

ARCHIVE OF FORGOTTEN MEMORIES

Policy of Forgetting

Implemented in June 2019

Archive of Forgotten Memories is the first iteration of POEM's One Stop Shop, a tool for the research project to present its research and interact with publics outside of university and scholarly environments. The Archive of Forgotten Memories invites publics to reflect on remembering and forgetting on an individual and societal level by submitting a 'memory' to the Archive and reflect on questions posed by the Archival team.

PRACTICE*Activity 1: Forgetting a Memory*

Visitors 'hand-in' something they want to or need to forget which we will then 'destroy' and store in our archive as a forgotten memory. They receive a coloured piece of paper, on which they can draw, write or visualize in any preferred way a memory that they want to forget. We then invite them to destroy it by putting it through our paper shredder, which works manually. With permission of the memory's owner, we take a picture of the remnants and subsequently upload it to our archive. The visitor chooses either to store the physical remnants at our booth, or take it with them.

Activity 2: Reflecting on Memories and Forgetting

We invite people to reflect on a more abstract level on forgetting and remembering. People take a specially created postcard on which a poignant question is asked that invites multiple answers, like "Why should we forget?". Alone, in conversation with POEM Fellows or other passers-by, the visitor responds by writing on the postcard. The answers will be kept in our booth to present to next visitors as conversation starters as well as for documentation purposes.

PURPOSE

Memory studies, heritage studies, and social theory, theorizes on collective memory. How it is shaped, which memories are included, who is 'creating' them and why. This involves abstract thinking all POEM fellows are engaged in, but has real-life iterations and consequences in the shape of institutions, interaction between people and groups and through various modalities of memory making. Simultaneously, remembering and forgetting happens in our everyday lives, all the time, without us noticing it. The purpose of the Archive of Forgotten Memories is to think together with the public about the processes of remembering and of forgetting, both on an individual and collective level. By offering a very physical and real activity imitating a simplified process of 'forgetting' in which our societies are involved – archival storing and the destruction of documents – we bring together the personal and the institutional. In that way, we start conversations with visitors about our everyday practices, the role of memory institutions in our lives, the place of symbolism and ceremonies in culture and the dichotomy between individual vs. collective memory, all by using a participatory approach.