

MNEMOSCOPIO and rs548049170_1_69869_TT (The Other Shapes of Me)

Media and memory are two terms that mutually resonate. If media preserves memory by default, storing information in some standardised format, memory requires a medium of some kind in order to be retrieved at will. Emilio Vavarella is an artist who researches the relationship between the two, and in particular how old and new technologies retain information, and how we delude ourselves about the intact preservation of this information. During the summer of 2020, he installed two works in Gagliano del Capo, a small town in the South-East of Italy, belonging to an area that Romans defined as one of their 'finis terrae' (end of the earth).

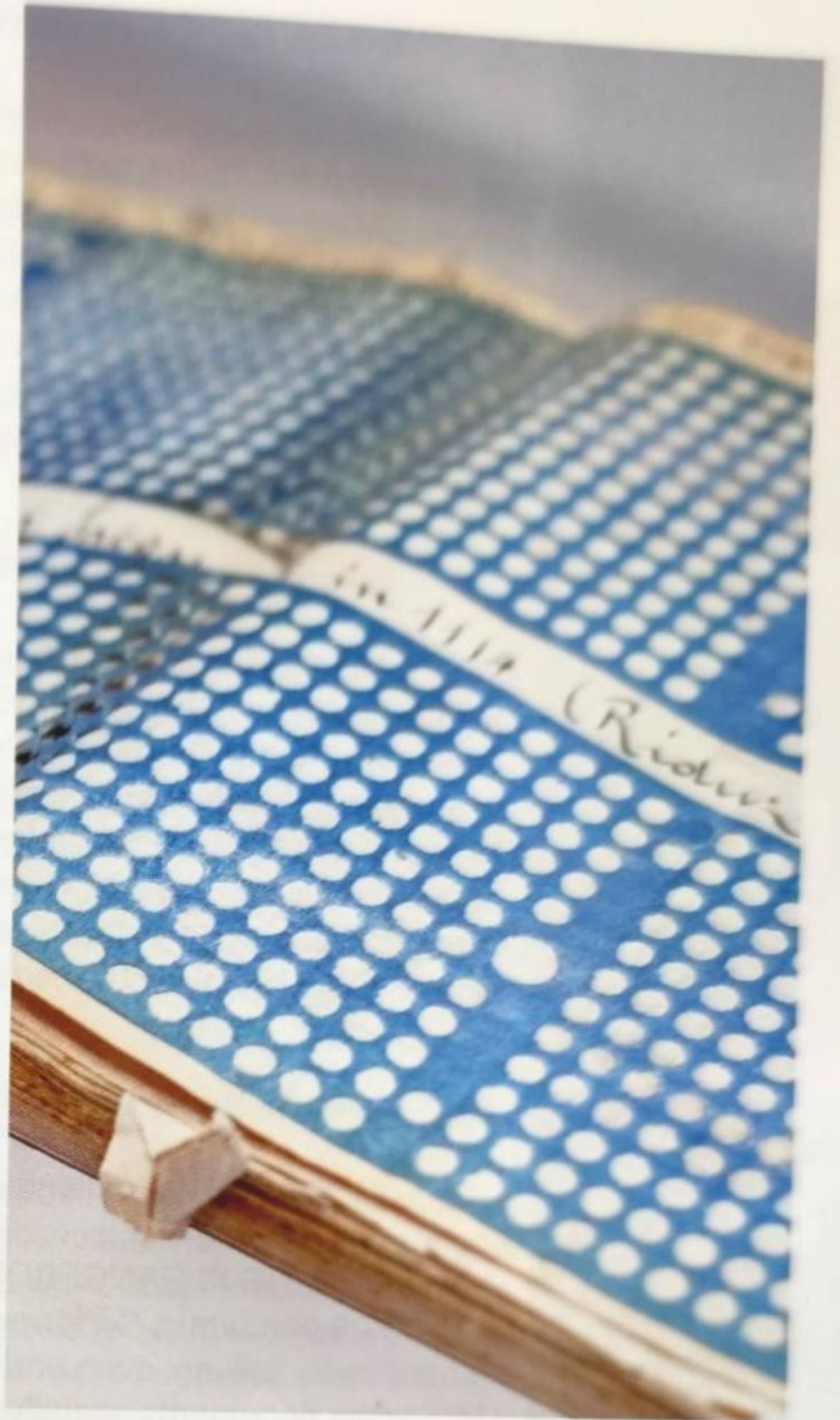
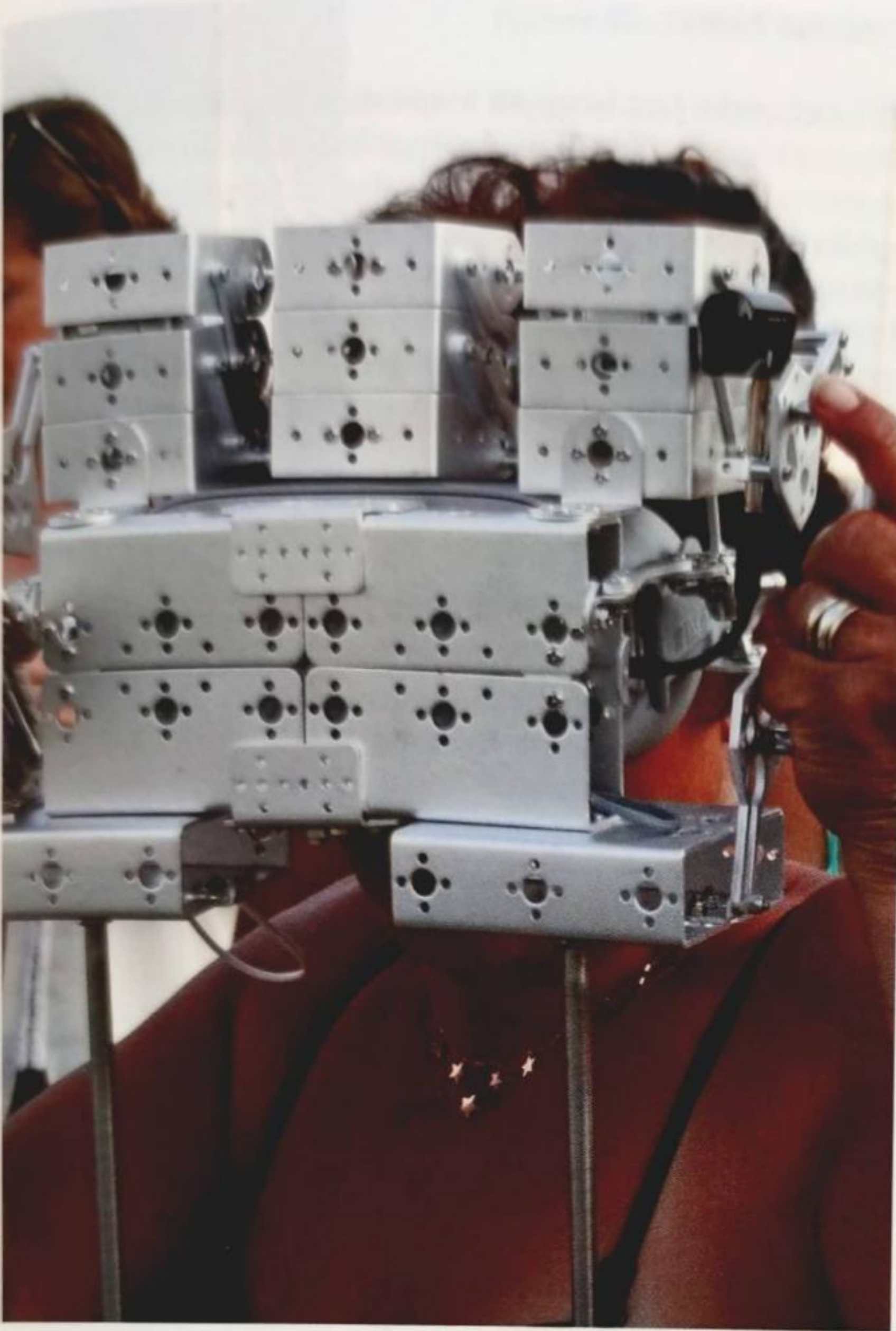
The works were part of an interesting exhibiting system, both site-specific and connecting different entities. MNEMOSCOPIO can be considered to be the last work in a series of original technical structures which Vavarella devised to represent the memory-influenced representation of reality. Among these are "The Sicilian Family", featuring photographs of his Sicilian relatives glitched through the insertion of their stories as text in the jpg code; "MEMORY-SCAPES", which transforms audio recordings of architectural memories into data that affect the three-dimensional representation of Venice; "MNEMODRONE", which shares memories with a drone, developing a 'personality' through their

collection; and "MNEMOGRAFO", a system that checks online to see if there is a new mention of the disastrous 1976 earthquake in Friuli (Italy). If found, it causes a pen to write on a strip of paper (like a conceptual DIY seismograph), causing a little brass bell to tinkle.

MNEMOSCOPIO was instead constituted by an aesthetically futuristic machine, an "experimental XR (Cross Reality) headset", which could be used on a small pier. With this headset the visible physical reality was overlapped with a three-dimensional map, generated after interviews with local residents who moved abroad but ultimately decided to settle back in the same area. Their ephemeral contextual memories can be listened to while experiencing this 'augmentation' of reality. Installed and available during the crowded summer season, it looked like an alien technology, allowing attendees of various kinds (including various bathers) to change their surrounding referential coordinates, joining an anonymous and invisible local community with its shared life memories.

"rs548049170_1_69869_TT (The Other Shapes of Me)" was curated and produced by Ramdom organisation and hosted in a gallery space nearby. The work consists of different elements: a Jacquard loom, a video documenting

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the production process of a fabric, and the fabric itself. The latter reveals Vavarella's genetic code element by element (the title is actually its first line), woven through the 19th century Jacquard loom (the first machine to use binary logic) operated by the artist's mother. The tapestry produced visualises the artist's genetic code. Here the 'revealing' of a hidden structure is an artistic strategy. In the exhibited space, a series of historical elements, including books, old portfolios, notebooks, and schemes, which can be considered as old 'software' for the machine, were introductions to the main elements. With the support of several institutional partners, the artwork will be exhibited and finally acquired by the MAMbo modern art museum in Bologna.

Furthermore, as part of the program, Random also provided an on-site guided tour of the Tessitura Giaquinto, the old family-based textile factory located just steps away from the gallery. They imparted a detailed explanation of the machines' logic and production, including mentions of how the artists' attempt to stress the material limits of technologies led him to push the jacquard loom to the limits of its possibilities, something that the factory never before attempted. Finally, a catalogue has been produced with visual documentation, and fifteen theoretical texts to contextualise

the work, providing the perspectives of art, science, philosophy, history of technology and media theory. Among the contributors are Sabine Himmelsbach, Davide Quadrio, Eugene Thacker, Stephen Monteiro and George Church. These works blend computational and intimately emotional elements. In the artists' poetics, the relationship between memory and its distortion produced by technology is collectively elaborated. He provides sophisticated and unconventional tools to trigger the touching and ephemeral elements that bind together a small community (a family or a town's emigrants). The other side of these works is the identity component, which manifests itself through universal codes: the DNA, the space, the weaving techniques, for example. Here the computational dimension enters the equation, providing the tools to manifest these codes as a process with recognisable outcomes as the scientific essence of a person on a tapestry or the juxtaposed spaces and voices on a landscape. The intimate becomes public in a process of mutual acknowledgement. ALESSANDRO LUDOVICO