

ONE SIDE AFTER ANOTHER

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Imagine a green field that has no borders, a forest that has no end, a city that has no closed doors and a house filled with thousands of life stories told over generations.

Summer. Dusty bright road. The sand from last year scatters over it with the speed of the thought. Grandfather is holding my hand. We are crossing infinite Siberian fields, which are covered with flowers, long green grass and enveloped in luminous transparent air. We are on the way to the forest, our favorite place near the village. «Every tree has his its own character, smell, function and life duration, each plant takes the pattern, shape what determined by settled by the nature, and we are all connected» - he is teaching me. I`m a young and promising collector of the organic patterns... All my five senses are awake. We are touching trees, drawing birds, listening to the wind, which is playing with foliage, collecting different types of the wood, tasting the pine-tree amber, we are searching for mushrooms, berries, watching the blurry footprints of rabbits and contemplating the movement of squirrels around us. It feels like the forest doesn't have any borders. It`s inside me, outside and around.

I`m absorbing the surroundings like a sponge with wide-eyes. We are coming back home with a mental basket full of flavors, colors and forest details. We are transforming this big internal collection into drawings and afterward to sketches for wood structures. My grandfather is a carpenter and an architect. He is teaching me to perceive life through the spatial and architectural details. It`s a bridge from generation to generation.

My next task for the summer is village research. I'm exploring windows with peeling paint, little cracks in the plaster walls of houses, shattered scratchy doors, creaking swings, wooden pliant stairs, lost details of ancient houses and new fragments of freshly built family nests, wickets of henhouses, hay on the broken village road, tables on the kid's playground, the base of the terracotta water tower, the dynamic green fences and deep brown benches cushioning old residents of the village under the sun. The flow of the chirping bird-houses, old slate grey roofs, soothed pipes, weathered corners are around me... - It feels like the village is endless.

That time in my child's mind I didn't have a question what lay behind these fragments of reality, what hang above that visual mosaic of sensitive details. Twenty years later this question became dominant in my art practice. How our memory is structured, how accumulated imagery functions. Is it like folders in a huge mental shelf, which contain dust or broken ledges or maybe it's like the infinite hall in the world «Alef», from the Borges book, through which you can see all the countries and places from the world in the same moment? Or maybe the memory is a mirage in-between the spirit and body like in the Bergson book «Matter and Memory», according to which: «There are two different forms of memory. On the one hand memories concerning habitude, replaying and repeating past action, not strictly recognized as representing the past, but utilizing it for the purpose of present action. This kind of memory is automatic, inscribed within the body, and serving a utilitarian purpose».



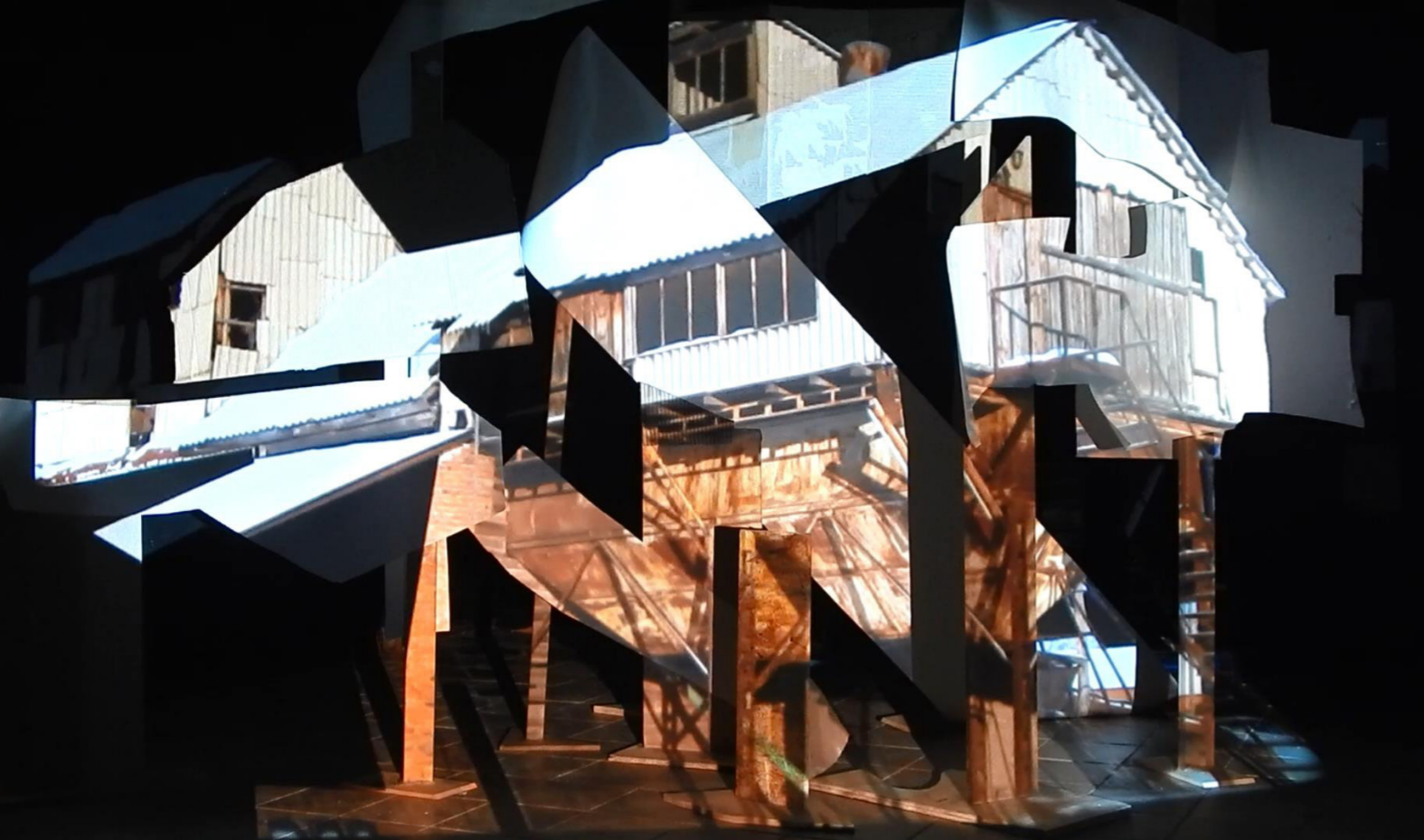
The memory could be like the planet from the movie of Tarkovsky «Solaris», which collects our brightest life`s moments and transforms them to a new level with new conditions. In the movie there were several scientists in the space ship on a planet without day or night, touching the moment when a breakdown of cognitive control starts. Jhonatan Crary in his book «24/7», describes this situation in this way: «Under the extremity of these conditions, one is overtaken not just by hallucinations but by the presence of ghosts, in the film referred to as «visitors”... and makes sleeplessness and exposure bearable».

My grandfather built a big wooden house for our family. I was about 10 years old, when we moved in, and at that time I thought our house was a Castle. Now it is my own Island, my personal Solaris of memory. Every summer I visit my parents and it feels like taking a train to the past. Every room has specific atmosphere, filled up with my old drawings, photos of previous generations, remarkable details of our life.

When summer is over we return to the city, where my friends and I have our own personal castle. It`s an old Soviet Union factory for drying grain, but for us it`s a magic Castle, a huge beast, an unknown creature which we would never finish exploring. The location of the factory is about two hundred meters from home and we explore it step by step every day after school. Our knees are scratched, elbows are torn, noses are smeared with soot, we can play around, we can hear wind in the fields, we inhale smell of wheat, and we can touch the future and the past with our hands. It`s excises of the perception. Our magic beast likes to sing songs with a local wind. It has huge cracks in the wooden and metal walls. It`s held up by several long metal legs, it`s almost a floating castle, which keeps its internal balance with a strategy unknown to us. There are two floors inside of our creature. The first one is full of dynamic constructions, without an obvious function. The second floor we share with the local birds, who used to stay here during the cold time. We find here traces of past generations like the obscure work activity, rusty parts and various unknown tools.



During that time we didn`t think about where our castle came from, or what story lay behind this architecture construction; we didn`t imagine that Russia had changed political regimes, and had narrowed but at the same time had opened borders. Agriculture production began to decrease and a lot of people lost their jobs.



«We are 11 years old, we can play around, we can hear the wind in fields, we can inhale the smell of wheat, and we can touch the future and the past with our hands. We could shift relations between buildings and bodies, structures and sites. And then... Time is gone. What should I do with the disappeared places, which exist today only in my mind, which sometimes appear as bright flickers, and later become faded».

During my Master's program I summarize all my feelings about that magic castle. Last spring we were in Helsinki with my class and I showed the work titled «Factory memorial». The project was accompanied by a short text:



The desire to travel, the possibility of living in any country and amassing sensations was paramount. During that time of my youth everything seemed open and available for exploration. Life was constantly moving, changing, and evolving. I had nothing to do, but to enjoy those movements. That time has passed. I grew up, lived in six cities and three countries, and the contemplation process has been transformed, but architecture still sculpts my experience.

We had several favorite creatures in our summer-research kid's crew. There were three cats and one puppet. Only fifteen years later I found the article about the distinction of speed and color perception between animals and humans. We are surrounded by physical experience: our perception of light, sound, temperature, touch become memory: creating a shifting fabric of what we have known. The specificity of a particular site, location, is a fluid mix of the physical, emotional, personal. We were able to feel the speed of wind, the warm flow of sunlight. But as we know, humanity is not alone in the Universe. I was always interested in how animals perceive colors and speed, smell, and motion and what would happen to us if we could have the same possibilities in our human body. Would it make us happy or more destructive? In my latest projects I have been exploring different types of structures and textures, angles and transformation of materials in order to explore the visual-optical illusory possibilities of the human vision.

For example, dogs, cats, mice, rats and rabbits have very poor color vision. In fact, they see mostly greys and some blues and yellows. Cats' daylight vision is about six times blurrier than ours. Monkeys, ground squirrels, birds, insects, and many fish can see a fairly good range of color. Bees and butterflies can see the ultraviolet. The leaves of the flowers they pollinate have special patterns which guide the insects deep into the flower. Flies see everything in slow-motion, in UV-light, with hundreds of thousands of tiny lenses. Sharks can see clearly in the water, but don't see colors. Eyes of rats can work independently and create a slow-motion effect. The chameleon's eyes are able to move independently and sharply at ten meters distance. The time passes more slowly for flies.

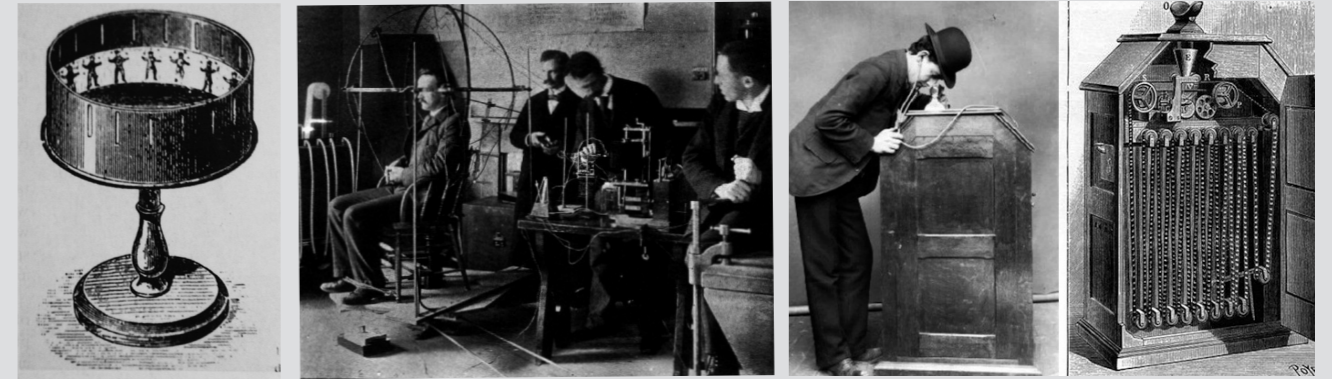
Time has an arrow, direction and personal psychological flow. I perceive time differently for each season in a year. Winter usually is stretched down, the summer is sparkling and relaxed, spring is full of young strong energy and the autumn is decadence. I have different types of music and books for the every moment of my life. Time has its own sense of movement.

Seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months are my tools for the treatment. I can heal myself with a slow motion of images, it's contemplation, it's meditation. It's the possibility to step into deep perception, when I can forget about the place, space, city, country where am I and just feel the present moment. It's like a time river, or a time-lapse waterfall of my memory.

I have always been inspired by books, which accompany me through each moment in my life and change my time-perception. Like in the book by Marcel Proust, «In Search of Lost Time», I was contemplating the very slow flow of life: «Only, we must allow time. But our demands as far as time is concerned are no less exorbitant than those which the heart requires in order to change. For one thing, time is the very thing that we are least willing to allow, for our suffering is acute and we are anxious to see it brought to an end. And then, too, the time which the other heart will need in order to change will have been spent by our own heart in changing itself too».

In the book of Sasha Sokolov, «A School for Fools», I was haunted by the memory process, that were stretched out in that book: «The rhododendron, growing every minute somewhere in Alpine meadows, are far happier than we, for they know neither love, nor hate, nor the Perillo slipper system, and they don't even die, since all nature, excepting man, is one undying, indestructible whole. If one tree somewhere in the forest perishes from old age, before dying, it gives the wind so many seeds, and so many new trees grow up around it on the land...» I was impressed by the time-shift in the novel by Milorad Pavić, «The Inner Side of the Wind». It is the story of two lovers, one from the turn of the eighteenth century and the other from early in the twentieth, who reach out to each other from across the gulf of time.

From the scientific point of view the motion and perception of time has a direct connection to the range of speed and dimension. Large objects seem to move more slowly than small details, like the sun and the moon travel slowly. We are almost not able to catch that movement. We can't see a kid growing up or man growing old. Everything is relative. In the research of Rudolf Arnheim he says, that «the nervous system creates the sensation of continuous movement by integrating the sequence of these momentary simulations, none of which records anything but a state change».



Each era has used whatever technologies were available in order to create a maximal illusion. These visual forms have often first been developed for propaganda purposes in the service of power. Before cinema, the moving element was visually separated from the static background, as with a mechanical slide show. The movement itself was limited in range and depicted only a clearly defined figure rather than the whole image. At the beginning of my project I was interested in the history of moving images and different time-technology possibilities. For example, the Camera Obscura was one of the first optical devices that led to photography and the photographic camera. It consisted of a box or room with a hole in one side. The image could be projected onto paper, and then be traced to produce a highly accurate representation. It had a long history, which originated at the time of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who was familiar with it already at that time. Another machine, which I was excited about was the Praxinoscope, invented in 1877 by the Frenchman, Emile Reynaud (1844-1918). It is a precursor of the moving picture. The images were reflected in a prism of mirrors which rose from the center of the drum. Each mirror as it passed flashed a clear image opposite to itself. The result was perfect animation experienced without the loss of luminosity in movement.



ONE SIDE AFTER ANOTHER

Last autumn I was lucky to meet up with one of my old childhood friends. We were sitting under the soft September sun on my grandmother's terrace with a view of the infinite pale green fields. We were wrapped by blankets and surrounded by the early autumn yellow birches. The green tea and talk opened up some important parts of my memory.

Do you remember that dusty summer, when we used to play in that old factory? We were about six to eight years old, fully covered with street mud, exploring that unknown world with our senses open. Already by that time, as I remember, I had a feeling that you would be an artist. I can see clearly that moment when you sat on the old wooden floor and made hand drawings on it with pen or charcoal – they were uncontrollable sketches, unconscious movement. I felt like you were trying to field the gaps between that old wooden floor-puzzle and your own internal processes.

Yes, I have some images in my mind from that moment, but they are quite blurry now. Since that time I've moved between three countries, eight cities, several circles of friends and even my inner personality, but that old grain factory left strong traces in my mind that will remain forever. It felt like we were inside of a huge wooden beast, resting on its thin legs and breathing very slowly with an old wooden creaking sound.

I haven't seen you in two years. Could you tell me a bit about your art process? What have you been experimenting with? I'm very anxious and excited to hear about it!

Since the beginning of my Master program in Bergen I've been working a lot with a space-perception, with the composition of elements in the installation. I've been haunted by the idea of changing the visitor's feeling about the specific location. I was experimenting

with different types of materials: plastic stretch-film, paper and glass casts, cardboard temporal structures, wooden light architectural details. As you remember, for the past few years the temporality of objects was one of the dominant lines in my works, and, I feel, the main characteristic of our contemporary lifestyle.

How did you come to the idea of video-installation for your final MA project?

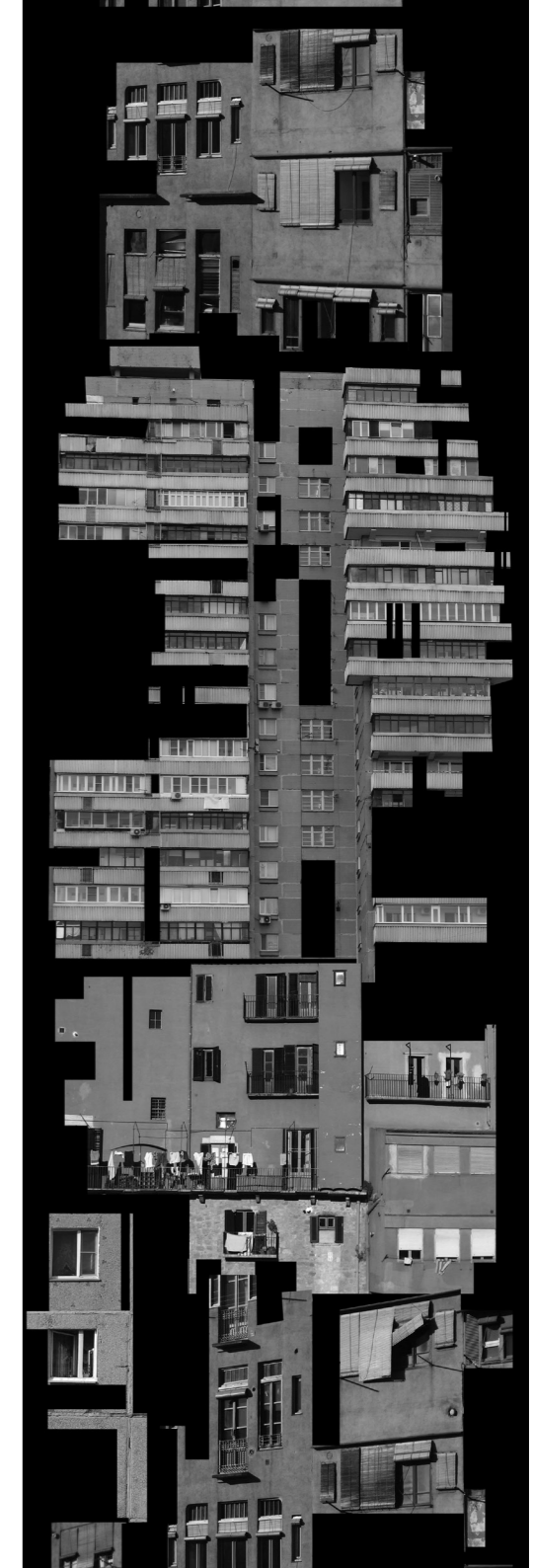
I've been looking for a new strategy to open my ideas about temporality and instability of this «every second changing world» and I found that the video-projections, moving images, could help me to create the right visualization of that sensation.

I'm curious about your collection of architectural details, which you have been using for this installation. How did you decide to use concrete images, why are they from different countries and why did you compose it all in a one flow?

I've been collecting photos of the architecture from the countries in which I've lived for the last years - Russia, Sweden and Norway. The choice of images is not random, it's from the important buildings, facades, which have been on my way to home from school or from work to home, which imprinted on my mind. I'm choosing the brightest fragments and creating long collages. In some photos I'm erasing certain details, leaving some black gaps, like memory constructs - black holes in our brain after a certain amount of time has passed. The next step is the animation of the flow of images. The moving parts of buildings are overlapping, mixing up the installation, creating an architectural river, with slow waterfalls of windows and doors, public places and my own personal important spaces.

I almost can't catch the shift between the countries. It looks like one city to me, but with different districts.

Yes, right. Architecture is sculpting our presence. The surroundings are transforming our everyday perception, changing our lifestyle. Today we are living in a



very globalist-nomadic world and for me it was important to explore that transformation of the feeling of home. The first couple months in a new country, my eyes were hungry for fresh architectural details, but after a certain amount of time differences melted down. Now it's one big city for me, with no borders and no difference.

Why did you add the drawing element in the composition and why is the work changing colors?

For me drawing is a way to keep the bodily relationship with an image, like moving memory. That type of drawing is like writing, a kind of description of perception in the border between reality and imagination, a sort of meditation on a fragment. I'm using that combination of hand drawing, photo images and video-collage for the first time in my practice. It was important for me to keep a connection with my classical artistic background. In the beginning the video collage has bright colors and after a while it becomes black and white. For example, we can remember yesterday quite sharply but to recreate memory images from one year ago is not so easy. I'm using that strategy in order to visualize the memorization process that has been going on in my mind.

Yes, I can feel that. But what is your relationships with a drawing now? Have you become deeply involved with digital media art?

Do you remember that I have a bachelor degree in the classical art field? We used to spend six hours per day, six days per week with that kind of modeling drawing. It was a type of meditation. Sometimes lines were jumping out of control, and my professor asked me to get back to reality, but I didn't... I miss the tactile exercises - as you can see now we are getting more and more distant from it with our gadgets. The sketches and hand drawings are my way to keep contact with my reality. As you can see in the installation I'm combining the physical material (the dynamic structure built from a special kind of wood) and video-projection to keep that tactile sensation.





Yes I found it very nice that sometimes I can catch the moment when the moving images fit exactly the structure. Do you use the video-mapping strategy here?

Yes, right. I'm happy that you caught it. I developed my own mapping strategy, to make the work more vivid. My idea was to construct the flexible illusion that in some moments video-flow totally fits the structure and by the next step it has already faded away. I feel it fits my nomadic life style and the flow of life in our days.

Can you tell me a bit more about the scale, speed and direction of video-projection?

The work is a one direction video-flow, like time has an arrow or vector, but the viewer can walk around and enjoy the process from different angles. I chose the specific speed with the idea to create an almost meditative feeling in the project. The scale is about two meters width and one and half in height, which is relevant to a human scale size perception of architecture.

What could you say in summarizing the current project?

I can say that, what I've learned from my art practice during the last two years is that my personal memory is the engine of my art narratives and that architecture is a tool for my expression. I'm deconstructing images through the video-projection. I'm exploring the shift of the architectural changes from the pure Siberian landscape to the urban cities, from the one country to the new society. In the installation I'm wondering how fragments of urban places can be presented as abstract contemplations of experience which have been stored in our memory, and inform our identity.

Do you have some contemporary artists for inspiration?

Yes, I was always interested in Japanese and Korean art. These people have some built-in wisdom and serenity in their works. Specifically in relation to my final MA project, I found the project «Home within home, Home within home» by the Korean artist Do Ho Suh very relevant to what I care about. He constructed sculptural space

from silk material. It was a full-scale reconstruction of his residential building, the artist's first address in the United States, which surrounds his «Seoul home», where he was raised as a child. I found it to be a strong visual metaphor for a combination of feelings about the new country and the artist's position in it. The structure was suspended from the ceiling, floating between the multi-layered panels of semi-opaque, jade-colored textiles that encompass it. The idea of transcultural displacement and temporal boundaries was one of the main themes in that project.

I remember the book by Stanislaw Lem « Solaris» according to which, there were some magic islands in Space that could accumulate layers of memory from each person on the Earth and keep them until they burned up, passing through the atmospheric layers. Someone might get lucky and meet with his Past, Present and Future at the same time, while others would remain in the dark until the end.

What would happen to us if we were to find ourselves on an Island where we could see in one place all the important fragments of our everyday reality, the transparent flow of the details of life, linked by historical threads, transitions, geophysical locations and personal precious moments?

I step onto that Island in the slow river of time and there is no way back...



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ILLUSTRATIONS:

p.2- the fragment of collague «One side after another», video-installation, 10 min loop
p. 5 - working material for the project «One side after another»
p. 7- the grain Factory , Siberia, Russia, 2015
p. 8-9 - documentation the project «Factory Memorial», video-installation, 6 min loop, Helsinki, 2015
p. 14-20 - fragments of collagues and documentation for the project «One side after another»,

**all illustration are courtesy of the artist, expect of p.13 (The Zoetrope, 1830, Sound laboratory, The Kinetoscope,1892)
from book by Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the observer*