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A legendary work available for the first time in its entirety in book form

MEMORY
BERNADETTE MAYER

PUB DATE: MAY 25, 2020 | $45 | HB | 7x10 | 336 pages | over 1100 color illustr.
poetry / photography / memoir | ISBN: 978-1-938221-25-5 | **ADVANCES AVAILABLE NOW**

In July 1971, Bernadette Mayer embarked on an experiment: For one month she shot a roll of 35mm film each day and kept a journal. The result was a conceptual work that investigates the nature of memory, its surfaces, textures and material. ***Memory* is both monumental in scope** (over 1100 photographs, two hundred pages of text and six hours of audio recording) **and a groundbreaking work by a poet who is widely regarded as one of the most innovative experimental writers of her generation.** Presaging Mayer's durational and constraint-based diaristic works of poetry, it also evinces her extraordinary—and often unheralded—contribution to conceptual art.

Mayer has called *Memory* "an emotional science project," but it is far from confessional. Rather, this boldly experimental record follows the poet's eye as she traverses early morning into night, as quotidian minutiae metamorphose into the lyrical, as her stream of consciousness becomes incantatory. The space of memory in Mayer's work is hyper-precise but also evanescent and expansive. In both text and image, Mayer constructs the mercurial, fleeting consciousness of the present moment from which memory is—as she says—"always there, to be entered, like the world of dreams or an ongoing TV show."

This publication brings together the full sequence of images and text for the first time in book form, making space for a work that has been legendary but mostly invisible. Originally exhibited in 1972 by pioneering gallerist Holly Solomon, it was not shown again in its entirety until 2016 at the Poetry Foundation in Chicago and then again in 2017 in New York City at the CANADA Gallery. The text was published without the photographs in 1975 by North Atlantic Books in an edition that has long been out of print. This edition was made from scans of the original slides that are housed at the Bernadette Mayer Papers, Special Collections & Archives, at the University of California, San Diego.

A prescient, ambitious work, *Memory* speaks profoundly to our current drive, as a society, to relentlessly record and share our daily lives, the self, and inner psyche, to attempt to fix the temporal, to capture the present before it passes. Yet in *Memory*, as Mayer seeks to notate "everything"—giving all details equal import—she also allows the accumulation of "information" to reveal what is intangible, unknowable, elusive, and fleeting.

MORE →

siglio is a small, fiercely independent press driven by its feminist ethos and its commitment to writers and artists who obey no boundaries, pay no fealty to trends and invite readers to see the world anew by reading word and image in provocative, unfamiliar ways. Siglio books are uncagetorizable and uncommon works that live at the intersection of art and literature.

From Bernadette Mayer's introduction to *Memory*

It's astonishing to me that there is so much in Memory, *yet so much is left out: emotions, thoughts, sex, the relationship between poetry and light, storytelling, walking, and voyaging to name a few. I thought by using both sound and image, I could include everything, but so far, that is not so. Then and now, I thought that if there were a computer or device that could record everything you think or see, even for a single day, that would make an interesting piece of language/information, but it seems like we are walking backward since everything that becomes popular is a very small part of the experience of being human, as if it were all too much for us. Yet every enormity gets closer to the middles of the scientific sentences of which* Memory *is a loosening part. As a book, with all the photographs, maybe* Memory *will become the sentence in which science tells us what art is, or the other way around.*

About the original installation

Memory was funded by Holly Solomon to exhibit at her first art space at 98 Greene Street. For the exhibition, Mayer had snapshots made from the slides, which she mounted on boards in the sequence in which they were shot, using handwritten cards to denote each day's sequence. The installation of over 1100 snapshots measured thirty-six feet long and more than four feet high and. A six-hour audio recording in her voice of the entire text also played in the gallery. Reviewing the exhibition in *The Village Voice*, critic A.D. Coleman wrote that *Memory* was an "enormous accumulation of data" that "explores photography not as an art but as a tool which has extended our vision in ways we have yet to comprehend." The installation was remounted at The Poetry Foundation in 2016 (with new prints made from scans of the original slides) and at CANADA Gallery in New York City in 2017 which featured the original 1972 grid of photographs.

About Bernadette Mayer

BERNADETTE MAYER (b. 1945, Brooklyn, NY) is the author of over thirty books including the acclaimed *Midwinter Day* (1982), a book-length poem written during a single day in Lenox, Massachusetts, as well as the *The Desires of Mothers to Please Others in Letters* (1994), *Eating the Colors of a Lineup of Words* (2015), *Sonnets* (2015, 1989), *The Helens of Troy, New York* (2013), *Studying Hunger Journals* (2011), *A Bernadette Mayer Reader* (1992) and most recently *Work and Days* (2016) which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in Poetry. She has been the recipient of numerous other grants and awards, including from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Poetry Society of America, and Creative Capital. Mayer is also known for her teaching and has led classes and workshops in experimental poetry at Naropa University, The New School for Social Research, and The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church. Associated with the New York School as well as the Language poets, she is also recognized in the art world for her collaboration with Vito Acconci as editors of the influential mimeographed magazine *0 TO 9*.

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Also this spring from Siglio

The Saddest Thing Is That I Have Had to Use Words: A Madeline Gins Reader, edited by Lucy Ives

This revelatory anthology, edited and with an introduction by the writer and critic Lucy Ives, brings never-before-published poems and essays together with a complete facsimile reproduction of Gins's 1969 masterpiece, *WORD RAIN*, along with substantial excerpts from her two later books. Long out of print or unpublished, Gins's poems and prose form a powerful corpus of experimental literature, one which is sure to upend existing narratives of American poetics at the close of the twentieth century.

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