

Haim Maor: Amending Memories

“The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.” –Marcus Tullius Cicero

Memory is the process in which the brain receives, processes, stores, and retrieves information. The mind, as with a computer, places information it regards to be important into a memory footprint or ‘file’ each time we remember something. However, this process does not always work perfectly. With age, it may take longer to retrieve the correct ‘file’ or to find the place where it was stored. In addition, not only do our memories degrade with time, they also change each time they are recalled. The slightly changed memory is then perceived as the ‘real’ memory. This process is more similar to a story that is edited each time it is told. With each re-telling, the story is altered along with our feelings.

The awareness of increasing forgetfulness as we age, the fear of losing our memories, and our identity are all issues that motivate the artist Haim Maor, as reflected in his artwork in the exhibition *Amending Memories*. This exhibition includes a new series of paintings, as well as works from recent years. In many of the exhibited paintings, a small square is painted on top of the painting and appears to be pasted onto it. This is the ‘Memo,’ a small colorful note with an adhesive strip on its opposite side, used for writing a short message or information, usually a reminder to the object it is pasted to. The word MEMO is a short term for the word MEMORANDUM, which is a document or written message of a contract or other communication. Furthermore, the word MEMO can be found in the word MEMORY. A ‘Memo’ aids the memory by a short recording of events or observations on a certain topic. By implementing the ‘Memo’ in his paintings, Maor is ‘amending memories’ with regard to new details that were discovered about the painted event, relating to the time and date of the event, the place, and the reason it was documented. It is impossible to ignore the ‘Memo’, as it obscures part of the painting, and is a constant reminder, causing tension between the memory of the subjective mind of the artist and the objective actual event. The reminder of the ‘Memo’ or the ‘amended memory’ becomes the main theme of the artist’s work.

Alongside the ‘Memos’ are smaller paintings that serve as footnotes for the larger ones. They offer different interpretations of the memories, or serve to reinforce them. The paintings of Judaica objects express memories from the past, allowing the artist to present the historical importance of each object in Jewish heritage and its place in his own family history and memory.

The need to preserve personal and family memories is a defining characteristic in Maor’s work. His ‘Memos,’ ‘footnotes’ and Judaica paintings do not provide any definite answers. They inspire the viewer to reflect upon his own personal and collective memories. Do our memories have a fixed narrative, or are they a woven, multi-voiced tapestry that can be seen from diverse points of view? Maor’s work lets us examine his attempts to amend memories that possibly can no longer be amended. His endeavors to document, understand, and reconstruct events that are long past; through his own memories or through events that happened before he was born; through stories he heard from his parents, and stories that were lost forever along with the family dynasty, enable Maor to commemorate those who are no longer with us, and to reconstruct his own identity, creating new memories to be passed down to future generations.

Shira Mushkin, Exhibition Curator

December 2015