"Hypomnesia," Game of Memory

Li Wanqi Anna
anna_22_li@hotmail.com

Guan Jian Focus
jguan0525@gmail.com

Abstract

Hypomnesia is created in Blender with Neurosky Brainwave sensor. By obtaining the data of one's attention level, in this project, participants try to visualize the abstract experience of reminiscence. Viewers are allowed to "intrude" into memory; simultaneously, there are possibilities of their memories being distorted without our consciously knowing it.

Concept

Human memory is a topic we had grown greatly interested in. Collaborating with department of psychology, City University of Hong Kong, we learned some interesting facts about human memories, which led to some critical thinking towards the disease Hypomnesia. Hypomnesia is a disease of having an abnormally poor memory of the past. Decay of memory, with any doubt, is fearful and dreadful. By reading some of the chapters in Professor Robert A. Bjork's "Successful remembering and successful forgetting," we learned that actually, lost memories can live again. [1] That is to say, things that we have no conscious memory of still live in our minds, waiting to be woken. However, when we try to recall them, and actively try to reconstruct the past, it seems that we have the possibility to create the stories by choosing which memories to recall. Is the fact of the matter that even as we try as hard as we can to bring something that happened long ago back to our minds, nevertheless, our brain might have already altered it based on our subconscious preferences? That's why we came up with the idea to visualize the abstract experience of reminiscence. To recall the loss of the collective memory of Hong Kong people, we decided to use the traditional buildings of Hong Kong as the scenes of our game. Collective memory, as a kind of cohesive power of the society, acts as common beliefs and shared moral attitudes of the public. [2] Collective memory can be related to many things like experience, images, texts, etc. However, buildings are always the most conspicuous scenes to bear collective memory. [3] We didn't realize the importance of old buildings until they had been demolished. As the development and reconstructions of the modern cities, our collective memories are fading along with the ancient buildings: it is a collective Hypomnesia.

Overview

We started to do photo scanning of the old buildings which gave us a sense of Hong Kong déjà vu: temples, outdated wagons, old seafood restaurants, scruffy cabins, etc. Then we did modelling in Blender to bring these fragments of memory together into a nonexistent old village. By getting the data of the attention level through Neurosky Brainwave sensor, we want to intimate the experience of "thinking hard," since this is what we all do when we want to recall something.

Fig 1. *Hypomnesia*, 2017, Li Wanqi / Guan Jian, Interactive game installation.

Wearing the brainwave sensor, the viewers became the "intruders" into memory. However, remember that it's definitely not a trivial matter to explore the surroundings. In order to penetrate the obscurity, people need to concentrate to find out what's in front of them. Through this process of discovery, some of the viewers may feel the environment to be strange, while the others may find it familiar. If they recognize it, what kind of memories will be jogged?

We have finished our prototype in the form of an interactive game installation. Believing in the potential of this project, we will continue to research in the fields of human memory and Hong Kong historical architectures. At the same time, we are also thinking about the possibilities of applying VR technologies to this game. With a more immersive environment, the experience could be much more impressive and vivid.

Project's link

https://www.annaliwanqi.com/hypomnesia

References

1. Robert. A. Bjork, *Successful Remembering and Successful Forgetting* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011).
2. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago：University of Chicago Press, 1992).
3. Walter Benjamin, "The Art of Work in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

Biographies

Li Wanqi, Anna received an art education in piano performing and dancing from childhood that enriched her life path and made her an imaginative and observant person. Through careful observation, a desire for self-expression was aroused, sometimes emotional, sometimes critical, which all turned into her motivations of creating films and other works, including instruments, installations and performances. During her study at the School of Creative Media, except for making great efforts in reaching proficiency in techniques of cinematography, software and hardware, she also learned not to conform to stereotypes and enhanced her independent critical thinking, reflected in works, which somehow also gave a hint of her personality, being vivacious and playful, and at the same time, interactive and thought-provoking. Recently, human memories and urban studies serve as inspirations and play crucial roles in her projects. Abstract emotions and thoughts were conveyed mainly through the forms of documentaries, installations and multimedia performances.

Guan Jian, Focus, arrived in Hong Kong in 2010 and set to study and work in the field of media and art. Bachelor degree study in media and communication gave him a deep sense of social study and research. He started to be interested in finding the underlying causes of the surface phenomenon. By traveling more than 50 places in 30 countries all over the world, he made a number of documentaries and also gained interesting ideas that can be applied into future new media projects. After working as a multi-task videography producer in a local media company for 2 years, he decided to engage in advanced studies in creative media to improve himself both technically and conceptually in the field of new media. During and after the study, he has created and participated in various new media projects, mostly films and installations. His experience of studying and working in both traditional and new media fields help him better understand "the old" and "the new."