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Uncovering Memory

Filming in South Africa, Germany, Poland and Bosnia/
Herzegovina

Tanja Sakota

This book presents a very important contribution to the field of film as research and the role of film in memory, remembering and history. Its importance lies in its structure and voice, which embody the subjective traits of autoethnography and personal practice, while seamlessly integrating the experiences of others through examples and stories from workshops and students' experiences. It also offers useful and understandable models for others to follow if they wish to adopt this method with students or academics in researching memory.

— Diane Charleson, Senior Lecturer in Media Production, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne

Uncovering Memory is a deeply fascinating piece of work – at once deconstructive, transgressive and creative, invoking the local, regional and the global in storytelling. It traverses geographies, spaces and discourses. It swims and swings in multiple levels of nuance as it explores and extends narratives in multiple mediums – for instance, film and documentary. It explores as much as it recuperates memory. It valorises self-reflexivity and lateral thinking. It is a true work of transdisciplinary practice and theorisation.

— Professor Tawana Kupe, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria

Each one of us comes with a history, a complex web of DNA and a library of information that shapes who we are and how we view the world. How can we use our own complexities not only to engage with one another but to build it for story content? As an artistic researcher, filmmaker and educator, Tanja Sakota has often thought how to bring this subjective experience into pedagogical practice. Using paired themes of memory and forgetting, segregation and migration, perpetrators and victims, Sakota travels along a timeline of memory as she takes us on a journey through South Africa, Germany, Poland and Bosnia/Herzegovina. Using a camera and short film techniques, she hosts several workshops focused on interacting and engaging with remembering through different memory sites. The author sits at the core but the book is an interdisciplinary work shaped around films made by different participants using the camera to access and unveil personal interpretations of space and place. Questions that underpin the uncovering of memories are: How does one use a camera to unmask invisible memories hidden within sites? How does one remember events that one hasn't necessarily experienced? How does one use film to interrogate the past from the future present? As the journey evolves, workshop participants and readers alike enter into a conversation around practice-based research, autoethnography and film.

Uncovering Memory is not a handbook offering a prescriptive method. Instead, it is a pedagogical text that offers an interactive approach for students and peers to consider, adapt or react to in their own teaching and learning practices. The narrative encourages readers to self-reflect as they explore their own memory using the camera and short film format as an engaging tool for research and knowledge production.

About the Author

Tanja Sakota is an artistic researcher, writer, filmmaker and Associate Professor at the School of Arts, Film and Television Department, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Keywords: memory studies; visual culture; memory; autoethnography; architecture; heritage; monument; memorial; pedagogy; interrogating the past; memorialising; curriculum (or pedagogy); decolonising the curriculum; film workshops; short filmmaking facilitation

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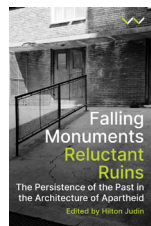
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