Memorization and Text

Evan Daniel
@ **evandaniel.com**

2014-2016

Abstract

Experiments in which I memorize verbal text and programmatic text.

The cardinal numbers are arbitrary symbols; the symbol 7 has nothing to do with ·····. In that sense at the very least, reciting numbers is reciting text. But textual content is broader than just the cardinal numbers.

In a 48" × 32" painting from 2014, I recreated a news photograph of the immediate aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown [Figure 1]. Then I used the painting to practice memorizing the text of the Wikipedia article on the shooting. This act was intended to draw attention to the continued cycle of outrage and apathy at each successive murder.

Text can also have an imperative function. To examine this, I wrote a program that created a single static grayscale image [Figure 2]. The image was designed to be intentional and rhythmic, but also relatively simple to create in a sequence of commands.

I then memorized the text [Figure 4] for the program and drew the output from memory [Figure 3]. In a sense, the act of memorizing the instructions and then executing them is akin to the act of compiling and executing a program.

As a simpler variation on the same theme I memorized 8-bit grayscale values of a 4-px × 8px image [Figure 5]. This might be thought of as similar to the work done by a monitor.

Figure 1: *The Shooting of Michael Brown*; 56”×40”.

Figure 2: A programmatically generated source image for a compiled drawing.

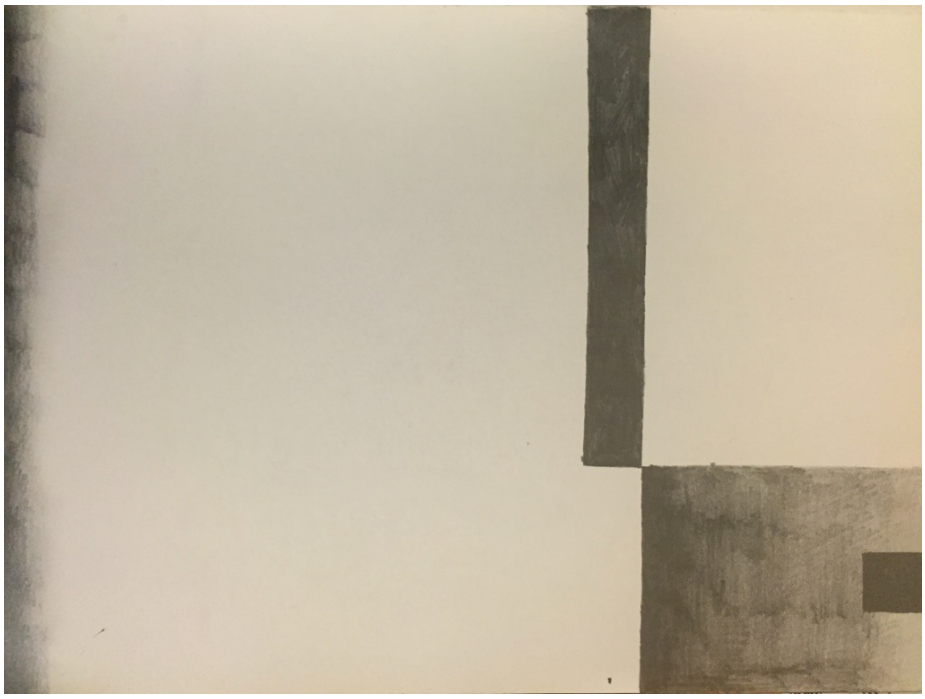

Figure 3: A pencil and paper reproduction of a compiled drawing.

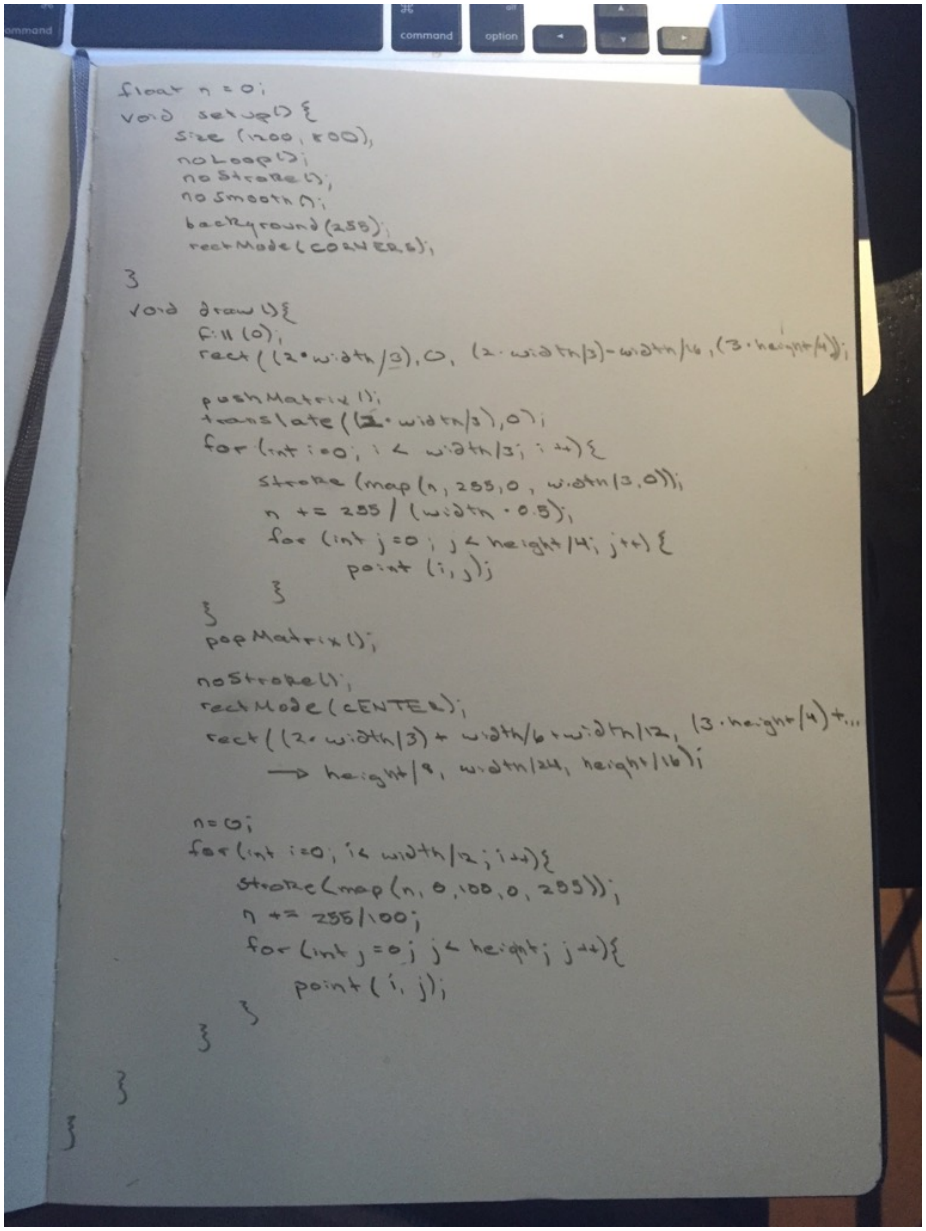

Figure 4: Memorized text of the program for a compiled drawing.

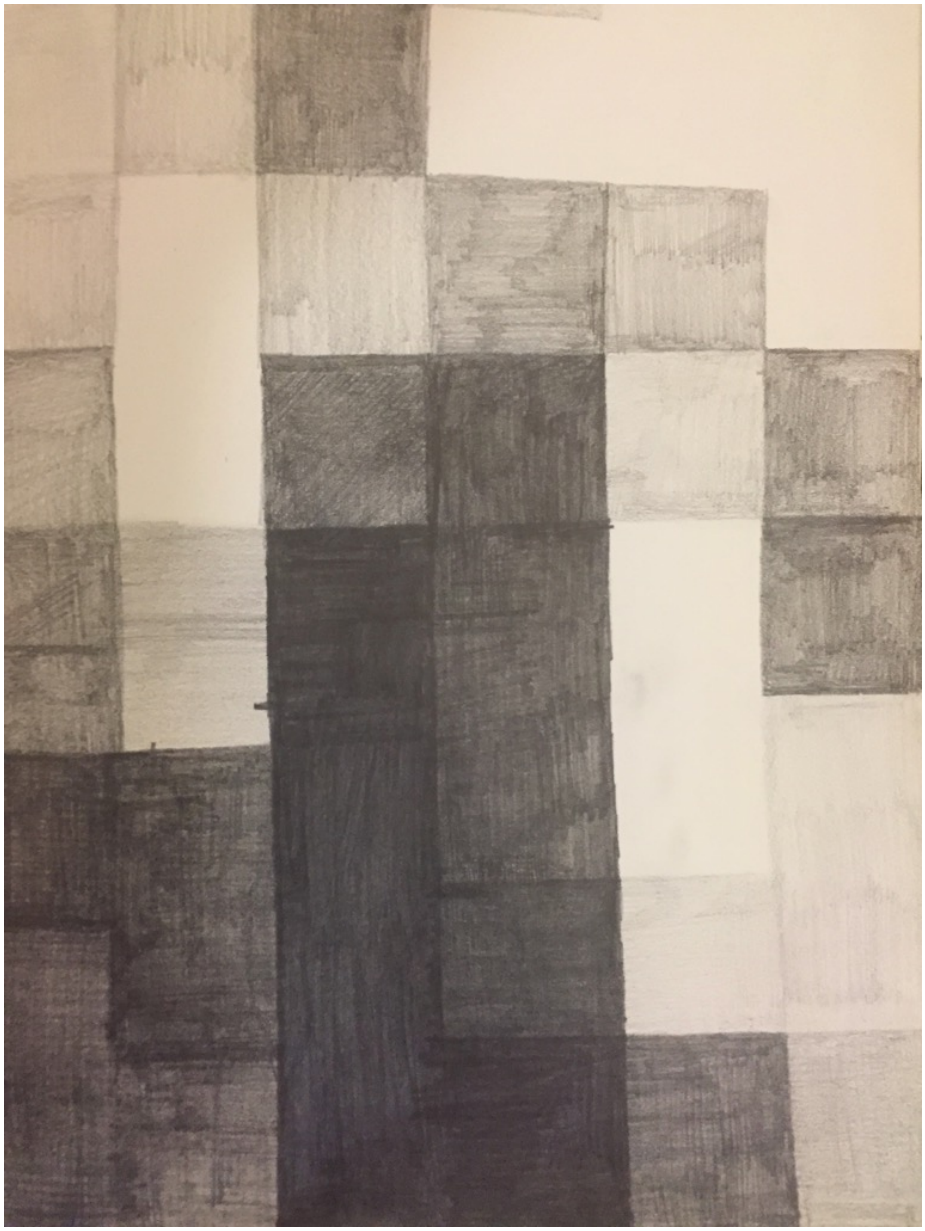

Figure 5: Memorized pixel data.