



Power and Politics of Mundane Memories. Tracing, templating and transforming everyday life.

Half-day workshop at King's College London

24 March 2017, Strand Campus, Small Committee Room (<http://tinyurl.com/z48e9r7>)

Personal and collective memory-making are usually studied on large scales that bridge rather extensive temporal distances, at least in human time. What is overlooked are the kinds of ordinary phenomena mundane memories are made of. The routines of keeping and recurring records, taking notes and planning the proximate future as well as representations thereof and the tools used to accomplish such activities often seem neither especially consequential nor important.

Addressing speakers from different sciences and humanities, from the arts and literature as well as from museums, curatorial institutions and public agencies, the workshop explores the practices and representations of mundane memories in artistic works, social organisations as well as in media forms and technologies from both historic and current perspectives.

Given mundane memories' historic and contextual ambivalence, they come with a moral charge to set claims and requirements about their significance. Frames of meaning, cultural practices and socio-political cleavages profoundly inform their ethics of attention and recognition that impact upon which mundane memories become normalised while others are rendered redundant, suspicious or precarious.

PROGRAMME

1.00 pm

Welcome and Introduction

Christian Pentzold, University of Bremen; Mikka Lene Pers-Højholt, Department of Education & Professional Studies; Sanna Stegmaier, German Department; Sandra Borges Tavares, Department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries all at King's College London

THEME I: Exploiting Mundane Memories

1.15 pm **Talk: The digital mundane and the abandoned past**
Andrew Hoskins, University of Glasgow

2.00 pm **Response**
Robert Gallagher, Department of English & The Ego-Media Project, King's College London

THEME II: Reimagining the Daily Grid

3.00 pm **Talk: Mundane memories and subjective feelings in the material biography of "Things we keep"**
Katrin Schreiter, German & European Studies Department, King's College London

3.30 pm **Talk: The interaction between the mundane and the culturally significant in remembering Ministry of Information campaigns of the Second World War**
Katherine Howells, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London

4.00 pm **Response**
Clare Brant, Department of English & The Ego-Media Project, King's College London

THEME III: Mundane Memories on the Move

4.30 pm **Roundtable**
Helen Adams, Department of Geography, King's College London
Ömür Özkoyuncu Black, Photographer
Cigdem Esin, Stories from the Jungle, University of East London
Aura Lounasmaa, Stories from the Jungle, University of East London
Leonie Ansems de Vries, Department of War Studies, King's College London

Discussant: *Max Saunders, Department of English & The Ego-Media Project, King's College London*

5.30 pm **Closing Remarks**
Christian Pentzold, University of Bremen; Mikka Lene Pers-Højholt, School of Education, Communication & Society; Sanna Stegmaier, German Department; Sandra Borges Tavares, Department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries all at King's College London

6.00 pm **Wine Reception**

Participation is free, but registration required via Eventbrite:

<http://mundanememories.eventbrite.co.uk?s=74211970>

For further information please contact sanna.stegmaier@kcl.ac.uk

The workshop is organized by an interdisciplinary team of junior members of the KCL faculty. It involves Mikka Lene Pers-Højholt, Department of Education & Professional Studies, Sanna Stegmaier, German Department, Sandra Borges Tavares, Department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries, as well as Christian Pentzold, a 2015 Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries.

The event is generously supported by King's Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Centre (KISS-DTC), funded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC). It also receives funds from King's The Ego-Media Project (ego-media.org), funded by the European Research Council.

ABSTRACTS

The concept of mundane memories provides a lens through which to examine the largely ignored modes of day-to-day remembering that knit together our activities, events, relations, materials and places of quotidian life along the chronological axis of past, present and future. In their continuity and contingency mundane memories are a recurring trivial issue and a pervasive exercise in which we find ourselves immersed. Often, they are mediated through material relations involving objects and more or less smart technologies. Rather than being of merely parochial interest then, mundane memories arrange and enable our daily occupations in all walks of life. As such, their practices too have become a topic of cultural representations and artistic reflection.

Talk: The digital mundane and the abandoned past

Andrew Hoskins, University of Glasgow

Using digital media challenge our notion of what it means to be present and absent in the world, and thus what of ourselves we leave and lose and find there, wherever there is. What I call our compulsion of connectivity - a 'sharing without sharing' - in which individuals routinely engage in everyday connective practices such as posting, linking, liking, recording, swiping, forwarding, etc. media content, has become an inescapable form of sociality almost overnight. And this digital mundane disguises the almighty convergence of communication and archive (or perhaps, so overwhelmed by digital immediacy and volume, we are just resigned to a state of diminished media consciousness) so that the massive memory boom of the self-explodes just under the technological surface. In this presentation I ask if this past abandoned to the vagaries of the uncertain decay time of the digital and its proprietors, can ever be realised or remembered, or has individual memory lost its self?

Andrew Hoskins is Interdisciplinary Research Professor in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. He is founding Editor-in-Chief of the Sage journal of Memory Studies and founding Co-Editor of the Palgrave Macmillan book series Memory Studies. His latest books are: (with John Tulloch) *Risk and Hyperconnectivity: Media and Memories of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2016), and as editor, *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition* (Routledge, forthcoming 2017).

Talk: Mundane memories and subjective feelings in the material biography of “Things we keep”

Katrin Schreiter, German & European Studies Department, King's College London

While the disciplines of archaeology, ancient and medieval history have traditionally relied on materiality to extend their limited textual source base, modern history continues to focus on textual sources, the products of growing bureaucracies and increasing literacy rates. As a result of its broad availability the written word somehow resonates with modernists as ‘more true’. Objects, in turn, seem circumstantial and situational in their embodied meaning. To evaluate the extent to which this assumption is true, the oral history study ‘Things We Keep’ (2015) looked at transformative displacements of crowd-sourced migrant mementos. Sidelining monetary and cultural value, the study was interested in the mundane memories that inhabit these objects chosen as an embodiment of migrant experience. The crowd-sourcing technique complicates and even transcends current hierarchies of knowledge in the historical discipline and still most museums, because it is not the historian or curator who decides what is worthy of preservation, but the subjects in the study. When the project participants selected the objects for the exhibition, they became curators of their own material history. This presentation explores mundane memories as the reflexive communication of experience through objects, with special attention to the relationship between biographic materialism and time-space context in subjective affective processes.

Dr Katrin Schreiter is Lecturer in German and European Studies at King's College London. Before joining King's in 2013, she taught twentieth-century history at the University of Pennsylvania and Universität Augsburg. Her research interests include material culture, aesthetics, and the economic and diplomatic history of Germany in Europe. She has published on these topics in the context of European economic integration after World War II. In collaboration with the German Historical Institute London, she developed the modern archaeology project “Things We Keep: Curators of Our Own History”, which curated objects that German expatriates brought with them from Germany to London. The project outputs included a multimedia website (www.thingswekeep.org) and an exhibition at the GHIL (2015). Currently, she co-edits the interdisciplinary history *Experiencing Postwar Germany: Everyday Life and Cultural Practice between East and West, 1960 - 2000* with Erica Carter and Jan Palmowski, and is in the process of finishing her first monograph *Designing One Nation: The Politics of Economic Culture and Trade in Divided Germany, 1945-1990*.

Talk: The interaction between the mundane and the culturally significant in remembering Ministry of Information campaigns of the Second World War

Katherine Howells, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London

During the Second World War, the British Ministry of Information promoted campaigns with slogans such as Dig for Victory, Make do and Mend and Careless Talk Cost Lives. These slogans are known by many people even today, due to their frequent repetition in a variety of ordinary contexts. Memories of Ministry of Information publications and slogans are often tied up with a variety of mundane memories. In 2009 a survey was distributed by Mass Observation which asked volunteers about their thoughts relating to the Second World War. Volunteers responding to the survey detail their memories, opinions and ideas spontaneously, frequently revealing their thought processes as they move from the mundane to the significant. Using data from the Mass Observation survey, this paper will explore the processes through which day-to-day remembering triggers memories of cultural objects with wider historical and political significance and vice versa. The broader objective of this research is to uncover how particular historical objects enter and remain in the memories of ordinary people and thus acquire cultural significance and it is indicated at this stage that mundane memories lie at the heart of these processes.

Katherine Howells is a Research Student in the Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London. Her research interests include the history of visual communication in digital and non-digital contexts and the relationships between visual images, cultural memory and history. Her doctoral research project focuses on the British Ministry of Information and the impact of visual materials published during the Second World War on British cultural memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Katherine Howells's research is part of a larger project, the 'Publishing and Communications History of the Ministry of Information, 1939-45', which is being undertaken by the Institute of English Studies in collaboration with the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London.