

Abstract

Title: Worn Clothes and Textiles as Archives of Memory.

The subject of this paper is memory, specifically, the capacity of textiles to retain and communicate memory, both privately and publicly. I argue that cloth can be regarded as a form of archival information and as a carrier of knowledge. My questions centre on the value of textiles in our lives and on the role of textiles in the process of recollection, as well as the extent to which textiles can stimulate remembering, not through the strategic mnemonics of national monuments and events, or the mnemonic device of the souvenir, but rather through unplanned encounters with textiles in their various guises and in different contexts. The themes of 'archiving' memory and 'materialising' memory are explored through an analysis of works of artists who use textile media in their visual practice and writers who include their memories of textiles in their works. The paper explores the role of fiction in our cognitive and cultural make up and as a tool in critical inquiry into our relationship to cloth and memory.

In addition metaphor is also explored as critical tool for reflexive inquiry of human behaviour. For example, I use the metaphors 'Miniature' and 'Gigantic' as a device to distinguish between 2 areas of analysis: the private and the public. My paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining the study of memory with philosophy, literature, history, material culture and visual studies.

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