



“Your highness, this science will increase the intelligence of the people of Egypt and improve their memories. For this invention is a potion for memory and intelligence.” With these words the god Theuth presented to King Thamus his discovery: writing. The Egyptian king, however, argued the utility that the deity granted it: “Theuth, my master of arts, this invention will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it. They will not need to exercise their memories, calling things to mind no longer from within themselves by their own unaided powers.”

As in the story of Theuth and Thamus, Montjuïc discovered writing with the 1929 International Exhibition. A diorama of the Altamira cave paintings exhibited at the Palau Nacional marked the time when the mountain began to develop as “center of intelligence accumulation”. Since then, its grounds have been chiseled to allow the spread of museums, miniatures, monuments, panoramas and archives until it has become a kind of contemporary *ars memoriae*, a system developed to generate historical discourses that work at different levels and help the recollection of certain events.

Antonio Gagliano gets involved with the facts that have made possible the emergence of this storytelling technology. The facts—the historical events—and the myths—the narrative structures that we need for their understanding—undergo several stages of exchange with his proposal. Indeed, the Altamira example appears split between its condition of Spanish mythical past and of universal visual culture, and its infrastructural condition for the understanding of a given historical moment. The exchange occurs to such an extent that, according to Gagliano, the diorama that held the myth of Altamira at the International Exhibition, which is stored today at the Archaeological Museum, has doubled the mythical condition of the cave since it would also take on the

beginning of the historiographical development of the mountain.

Reviewing Altamira is part of the first chapter of the **script (1)** where the nervous system of the exhibition can be found, the textual fabric from which the research unfolds. The first chapter serves also as base for the **monumentalized fragments (2)** that start to spread the stories around the space. They link with the **galaxy transferred to the artificial line (3)**, a visual atlas distributed on the walls of the gallery and constructed from documents that the artist has mimetically copied through drawing.

Researching the production technology of historical discourse is essentially institutional and based on following the history of formations that have become conventional. However, the reproduction of the documents that this system has generated allows the artist to produce new relations between historical facts, as well as experiment with those ways of organizing information that overwhelm the mainstreamed stories sanctioned by historiography. When Gagliano runs a check on the infrastructures, the narrative logics and the contents that make up their networks and proceeds to establish new connections and exchanges at a worldwide scale, the memories packed inside Montjuïc’s institutions start to disseminate.

Among the news he has gathered, there is a certain penchant for accidents and the crippled—Montjuïc as a perfectly synchronized mnemonic system was laid out, for the first time, in the mind of Puig i Cadafalch before he was fired from the management of the International Exhibition. Similarly, in the story of Jorge Luis Borges, the fulfillment of a reliable system of memory in Ireneo Funes’ mind would not have been possible without fracturing his spine in a fall from a horse. In fact, after the accident, Ireneo lost his capacity to forget, his mind became something he described as “a dump”, something that, eventually, stopped his ability to think: “To think is to forget a difference, to generalize, to abstract.”

At the end of the Seventeenth Century, Johannes Buno invented a method to construct mnemonic images, a kind of calligrams whereby a description of historical events ends up producing monstrous figures. Montjuïc can also be understood as one of those monsters. In any case, as Funes shows, the fulfillment of an *ars memoriae* leads to disaster. This is why Gagliano’s exercise of imploding the

