glimpses at the ways others see  
 altering my eyes  
 My own seeing alter theirs  
 and so  
 we are bodies to be moulded  
 Sculpting ourselves through the touch of others.*

*I become the unknowability of the future  
 Such lack of grounding  
 Such beauty  
 This uneasy terrain alters my course  
 Will I get lost  
 Will I come home*

<sup>1</sup> Luigi Pirandello, *One, None and a Hundred Thousand*, trans by William Weaver (California: Spurl Editions, 2018).

The moment we scroll down our own social media profiles, we find ourselves strikingly aware of our changes, our growth, and our susceptibility to trends. Experiencing the live archive of our malleable identities is easily accessible to us now. To look at our platforms is to bear witness to our curious performances of self, locked in chronological time. “Enable me to perceive reality in illusion itself”, asserts Zizek.<sup>2</sup> In this playful deception with our performed selves, we find an enhanced awareness of our identity-moulding inside the environments we are placed in.

In a previous writing exploring the delicacy of human vision, I focus on the power of the illusion: “*We find enjoyment from this deception, allowing the absurd to cloud our minds as a visual pleasure, entertaining us between our ordinary ways of looking at the world around us. Illusions allow us to let go of conventional ideas of reality.*”<sup>3</sup>

This is a new age of such illusion, with new distorted mirrors now extending to the construction of ourselves online. Witnessing each other’s performances whilst performing our own provides an excitement that we continue to immerse ourselves in, a veil we pull over our own eyes. The illusion intrigues us as to our own imperceptible downfalls made visible, our ability to be fooled. In this creation of ourselves online, we are willingly made vulnerable to be defined by our content. Warren notes in the human nature of lying how “Humans are masters of self-deception. We fool ourselves into believing things that are false and we refuse to believe things that are true.”<sup>4</sup> In this, we choose to mould our identities inside the illusions we create of ourselves and be moulded by the identity formation of others. These performances raise the popular questions of how one can truly define themselves on a mass scale.

How we apply personality to understand others has been brought into question in our habituation inside these archived identities. Zizek states “A subject is a partial-something. Behind it is a void, we fill in our nothingness with fantasies about the wealth of human personalities.”<sup>5</sup> The age of the digitally performed self imitates this notion, hooked on the ways we can mould how others perceive us, and alter how we perceive ourselves in the process. Mirzeoff, in his amusing comparison of Greek mythology to modern day selfies, states “Narcissus spent his life looking at himself, but he did not release a copy of his image for others to look at. Selfies are, like them or not, all about sharing.”<sup>6</sup> Our performances of ourselves then become a way of connecting with others, strikingly aware to the ways that individual identity is socially created.<sup>7</sup> In this creation, the introduction of alternative perspectives is moulding how we see ourselves. The ability to now look at ourselves through an array of lenses changes us, where the ability to perform alternate personalities changes us.

In the platforms we now operate inside, we are becoming increasingly aware of the malleability of our perceiving our lives. In her work ‘The Autobiographical Self in Time and Culture’ Sociologist Qi Wang notes

“By contributing to and being shaped by the collective remembering processes of the virtual community, each individual blogger’s autobiographical self becomes part of a shared reality and serves as an impetus for the very existence and vitality of the community.”<sup>8</sup>

The memories of our existence are dependent on the context we are in, who we are is dependent on when and where we exist. This extends to our dwelling inside applications: Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, our camera rolls and our notes pages all provide shifting perspectives on viewing ourselves in the new reality of the digital age. The enjoyment to reflect on what these platforms show as lived

<sup>2</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*, dir. By Sophie Fiennes (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Annette Warner, ‘The Subjectivity of Seeing and Art Within It (unpublished BA thesis, University of Southampton, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Cortney Warren, *Honest Liars – the psychology of self-deception at TEDx*, online video recording, Youtube, 2016 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpEeSa6zBTE>> [accessed February 2020].

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*, dir. By Sophie Fiennes (2006).

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Mirzeoff, *How to See the World*. (London: Penguin, 2015) p64.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Rovner, *What happens to people in solitary confinement*, at TEDx, online video recording, Youtube, 2019. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UNCvk9YXOo>> [accessed November 2020].

<sup>8</sup> Qi Wang, *The Autobiographical Self in Time and Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p171.

experience is to align it with what has formed in our minds, altering our memories in the process. As Malabou asserts, “A brain that changes itself. That is exactly what “I” am.”<sup>9</sup>

09:52 🌙



&lt; Notes

Tue 4 Sep 2022 09:52



Done

You are everything combined of what you once  
were |

## Stored

The images we store in our camera rolls have commonly been conceived as neutral reproductions of the experiences they show. Only recently has the slippery nature of images been pushed into mainstream discussion.<sup>10</sup> As images move seamlessly from context to context, our interpretations of them morph.<sup>11</sup> As malleable as their maker, their bodies are fragile in their subjectivity as they travel across different environments. Huberman suggests that “The image is not a closed field of knowledge; it is a whirling, centrifugal field. It is not a field of knowledge like any other”<sup>12</sup>. Constantly in flux, what we see contorts beyond the event that conceived it. Images, in dialogue with each present moment we return to them in, conjure new interpretations. Can it then be said that every image we choose to capture becomes its own moment? Within our growing awareness of photography’s distorted representation, we perhaps do not document our lives so much as have a fascination with how the camera represents what we are already experiencing. Unique to us and us alone.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dust of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2009) p81.

<sup>10</sup> Laura Mallonee, ‘How Photos Fuel the Spread of Fake News’, *Wired* <<https://www.wired.com/2016/12/photos-fuel-spread>> [accessed 4 June 2022].

<sup>11</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Mitchell quoting Georges Didi-Huberman, ‘*Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies)*’. in Michaud, Philippe-Alain. *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 2004) p13.



Figure 1 – Dace Kruger, Image of Image of Francis Bacon's notes at *A Century of the Artist's Studio: 1920-2020*, Whitechapel Gallery, London. 2022.

14  
Oct

Our growing awareness to the camera's elusive nature may allow for something new to seep through our abstracted documentations, enriching more from our experiences in their storage.

As Deleuze suggests, "in the act of writing there's an attempt to make life something more than personal, to free life from what imprisons it"<sup>13</sup>, can we extend this reasoning to our contemporary habits of capture? To find more from our experiences, to free more from ourselves?<sup>14</sup> Francis Bacon scribbles down, "Highly controlled chaos", the words themselves controlled in their framing for the exhibition '*A Century of the Artist's Studio: 1920-2020*', Whitechapel Gallery. I capture it, quick to grasp that spark of inspiration found in reading these words; my friend captures me. Our images become a form of highly controlled chaos, a continuation of the relentless attempts to grasp the disorder of our minds, in ways akin to Bacon's notes.

Perhaps we attempt to justify ourselves through these frenzied captures; a need to see and be seen, by others and by ourselves. Reminders of our existence can be found at any instance we tap awake our hand-held companions. Within my practice, my incessant documentation both soothes and affirms the anxiety that "everything that is not photographed is lost... The camera must record all reality, all history; only then would it begin making some sort of crazy sense," as writer Italo Calvino describes.<sup>15</sup> What began as an anxious need to store my ideas before they fell through the weak grasp of my mind, has now grown to explore how the camera records its own reality. My captures live beyond my thinking. This archive transforms past mere documentation, becoming its own parallel experience; a perpetual recycling of each sparked idea thus occurs in every reflection.<sup>16</sup> With the ability to look back on swathes of forgotten captures, these moments become transformed outside of me.

<sup>13</sup>. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972 – 1990 – European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism* trans by Martin Joughin (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1997) p143.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p141.

<sup>15</sup> Aweek Sen, 'Redux: Italo Calvino's The Adventures of a Photographer', <<https://aperture.org/editorial/redux-italo-calvinos-the-adventure-of-a-photographer/>> [accessed 22 March 2022].

<sup>16</sup> Derrida, Jacques, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017) <<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/A/bo27619045.html>> [accessed 19 May 2022].

“See enough and write it down, I tell myself  
And then some morning when the world seems drained of wonder  
some day when I’m only going through the motions of doing what I am supposed to do

...  
On that bankrupt morning I will simply open my notebook and there it will all be,  
a forgotten account with accumulated interest.

Paid passage back to the world out there  
It all comes back  
Remember what it is to be me  
That is always the point”

- Joan Didion. *The Centre Will Not Hold*<sup>17</sup>

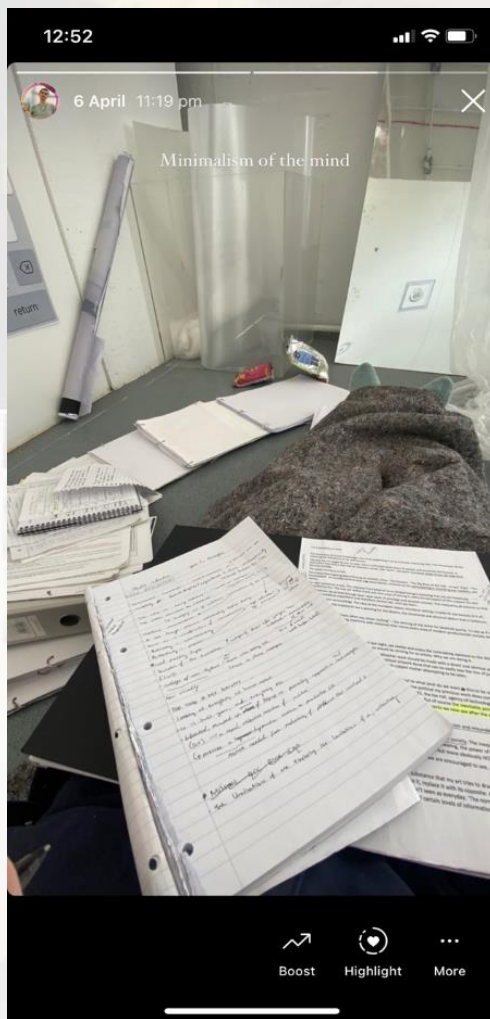


Figure 2 – Annette Warner, *Minimalism of the mind*, @annetwarner Instagram story, 2022

<sup>17</sup> Joan Didion: *The Centre Will Not Hold*, dir. by Griffin Dunne (Netflix. Oct 2017).





Figure 3 – Annette Warner, *A definition of Self as Artist*, @annetnewarner Instagram stories, 2021.

The growing efficiency and ease with which we can store our moments has increased our awareness to the elusive nature of their representation. It appears to have broken down both our objective trust in our images and our trust in how we can be defined. Computer scientist Jaron Lanier warned in 2010 that “Information systems need to have information in order to run, but information underrepresents reality.”<sup>18</sup> concerning how we, at that time, viewed social networking sites as having the ability to represent existing human relationships. After over a decade of normalised use in these platforms, I argue that we no longer look at our systems as carrying such an impossible burden of representing reality but have instead created their own. These environments allow us to think in alternate ways to what we had previously known, where our continued image-taking and sharing implies an ongoing fascination with this new environment.

This ability to document within seconds now defines the age we live in. As creatures of habit, Malabou affirms, “To be human entails repetition. The human does not exist prior to repetition but is designed by it. The human is the product and not the origin of repetition.”<sup>19</sup> This reflection is what Simone de Beauvoir defines as crucial for us. She states, “to go beyond itself, it [human existence] must maintain itself, to thrust itself towards the future, it must integrate the past into itself, and while relating to others it must confirm itself in itself.”<sup>20</sup> Social media has replicated this human necessity.

<sup>18</sup> Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not A Gadget: A Manifesto* (London New York: Penguin, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Catherine Malabou, ‘Superhumanity on Plasticity’, Superhumanity: Post-Labor, Psychopathology, Plasticity, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, 27 October 2017 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kL6oQRKu4s>> [accessed 30 March 2022].

<sup>20</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage Publishing, 2015)

29  
Oct

31  
Oct

9

The contemplative, melancholic and nostalgic connection one finds in reading their past diaries can now be felt inside our pockets at every instance. Integrating ourselves into our past through our repetitive documenting thrusts us forward into new ways of understanding our lived experience. These archives of ourselves are now essential in confirming who we are.

### ***Who Am I***

*100,000 images of who I have been.  
I am watching a film of my archived self.  
I am watching myself watching  
and I am watching myself grow,  
these years of in-between,  
now in fresh comparison to the life I forgot I lived.  
I am watching myself mould more and more around others,  
each and every day  
a changed body and changed mind.*

*Who am I after the film ends,  
an altered being by this ability for comparison across time.  
To bring to the screen these images  
These multitudes of me  
blurred in the depths of my mind.*

1  
Nov

2  
Nov

5  
Nov

7  
Nov

10

Who are we when we do not recognize the pictures we see, the older versions of ourselves? Who are we when our hands forget what they have brought into existence? A sense of grief can be felt; a death of this experience and of who we were inside it. In capturing more of life, we become increasingly aware of our memory's downfalls. Joan Didion records the feelings of grief as "the relentless succession of moments during which we will confront the experience of meaninglessness itself."<sup>21</sup> Through our representations of ourselves we can at once mourn who we had forgotten we were, while breaking down any and all meaning of ourselves, confronting the meaninglessness that exists outside of our performances. To consider this alongside Pirandello's words, "I am dying every instant, and being born anew and without memories; alive and whole, no longer in myself, but in everything outside"<sup>22</sup> we may begin to understand the presence of absence in ourselves: the ongoing cycle of death and rebirth in our known identities.

*It brings me pain,  
What realisation I have  
of how things were  
Of what remains  
The traces of the past  
scratched into our minds,  
our devices,  
our skin.*

9  
Nov

*Invisibly visible  
Present in their absence  
Forgotten until,  
caught on our fingers,  
they glisten in the light  
Such beauty exists in them  
these scars of time.  
And such beauty exists in pain,  
To remind oneself of their own existence.*

10  
Nov

*A mourning of myself, again and again, I find myself unknown to me.*

12  
Nov

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<sup>21</sup> Joan Didion: *The Centre Will Not Hold*, dir. by Griffin Dunne (Netflix, Oct 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Luigi Pirandello, *One, None and a Hundred Thousand*, trans by William Weaver (California: Spurl Editions, 2018).

## Presence Impulse

*“The mind is certainly a very mysterious organ, I reflected, drawing my head in from the window, about which nothing whatever is known, though we depend upon it so completely.”<sup>23</sup>*

*- A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf*

Capturing our moments inside images is now regarded as a daily habit. Our growing impulse to do so begins to change how we consider the authenticity of documenting experience. The progressive infiltration of smartphones has been met with hints of shame underlying our use of them. This shame looks with disdain at our screentime,<sup>24</sup> our reliance on having our devices nearby,<sup>25</sup> and importantly how they capture moments of our lives. This use of our devices has been seen as removing us from the very moment we attempt to capture.<sup>26</sup> Yet we continue to relentlessly archive our lives, entrenched in this behaviour, fascinated by preserving moments in our relentless reach to grasp the present.

The image locks moments inside time allowing us to position ourselves contextually inside them.<sup>27</sup> Derrida notes how “all aspects of experience and/or existence are relegated to a moment of presence. But the ideal of presence always implies more than one moment”<sup>28</sup> questioning the ability to grasp a present moment whilst consciously aware of its happening. The implication of taking a picture implies this awareness and has thus been seen as removing us from the present moment. However, when we begin to regard images as triggers for memory rather than representations, we can move beyond this concept. We return to the notion that these images create their own reality in and beyond their moment of capture, altering our conventional understanding of presence. Goethe writes, “if anyone looks at the sun, [they] may retain the image in [their] eyes for several days...and who is to say this afterimage is not equally real?”<sup>29</sup> What we once considered authentic demands a shift in understanding, where the afterimage of a moment becomes its own autonomous truth. These methods of documentation hence birth a new moment inside itself.

With the ability to access our notes pages, pinning down our ideas in mere seconds, are we not brought closer to the moment once attempted on pen and paper? Are we any less present by experiencing through the screen of our smartphones? Derrida continues “The singular condition that allows us to represent the world to ourselves at all is the trace... Our experience of presence is mediated by an absence that we can never experience as such.”<sup>30</sup>, implying how our attempt to grasp the impossibility of presence has always been a part of the human condition. These subconscious traces imply developments towards new representations of the world, understanding experience anew.

<sup>23</sup> Virginia Woolf. *A Room of One's Own*. (Hogarth Press, 1929).

<sup>24</sup> ‘Half of Gen Z Feel Bad About the Amount of Time Spent on Screens’, *Barna Group* <<https://www.barna.com/research/gen-z-screens/>> [accessed 3 June 2022]

<sup>25</sup> ‘Having Your Smartphone Nearby Takes a Toll on Your Thinking’, *Harvard Business Review*, 20 March 2018 <<https://hbr.org/2018/03/having-your-smartphone-nearby-takes-a-toll-on-your-thinking>> [accessed 3 June 2022]

<sup>26</sup> Stevenson, Tom, ‘Mobile Phones Are Stopping Us From Living In The Present’, *Medium*, 2019 <<https://tom-stevenson.medium.com/mobile-phones-are-stopping-us-from-living-in-the-present-33d0ddf425af>> [accessed 5 June 2022]

<sup>27</sup> Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube, The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, (Santa Monica and San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1976) p.18.

<sup>28</sup> John Phillips, ‘Introduction to Derrida. Presence and Absence’ <<https://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/derriduction3.htm>> [accessed 29 March 2022].

<sup>29</sup> Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2017)

<sup>30</sup> John Phillips, ‘Introduction to Derrida. Presence and Absence’ <<https://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/derriduction3.htm>> [accessed 29 March 2022].



Figure 4 - Annette Warner, Reach, iPhone image, 2022

*“everything has an instant in which it is... I want to possess the atoms of time. And to capture the present, forbidden by its very nature”<sup>31</sup>*

- Agua Viva, Clarice Lispector

<sup>31</sup> Clarice Lispector, *Agua Viva*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2014) p3.

***We are reminded***

*Of why we once captured this second,  
how we felt inside it  
who we were  
our intentions  
our desires.*

*With brutal honesty,  
the image cannot lie*

*Authenticity resides in even the most edited images*

*An intention of its creator made visible.*

*A thought, a moment of struggle, a moment of clarity*

*A forcefulness, a desperation, a mimicry*

*We lie to ourselves through them until*

*We are reminded*

Our smartphone captures become the next, quicker method in a long line of tools we have used to attempt to pin down our thinking.

“The human mind, if it is to be the physical organ of human reason, simply cannot be seen as bound and restricted by the biological skinbag. In fact, it has never been thus restricted and bound, at least not since the first meaningful words were uttered on some ancestral plain”<sup>32</sup>.

Clark, in his work ‘Natural-Born Cyborgs’ encourages the concept of ‘cyborg’ as the strength of humans to integrate their tools as extensions of their own bodies. The description of our digital devices as our ‘second brain’ provides strength to this concept, encouraging the notion that brains are for having ideas and not for storing them.<sup>33</sup> The more habitually impulsive our captures in images or notes become, the less we consciously consider performing them. The capture becomes subconscious, placing itself alongside language, writing and art to seize the fleeting instant and the ideas embedded within them.

*The capture of an image is live,  
its language implying entrapment,  
a caging.*

*To hold hostage an idea.*

*Trapped in its image,*

*providing sustenance*

*in feeding on ourselves,*

*picking at the carcass of what we once were*

*to strengthen who we are yet to be.*

The notion of impulse is being redefined within the digital age. Maslow reminds us that “Impulse is not necessarily in contrast with intelligent judgement, for intelligence is itself an impulse”<sup>34</sup>. The technologies we use are mediating our compulsions, and our behaviours mediate them back. Clark expands on this redefinition,

“Such technologies...do far more than merely allow for the external storage and transmission of ideas.

They constitute, I want to say, a cascade of “mindware upgrades”: cognitive upheavals in which the effective architecture of the human mind is altered and transformed”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Andy Clarke, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p4.

<sup>33</sup> Ali Abdaal, ‘The Second Brain - A Life-Changing Productivity System - YouTube’, 2020. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OP3dA2GcAh8>> [accessed 8 June 2022].

<sup>34</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (Longmans, 1970) p3.

<sup>35</sup> Andy Clarke, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p4.

Implying further how our connections to our devices extend how we define ourselves. The impulse of information capture and performative sharing may function as both an anchor and an upheaval in who we know ourselves to be inside the moment of presence.

*20 March 10.48am*

*Never alone  
I hold hands with you  
my thoughts,  
my memories,  
my people,*

*I search for language to describe it,  
what I am feeling  
Attempts redrawn on finger to glass  
As liquid as the light I capture  
I remain silent  
Companionship in the comfort of solitude*

*My brain heats up,  
Melting the plastic of mind,  
breaking me down  
Letting this moment become the photograph<sup>36</sup>  
Capture to let go*

*The capture itself provides the release,  
capture  
to break free  
A spark slicing through the image,  
giving light to what beauty lies in the shadows  
of this glistening instant.<sup>37</sup>*

*What euphoric gratitude it allows us,  
to appreciate what these moments hold,  
20 March, 10.48am  
a greater understanding of the beauty of existence”*



Figure 5 – Annette Warner, 20 March 10.48am,  
Screenshot of Instagram stories @annettewarner, 2022.

<sup>36</sup>Joan Didion: *The Centre Will Not Hold*, dir. by Griffin Dunne (Netflix, Oct 2017).

<sup>37</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990 – European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism*, trans by Martin Joughin (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1997) p141.

If Zizek is correct in saying “Our desires are artificial. We have to be taught to desire”<sup>38</sup>, what can then be considered as individual expression? As the authenticity of our images have been called into question, so too has the notion of authentic individuality. Doris Lessing, in 1986, wrote that “Writing about oneself, one is writing about others, since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions—and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas—can’t be yours alone.”<sup>39</sup> Documenting for oneself is as collaborative as that of sharing. Wang expands on this concept in current times:

“Individuals create their own personal-cultural experiences in constructing their autobiographical self, balancing between cultural formations and individual agency. This results in both diversity and commonality in the autobiographical self within a cultural community.”<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps it is less that we are losing our authentic selves inside our devices than that we recognise ourselves as constituting a broader collaborative body, where conventional notions of authentic individualism are being subverted.

*Images are but a reflection of how we segment our lives.*

*1080px by 108px*

*Neat boxes of experience,  
slicing up our time.*

*Where does the ‘individual’ end and the tool begin.*

*Where does the experience end and the image begin.*

*Attached to each other.*

*And what happens in-between*

*Must there be one or another*

*One reality uploaded into*

*a new reality*

*Does it not all liquidate*

*collapse*

*dissolve*

<sup>38</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, dir. By Sophie Fiennes (2006).

<sup>39</sup> Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> Qi Wang, *The Autobiographical Self in Time and Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p14.



## Capture Remember

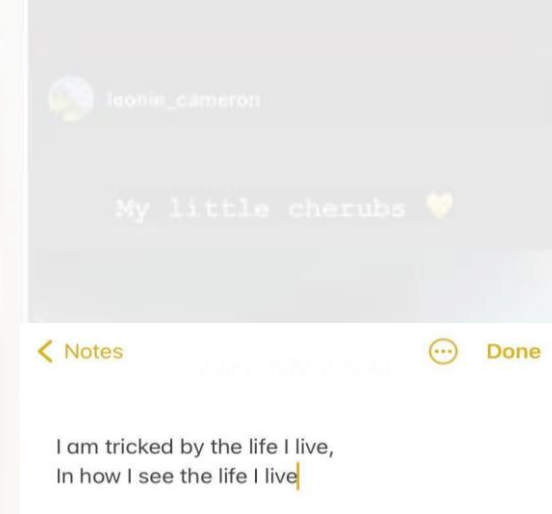


Figure 6 - Annette Warner, screenshot of notes page, 2022.

## Companion

*I wake you  
Power on  
my tired old friend,  
waiting for me at the end of each day,  
with me through the vulnerability of adolescence,*

*The resistance to bring you to life weighs heavy on me,  
knowing the burden of content you carry  
The traces of my existence.  
I look back at these years  
as I pass through ever more.  
This bank of gold kept safe  
Mundane and marvellous depictions of my life  
in a time forgotten.*

*I do not know who I was.  
I do not know who I am.  
I feel a tugging pressure to reach that which the image shows me,  
that person  
An onlooker gazing into the window of myself,  
blurring into the past,  
alienated  
with the skeleton left before me to witness.*

What drives our hands to our phones to point at the experience before us? To capture? To control? To retain? Recording daily life at such accumulative speed is changing how we experience, how we remember the experience, and how we consider ourselves within it. Storing versions of ourselves alongside our perpetually shifting identities is the point at which our contemporary understanding of memory shifts. If memories of an event are altered by our accounts of them, we must then be altered by our accounts of ourselves.

Foucault notes that during the Hellenistic period (323-33BC) a main feature of self-care involved taking notes to be reread, with the purpose of “reactivating for oneself the truths one needed”.<sup>41</sup> The

<sup>41</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Technologies of the Self: Lectures at University of Vermont in October 1982’, <<https://foucault.info/documents/foucault.technologiesOfSelf.en/>> [accessed 9 May 2022].

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London:Vintage Publishing, 2015).

truths one needs at the time of re-reading are affirmed in the various ways we can interpret writing. It remains a consistent part of the human condition to record one's personal truths. In this attempt, as Foucault suggests, we reach toward our personal history as a direct link to our past selves, reactivating the truths we may need in the present. These attempts to preserve our existence proliferate in the digital environment. Returning to Clark's concept of 'mindware upgrades' as the transformation of the architecture of the human mind inside our devices,<sup>42</sup> we can begin to consider the ways we naturally integrate ourselves with our tools, searching for our own truths within them and utilising them for our own benefit.

How often are we comforted in compiling records of our lives, close by yet rarely returned to? Recent studies suggest that we have grown less inclined to remember content and more adept at knowing the location of where it is stored.<sup>43</sup> Where our changing attention steers our memory, we create our subjective realities around these systems of storage. Malabou affirms that "through the direction and nature of our attention, we prove ourselves to be parties in creation, both of the world and of ourselves."<sup>44</sup> Our personal truth can be found in the constant return to our memories, now residing between mind and device.

The chronological ordering of these digital memories now abstracts our conventional perceptions of time. Derrida considers memory as both preceding and exceeding the present moment<sup>45</sup> in much a similar vein to Bergson, who states "The pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future. In truth, all sensation is already memory."<sup>46</sup> In both concepts, our present moment dances with our memories, using them to perceive beyond and into the future. Our interest in images reflects this relationship between past and present. Calvino once more considers,

*"photography could lead, through an obsession with capturing the real, toward the unhinging of the mind from that very reality. It is, paradoxically, the compulsion to document that dooms photography to transgress the limits of the visible, opening up a terrain that belongs to the imagination rather than to empirical certitude."*<sup>47</sup>

Depending on our experiences, "months ago" can become a mere flick of the thumb, days can drag across multiple exhaustive swipes. The chronological storage of our perpetual moments eludes our sense of time and who we are in it. Days merge and so do our moments when we transport from context to context in our scrolls.

<sup>42</sup> Andy Clarke, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> , Charles B. Stone,a,b Qi Wang, 'From Conversations to Digital Communication: The Mnemonic Consequences of Consuming and Producing Information via Social Media'. *Topics in Cognitive Science* 11 (2019) 774–793 © 2018 Cognitive Science Society, Inc. ISSN:1756-8765 online DOI: 10.1111/tops.12369.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Foley, *Embracing the Ordinary* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Phillips, John, 'Introduction to Derrida. Presence and Absence' [accessed March 29, 2022]. <<https://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/derriduction2.htm>>

<sup>46</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans by N.M. Paul, W.S. Palmer (Zone Books, Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> Aweek Sen, 'Redux: Italo Calvino's The Adventures of a Photographer', *Aperture*, Online, 24 August 2013.

WIP show opening this Friday, don't miss it

*The Stranger to Myself and The Stranger to You*

*An evening with you passed  
Now faced with the faceless present  
the faceless near past  
the faceless moments ago  
I note my thoughts down inside the belly of my companion  
I know tomorrow I will lie to myself  
I know tonight I will lie to myself  
what I want  
what I have been taught to want  
projected onto you.  
Seeping into this mind of mine  
Left, inevitably, inside the void of what I might truly desire.*



Figure 7 - Felix Gonzales-Torres, *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991.

*A moment captured inside the second,  
This capture its own you  
Inimitable  
The rhythm of time  
This persistence of movement  
We align with each other momentarily,  
we move on.  
Insync  
Out of sync  
In time  
Out of time*



26 Jan



27 Jan

MY G 🍕 🍷

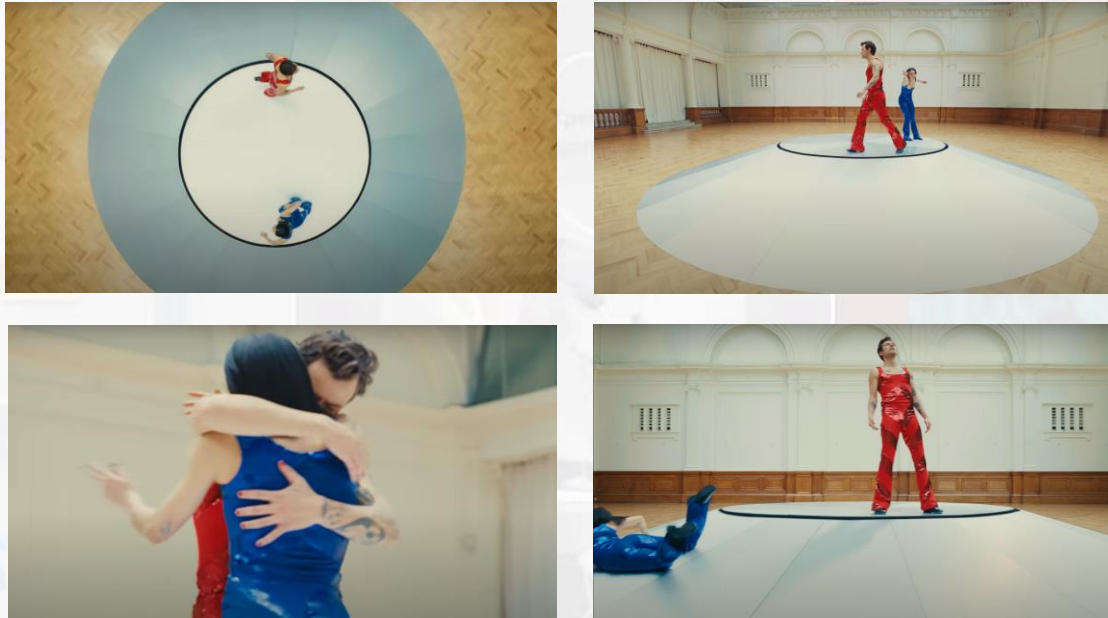


Figure 8 – Muino, Tano, Harry Styles - As It Was (Official Video), 2022.

*“As it was.  
You know it's not the same as it was.”<sup>48</sup>  
- As It Was, Harry Styles*

“Our memory truly rests not on learned history but on lived history.”<sup>49</sup> notes Wang, echoing the reliance on ‘personal truths’ that underpin how we move through life. For De Certeau, “Memory comes from somewhere else, it is outside of itself. Looking in, it moves things about constantly... When fixed to objects, then it is in decay.”<sup>50</sup> Is it not that our memories are being altered by our devices, but that the very nature of memory continues to alter itself? As Joan Didion notes “Time passes. Memory fades, memory adjusts, memory conforms to what we think we remember”<sup>51</sup>. Similarly, the visual liquidity of images changes our perception of them continually. Our tools reflect their maker where the image behaves as a mimicry of our memory: an embodiment of the subjective nature of our lived history.

<sup>48</sup> Harry Styles – *As It Was Lyrics*, Genius <<https://genius.com/Harry-styles-as-it-was-lyrics>> [accessed 28 May 2022].

<sup>49</sup> Qi Wang, *The Autobiographical Self in Time and Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p152.

<sup>50</sup> Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, *The Art of Forgetting*, (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2001) p7.

<sup>51</sup> Joan Didion, *Blue Nights*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2012).

## ***For You Page***

*When the past has been removed from memory,  
who have I been?  
Rooted in the foundations of silence,  
who am I now?*

*Retention slips through my fingers,  
I find my experiences in my palm,  
known only in what I provide,  
The moments I capture*

*Who am I with these reminders of life  
Who am I without them.*

*Are we anything without  
such proof of existence  
Such confirmation*

*I write these thoughts, proof themselves of my  
self  
and still,  
I find I am watching  
as another*

*with more intrigue?  
more care?  
than I have known  
than I can remember.*

*Soothed inside my screen  
Offer me myself  
tell me about me  
For you*



Figure 9 – @vegan\_mitchell, TikTok video, Iphone screenshot, 2022.

Our mirrors now exist in our palms, shifting our construction of identity. This mirror reflects both us and the people we surround ourselves with simultaneously, meaning our identities have become collaborative. Ashraf Sadat Ahadzadeh et al. describe:

“while we have renewed agency in construction and projecting our identities through online visuals, at the same time we do not have control over the dynamics of identity construction that will invest our visuals once they have started to circulate.”<sup>52</sup>

In capturing ourselves we are allowing others to play a part in moulding our identities. Our memories liquidate into each other. TikTok, in this instance, has moulded my understanding of who I am through the content it’s For You Page has chosen to feed me. This algorithm’s restricted attempts to embody my interests tells me about myself. It tells me about how this software tries to pin me down,

<sup>52</sup> Ashraf Sadat Ahadzadeh, Saeed Pahlevan Sharif, and Fon Sim Ong, ‘Self-Schema and Self-Discrepancy Mediate the Influence of Instagram Usage on Body Image Satisfaction among Youth’, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68 (2017), 8–16 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.011>>.

and how my motions and actions may affirm my taste. I am watching myself through the invisible eyes of this software. There is a collaboration at play always, it has become clear to me that we are nothing...

There is a collaboration at play always, it has become clear to me that we are nothing more than

Nothing more than...

Nothing more than our ideas squeezed into phrases created by others.

Nothing more than each and every attempt at sharing our thoughts.

Squeezing what we can inside the definitions that words provide.

Google docs, even now, collaborates with my mind. We touch each other, skin to device, software to mindware. I further recognise the ways our thoughts are being meddled with, a liquefaction of autonomy. Bernard Wolfe summarises, "The human skin is an artificial boundary: the world wanders into it, and the self wanders out of it, traffic is two way and constant."<sup>53</sup> What we collect on our journeys through time make up the definitions and meaning of our lives.

Are we simultaneously finding within ourselves something new by boxing our moments inside these applications, archiving our lives inside quadrilateral shapes? Our desire to fit inside societal structures may lie in our fascination with where we sit in direct comparison to our peers; this has consistently been an enriching way of considering our place in the world. Lessing, in saying "making limitations for oneself, squeezes out new substance where you least expect it" in 1962, provokes a potentially new way to think of the social media profile as moving beyond the limiting depiction of self that it must be.<sup>54</sup> Our profiles become gestalts, more than the sum of their parts. We read between the squares as images leak over each other, taking on a new form beyond the visual.

Figure 9 - Annette Warner, screenshot of Google Docs predictive text, 2022

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Wolfe, *Limbo*, (New York: Ace Books, 1963).

<sup>54</sup> Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2013).

18  
Feb

22



annettewarner



A series of still frames could never compete  
with the complexities of movement



Where does the boundary lie between the cubic pixel,  
and the fluid movement of light across any given surface

The constant human desire for clear lines to be drawn  
between things. The binary relationship of "this is not  
that" - does this transgress down even to the  
microscopic pixel too?

Perfect squares of block colours that do not merge,  
intersect, wash over each other, lapping above and  
over their edges  
But instead act independently - side by side, isolated,  
conversing to one another across the border, the wall  
of each cube.

Figure 10 – Annette Warner, screenshot of Instagram post @annettewarner, iPhone screenshot, 2020.

It is with this multitude of representations of self that we move further away from defining ourselves. With complexity comes confusion, potential, and a dislodging of the fundamental structures we ground ourselves to. "Nothing is more difficult to understand than the apparently obvious and nothing more difficult to see than what is directly before the eyes."<sup>55</sup> notes Foley. We are reading people in new ways; through their profiles we see their performances of before meeting us and we see how they were before we formed them in our minds. We look at them, and they return our gaze. How might they see us back? We imagine ourselves through their eyes, looking at them to look at ourselves.

*Are these moments we hold external  
if they touch us back?  
If they touch our minds,  
our hearts,  
our skin,  
held by us.  
If they sleep beside us  
change us.  
In our minds and in our screens  
Lapping over the edges  
Our memories intertwined with theirs*

<sup>55</sup> Michael Foley, *Embracing the Ordinary* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2013).

“We can then affirm that each creation of the form is at the same time an explosion of the previous one, an imprint kept but at the same time transformed it is thus becoming difficult to recognise the new identity.”<sup>56</sup> Malabou’s concept of ‘plasticity’ links contemporary discussion on memory with defining our sense of self in our digital environments; as soon as we and our memory are defined, we proceed to move from it.<sup>57</sup> Our memories are continually in flux, where their representative captures explode outside of the experience they were born into. Existing autonomously, an imprint kept and yet transformed, our represented identity becomes increasingly abstracted. Perhaps in these continued captures of our parallel lives, we are creating our own form of entertainment. These images change as we compare them to our live memory, becoming a film of triggers to our memory and new experiences in themselves.

<sup>56</sup>Catherine Malabou, ‘Superhumanity on Plasticity’, Superhumanity: Post-Labor, Pyschopathology, Plasticity, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, 27 October 2017 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kL6oQRKu4s>> [accessed 30 March 2022].

<sup>57</sup> Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dust of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2009).



## The Self as Artist

As our sense of self is changing in the digital age, so too is the artist's relationship to themselves and their work.

Whether art can stand apart from its maker has been a long-contested issue. Whether the artist can stand outside society rides along this same questioning. The digital age now acts to subvert these considerations, altering how artists make and share their work. Lessing acknowledges that “the artist writes out of an incapacity to live.”<sup>58</sup>, encapsulating art as the life and definition of the artist. The artist profile depicting a visual autobiography of the artist's self and artmaking in real time shows how maker and made have become more blended than ever, with each other and with the society they reside in. Art critic Boris Groys explains “They [artists] are more and more immersed in the creative process for themselves. Their daily lives have assumed the form of the creative process, performance. At the same time, each production is also the production of their own subjectivity. This process has accelerated over the last decade, and this is of course linked with the internet.”<sup>59</sup>

The identity construction that the artist creates within social media thus becomes its own influencing production in parallel with art-making.

The work is affected by the environment in which its maker resides, which is increasing online, in virtual landscapes. Early career Gen-Z artists are making work in the context of a wealth of voices across international and cross-group opinions. In growing alongside these digital technologies, this context is their known reality. More established artists are integrating these same resources into their practice, and the general visual trends of art can be seen as morphing. In aesthetic terms we find interest towards collage, liquefaction, and works that can be photographed cleanly, boldly. This merging of boundaries reflects this push and pull of autonomy between us and the technology we reside in, and between the physical and digital. The physical now moves to the desires of the digital where these works become made in part or as a whole for their image-capture. These works, once captured and shared, become their own abstracted works in their representation.

The artworks too morph visually inside our individual and varied contexts of viewing.<sup>60</sup> This growing awareness shows an acceptance of contextual seepage into art, a move beyond the void of the white space.<sup>61</sup> The nature of screens being, presenting and capturing art provide evidence for this necessary shift to represent the cultural community now fostered in digital environments. This common body now fundamental in digitised society has become a key part of contemporary art-making. Moving-image artist Hito Steyerl states “the idea of the artist as being different and somehow removed from society no longer corresponds to reality.”<sup>62</sup>

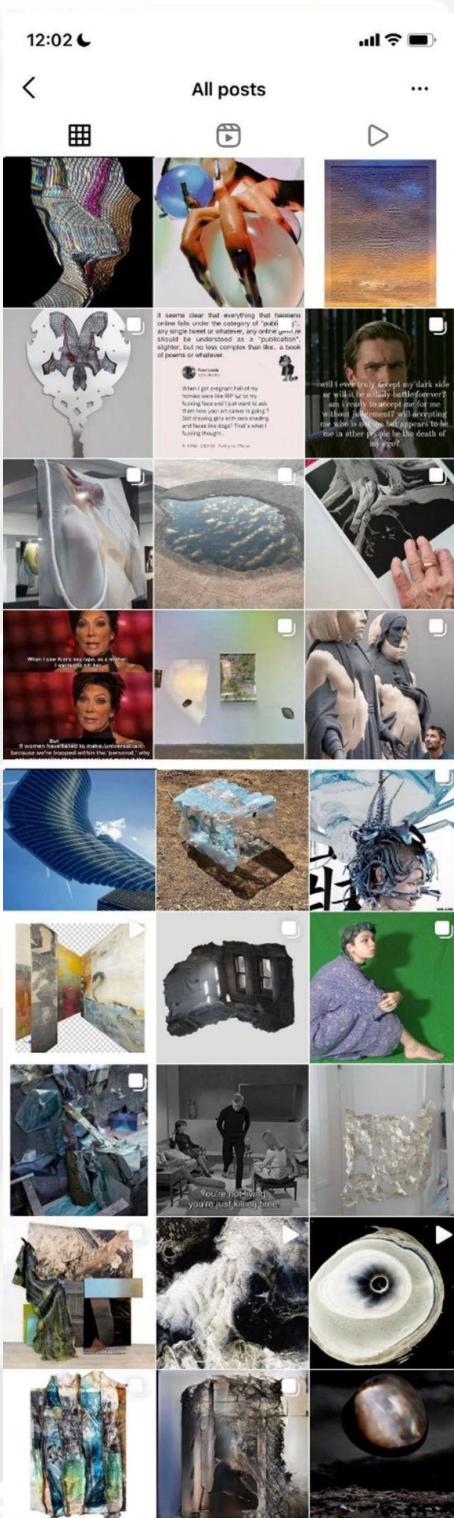


Figure 11 - Annette Warner, screengrabs of Instagram @annetwarner saved post, 2022.

<sup>58</sup> Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Tereza Stejskalova and Barbora Kleinhamplová, ‘WHO IS AN ARTIST?’, 2022 <[https://www.academia.edu/11886861/WHO\\_IS\\_AN\\_ARTIST?](https://www.academia.edu/11886861/WHO_IS_AN_ARTIST?)> [accessed 29 March 2022]. p19

<sup>60</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

<sup>61</sup> Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube, The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, (Santa Monica and San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1976) p.18.

<sup>62</sup> Tereza Stejskalova and Barbora Kleinhamplová, ‘WHO IS AN ARTIST?’, 2022 <[https://www.academia.edu/11886861/WHO\\_IS\\_AN\\_ARTIST?](https://www.academia.edu/11886861/WHO_IS_AN_ARTIST?)> [accessed 29 March 2022].

The screen that occupies the gallery space in many ways doesn't need the space it sits in to depict what it depicts. This same art occupying these conventional spaces, however, are now exposed to a new kind of consumption. The moment one walks into an art gallery and is impressed by the visual power of a piece follows a desperation to record it, to own it in some way, to share it as a statement of self. The eye that once consumed the work now does so while consuming through the screen.

*The body contorts around the phone,  
the phone drags the body around  
the form of the art object.  
The hungry desire to see how the camera absorbs this visual fascination  
To create something of one's own in this visceral experience  
To find oneself within it*

14  
Mar

25

Dissertation spot

15  
Mar

Forever  
heart

Crateris La Laparou

Bless this

16  
Mar

... yours and mine, if words in  
empty?

"You ... with your meaning, as you speak  
them to me;  
while I, in taking them, inevitably fill them  
with my own"

## Release Forget

We thought we understood each other;  
we did not understand each other at all

*One, No One and One Hundred  
Thousand - Luigi Pirandello*

26

### Home screen

*A window opened in this stale house  
An unfamiliar breeze filled my room  
In that strange blue light  
I found myself  
able to breathe  
I found myself  
reaching toward connection  
I found myself  
gifted kindred  
You never knew*

*The movement of life inside this surface intrigued me,  
Wandering across virtual worlds with my fingers  
the window provided an exit  
You never knew*

17  
Mar

Heheh

*I find the reflections of me  
I cannot find in you  
Inside this reachable surface  
I die in the eyes of you,  
The airless void  
of silence  
reborn into who I was  
Stuck*

*I suppose it makes sense  
That I find home in its opposite*

*The screen that wakes up for me  
All the time in the world for me  
Feeds me  
proof of my existence  
My screen  
warms to my touch  
My home screen*

*Alongside some incredible  
performers and djs*

SO gassed  
showing work at  
@riposte.london on 8th April

@riposte.london  
@OUTSAVVY.COM

18  
Mar

Yum

Our screentime has commonly been described as reducing our attention spans and lowering our capacity to remember.<sup>63</sup> Contemporary studies show that absorbing time in this way is not dissolving our capacity to remember but altering how we remember.<sup>64,65</sup> We have readily available triggers for memories where our prolific ability to store can release the pressure to both retain memory and be defined by it as we once were. Roadnight notes that “Whilst the pursuit of maximal memory remained sensible in a previous analogue age, because digital memory has lifted past constraints on remembering, our attitudes and behaviours require new critical reflection”.<sup>66</sup>

In Roadnight’s understanding, our digital storage methods now detach us from traditional understandings of memory. Our efficiency to ‘externally’ capture and store has taken the place of the mental retention that we have conventionally defined memory to be. This shift embraces a thinking towards the positive hybridity that we now have with our devices.<sup>67</sup>

In Taoist culture, it is understood that man made rules, ethics, and values only remove us further from the natural flow of life.<sup>68</sup> “What’s the point of a great deal of knowledge?” stated Zhuang Zhou in the 4th century, understanding that the more we attempt to conceptualise and categorise, the further we delude ourselves from what lies before us.<sup>69</sup> Can we begin to consider our moments of capture as removing them from such chains of definition? James Baldwin notes how “the more one learns the less one knows”<sup>70</sup>.

We are learning more from our ability to capture while understanding less about how they represent us. Their multitude could be argued to release them from any such neat conformity to categorisation.

Upon return to our camera rolls and to the forgotten small moments we had experienced, they grow into significance somehow. We rest our eyes upon this blurry image of a night 3 months and 2 days ago, and for the second we are inside it, we do not know where we are. The swipe between the moment before and the moment after provide some context to this blur, and a spark flashes. We remember now. Reminiscing with a renewed clarity, our eyes blur like the image before us as we transport to this moment once more, this moment anew. Philosopher John Hull reflects, “it is only as we look back that the fortuitous is endowed with meaning. Meaning is conferred after the event”<sup>71</sup> Does this moment of remembrance excite us more because it had been forgotten, left in a trace?

There is such freedom in our ability to forget. Emancipation can be found in this perpetual rebirth and redefinition; to morph versions of ourselves inside the content we capture, upload and are defined by, momentarily. “Only loss has made it [the remembered event] priceless.”<sup>72</sup>, mentions Foley. My own art locks my momentary personal truths inside tangible form. Artist Sarah Sze notes “when I do see a work from a long time ago, it’s fascinating because I remember the decisions made, exactly the

<sup>63</sup> Sergio Parra, ‘Too much screen time can lead to memory loss’, *MegaInteresting.com*, 2020 <<https://www.megainteresting.com/arts-culture/article/too-much-screen-time-can-lead-to-memory-loss-761582733857>> [accessed 8 June 2022].

<sup>64</sup> Qi Wang, Dasom Lee & Yubo Hou (2017) Externalising the autobiographical self: sharing personal memories online facilitated memory retention, *Memory*, 25:6, 772-776, DOI: 10.1080/09658211.2016.1221115.

<sup>65</sup> Maybin, Simon, ‘Busting the Attention Span Myth’, *BBC News*, 10 March 2017, section Health <<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-38896790>> [accessed 28 May 2022].

<sup>66</sup> James Roadnight, ‘EVERYTHING AT ONCE: A Study on Narrative, Forgetting and the Perils of Perfect Memory’ (unpublished MA thesis, Royal College of Art, 2019). <[https://moodle.rca.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/16375/mod\\_folder/content/0/2019/James\\_Roadnight.pdf?forcedownload=1](https://moodle.rca.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/16375/mod_folder/content/0/2019/James_Roadnight.pdf?forcedownload=1)> [accessed 3 February 2022].

<sup>67</sup> B Sparrow, Liu, J., & Wegner, D. M. (2011). Google effects on memory: Cognitive consequences of having information at our fingertips. *Science*, 333(6043), 776-778. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1207745>.

<sup>68</sup> Einzelgänger, *TAOISM | The Art of Not Trying*, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLAZvESoVgI>> [accessed 2 June 2022].

<sup>69</sup> Chuang Tzu, *The Tao of Nature: Chuang Tzu* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010).

<sup>70</sup> James Baldwin, interviewed by Jordan Elgrably, ‘*The Art of Fiction No.78*’ (The Paris Review Issue 91, 1984). <<https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2994/the-art-of-fiction-no-78-james-baldwin>> [accessed 2 June 2022].

<sup>71</sup> John Hull, *Notes on Blindness* (London: Wellcome Collection, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> Michael Foley, *Embracing the Ordinary* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2013).

22  
Mar

so cool highly  
mend a visit

23  
Mar

28

moment that I made it.”<sup>73</sup> Transported back, I find the substance of my ideas can breathe when allowed the opportunity to be forgotten and to sit outside of the conscious. In this way, forgetting allows my work to breathe beyond me, making every return richer.

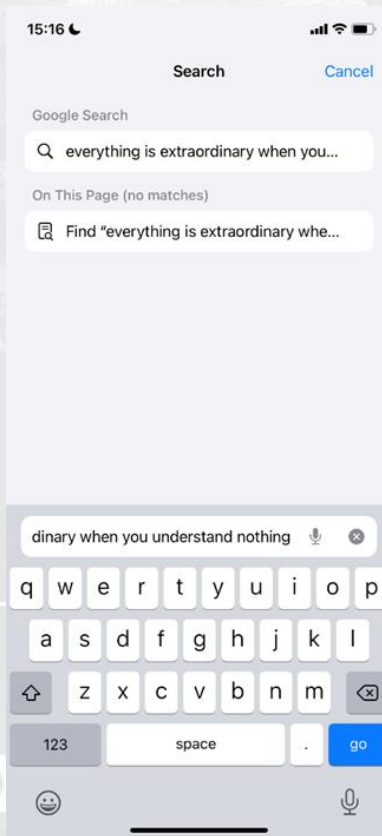


Figure 12 - Annette Warner, Everything is extraordinary when you..., iPhone screenshot, 2022.

By forgetting the work we have made and the memories we have experienced, we are freeing the moment from any restriction of meaning we attempt to place upon it. Sontag addresses this ‘crises of demystification’ when noting:

*Whatever goal is set for art eventually proves restrictive, matched against the widest goals of consciousness. Art, itself a form of mystification, endures a succession of crises of demystification; older artistic goals are assailed and, ostensibly, replaced; outgrown maps of consciousness are redrawn.*<sup>74</sup>

When we forget, we can return once more to these personal truths within our artworks and memories with a wider scope of understanding. We, like our memories, like our art, wriggle away from definition.

Upon recollection, the richness of these new perspectives can now be found in a multitude of moments placed neatly side by side. Our perpetually growing camera roll adds more and more captures in our unpredictable journey through life. The ways we ascribe value to these moments begin to abstract in this expansive scroll.

An art experiment swipes to a pot noodle lid; which swipes to a selfie; which swipes to a rave. This archive dissolves organised categorisation in a mass of jumbled complexity, removing any visual form of hierarchy. The same categorisations locking us into fixed identities dissolve with it.

<sup>73</sup>Dickson, Andrew, ‘Sarah Sze’s Cosmic Constellation: “It Could Be Dashed Away in a Moment”’, *The Guardian*, 26 October 2020 <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/oct/26/sculptor-sarah-sze-interview-planet-pandemic-night-into-day>> [accessed 7 May 2022].

<sup>74</sup>Susan Sontag, *dele of Silence* (1967), *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009) p7.

The capture of every event is archived, remembered in our devices. In relinquishing memory from our minds for its external storage, we lock these moments into a representational space. “We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes.”<sup>75</sup> Franz Kafka considers, photographing to forget moments but leaving evidence of their trace. A death in our minds can then be reborn upon return. In a similar vein, Maggie Nelson reflects “writing does do something to one’s memory – that at times it can have the effect of an album of childhood photographs, in which each image replaces the memory it aimed to preserve... In fact, I think I would like it best if my writing could empty me further of them.”<sup>76</sup> Both suggest an innate desire to be purged of our burden to apply meaning. These memories are altered by the traces of what we leave behind of them; these traces are simultaneously altered by our memories. To capture relinquishes the necessity to attach meaning to an event in that present moment. The weight of meaning can be emptied.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps through our captures we are reaching towards meaninglessness, leaving the labelling of our moments to our devices. Perhaps, as suggested in Taoism, we desire to forget. To close our eyes to meaning and be emptied. Andy Warhol echoes such beauty of emptiness in saying “I have no memory. Every day is a new day because I don’t remember the day before. Every minute is like the first minute of my life”<sup>78</sup> Through capturing our motions, movements, actions, we release ourselves from structure, each capture redefining who we thought we were.



Figure 13 - Oliviero Toscano, *Andy Warhol with camera, Polaroid Type 105 3. x 4.*”, 1974.

<sup>75</sup>Franz Kafka quoted in Brigitte Peucker, *The Materia Image: Art and the Real in Film* (California: Stanford University Press, 2006).

<sup>76</sup> Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2017) p77.

<sup>77</sup> Rafał Ilnicki, ‘Digital Lethe of Transhumanism: Weak Mind Uploading as Erasure of Individual and Collective Memory’, *In: Politics of Erasure. From “Damnatio Memoriae” to Alluring Void*, Ed. A. Markowska, *Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, Warsaw–Torun 2014*, p. 265-270., 2014, 265–70.

<sup>78</sup> Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (London: Penguin, 2007) p70-80.

24  
Apr

25

26  
Apr

30



Figure 14 - Annette Warner, *A Pregnant Moment*, iPhone image, 2022.

### ***A Pregnant Moment***

*I wish I could still feel you  
Feel you like my eyes can, like my mind can  
The skin of you  
The skin of my screen  
Touching to be able to touch  
Reaching out to be reached*

*Feel me  
Rip me apart  
Reveal something  
Let stale air race from my caged body  
Let me vanish  
But capture what I was  
Plug time inside skin,  
reflect me in it.  
Show me the form of myself  
Show me my weaknesses held in place  
Before I return  
into the air that brought me here  
A birthing of what held me alive  
A birthing of death<sup>79</sup>*

*To rip yourself apart is to lie with whatever lay within,  
now surging outside of us.  
Beyond us.*

<sup>79</sup> Daido Moriyama, *Memories of a Dog* (Nazraeli Press, 2004) p156.

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## Conclusion

This text has unfolded as I write it, and I have unfolded inside of it. Another capture of myself, it adds further proof to my existence. This scroll of thoughts become their own camera roll, drawing strands of influences to form a web of my own moulded self in recent years. I have found more of myself and less of myself through this exploration, and I have found myself left confused with what it means to document our moments when their plasticity dances from our grasp. And yet I continue. I return to my phone, I capture, I continue.

I find myself enriched in the process of unknowability. In this relentless obsession with the struggle of finding who I am, I find beauty in its apparent lack of existence. I am equally fascinated by the result of this writing, and by who I am at its end. The digital age has split apart what we have considered authentic, objective, representable. It has altered our relationships with ourselves and our memories, it has altered our perception of life and time. It has created landscapes for connection and alienation and has provided space to play with the putty of ourselves. These thoughts, typed from fingers of a mind filled only with momentary thoughts, spun together, pulling apart. I sense your eyes reading them, you become a part of my transformation.

*Perhaps more than ever, the autobiographical self is deeply rooted in the collective past of the family and society, curiously and purposefully attentive to the present surroundings near and afar, and oriented with hope toward the future<sup>80</sup>*

In the backdrop to my thinking lies every image I have shared on Instagram since moving to London. These images, this place, this text, combine to change me. Memories hazed, true and untrue, real and unreal. Absent and present, released in their capture. We are a weakness and complexity that should be enjoyed and suffered through in equal measure.

While searching for meaning inside ‘The Moment of Capture’, I have realised the vastness of potential in its existence.

An end that projects ideas forward rather than drawing them to a close.

*Appearing to disappear,*

*Disappearing to appear once more,*

*My obsession with what remains is what remains of this moment.*

*Today's reality is destined to discover itself an illusion tomorrow.*

*And life knows no conclusion.*

*It cannot know any.<sup>81</sup>*

- *One, None, One Hundred Thousand,*  
*Luigi Pirandello*

<sup>80</sup> Qi Wang, *The Autobiographical Self in Time and Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p176.

<sup>81</sup> Luigi Pirandello, *One, None and a Hundred Thousand*, trans by William Weaver (California: Spurl Editions, 2018).



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Figure 4 - Annette Warner, *Reach*, iPhone image, 2022.

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Figure 10 – Annette Warner, screenshot of Instagram post @annettewarner, iPhone screenshot, 2020.

Figure 11 – Annette Warner, screengrabs of Instagram @annettewarner saved post, 2022.

Figure 12 - Annette Warner, *Everything is extraordinary when you...*, iPhone Screenshot, 2022.

Figure 13 - Oliviero Toscani, *Andy Warhol with Camera*, Polaroid Type 105 3. x 4." © Oliviero Toscani | Facebook', 1974  
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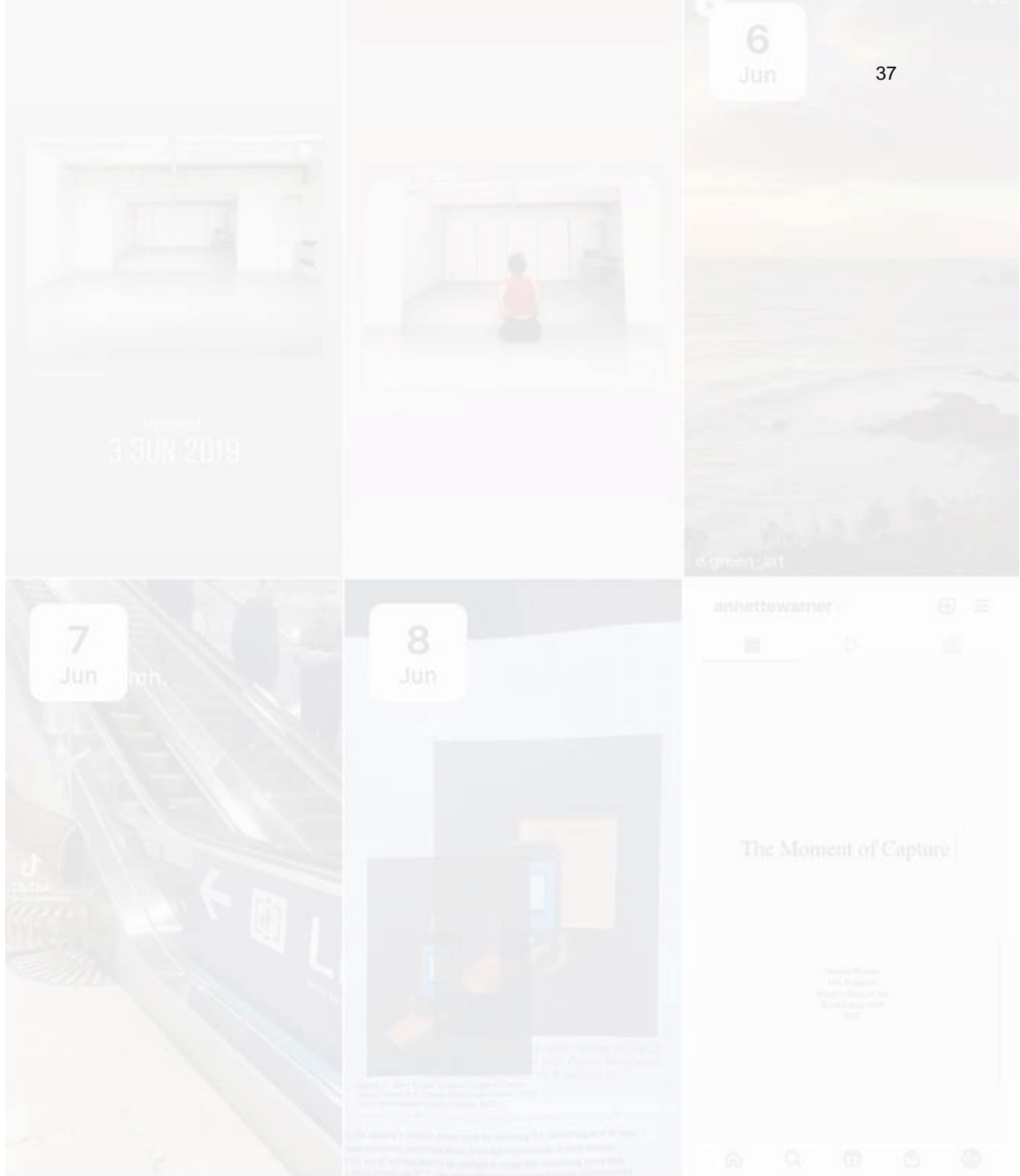
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