

# **ARCHITECTURE OF MEMORY**

## **RECOLLECTING SPACES**

Back in 2022 we embarked on a small but curious experiment. We invited friends and colleagues to share their childhood memories through sketches and stories. In a single evening, we not only created a series of drawings, but also discovered new layers of connection between the participants.

These shared experiences revealed the potential of an idea: What if architects and artists were invited to participate? What would their memories reveal about their creative journeys? And how might these personal stories resonate with a wider audience?

It was in a buvette, overlooking Lake Lucerne, where the decision was made – what started as an experiment became an exhibition concept. Over the next years, we changed jobs and cities, but this project stayed with us, turning our friendship into a true partnership. And now we are finally happy to share with you: Architecture of Memory.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the participants who took part to this challenge – or playful experiment – by opening their doors and sharing their personal stories with us: it has been an honour to get to know you.

Special thanks go to Elodie Habert for joining us and curating the invitations to the colleagues from the Romandie. We are excited to establish this connection and hope that the exhibition will eventually find its way to the French- and Italian-speaking regions in Switzerland.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the Architekturforum Zürich, and especially to Claudia and Thomas, for believing in this project and supporting it at every stage.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have contributed to the realisation of this exhibition – the foundations and sponsors, all the people taking part to the events and all our friends for their useful suggestions throughout the project: you have been precious partners.

March 2025  
Clara & Sonja

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**“(…) YOU SEE IMAGES, YOU  
REPRODUCE IMAGES, YOU KEEP  
IMAGES IN YOUR MEMORY.  
THE IMAGE IS EVERYTHING BUT  
A DIRECT PRODUCT OF THE  
IMAGINATION.”**

**GASTON BACHELARD, THE POETICS OF SPACE!**

**“IN THE ART OF MEMORY, THE TRAINED IMAGINATION WAS CALLED UPON TO PROVIDE THE ‘PLACES’ AND ‘IMAGES’ WHICH MADE IT WORK. THE IMAGINATION WAS DISCIPLINED TO THIS END, AND THE WHOLE ART DEPENDED ON THE USE OF EMOTIONALLY STRIKING IMAGERY.”**

FRANCES YATES, THE ART OF MEMORY<sup>2</sup>

**“THE TRAVELER FINDS AGAIN A  
PAST HE DID NOT KNOW HE HAD:  
THE FOREIGNNESS OF WHAT  
YOU NO LONGER ARE OR POSSESS  
LIES IN WAITING FOR YOU IN  
FOREIGN, UNPOSSESSED PLACES.”**

ITALO CALVINO, *INVISIBLE CITIES*<sup>3</sup>

By bringing different generations together, the exhibition shows how architecture and art intersect with memory through different perspectives, highlighting the many ways early experiences shape and leave lasting imprints on creative expression.

#### A Space for Shared Reflection

As you will explore the exhibition, you are invited to reflect on your own spatial memories. What places from your past remain vivid in your mind? How have these places shaped your perception of the world? *Architecture of Memory* creates a communal space for these questions, encouraging an exchange of ideas, stories, and interpretations.

Through this lens, *Architecture of Memory* becomes more than an exhibition: it is an exploration of how we inhabit spaces, both physically and emotionally, and how those spaces, in turn, inhabit us. It is an invitation to rediscover the places we all carry within us.

#### Looking Ahead

Making its debut at Architekturforum Zürich in 2025, *Architecture of Memory – Recollecting Spaces* is a thought provoking and deeply personal journey – built upon the following curated archive. It has the potential to evolve and travel to new locations. By blending drawing, storytelling and architecture, the exhibition not only sheds light on the creative process but also offers a rare glimpse into our shared human experience. After all, just as art and architecture, our past is something we continuously build upon.

**“(…) IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, DEVOID OF PRINTING, WITHOUT PAPER FOR NOTE-TAKING OR ON WHICH TO TYPE LECTURES, THE TRAINED MEMORY WAS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE. AND THE ANCIENT MEMORIES WERE TRAINED BY AN ART WHICH REFLECTED THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE ANCIENT WORLD, WHICH COULD DEPEND ON FACULTIES OF INTENSE VISUAL MEMORIZATION WHICH WE HAVE LOST.”**

FRANCES YATES, *THE ART OF MEMORY* (1966)<sup>4</sup>

#### Memoria Arteficiosa

In her classic, seminal book *The Art of Memory*<sup>4</sup>, tracing the origins of the ancient method of loci and the imaginary palaces used by the Greeks and Romans to structure their memories, the historian Frances Yates hints at a specific faculty, a skill that has –seemingly– faded away over the course of human evolution: the intense inner vision of the ancient mnemonists, the capacity they had to memorize and visualize complex imaginary spaces, mentally moving through them with the same degree of accuracy and vividness as in a real physical experience.

Yates makes the argument that in our modern era replete with external memory technologies, the need for this kind of mnemonic feat has somehow vanished – and she writes this in 1966, at a time when it would have been difficult to even imagine the extent to which XXIst century technology would have exponentially taken over the function of remembering, storing and structuring our memories through countless devices and networks.

Yet when I first leafed through the works gathered here in the *Architecture of Memory* archive, my initial thought was that the inner vision skill was still very much alive, in the brains of the architects and artists who contributed to the project – albeit in a more spontaneous, unorthodox and eclectic manner, sometimes veering towards abstraction, sometimes towards narration and visceral sensations. The diversity of responses and attitudes displayed here could inspire many possible ways to nurture, expand and reinvent our relationship to our organic memory – an urgent need, in our era of digital mutation, where thought itself is being outsourced to massive external networks, at an enormous cost regarding privacy, autonomy and energy...

#### Embodied thoughts

As exemplified by the works presented here, the capacity of reviving past situations and *seeing* them mentally has remained one of the core skills of the architect and the visual artist – at least to those giving value to the temporal and experiential dimension in their work: these deep memories constitute a reservoir of embodied knowledge, an inner archive of multi-sensorial images that provides a prime raw material for architecture, loaded with olfactive, tactile or acoustic stimuli, atmospheres and light qualities, and a sense of human situation and narrative.

Perhaps this narrative quality is why the mental space of memory is often referred to as an inner “theatre”: it is indeed a stage where immaterial ideas, profound impressions and almost impalpable reminiscences take visible shape, manifesting themselves as images we can visualize, feel, hear, and above all, share. It brings to mind Aldo Rossi’s famous little “*Teatrino Scientifico*”<sup>5</sup>, where looking inside the theatre felt akin to looking within the architect’s brain, seeing reminisced building silhouettes haunting the stage like living characters emerging from childhood remembrances.

<sup>1</sup> Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, 1994, p. 23.  
<sup>2</sup> Yates, Frances A., *The Art of Memory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966, p. 4.  
<sup>3</sup> Calvino, Italo, *Invisible Cities*. Translated by William Weaver, Harcourt, 1974, p. 27.

### Common mnemonic ground

This inner theatre is also the place where our intimate experience meets the collective dimensions of memory.

In the 1950s, in his groundbreaking research *On Collective Memory*<sup>6</sup>, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs demonstrated that our memories, even in their most personal aspects, far from being static "truths", are constantly being reworked and reinvented, subconsciously contaminated by the memories of the social groups we are part of.

Now as I mentally wander through the spaces and places gathered here in this collective archive, I recreate in my own mind the memories of others: as intimate as these may seem, I am still able to grasp some of their essence, through the few words, colors, forms and traces shared by their authors – these elements reawaken some of my personal memories, automatically triggering networks of stored sensations, feelings, imprints of experiences, in order to somehow reconstruct a credible mental image, at the exact intersection of my mind and that of an unknown other.

This is the point where the brain's specific plasticity allows us to go beyond the anecdotal character of autobiographical memories – our ability to absorb other people's recollections and make them our own, is the key here: as architects working for a community, we always face an inherent challenge, an apparent paradox, when we start working with this type of intimate, idiosyncratic and autobiographical memories: how does the raw material of personal memory relate to the inhabitants of the spaces we build? Where lies the common ground, the shared experience that ensures that the spatial language that we speak can communicate with the unknown, unpredictable other?

The importance of our inner library of spatial memories, our intimate archive of lived, embodied moments, lies not only in this wealth of raw material to draw inspiration from, but also in how these memories can be anchored in shared feelings, shared experiences.

And as such, the collective *Architecture of Memory* effort is building a common brain, a "cadavre exquis" kind of collage, where the sum of all contributions can be read as a wide-ranging shared memory, heterogeneous in appearance, but cohesive at many levels, through recurrent, unpremeditated themes: the question of presence, or "Dasein", runs throughout, through an attention to the "infra-ordinary" details of the everyday, that only a child or an attentive mind might trace; there is also a strong sense of the economy of means, and in most cases, a confidence that one can transmit strong ideas with the simple means of the thinking hand.

### From Reminiscence to Oblivion

There is, lastly, another crucial factor repeated throughout this collective experiment, a condition that can be sensed along the sketchy and blurred edges where the drawings end and the blank spaces of the pages begin: the limits of memory, the failure to remember perfectly, fully, objectively; the recognition of the partial impossibility of the exercise as it was laid out by the curators themselves, acknowledging that trying to reconstruct profound memories like these is an essentially paradoxical task – but turning this limitation into a game, a constraint that forces to re-invent and imagine the missing pieces.

Just as we reach a point, in artistic, architectural or even musical training, where we realize that it is not the material elements, but rather the silent void of space that constitutes the core substance with which we work – so it is in the realm of memory, when we realize that it is not the recollection as such, but rather the "void" of oblivion – of *what we do not remember* – that is the core substance around which we gravitate when we attempt to reconstruct mnemonic spaces. Like the "hors-champ" that a filmmaker or a photographer decides to keep out of his frame, in the delicate art of memory reconstruction, what is not shown often matters more than what is shown.

When we stumble upon that eerie limit in our mind where our memory ends and oblivion begins, we find ourselves at the edge of a singular locus: borrowing the analogy to astrophysical theory, we might call it a mental "event horizon" – it is a place where all we can do is gaze into the abyss, so to speak. But it is also here that we might want to linger and push the boundary, to probe this void and try to recover lost memories, repressed images, things left out of the mnemonic scene...

In this endeavor, I have found confirmation repeatedly that drawing and sketching can have an eerie facilitating effect: the materialization of forms and the intuitive connection between gesture and thought can indeed help to let subconscious reminiscences emerge. If transferred into built projects, these qualities can become singular elements, uncannily enriching or "disquieting" the perception of the spaces, opening layers of meaning that reach way beyond simple imagery, anecdotal references or nostalgic atmospheres.

In many of the testimonies shared here in the *Architecture of Memory* ensemble, we realize that there is always this invisible presence of the unknown, the forgotten, the lost images.

And perhaps we might take it as an incentive to let go, to let the brain and the body do their work of remembering and forgetting, of recording and erasing, letting memories sink out of sight and control, only to let them re-emerge with force, unexpectedly, after having travelled through the depths of oblivion.

# MEMORIES

4 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge, London 1966  
5 Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, Opposition Books, MIT, Cambridge Mass. 1981  
6 Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective*, P.U.F., Paris 1950

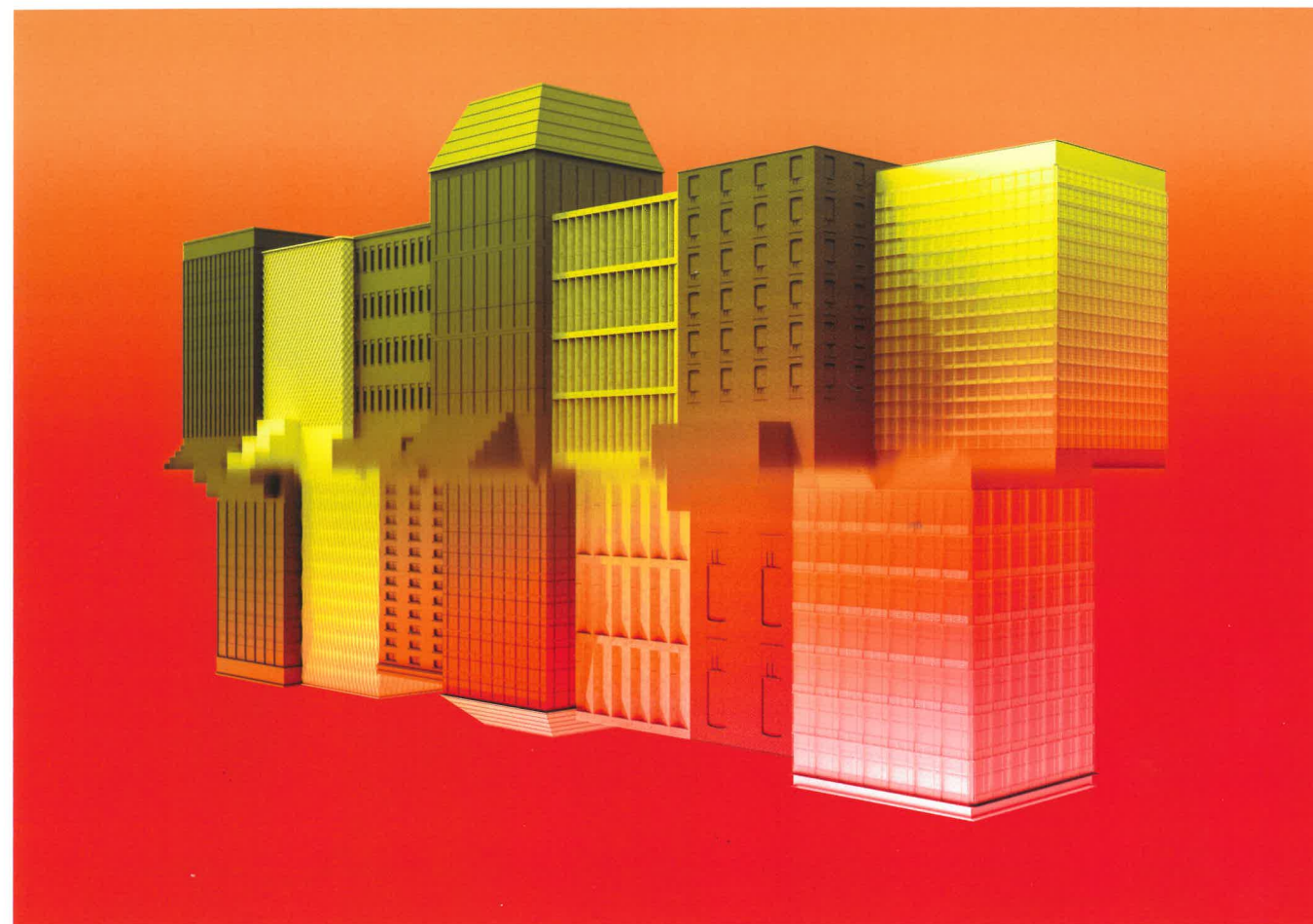
### BIG, BIG HOUSES

When discussing on one's own coming of age, the focus most often is on cognitive changes, defining experiences and socialization. However, in the sober, spatial-geometric examination of this formative phase, we found an opportunity to leave our own point of view behind for a moment.

How tall I am, how strong I am, how fragile I am, how long my stride is, how far I can see or how visible I am, are few of the more measurable factors that are consolidated during adolescence and change only slightly in the decades to come.

When we as architects create spaces, they are, in their very nature, rigid and restrictive. We build and rebuild, expand, reduce and change again and again – limited by an indistinguishable relation with the scale of the fictitious one human being.

As a rather sluggish child and all the more athletic teenager, I became aware of the interdependence of my own physicality and space. I am recently very conscious in revisiting places from my childhood and I am always amazed that I have stored sharp and precise memories of pictorial details and situations, but no memory of scale. Today – as an architect and as a healthy white man of average height and weight who grew up in a working-class family – I'm interested in spaces that are as open as possible and refuse to be clearly categorized: spaces that are not the same for all of us – but are equally good.



Fine Art print on Matte paper  
1290 × 900mm

Adrien Comte  
Adrien Meuwly  
Alan Hasoo  
Andrea Deplazes  
Andreas Bründler  
Barbara Hennig Marques  
Bob Gysin  
Camille Trechot  
Carlos Viladoms  
Carmen Lorente Sangros  
Charlotte Truwant  
Christian Inderbitzin  
Daniel Zamarbide  
Daniele Marques  
Daniela Keiser  
David Palussiere  
Dominique Salathé  
Dries Rodet  
Emanuel Christ  
Francesco Buzzi  
Gregory Tara Hari  
Guillaume Henry  
Guillaume Yersin  
Heinrich Toews  
Ioannis Piertzovanis  
Irene Naef  
Ivo Barão  
Jürg Conzett  
Leonid Slonimskiy  
Lilitt Bollinger  
Livia Gnos  
Liz Kueneke  
Logan Amont  
Marcia Akermann  
Maria Zraggen

Mariana Santana  
Marie-Aude Papin  
Mirko Akermann  
Monika Feucht  
Peter Roesch  
Quintus Miller  
Ralph Blättler  
Raphael Kadid  
Roger Boltshauser  
Rolf Winnewisser  
Ron Edelaar  
Shadi Rahbaran  
Simon Frommenwiler  
Simon Hartmann  
Stefan Koepfli  
Stefan Wülser  
Thibaud Sulliger  
Thomas Lussi  
Tilo Herlach  
Tivadar Puskas  
Valentin Deschenaux

# ARCHITECTURE OF MEMORY

# RECOLLECTING SPACES