

## ETERNITY IS NOW

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*This essay was inspired by the art of the Ukrainian contemporary artist Denys Struk and literary works of the Ukrainian Professor of Literature and poet Mrs. Iryna Starovoyt*

### ETERNITY as

Eternity is forever. But what does it mean? In the West, everything is measured by the clock; whereas in the East, everything is measured by events. Therefore, Eastern memory is more aligned with storytelling and Western memory is more aligned with the chronology. In the Western world, eternity often referred to the future, and in the Eastern world eternity embraces the past, the present and the future as a whole. Our memory defines not only our history but also our future.

But what is memory?

### MEMORY as

Human memory differs from computer memory. Computer memory is static, solid record of certain events. It is like a photograph or video recording that can be retrieved at any time and played back. Human memory is completely different. According to cognitive psychologist, Elizabeth Loftus, human memory is liquid, and it constantly rewrites itself. It cannot be played back to recreate certain events as they have happened. The events of the past are constantly altered and modified by the events of the present and, in their essence, could be compared to the *palimpsest*.

### PALIMPSEST as

And what is *palimpsest*? *Palimpsest* is a permanently rewritten book (story), where the remnants of an erased writings are still visible. How does it work? In ancient times religious texts and history books were written on parchments made of lamb, calf or goat skin. The media was expensive and not readily available, so the parchment was re-used by washing off the previous writing with milk or oat bran. The construction and deconstruction of texts and images were done hundreds of times. To the astonishment of subsequent generations, the writings of the past would not be lost, but would reappear again on the same parchment. They would blend between themselves in the intricate kaleidoscope of characters and events.

### HYPertext as

The scientists, and among them the famous French theorist Gerard Genette, had named the original text in a *palimpsest* the *undertext* or *hypotext*. And the text written on top of the *undertext* was called the *hypertext*. For example, James Joyce's 'Ulysses' could be regarded as one of the many *hypertexts* deriving from Homer's 'Odyssey'. Hypertextuality refers to any relationship uniting a text B (*hypertext*) to an earlier text A (*hypotext*) upon which it is grafted in a manner that is unknown. So, the *hypertext* derives from the *hypotext* through a process which Genette calls transformation, in which the text B "evokes" the text A without necessarily mentoring it directly.

The *hypertext* was not necessarily a logical, rational continuation of the *hypotext*. Surprisingly, it was often a modified version of events of the original text; sometimes completely denying them or changing their sequences dramatically. The human memory follows the same path. It derives from a certain *hypotext*, but does not reference it directly. It rather transforms it into something new. Thus, we always have a new perspective on the past, and this perspective is never static. This is what we know about the curious nature of human memory.

#### GENOME as

The human genome is a type of *palimpsest* of our collective memories. The genome of modern humans is defined as a record of the journeys and successes of the generations that came before. A genome is a code that holds a record of tribal, familial, cultural, and territorial memories. It is not static and is constantly being erased and rewritten. In the course of rewriting, the original undertext is not lost but transcended with new information. Furthermore, the human genome is not uniform. Except for identical twins, no two humans on Earth are the same. Every genome is a type of singularity. This singularity, however, is not a type of a pure identity, which the French curator Nicolas Bourriaud refers to in his article for the 16th Istanbul Biennial: 'The Seventh Continent: Theses Upon Art in the Age of Global Warming', but rather it is a collection of common cultural memories diffused in the myriads of singular experiences.

#### ART as

If we look at art as a creative expression of singular experience, we can compare its nature to the *hypertext* of a *palimpsest*. *Hypertext* in art, never stands alone; the attentive viewer can always trace the hundreds and thousands of *hypotexts* written and rewritten underneath it. Art is a *palimpsest*. Another thing to acknowledge is that it is not always possible to read a text; some are written in different languages, sometimes in extinct languages and cultural codes. To understand them we should be curious enough to learn about them. I do not think that the world has suddenly become uniform, and therefore art has become uniform - I think that humans have lost curiosity towards the differences, partially because with the rise of global communications the differences became so overwhelmingly evident that it became difficult to maintain old prejudices about certain cultures. The *palimpsest* has to be rewritten once again, but before that can be achieved, the old *hypotext* has to be erased. The destruction of the *hypotext* is always accompanied by conflict. However, such fear of conflict is ungrounded, because within the *palimpsest*, as in human memory, nothing is lost or forgotten. Everything exists in the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present and future, regarded as a whole.

#### ISTANBUL ARTIST RESIDENCY as

Istanbul Artist Residency 2020 is calling for artists from different parts of the world to rewrite their own cultural and genetic *palimpsest*. As the *hypertext* will be written, we would like the artists to reflect on the following three questions:

What do you think you have lost? (*hypotext*)

What do you think you have found? (*hypertext*)

What is in the essence of the conflict between what you have erased from your experience and what you have written on top of it? (transformation)

The residency is site specific. Istanbul is the megapolis uniting Europe and Asia. One part of Istanbul is called the European side and another part is called the Asian side. Istanbul is also one of the oldest cities in the world with one of the wealthiest and most curious examples of the layering of different, sometimes conflicting cultures, writing common history. The Hagia Sofia of Istanbul is a rare place that displays Christian and Muslim religions united under one dome. It is also important that Istanbul, historically, unites the West with the East. The history of Western and Eastern Roman Empires is an example. How have cultures influenced each other? What has been lost and what has been found? All can be found here.

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