# Experiment 1: CORE

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I. **Current thesis concept**

Lossy Light Memories is about bringing back those emotional elements characteristic of analog photography such as surprise, value, magic and intimacy which have been lost during the transition to the digital photographic medium. The chosen form is a digital device split in two halves intimately linked together though displaced in both time and space. The first half will just capture and remotely store a visual memory, while the second half will be able to make it emerge from the oblivion lighting it up to be enjoyed.

| *Two halves displaced in time and space* | To evoke → | *Magic + Surprise* |
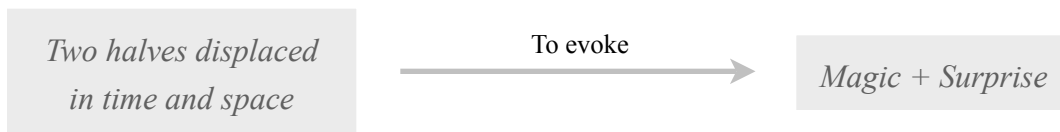
Until the two halves are physically separated, some constrains will limit both the capture and playback processes, while when the two halves will be finally reunited all the constrains will cease for a limited amount of time in order to let the two users freely evoke their shared memories.

| *Two halves physically joined together* | To foster → | *Intimacy of sharing* |
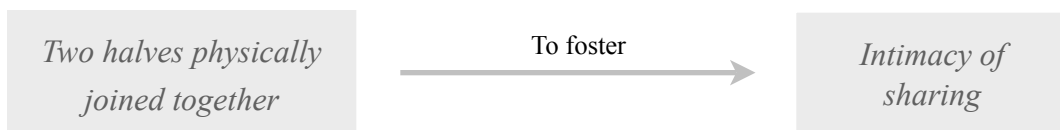
The visual memory itself will be an artifact similar to a photograph, it will live as light on a physical medium but won't be a print, it will seem to be still while instead will move over time. In reality it will be a high speed high resolution short video, played back in a specific way exploiting both its spatial and temporal qualities. Two immediate effects will be those of adding a sense of motion and the enhancement of the curiosity a single shot will be able to excite, as each visual memory will have much more moving details than a still photograph.

	To stimulate	
Video as photograph	⟶	*Curiosity*
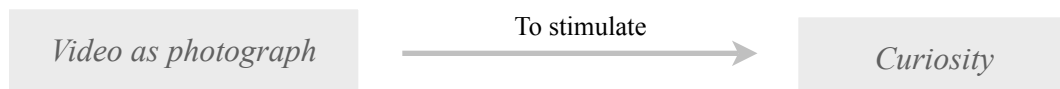
Constrains will be present both in the process of capturing a visual memory and in that of showing it back. For example the capturer won't be able to record memories sequentially, one immediately after another, but some time will pass in between each capture in order to limit the their potential over flood and their consequent devaluation; each capture will be very precious. From the receiver side, the visual memories won't be always accessible as programs on televisions, but they will require certain environmental conditions (silence, darkness) to be met and an active commitment from the person who wishes to enjoy them (holding the interface with the hands, keeping it close), thus adding value to each single memory evoked.

	To boost	
Capture and playback constrains	⟶	*Value - inflation + commitment*
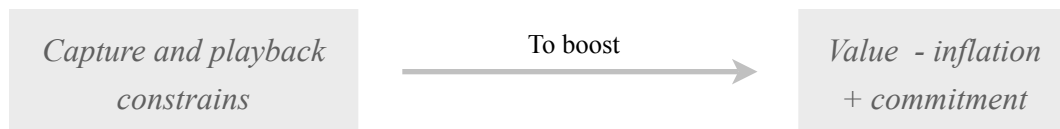
The look and feel of the interface will be almost "magical" to encourage a suspension of disbelief to let the users focus on the experience itself and not on the actual technology that make it happen. The final goal will be the restoration and enhancement of digital visual memories emotional value, ultimately suggesting a different perspective over the relationship towards digital consumer tools, not in the direction production, guided by the elements of speed, quality and conveniency but in that of humanity grounded on surprise, emotion and meaningfulness.

II. **Experiment/research objective**

The core experiment I've chosen will focus on two aspects of the prototyping process specifically those of ideal role and look and feel in the form of a video user scenario. The goal I'm trying to achieve through this experiment is that of the exploration and visualization of what for now in my mind is the ideal form that synthesizes both from a conceptual and interaction perspective all the core elements of the project, completely discarding the implementation side of it as it would be just a burden and useless limit at this stage.

III. **Design questions**

What is your current macro design question? A macro design question expresses your overarching design goal, what it is that you want to discover with your thesis.

As I've already specified at the end of the first part of this paper my overall ideal goal would be designing a digital tool able to restore and enhance the emotional value of digital visual memories, ultimately suggesting a different perspective over the relationship towards digital consumer tools, not in the direction production, guided by the elements of speed, quality and conveniency but in that of humanity grounded on surprise, emotion and meaningfulness.

What are specific working design questions you are attempting to answer by conducting this experiment?

The concept I've in my mind is clear, motivated, strong, beautiful and useful, but I want to see it ideally implemented in a complete user scenario to have a glimpse of its true potential, possible flaws or new working perspectives.

There are many other strict design question I pose periodically to myself regarding this project such as:

How the capture/reception flow of interactions will work? Which kind of metaphores and imaginaria I'm going to reference in order to create them. How the constrain system will work on them. Do I want a conscious capture mechanism or not? If not how to select relevant memories? What would I lose what would I gain from this?

How visual memories will physically present themselves to the receiver?

What are the most common scenarios of usage of the tool? Two persons emotionally linked which live far away from each other? How the memory sent to the other person will be precious if the other person is far away and not present in the memories? How to define preciousness in this scenario.

Another scenario may be two emotionally linked persons living close to each other, this scenario is less problematic on one side as probably the other person will be part of many memories, but the value of them may be diminished as they will be fully accessed from both the users more frequently.

A third scenario may even be a single person who wants to use this as a personal visual diary. This scenario seems to be the most satisfactory one as the two parts overlaps in one.

What if a person wants to direct a memory to more than one receivers? Do I want this?

The ideal form for the encoder, receiver would be a symmetrical object which evokes its unity when the two halves of it are apart from each other and suggest a way to physically reunite them once the two users meet again. Right now I'm fascinated by the idea of using a stone or wood block as receiver and a sheet of paper as receiver. Their union symbolizes the writing, the oldest and most fundamental way to fixate in time memories and visual memories thus it is resonating with my concept, but I wonder if it will be technically feasible to achieve.

Are the people I'm going to direct this project to aware of the loss has taken place from analog to digital photography? Are they feeling it? I have some past experiences about it confirming my vision, but probably a survey might help me to find new perspectives on this.

Who are the giants I can refer to regarding this project?

IV. Experiment/research description

The nature of this first core experiment is a video user scenario which can be found at

I created a simple cardboard physical prototype to simulate the actual form factor of the device and I digitally enhanced it using a laptop computer programmed with a custom made java application. These are the steps I took in order to complete this first prototyping phase:
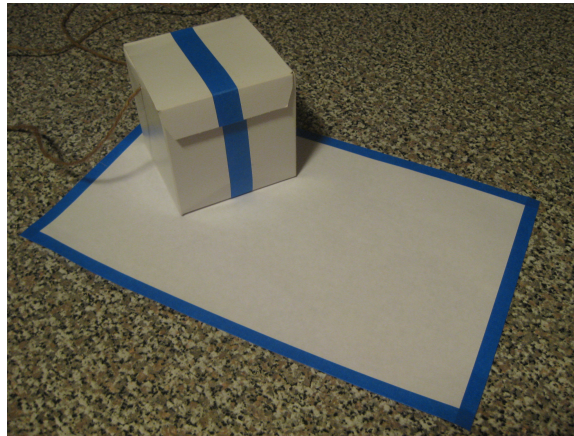

Instruments used to build the receiver and the encoder

The encoder
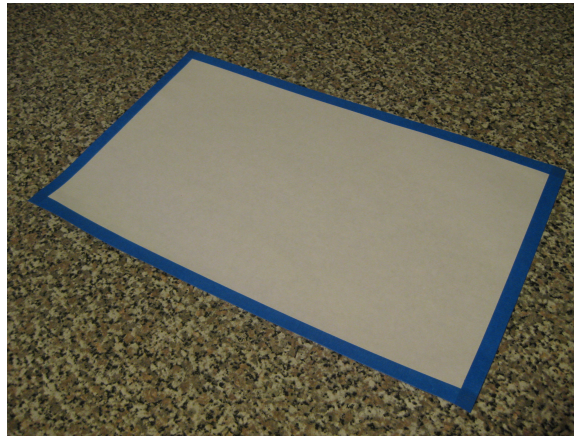
The receiver

The encoder and the receiver

For the encoder I chose a box shape as it had almost the ideal right form factor I'm envisioning and it incorporates a type of interaction which fits my current idea which is that of opening and closing a box in order to record a visual memory, without any way to rationally compose the shot, living the moment instead of building it.

The receiver was a simple piece of paper, with a blue stroke running around to visually match its half, the encoder. The paper immediately suggest a pattern of interactions that I consider important to the function the receiver should fulfill. The user will be able to touch it, feel it in its hands, move it, rotate it, watch the visual memories emerging from it.

This physical prototype was used to simulate an ideal user interaction, documented in a video form. The video illustrates an ideal setting for the experiment, that of two persons in love, who don't live together, and meet one afternoon to spend some time together in a park. The boy has the encoder with him and is capturing some moments of their romantic meeting with it. When the afternoon is over the couple split. Later at night the girl is almost falling asleep when she notice the receiver glowing in the dark. She approaches it and touches it and as soon as her finger touch its surface, a visual memory emerges from the darkness and she enjoys it, and after that another one and another one. The girl is very touched by them as they represent very precious moments that she can see breathing again in front of her eyes. They are not staged or rationally composed, but they are genuine and natural, carrying a strong emotional value. After some time the visual memories fade away leaving the receiver glowing less and less brightly. The girl goes to bed happy to have witnessed again in such a special way the moments passed with her beloved one.

VI. Results & Conclusion

This experiment was extremely valuable as it offered me the possibility to see a glimpse of the possibilities of the device I have in my mind, and I loved them. It is really a powerful hybrid of photography and moving pictures, taking from both of them some very powerful elements, without exploiting them so much to fall in their realm, becoming either a photograph or a video; the visual memory is not a photo neither a video, but is the two of them recombined together in a new form.

The results were of qualitative nature as they were mostly emotions and they confirmed my core perspective over digital photography. Mimicking the traditional analog cameras faster, better and more conveniently hasn't enriched and fully exploited the possibilities of the digital medium; other more interesting and human compelling ways exist get the best out of it.

The visual memories captured and later retrieved generated immediate surprise and attention in the user who tried this first prototype. The interface itself was perceived as strange, original and almost magical. The moving quality of the visual memories was appreciated as it enabled the user to explore each capture spatially and temporally, giving her more time to appreciate tiny details that boosted the emotions those visual memories were carrying.

The interaction pattern were a bit confusing, more work must be done in the look and feel, refining the way the usage metaphors I've chosen are implemented.

A need for a name has emerged, how to call the interface? how to call the experience? how to call the two halves of the device, why? Which kind of imaginarium I'm extracting this concepts from? (Ancient Greece mythology can be a powerful source).

VII. Next steps

The next experiment I'm planning to take is that of trying to explore the technical possibilities available to actually create the Lossy Light Memories device. Once found these information build the simplest and cheapest setup to prototype all the parameters and interactions that were taken for granted during the first core experiment.