

Somehow we all have the ability to recognize faces. We mostly recognize everyone we know, family, colleagues and friends. You just don't think about it, but what data do you actually have available from their appearance when they are not there? Do we have some sort of image, a photograph of them in our head? No detailed images; no descriptions of their characteristic features. I can't draw my friends nor describe them and I do not think that is because of my lack of drawing or writing talent. It has something to do with the "image" of the other when the other person is not in sight. But for everyone there is another system. I don't use one particular image of you to remember you. You consist of pieces of layers or fragments: fragments of contexts, images, emotions, etc. To remember you is recalling those fragments. But you are always different. It is like a recipe for a complex cake: you have all the ingredients but not the necessary proportions. Thus the implementation of you depends on how much of each fragment is used reconstructing you. Every time these memories are convoked the core is unchanged but in a way the substance differs. That is why you are slightly changing although still, you stays you despite the minor changes. Do you think your change will ever stop? It is difficult to describe you to others. It all depends on the situation of the moment and even on the others. Maybe I should share you more with others. I often hesitate for I am afraid that you will somehow change their perception on you. That is only for others who know of your existence off course, but for those who don't know I always have to think twice before sharing you. A first introduction is what sets the first impression. Therefor I am cautious with revealing you. But I can talk about you, in fact it is very nice to talk about you. It is like we meet again. By talking about you, the changes emerge: minor adjustments made in my brain. It is true, however, we give elaborating attention only to certain aspects of what we are experiencing. Things that stand out, special, enjoyable, or potentially threatening, get that attention, but at the expense of other elements of the event. The result is not a reflection of everything that happened which is saved, but only the fragments are saved: fragments which have had elaborate attention. What we remember are no loose fragments, but a coherent whole, often less vivid and with clarity than the original experience must have been, but still. When I share you with friends, I tell stories that have head and tail. This perception of coherence is associated with a second feature of the brain, namely the irrepressible tendency to create cohesion, even where it does not exist in reality. Our brain reconstructs the memory based on existing fragments and general knowledge of the world [out of a few stored bone chips, we remember a dinosaur]. I noticed that every time your were shared with others you have been somehow altered. I mean, things are in a way being made up. Though I don't see it as an actual lie being added. It is a so called memory distortion sometimes even confabulation. I even don't think it is a conscious act. But there were to some extent minor additions. These additions were made over time. Did they make you more interesting or exciting? Not necessarily, in my opinion, but maybe they did make you more vivid with clarity, in order to come close to the original experience again. In some cases I feel I have to add some 'little white nothings' to get you, don't mind me saying, 'awarded'. So it somehow happened, I have to confess, that there are others that act with you that you did not know of. That is what I meant by saying: 'It is difficult to describe you to others. It all depends on the situation of the moment and even on the others'. It is also the others who ask me about you, and believe me, few can be very curious but uninterested at the same time. On those moments the brain is trying to add this new sort of ingredient to make a whole again. This can help to tell and talk about you. But can it help to preserve you? 'To preserve' is a powerful verb, it is to ensure something remains intact, preventing it decays. But in this sense it is rather passive: it is what happens to something. However 'to preserve' also has an active meaning: it makes something true, a proof that it exists. 'To preserve' in this sense is about authenticity. We, mindful of our concept of art, consider a work of art always as made by people. We assume that a work of art realizes the makers intentions for his audience. In that respect art is also regarded as one of the possibilities for a person to save himself, to prove that he existed and shows who he was. From that point of view one can be preserved. But can I consider you as art? Somehow I have the feeling it is one step too far. On the other hand I would like to consider you as art. Your base lies in history of life. For now, I think I prefer to talk to you like you are a document: a document which has its origin in history and which I witnessed emerge. Clearly most of you is subjective but the core is absolutely not. The core is the proof that you exist. The 'little white nothings' are the peel around the core. This all-encompassing information is rather relative and therefore a subject to change. Does this endanger the possibility to preserve you? It is a paradox. Though the enduring possibility of change can be understood as a threat, I think the peel is also the defending mechanism for the core: Sharing means you will be changed, not being shared means you will be forgotten. I want to preserve you close to your origin but I have to continue sharing you to keep you present. You exist by virtue of tension between change and oblivion. "*Back in his studio, Rauschenberg set to work reversing de Kooning's masterful draftsmanship, a process that took considerable time and numerous erasers. Rauschenberg had a penchant for storytelling, and some of the finer details of his account were embellished over the decades (de Kooning's demeanor grew more intimidating, the number of erasers increased). However, the central plot points, present in the first major public airing of the tale in Calvin Tomkins's February 1964 New Yorker profile of Rauschenberg, remained remarkably stable in the artist's many retellings of the story and in the published accounts that appeared throughout the last four decades of his life.*" Sarah Roberts, "Erased de Kooning Drawing," Rauschenberg Research Project, July 2013. MoMa San Francisco.

Can you call it 'to be blessed' having the ability to recognize faces? Or maybe better, who is blessed with your ability to recognize faces? From my perspective it is rather nice if you would recognize me. The recognition will be a form of proof that I am. How do you recognize me? Do you see me as data, or is this just a way of explaining your image of me? I must be fed with facts strung together by little white nothings to make a whole. All our shared memories are built with shared times, but strangely enough, on the times we shared we have different memories. These memories have common items: i.e. time and context. No, it is not strange, it is even logic. Different entities sharing the same time laps with the same context equals different memories on that time laps and context. With that it is true saying sometimes the image doesn't really match with reality. In that way you can say that I have changed. But this is also happening to you: is this due to the fact that we both have changed after the last time we have met? If you hold the first time we have met as a baseline, then it could be easily true that I have changed over time, but so have you. Though in my opinion this all is more complex. I think I am built unconsciously with the use of all sort of building stones: images, sounds, contexts, fragrances, tastes, etc. Maybe you can even call it a bricolage of thoughts to make, understand and hold the whole me. Only with some minor variations the whole changes and is perceived else. In this case the change is not a physical one but it is a change of the perception on me. The feeling I get seeing you has changed. Does it matter? These changes will occur frequently and we have to look at them as an evolution in your perception. As soon as my source left this life [imho, too soon], I took over. Did I fall prey to the survivors mr. Sartre? At least I feel supported by the expression 'you can't libel the dead'. For as long as my source lived, it somehow was able to direct the way of your perception about me. Most of it was done unconsciously so maybe you have to call it in a more nuanced way 'building me through being itself without knowing'. Initially you also created me based on truth. I was formed by you learning me how to react on you. Like a pat: rewarded after doing something good and punished after doing something bad. I did my best to comprehend your lessons, but it is hard to recall them. I guess I forgot. The strange thing is that I exist of only certain fragments. Timeless fragments of situations, I mean, I cannot say how long they are time-wise. It is hard to point out how long an event lasted at the time I was formed. But for as far as I can analyze, these fragments are formed by multiple different overflowing time slots, and thus not measurable anymore. Actually I think it is kind of nice not knowing about time, in that way I can last as long as you want me to. Though I have the feeling I have changed. Is this due to your different 'little white nothings'? Mixing your common thoughts about me is a nice gesture to get the whole more clear and more vivid. But somehow I see myself different than the last time I looked at myself. It feels as if I grew up or at least got older. Suddenly I notice that I am bigger now, maybe even more mature? I surely like the way you dressed me, you even put me some makeup on. But do I really need this wheelchair? Am I being changed in order to change the perception of the others? Or is it because you are trying to keep me alive? Making these changes to me is you getting me back to a life I could not have lived. I believe when the changing stops I will disappear slowly but surely. You are responsible for the changes. Information that your brain stores is not the same as offered. Storage of information requires brain activity which is called elaborated attention. Your brain is forced to do something with the information from the environment before this information can be stored as a memory. Through bringing imagination into my scene, my identity comes under question. You are recalling things from the past, but augment that memory in order to preserve its presence. In doing so, the relation between the original experience and the preserved version of that experience comes to an increasing distance. In time, you may adjust yourself to the 'from place to memory'-distance and lose sight of the original experience altogether. Indeed, on an individual level, the experience of this distance may amount to nothing more than a vague estrangement from my past. Is this what you are afraid of? I think the phenomenology of individual experience of place and memory has been taken up through a consideration of the structural emergence of place and memory which is enforced through the role imagination plays in preserving the past. Remember the 'little white nothings'? The blending of memory and imagination marks a broader tension between memory and history, whereby the past becomes articulated indirectly. Consider how the ambiguity of me being a preserved memory was partly resolved by the rediscovery of memory being different from that of the pre-given experience. Within this context, the account of memory and place as an event occupies a narrative verifiable by me as the subject. This testifies to the gradual formation of me, and so to an underlying temporal unity. With me, you are in the region of a highly specific frame that is brought alive through recall, remembrance, and the imagination. Your mixed thoughts about me are irreducible to experience, yet fundamentally rooted in lived experience. Individual memory, moreover, is always in process, constantly modifying me as the remembering subjects themselves are modified. I exist from the inside out, your individual memory obtains a deep affective quality by dint of its intimacy of me. You are, after all, seldom indifferent to me, despite my familiarity, recurrence and unstable appearance. "*It is better to form one's memory loci in a deserted and solitary place, for crowds of passing people tend to weaken the impressions. Therefore the student intent on acquiring a sharp and well-defined set of loci, will choose an unfrequented building in which to memorize places.*" Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*