THE MATERIALITY OF THE ARCHIVE

CREATIVE PRACTICE IN CONTEXT

Edited by
Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell

The Materiality of the Archive

The Materiality of the Archive is the first volume to bring together a range of methodological approaches to the materiality of archives, as a framework for their engagement, analysis and interpretation.

Focusing on the archives of creative practices, the book reaches between and across existing bodies of knowledge in this field, including material culture, art history and literary studies, unified by an interest in archives as material deposits and aggregations, in both analogue and digital forms, as well as the material encounter. Connecting a breadth of disciplinary interests in the archive with expanding discourses in materiality, contributors address the potential of a material engagement to animate archival content. Analysing the systems, processes and actions that constitute the shapes, forms and structures in which individual archival objects accumulate, and the underpinnings which may hold them in place as an archival body, the book considers ways in which the inexorable move to the digital affects traditional theories of the physical archival object. It also considers how stewardship practices such as description and meta-data creation can accommodate these changes.

The Materiality of the Archive unifies theory and practice and brings together professional and academic perspectives. The book is essential reading for academics, researchers and postgraduate students working in the fields of archive studies, museology, art history and material culture.

Sue Breakell is Archive Director and Principal Research Fellow at the University of Brighton Design Archives, UK. She was formerly head of Tate Archive, London and War Artists Archivist/Museum Archivist at IWM London. Her research bridges critical archive studies, twentieth-century art and design history and material culture.

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Routledge Studies in Archives
Series Editor: James Lowry

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Contributors

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Peter Lester is an archivist and researcher. He completed an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Midlands3Cities funded PhD at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. The research explores the exhibition and display of archives and encounters with archival material, and wider

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Tate Exchange was founded in 2016 and works with the public to explore what happens when art and society meet. Working on a yearly themed programme of events, Tate Exchange is led by Cara Courage.

Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum (2018–2021) was a Tate research project that sought to interrogate forms of art and art making that challenge the practices and definitions of the museum and its collections. Information about the project and the team can be found here: www.tate.org.uk/research/reshaping-the-collectible

Series introduction

Routledge Studies in Archives publishes new research in archival studies. Recognising the imperative for archival work in support of memory, identity construction, social justice, accountability, legal rights and historical understanding, the series extends the disciplinary boundaries of archival studies. The works in this series illustrate how archival studies intersects with the concerns and methods of, and is increasingly intellectually in conversation with, other fields.

Bringing together scholarship from diverse academic and cultural traditions and presenting the work of emerging and established scholars side by side, the series promotes the exploration of the intellectual history of archival science, the internationalisation of archival discourse and the building of new archival theory. It sees the archival in personal, economic and political activity, historically and digitally situated cultures, subcultures and movements, technical and socio-technical systems, technological and infrastructural developments and in many other places.

Archival studies brings an historical perspective and unique expertise in records creation, management and sustainability to questions, problems and data challenges that lie at the heart of our knowledge about and ability to tackle some of the most difficult dilemmas facing the world today, such as climate change, mass migration, and disinformation. *Routledge Studies in Archives* is a platform for this work.

Series Editor: James Lowry

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Materiality as connective tissue

Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell

The origins of this volume lie in a symposium in September 2016, a collaboration between the University of Brighton Design Archives, who hosted the event, and the then ARLIS (Art Libraries Society) Committee for Art and Design Archives (CADA), who organised its content, and of which both this volume's editors were then members. The event was part of a strand of programming developing inter-disciplinary exchange and reflection on archival practices in visual arts contexts. Its call for papers was driven by extensive recent attention to materiality across a range of disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, art history, literary studies and material culture, and a recognition that, as yet, archival theory and practice had given limited consideration to materiality as a distinct approach. We wanted to reach across and between these various bodies of knowledge, considering materiality as a framework for analysing, interpreting and engaging with archives of art and design. What research, we wondered, might we find that considered archives through a lens of materiality in other disciplines? What might the particular perspective of the archive and the archivist contribute to existing scholarship, and how might connecting such work with critical archive studies be mutually enriching?

The event attracted speakers from a broad range not only of approaches to materiality, but also of understandings of the archive: in some cases broadly coterminous with the notion of the *collection*, in others denoting those parts of collections which are not on display and therefore unseen, or elsewhere associated with the non-specialist digital process of *archiving* or putting out of current use. From the co-editors' perspective as practising archivists as well as researchers it was clear that, while there was wide-ranging interest in the theme, a publication proposal required greater focus in its framing of the *archive*. We conceived a publication that would clarify and refine ideas of materiality starting from a practitioner's definition of the archive: 'materials that have been created by individuals, groups or organisations during the course of their life or work and deemed to be worth keeping permanently for the purposes of research and as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator'.[1] From such a definition we hoped to push boundaries of archival materiality more usefully than by assembling too many disparate notions of the archive with their associated conceptual slippages. A starting point for this volume, then, is the distinctiveness of the archive in its disciplinary

and epistemological history, and in its materials and its inherent organic structures. Here we follow the framing of critical archival studies as 'using archival studies to disrupt the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the humanities' (Caswell, Punzalan & Sangwand 2017).

In parallel with the archival and material turns in the humanities, interest in the archive as subject as well as source (Stoler 2009) has expanded exponentially in recent decades, with a particular mobilisation of the archive identified in contemporary art and curating (for useful surveys of these literatures, see Bruchet 2019 and Callahan 2022). Yet within this phenomenon, limited attention was paid to the theories that underpin archival studies as a discipline and a practice, an imbalance that began to be redressed by archivists (Breakell 2008, Vaknin et al. 2013). By its focus on the archive, this volume seeks to contribute to such a rebalancing and to map a developing shared terrain. Bridging the gap between archival and non-archival bodies of knowledge, the collection places the archive, through a series of grounded case studies, at the heart of the enquiry. It brings together a range of innovative methodological approaches to the materiality of archives, as a framework for their engagement, analysis and interpretation. Its focus on archives of creative practices, including fine art, design, craft, film, performance and literature, reaches between and across existing bodies of knowledge, unified by an interest in archives as material deposits and aggregations, in both analogue and digital forms, as well as in the material encounter.

This introduction cannot claim to offer a comprehensive history of materiality: its purpose is rather to note some points of connection and commonality across associated disciplines, which generate productive interactions and intersections. It highlights a set of themes and ideas which underpin this volume, primarily from the sibling pairings of archives/conservation studies and material culture/design history. Responses to the elusive physical qualities of objects, as seen in material culture and other disciplines, do not have such rich equivalents in archives, despite the distinctive 'allure' (Farge 2015) ascribed to the archive, that very particular pleasure of the archive which is, in fact, founded in the material encounter. Broadly speaking, archival thinking has tended to focus on function and meaning, and the conservation approach on physical properties, or discussions of material literacy on the encounter with an individual document (Rekrut 2006).

Ideas of materiality have received considerable creative and critical attention in the visual arts over recent years (Lange Berndt 2015), but questions of materiality in particular relation to the *archive* of creative practice – residues of the creative process, or the social documentation that surrounds it – have, until recently, received less consideration. A wider exchange of ideas between archives and art has been deeply enriching (Stuckey et al. 2013, Breakell 2015, Bruchet 2019, Callahan 2022) and a conduit into the wider archive literatures. Indeed, this field has benefited materially from a shared concern with materials and media which is not always seen in other areas of archival practice, as it follows its descriptive practices for drawings in archives, from those of the museum art object, and considers the archival nature of performance relics. Archives of creative practice have made

a particular contribution to expanding notions of the archive through the blurring of boundaries between archives and the art objects that may accompany them, challenging what we might call the paper-based assumptions of the archive.

Scholars within and outside the discipline of archive studies have noted a tendency for archives to be disregarded materially, too easily dismissed as primarily supporting documentation for other kinds of material culture (Dever 2013, 176; Hugh Taylor quoted in Rekrut 2006, 35). Conservation science is a corollary discipline from whose material lens archives may benefit: trained as both conservator and archivist, Ala Rekrut's perspective naturally tends to the material qualities of records, and to notice that 'where text is present, the rest of the physical record is usually marginalised' (Rekrut 2006, 35). A growing body of literature indicates how technological innovations in conservation science make possible new historical research drawing on otherwise inaccessible knowledge held in the material of documents: patterns of handling different pages of manuscript volumes bear witness to the fear of bubonic plague (Rudy 2010), while biocodicology (analysis at a molecular level) uses DNA, microbial and protein analysis 'to enrich understandings of … objects and the people who use them' (Brown 2021). Such projects embody the potential of material analyses to open up sources of information for cultures and communities whose histories we can't access in other ways; new narratives that can mobilise marginalised voices, unacknowledged in the written record, thereby making visible 'previously unnoticed … participants' (Gansky 2013, 134). Other archival scholars have explored archival materialities beyond the document and modes of articulation which link to affect studies (Lee 2021; Cifor & Gilliland 2016) for new forms of archival knowledge. It is important to acknowledge the significance of contributions made by scholars whose work combines both academic and practice-based engagement, such as photographic historian and curator Elizabeth Edwards on the materiality of photographs (2004, 2009).

Such immaterial properties of the material archive are paper's 'emergent capacities–what it can *do*' (Dever 2014, 290) and can only be understood through handling the paper and the experience of 'being-in-the-archive' (ibid, 285). Of course, the experience of material encounters is no longer the only way to access the information held in archives, as the proliferation of digital surrogates attests. Pierre Nora famously declared that 'modern memory is archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace' (Nora 1989, 13): yet such reliance is both transformed and obfuscated by the emergence of digital technologies. Scholars have highlighted that discussions of materiality in archives emerge from a binary of digital/analogue (Dever & Morra 2014), mirroring a similar tension in contemporary art between materiality and immateriality 'its perceived opposite' (Callahan). Burton argues that the digital gives the material 'a new kind of sacral character' (Burton 2005, 5), while Callahan suggests that the archive's critical role in contemporary art in recent decades is attributable to its analogue properties such as 'material authenticity', as artists turn away from the ubiquity of the digital in daily life. While acknowledging these tensions, this volume's concerns are weighted towards the analogue, while others attend to digital materialities (Goudarouli & Prescott forthcoming).

The relationship between archives and material culture is most often seen in a distinction between the document and the object, which we seek at once to confirm and to avoid. While there are many discussions of the definitions of object and document in the literature, their commonly understood definitions indicate of object – 'a material thing that can be seen and touched' (Oxford Languages) – highlights its haptic or perceptual qualities, while that of the document – 'a piece of written, printed or electronic matter that provides information or evidence that serves as an official record' – focuses on its evidential or informational qualities; but both definitions may apply to both nouns, in terms of what each can convey. Material culture has often focussed on ways that objects embody and convey meaning through their use-value, seeing textual documents as merely *conveying* meaning (Hannan & Longair 2017), though there are material histories of typewriting (Acland 2006). The literature on object-based materiality has begun to permeate archival literature, but in general, there has been less traffic in the opposite direction, despite the proximity of their concerns with material remains and their informational content. This may be due to the richness of material culture's own literature, and the different yet parallel disciplinary histories. Archival materiality has the potential to bridge this gap. Through a material culture lens, it may seem self-evident that archives are a form of material culture. Here, we seek to enrich and nuance such a framing, by foregrounding the particular materialities of the archive, treating material culture and archival studies on more equal terms and beginning to map the territory at their intersection. Both, in Hans Schouwenburg's words, 'Focus on *stuff*', and documents meet Schlereth's definition of stuff as

> objects made or modified by humans, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, reflect[ing] the belief patterns of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased or used them, and by extension the belief patterns of the larger society of which they are a part?
>
> (Schlereth, cited in Schouewenberg 2015)

Arjun Appadurai's work on objects as commodities focussed on the *thingness* of objects, suggesting that 'their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and circulations that enliven things' (Appadurai 1986); the role of things in human relationships was further explored by anthropologist Daniel Miller, for example (Miller 2010). By these definitions, documents, too, are things, mobile through time, whose stories are understood through their cultural biographies (Kopytoff 1986). Archives and objects reflect the dynamic interaction of people, things and, even, natural forces. Design history has similar concerns, though differently articulated and oriented: Judy Attfield 'locates design within a social context as a meaningful part of people's lives [which] means integrating objects and practices within a culture of everyday life where things don't always do as they are told nor go according to plan' (Attfield 2000, 5). We might also add the document to Attfield's integration, to consider the behaviour of archival documents

in the different social contexts where they have agency: contexts of creation and of re-use, both by their creators and by subsequent readers and users.

Space does not permit a full account of the complex relationships between text/word/document and functions/things/object, or the many ideas from material culture which might be enriched by the inclusion of archives: the contents of this volume offer lead to further ideas and sources. For historians, the object-based approach offered by material culture, through the material turn, opened up new forms of knowledge as alternatives to the traditional textual sources, based on the distinction between object and document, drawing from object-based disciplines such as archaeology and anthropology which work with few textual sources; for some, objects offered richer and more inclusive forms of embodied knowledge (Glassie 1999). Others reject any distinction between supposedly active objects and more critically distant documents (Harvey 2017, 7); for Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry, 'written sources represent simply another, albeit distinctive, form of material culture rather than a revolutionary change in the human past' (Harvey 2017, 7). There is continuity across the work that objects and documents are doing, in recording, witnessing or expressing. Documents and archival records have an object life as well as a text life; they interact just as objects do: they have social agency and voice, beyond the mere embodiment of their texts into voice. Catherine Richardson points to a circularity in the way that documents and objects enrich each other: text sources in the writing of material culture history show 'how language conjures things into being', evoking the material objects they describe, such as the material goods listed in inventories, which testify to status in life and death. For her, reading archival sources is 'a performance of objects in itself … a reanimation of the relationship between language, materiality and the imagination' (Richardson 2021). If objects may be read both *through* (Richardson) and *as* texts (Tilley 2002; Glassie 1999), we may usefully complete the circle and read documents not simply as sources for understanding objects, but as objects themselves, both individually and in their sets and aggregations. As Tilley writes:

> Neither language or the production, reception and use of material forms can be claimed to have any ontological primacy. As differing modes of communication the linguistic forms of words and the material forms of artefacts play complementary roles in social life. What links together language use and the use of things is that both arise as products of an embodied human mind.
>
> (Tilley 2002, 24)

In short, there is a shared interest in texts in context, with people – actors – always central to the equation.

Broadly speaking, then, a distinction between the material potential of documents and objects is unhelpful. We locate this volume in this area of potential connectivity between the text-based ontology of the archive and the object-based ontology of material culture, and in the overlapping area between archive studies, materiality and creative practice. In doing so, we seek to let go of conventional

distinctions, to focus rather on connectivity and to accelerate exchange. We frame the archive, not as a site for evidence to support or refute an externally generated proposition, but as an affective encounter that, through a phenomenological engagement, generates propositions through the material encounter. If the archive is a means of approaching the creative practitioner who generated it, as many writers in this volume agree, such an approach is made not just through the documents/objects that provide evidence of the lives that produced them, but through the embodied material representation of the subjects themselves. As such, the volume considers archives not as 'mere things in themselves' but for 'their complex role in the relationship between objects and subjects' (Attfield 2000), or, in a phrase familiar to scholars of both material culture and archive studies, texts in context.

Materiality is a connective tissue not only between disciplines but also across a range of creative practices, and their complex materialities and immaterialities. The performance of materiality witnessed in this volume takes a broad view of the archive's agency. By implication also in the material archive are the immaterialities, those things which do not have a material presence, but which can be felt, inferred or performed *from* the archive, through its 'leaky economies of generative and persistent acts in time' (Clarke et al. 2018, 11). Given the vast reach of such connectivity, the volume can but indicate the richness and range of material-based methodologies. It presents a varied yet coherent range of perspectives, rooted in case studies which frame the archive as a real place as well as a theoretical construct. Further, its focus on archives of creative practice heightens a particular emphasis on the generative possibilities of the archive foregrounding the fluidity, blurred boundaries and expanded notions of the archive, that are characteristic of creative practices.

Petra Lange-Berndt proposed 'a methodology of material complicity', asking what it means 'to give agency to the material, to follow the material and to *act* with the material' (Lange-Berndt 2015, 13). Materiality offers a means of engaging with the archive differently, beyond convention – Elodie Roy here suggests that 'materiality prompts us to touch and not to read'. The volume moves out into a range of innovations and expansions, stretching the work that the archive is doing, critically and practically, to support 'multiple and provisional interpretations' (Pringle et al. 2022, 1). Harvey notes a distinction between two historical positions in the material turn: materiality, and materials as distinct areas of thought. Both are represented in this volume, as we put the material archive to all kinds of work and 'mattering' (Cranfield, this volume). Articulating its interdisciplinary frame in four sections, moving outwards from the archive itself, yet always held in relation to the archive, its structure is a 'diagram of active forces' (Yaneva 2020), part of an anthropology of the archive.

Part I begins our journey, as might be imagined from this introduction, '**In the archive: practices and encounters**'. In the opening chapter, archivist and architectural historian **Alexandrina Buchanan** primes us for the following chapters with a detailed account of materiality in the historiography of the archive profession and the discipline of archive studies. She argues that certain material considerations – integral to contemporary discussions of materiality – have always been

central to the discipline, and to the broader realm and approaches – the 'craft knowledge' – of the archivist and conservator, but that its presence has been implicit, latent, taken for granted, undervalued or directed to other ends. From here, archivist and researcher **Sue Breakell** considers the materiality of the fonds, or individual archive collection, often only experienced through the privileged access enjoyed by the archivist, as itself a primary unity of production with a distinct material presence and identity. She explores the triangulated relationship that develops through this encounter, involving the 'viewer-participant', the archive and its creator, a version of whose presence is materialised by the archive. She uses material culture scholar Jules David Prown's functional approach to object analysis as a means of analysing the tacit knowledge generated through this encounter. Curator and researcher **Liz Bruchet** presents a careful close analysis of the multi-layered materialities of a volume generated in the course of earlier phases of history-making in the archive of the Slade School of Art at University College London. Applying biographical and ethnographic approaches to both the archival object and its creator, the artist and educator Stephen Chaplin, she explores his complex positionality and his relationship with both the material object and the institution whose story he tells through it, all unfolded from this single volume. Finally in this section, photographic archivist and historian **Costanza Caraffa** identifies a range of 'cutting practices' in and on the institutional photographic archive, in this case specifically on the large aggregations of photographs created for documentary and comparative purposes in disciplines such as art history and archaeology, such as the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max Planck Institut, of which Caraffa is Director. She discusses how these practices 'materially transform' the archive, reflect and record changing values ascribed to the photographs, individually and collectively, and shape our encounter with, and understanding of, these photographic documents, which are 'produced by the technologies of the archive and … [its] actors'.

Part II, **With the archive: energy**, brings together a number of evocations of vital forces at play in material encounters with the archive, reminding us of Jane Bennett's notion of 'vibrant materiality' (2010). First, literary scholar **Maryanne Dever** presents a close and nuanced reading of a patchwork jacket, made for poet Valentine Ackland by her lover Sylvia Townsend Warner, held, along with Ackland and Warner's joint paper archives at Dorset Museum, UK. Asking 'what happens when traces of bodies collide with more conventional knowledge', Dever's careful analysis of the multiple material and immaterial traces and references held in the jacket, specifically in an archival context, suggests ways to bring out new understandings from its material forms and their extrapolation into its making, wearing and wider social contexts of fashion and modernism, as well as the intimate spaces of domestic life. Picking up on similar themes, archivist and researcher **Peter Lester** presents the archive as a process of making: not a fixed object but a 'working tool' which records an evolutionary process. Encouraging us to work *with* not *from* the archive, he reflects on material culture scholar Tim Ingold's notion of meshwork, the entanglements emanating from individuals during the course of

their life, and from the objects and documents that they create or engage with. Applying these ideas to the archive of the playwright David Campton, Lester 'follows the contours of the archive' to demonstrate the function of materiality as an indexical relationship between writer and reader. The two remaining chapters in this section address forces of waste and decay in the archive. **Lisa Cianci** brings her distinctive perspective as artist, archivist, digital media developer and educator, to a consideration of the 'inevitable entropic tendencies' of the archive. She uses three case studies of artists whose practices apply energy to resist entropy and to sustain the content and materials of the archive. Here, creative energy continually regenerates spaces, relics and records of artistic practice; brings out 'dark and hidden stories' from Australia's colonial archive; and, through 'anarchival practices', breaks down the original meanings and narratives of the archive. This section concludes with media and material culture theorist **Elodie Roy's** lyrical consideration of materiality as a form of 'surplus meaning' offered by the inherently 'dying footage' of the film archive. Framing the archive as a 'waste-site', where time is at work in a natural process of erasure, Roy proposes this as a 'laboratory of decay', where decay radiates an energy that is its own 'haunted dimension', and offers rich yet elusive new understandings of what film seeks to present, when seen through the archive's 'grain, surface noise and asperities'. In this way, materiality makes us more aware of layers of temporality embodied in the process of decay.

Part III, themed **About the archive: technologies,** unites a diverse set of chapters about the material/immaterial underpinnings of the archive. It begins with literary scholar **Sarah Cain**'s analysis of the filing system in both analogue and digital forms. Cain charts its historical development across the administrative settings of the office, the archive, and later the home, the duality of the acts of storing and retrieving marking 'the moments of transition and transformation, when writing both disappears into, and appears out of, the object-world of the material archive'. What, Cain asks, does this mean for the labour of writing, the labour of filing and retrieving and the labour-to-come out of the archive? The analogue and digital imaginaries of the filing system are seen on screen – including in the visual filing graphics of the computer, where 'skeuomorphic' design emulates the aesthetics of physical files in the digital space, cementing the imagistic overlap in the way we imagine the storage of digital information as like our experience of the material archive, so that the physical and digital management of the archive develops as 'two interconnecting fantasies'. Crossing Cain's bridge to the digital, we are next reminded by **Wolfgang Ernst** of a very different kind of material framing of archival data. In view of the complexities of the material-immaterial nexus, Ernst focuses on the technological archive, reminding us that with digital records 'media-archaeology still matters'. Where the analogue record is stored as a static object, the record in its digital form, 'a matrix of "bits"', is configured through modes of fluidity and latency, but, Ernst argues, this does not mean that digitisation is synonymous with dematerialisation. Instead, the digital record is a composite, whose elements encompass both the material and the immaterial, the hardware and the software: 'the techno-archive's "two bodies"'. How then are we

to understand the operation of memory within this distribution? As Ernst points out, in cyberspace 'the archival rule that only what has been substantially fixed can endure and be located does not count any more'. **Amanda Egbe** considers the connected technologies of paper and moving image, with a specific focus on the process and outcomes of reproducing and duplicating film, addressing a criticism of media archaeology that it fetishises technology or 'at the least relegates human agency'. Through an analysis of the interweaving of technology, paper and culture in a 'new mapping' of the history of film, Egbe identifies where the material and immaterial traces of the subject appear. Finally in this section, conservator and researcher **Athanasios Velios** contributes an important perspective too often under-represented in discussions of materiality: how the knowledge produced by conservators and their practices might be reflected in the archive catalogue. Outlining the limitations of current archival software tools for capturing materiality, he discusses the potential of the CIDOC (International Committee for Documentation) Conceptual Reference Model (CRM), an ontological model created for cultural reference organisations, to rectify this, and encourages new, materially focussed descriptive practice. The model is a response to some of the challenges raised by Ala Rekrut to make materiality visible, and 'to balance the current bias towards *content* [as opposed to material, my italics] description'.

Part IV **Beyond the archives: expanding the frame** concludes the volume by reaching outwards beyond the conventional boundaries and emplacements of the archive, reflecting contemporary concerns about what materials and materialities are accepted into the archive, whose stories are told there, and to whom they belong in material form. These chapters show how expansions of the concept of what, and where, the archive is, can not only bring new forms of knowledge into play but also more voices in its ownership and formulation: what it is allowed to say. They consider what constitutes the archive at this moment in time: what we need it to be doing, and for whom. **James Lowry and Forget Chaterere-Zambuko's** photo essay draws on their *Lost Unities* exhibition in the online Museum of British Colonialism, to foreground material aspects of the so-called Migrated Archives, displaced archives taken from 37 former British colonies as they became independent, which were only acknowledged to exist by the British Government in 2010. Now held at the UK National Archives, in which context they 'confirm a colonial fantasy', physical and catalogue access to the records is limited, especially for those in whose countries they originated. The essay and the exhibition highlight the significance of space and place as physical manifestations of power through archives, through a material response to their physical expatriation, de- and re-contextualisation, a distance which the supposed potential of digital surrogacy serves only to increase. These displaced archives are, as the authors show, 'a symbol of the unfinished business of decolonisation'. Next, curator **Claire Smith** takes us through the complex materialities of the quilt as not only a 'textile document' but also a 'record system for largely anonymised and hidden histories'. Among the multiple layers of transactions held in the quilt are the paper templates of the piecing technique, which repurpose other paper forms, themselves bearing

fragments of text, 'papery transactions that move beyond reading'. Like Dever, Smith connects the roots of textile and text, and their figurative as well as their constructive applications, testament to 'a shared drive between textile, text and paper towards a consistent narrative'. Drawing on Agamben and Husser's work on gesture, and Lepicki's ideas of the archival nature of the body, **Ben Cranfield** uses an analysis of performance work by Trajal Harrell to present the archival fragment as both evidence and persistent materiality. He proposes that all archival fragments can be framed as gestures, performative pieces of 'radical materiality' which create new possibilities as a form of queer archive or 'queer (dis)order'. In this way, gesture is a 'material support' in the re-imagining of the present. The volume closes with a collaborative chapter, with archivist and researcher **Sarah Haylett** as lead author, in which a project team captures moments from their own real-world considerations of archives and material manifestations of socially engaged art practice. The team brings together the Tate research project 'Reshaping the collectible: when artworks live in the museum' with Tate Exchange**,** a programming stream exploring what happens 'when art and society meet'. The collaboration offers a participative approach to archive-making, between the museum and its communities, with the opportunity to challenge conventional boundaries between the record, the archive and the artwork and who is authorised to decide. Cara Courage's vision of 'a really beautiful living, breathing, dynamic archive [that] has relevance and use for people' brings together not only the ideas in this final chapter, but the ambitions of all the volume's contributors, 'exploring what our archive may be'.

Note

1   For more on definitions, see Breakell (2008); for an account of the archivist's work on the archive, see McNally (2013); for a practical guide to understanding professional framings of archives as encountered by researchers, see Archives Hub https://archives hub.jisc.ac.uk/guides/whatarearchives/#definition

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Part I

In the archive

Practices and encounters

Chapter 1

'*Material evidences* surviving in the form of writing'

Materiality in archival theory and practice

Alexandrina Buchanan

Introduction

Both within the discipline of archival studies and in research using archives, either as sources or as objects of study, there have been recent calls for a 'material turn' (Cifor 2017; Dever 2013, 2014, 2017, 2019; Lester 2018; Rekrut 2006). Meanwhile, scholars whose work has been characterised as 'new materialist', including Karen Barad and Jane Bennett, have sought to contest a human-centred definition of agency, redefining the interactions between human and non-human matter in ways that have obvious significance for our understanding of the role of archives in events. Whilst these enterprises and their theoretical underpinnings are unprecedented in their emphases, it can be posited that 'thinking through paper' (Dever 2013) is not a wholly original exercise and that the agency of archives has already been recognised within archival theory and practice. In its focus on documents *per se*, rather than as sources for history or other constructive practices, archival studies is – or could be – essentially materially orientated. As Terry Eastwood once suggested,

> Banal as it is to say, the focus of archival studies is the nature of archives, not even the nature of the archivist's duties, for everything flows from an understanding of the nature of the things unto which things are done.
>
> (Eastwood 1988, 245)

Whilst this statement implies the passivity of archival materials, their role as an 'artificial memory' and as 'an actual part of the activities which gave them birth' (Jenkinson 1922, 23 and Jenkinson 1948) potentially situates them as an active agent in events. My argument therefore is that an appreciation of materiality has always been integral to archival discourse, but that this can be hard to trace, for various reasons.

Looking primarily at the UK, my approach in this chapter will be both archaeological in the Foucauldian sense, looking through history to explore operational paradigms and how these tended to occlude discussion of materiality, and assertive, calling upon those within both the academic discipline and the profession of

archives to identify and acknowledge the (often tacit) expertise of their own practices, not simply modelling their theories on those borrowed from other disciplines.

When looking for evidence of attention to archival materiality, I have considered the following aspects: documents' and archives' form, materials, manufacture and meanings(s) (considered in both empirical/formalistic terms and in terms of social and cultural significance); their physical presence and occupation of space; their material temporality – their capacity to transcend their moment of production, which exists alongside their vulnerability, and the bodily materiality of the archivist. I have looked both for discussion of these aspects and associated practices.

Early history

In complex societies throughout history, whilst oral traditions remain vital for cultural transmission, material inscription was considered the most reliable means of authenticating and communicating information across space and time. Materiality and archival creation therefore go hand in hand. Materials which were difficult to obtain or expensive to produce became associated with more prestigious documents and, particularly in pre-literate societies, the material dimensions of documents – their structure, the symbolism of their textuality and physical elements like seals – could be more important in asserting their authority than the textual content (Mauntel 2015). We also see general awareness of the longevity of materials as a consideration for documents intended to be preserved for posterity. In ancient Greece and Rome, archival information deemed important by rulers was published for preservation and wider access by being engraved on stone *stele* or on the walls of public buildings (Delsalle 2017, 18, 26). Although printing on paper transformed the availability of information, Abbot Tritheim (1462–1516) continued to recommend parchment for long-term preservation (Tribble & Trubeck 2003). The choices involved in selecting materials and the understanding required to interpret the significance of documents therefore presuppose considerable material literacy, acquired both by training (learning the rules) and personal experience. As with much cultural knowledge, however, it often remained tacit, only requiring explication to anyone unfamiliar with the issues and codes involved.

The early modern period

The materiality of documents came under scrutiny alongside attempts to understand and explain the materiality of alien recordkeeping systems. Such discussions may have occurred whenever one culture had to engage with another and are particularly a feature of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, resulting from colonialist expansion, renewed interest in the ancient world and attempts to manage the medieval legacy to benefit the new *status quo*. These centuries therefore saw a body of scholarship emerge to meet these challenges, generally characterised as 'antiquarianism' which is where we first find clear evidence of scholarly sensitivity to documentary materiality.

As Arnaldo Momigliano has argued, antiquarianism, although based on earlier materials-based investigations, was first articulated and practised as an approach from the sixteenth century (Momigliano 1966). Antiquarians distinguished themselves from historians by their focus on material objects, offering both a means of authenticating or critiquing literary accounts and a source for periods and places not discussed by Classical authors. Moreover, just as modern concern with materiality has emerged alongside the digital turn, so its early modern counterpart emerged alongside the rise of new techniques of print and engraving (Boehm & Mills 2017). In both, the developments have been symbiotic: through the wide circulation, systematisation, recontextualisation and discussion of textual and visual representations of objects (including textual objects), the absences from such renditions become more evident, and object-orientated scholarship can emerge.

Developed as a branch of antiquarianism, a new methodology termed 'diplomatic[s]' was likewise concerned with using the past's material traces as an alternative source of evidence, for legal as much as historical purposes. Diplomatic method examines the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of a document, the latter defined as 'those which constitute the material make-up of the document and its external appearance' (Duranti 1998, 134). In the first volume of *De Re Diplomatica*, which first codified diplomatic methods (Mabillon 1681; McDonald 1979), Dom Jean Mabillon studied the materials from which documents were made, while the fourth book, by Michael Germain, looked at the places where documents were created. The materiality of individual documents was an essential element, with close attention being paid to documentary media, seals, styles of handwriting and so on. Although diplomatic was not synonymous with archival literature (Friedrich 2018, 65), the two were clearly allied and modern archival scholars have identified diplomatic scholarship as a point of origin for archival theory (Duranti 1998; Williams 2005), building material analysis into the field from the outset.

Although antiquarianism established a set of tools and a rationale for studying materiality, to detractors, its focus on the material traces of the past could be seen as a distraction, sometimes even an obsession. Antiquaries were decried for their love of the rust and dust of Antiquity, the mouldering materiality of manuscripts, the dirt of potshards and tarnished medals. Francis Bacon expressed disdain for its methods: in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), he defines antiquarianism as 'Historie defaced, or some remnants of History, which haue casually escaped the shipwreck of time', and which are brought forth

> when industrious persons by an exact and scrupulous diligence and obseruation, out of Monume*n*ts, Names, Wordes, Prouerbes, Traditions, Priuate Recordes, and Euidences, Fragments of stories, Passages of Bookes, that concerne not storie, and the like, doe saue and recouer somewhat from the deluge of time.
>
> (Bacon 2000, 65–66)

Here the focus on the material (monuments, private records and evidences) is subsumed within a list of topics whose significance, rather than their physicality, was

problematised and contrasted negatively with the interests of the historian proper. Francis Grose, himself an antiquary, noted that it had

> long been the fashion to laugh at the study of Antiquities, and to consider it as the idle amusement of a few humdrum plodding fellows, who, wanting genius for nobler studies, busied themselves in heaping up illegible Manuscripts, mutilated Statues, obliterated Coins, and broken pipkins!
>
> (Brown 1980, 11)

Through such definitions and defamations, the antiquary was typified as a figure of fun, in contrast to the lofty-minded historian. It is therefore not surprising that antiquaries prioritised the historical and societal value of their research rather than its material aspects, which were mentioned only insofar as they had to be for methodological purposes. Thus, although antiquarianism provided opportunities for discussion of materiality, this aspect was rarely given the attention it could have merited.

Archival practice in the antiquarian era

Alongside the development of diplomatic, the emergence of the military/fiscal and colonialist State involved the creation and management of both legacy documents from the medieval past and growing numbers of new records produced by increasingly impersonal and bureaucratic styles of government, where rulers had to impose their will remotely or through delegates. Administrators within this system had to manage the associated archives, and manuals began to be published to help them to do so (Delsalle 2017), sometimes described as the first guides to archival practice.

Within this genre, the materiality of documents is given due prominence but is generally presented as a problem to be managed rather than a quality to be investigated or celebrated. Good practice was associated with a visibly well-ordered archive, in appropriately designed cupboards and presses, sorted into groupings for classification and retrieval. Physical order was thus associated with intellectual order, control and power: the archive could only be a useful, operational resource if it could be marshalled. In 1602, Arthur Agard, Deputy Chamberlain of the Exchequer, decided to refile numerous records held in trunks and chests into smaller, more manageable units. He reported that he removed from their chest a motley collection of documents from the reign of Henry III and

> reviewed repaired and sorted [them] and for their better preservasion placed [them] into sundrie little bagges some bagges conteyninge one sheire and some moe: And those put into three great bagges noted wth A: B: & C … and also upon a labell fastened to the same bagge is expressed by shire.
>
> (Popper 2010, 260; Yax 1998)

Many such pouches survive in The National Archives (Wolfe & Stallybrass 2018).

Nevertheless, with centuries-worth of disorganised records to bring under control, the physical effort was considerable and rarely pleasant for members of a class unused to manual labour. In the associated discourse, there was therefore a conflict between emphasising the recordkeeper's devotion to duty whilst not wanting to admit to the ignoble nature of the efforts required. William Prynne (1600–1669), appointed Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London in 1660, gives a sense both of the experiential quality of the physical work entailed and how he became personally involved only as a last resort:

> I imployed some souldiers and women to remove and cleanse them from their filthynesse; who soon growing weary of this noisome work, left them almost as foul, dusty, nasty, as they found them. Whereupon … I and my clerk … spent many whole dayes in cleansing and sorting them into distinct confused heaps, in order to their future reducement into method; the old clerks of the office being unwilling to touch them for fear of … their cankerous dust and evil scent.
>
> (Delsalle 2017, 134)

It is therefore unsurprising that when promoting the importance of archives, authors emphasised their potency rather than the nature of the work required to achieve this potential (Head 2003; Henny 2018). Nevertheless, the materiality of archives in terms of their need to occupy physical space did lead to the erection of a number of repositories designed to impress and to enhance the status of their owners: the ducal archives of Turin and the archives of the *ancien regime* at Versailles were both constructed in the eighteenth century. The third edition of Mabillon's *De Re Diplomatica*, published in Naples in 1789, depicts the ideal archive repository as an extensive and well-ordered space, in a Classical style, containing documents which would have been visually impressive through their large size and pendent seals. Well-ordered archives became associated with particular materials (such as slate shelves), furniture and spatial configurations, creating a recognisable 'archival aesthetic' since exploited by artists (Spieker 2009). The other sensory qualities of an archive, however, were less amenable to representation. The musty or mouldy smell of a poorly maintained archive could be verbalised (as in the context of a belief that malodorous vapours were injurious to health), but I have yet to find a celebration of the smell and sound of clean paper or well-maintained vellum. Likewise the grime of a dusty archive could be described in terms of its effects on those required to touch it, but there was no differentiation between different types of dirt, nor of the values associated with a clean document, other than a 'fair copy' distinguishing a clearly legible transcript from an original record.

As an ordered archive increasingly became seen as a prerequisite for good governance, so the idea of an 'archivist' as a curator with specialist skills associated with archival management began to emerge. In the years around 1800, university posts and training programmes were founded and their curricula defined the skills

required. Even so, much learning would necessarily be acquired on the job and therefore remains inaccessible outside the master/student relationship. Yet again, it may be assumed that sensitivity to the material qualities of both individual documents and archives as a whole was acquired by archival practitioners in order to enable them to do their job. Nevertheless, these issues were rarely central to any discussion of archives or mentioned only in terms of problems and their mitigation. Archival manuals are therefore again not the place to look for appreciation of archival materiality.

The nineteenth century

The methods of early modern antiquarianism arguably fed into nineteenth-century scholarship and the emergence of archaeology and history as 'academic' disciplines (Momigliano 1966; Sweet 2004). Certainly the documentary emphasis of so-called scientific history as it emerged in nineteenth-century Germany appears to have more in common with antiquarian methods than the narrative-focused and moralising approach of Enlightenment historiography. Just as the new sciences of chemistry and physics were associated with particular locations: the laboratory and the workshop, so academic historians had their associated place of scholarly labour and discovery: the archive. Again, the reciprocal relationship between the development of the archive as a repository for scholarly research, rather than an instrument of bureaucratic governmentality is clear (although in practice the two were never unrelated): without a concept of historical scholarship that relied on access to verifiable archival evidence, the idea of an archive as a public resource would not have emerged, whilst privately owned archives presented a potential obstacle to historical research. Nevertheless, within historical scholarship, archives tended to be relegated to footnotes and their physical aspects, as repositories or as holdings, rendered invisible: redefined as 'sources', secondary to the past they were being exploited to reconstruct. The past as past is necessarily conceptual – as material objects, its remains and traces exist in the present, but foregrounding these exposes the constructed and provisional nature of history, something scientific historians were at pains to disguise.

Within scientific history, the study of diplomatic became relegated to an 'ancillary' study, along with other subjects associated with archives, such as palaeography and sigillography. Derived from '*ancilla*', the Latin for maid, specifically archival methods were thus characterised as feminine, at the same time as archive workers were starting to be considered the 'handmaidens of history' (Lapp 2019). Again, this did not favour detailed discussion of the materiality of documents, even when such knowledge was acknowledged as highly significant. For example, Hubert Hall in his *Studies in English Official Historical Documents* wrote 'in the case of the Record the distinction between a volume and a bundle, a roll and a file, a membrane and a folio, may prove of real importance'; nevertheless the associated chapter dealt largely with discovering sources, whilst his chapters on diplomatic were more concerned with intellectual than physical form (Hall 1908, 77).

It was nevertheless during the nineteenth century that those responsible for the management of archives began more explicitly to articulate concepts that have remained fundamental, albeit endlessly debated, to the arrangement and description of archival materials, that is to say *respect des fonds* and *Provenienprinzip*. Deriving from different national traditions, these were connected by their recognition that archives consist of related items and that individual documents should be understood as part of a body of materials, defined by the relationship to its creating agency. In a paper world, an archive group was thus both an intellectual and, crucially for this argument, a physical entity. To be properly understood, the archive group had to be retained in its entirety and in the same intellectual (often conflated with the physical) order as it had been maintained by its creator. Although these strictures were often articulated in terms derived from the biological sciences (Ilerbaig 2016), it is unlikely that the concepts originated outside archival thought, rather the metaphors were used to explain and justify practices which both systematised the transfer of custody of records from their context of creation and original use into an archival repository and supported the requirements of 'scientific' historians that archives should provide a doorway into the past 'as it actually was' (MacNeil 2008, 13; Posner 2006). These ideas introduced a specifically archival conception of materiality, based on context and connection, rooted (however problematically) in the needs of acquiring, describing and providing access to a physical grouping in a particular repository.

Professionalisation of archive work

The practices of antiquaries and scientific historians had required some level of public access to archives, and repositories were never entirely closed, although admittance often depended on personal networking or payment of fees. Even in the nineteenth century, archives were more often used for administrative than purely historical purposes and repositories such as the French *Archives Nationales* in France and the English Public Record Office were not originally opened with public reading facilities (Delsalle 2017). Their establishment increased awareness of the need for specialist staff including, for the first time, conservation expertise. Nevertheless, much of the associated scholarship was associated more with the burgeoning antiquarian book and print trades than with archives: early essays on paper conservation being found in the second edition of F. Mairet's *Notice sur la Lithographie* (1824) and in Alfred Bonnardot's (1846) *Essai sur la restauration des anciennes estampes et des livres rares*… its second edition of 1858 being translated into English in 1918. An early text in English, first published anonymously in 1909, is explicit in focus: *The book of trade secrets, recipes and instructions for renovating, repairing, improving and preserving old books and prints*, although its author, W. Haslam, whose identity was revealed in the 1923 edition (Haslam, 1923), advertised the book as a means by which the reader could avoid paying a professional bookbinder. To the modern reader, its recommended treatments are a mixture of the horrifying (masking bleaching by holding the document above a

smokey fire) and the terrifying (bringing up faded text using highly toxic ammonium sulphide): preserving the condition of the document as originally encountered was not a high priority.

Nineteenth-century confidence in science offered new problems, diagnoses and solutions (Williams 1970). No sooner were new methods of paper manufacture introduced than their problems began to be identified (Murray 1824; Murray 1829; Grove 1966); in the 1890s, librarians including J.Y.W. MacAlister of the Leeds Library and the Librarian of Congress, John Russell Young (1840–1899) voiced shared concerns about the fragility of modern paper (MacAlister 1898; Norman n.d.). Such awareness depends on a sensitivity to the material qualities of paper: its colour, texture and pliability, but yet again, these are rarely discussed. The Society of Arts established a committee on the Deterioration of Paper which reported in 1898 (Royal Society of Arts 1898), and a Committee on Leather for Bookbinding (founded 1900, report 1905), which recognised the problems of changes in manufacturing methods as well as the lighting and heating of repositories. Michael Faraday, who had started his career as a bookbinder, had noted the detrimental effect of gas lighting on leather bindings as early as 1843 (Caldararo 1987).

The application of scientific techniques to preservation problems was promoted by Cardinal Franz Ehrle (1845–1934), Keeper of the Vatican Library, who was also instrumental in setting up the International Conference of St Gall on the preservation of archival materials in 1898, the first of its kind anywhere (St Gall 1898), predating the first international conference on archives held in Dresden in 1899. The St Gall conference called for a list and photographic record to be made of the world's oldest and most valuable manuscripts and their current condition, and of emerging conservation techniques to review their long-term effects. The emphasis on recording is familiar from the earlier antiquaries and, as previously, prioritised knowledge of an object's existence and visual appearance over other experiential qualities.

The St Gall conference identified that the scientific expertise required for conservation work was not the preserve of archivists and many of the earliest writings on testing of documents' materials were produced by chemists (Cloonan 2010). A few, such as W.H. Langwell's *The Conservation of Books and Documents* (1957), were written for the purposes of archival conservation but most were associated more with forensic science, to test the authenticity of documents for legal purposes. Here the principles were similar to those of traditional diplomatic but the tools were more technical, including cameras, microscopes and chemical tests. The evidentiary potential of documents was scrutinised as never before, with their materiality providing much of the grounds for discussion. Key texts included Albert Sherman Osborn's *Questioned Documents*, first published in 1910 and Julius Grant's *Books and Documents* of 1937. Grant (famous for exposing the so-called Hitler diaries as a forgery in 1984) also wrote on conservation and there was significant crossover between the two fields of endeavour, but apparently little transfer into the more historical side of archival studies.

Despite these early forays into conservation science, in practice much preservation activity remained the responsibility of the archivist. Although Geoffrey

Barraclough, the medieval historian who founded the archives programme at the University of Liverpool, felt it would be 'a sad day if archivists turn into laboratory assistants dressed in white coats and surrounded by glass-stoppered bottles', he nevertheless supplied the Foreword to Langwell's book and noted the need for archival practice to take account of the demands of new materials, the growing bulk of modern records and the interrelationship between archival techniques and the sciences. For his primarily archival readership, Langwell wrote in language suitable for the layperson and advised on procedures to be undertaken by archivists themselves. The majority go far beyond what an archivist today would consider to be their remit and demonstrate how the scope of professional endeavour in relation to the material dimension of documents is mutable. Nevertheless, these more physical interventions are less often discussed in histories of archival practice than the more intellectually orientated activities of appraisal and description.

Other pioneers usually identified as archivists but equally important in conservation included G. Herbert Fowler, the founder of Bedfordshire's archive service. He had originally worked as a zoologist and maintained a keen scientific interest in document repair, with his own conservation workshop in the attic of his house in Aspley Guise. He trained his record clerk and clerk's assistant in repair methods and repairs were undertaken in a small workshop at the Bedfordshire archives 'when other tasks are not too pressing' (Fowler 1923). At the Public Record Office, Charles Hilary Jenkinson took a more managerial role but was extremely important in establishing both the methods used by PRO conservators (who also worked on documents from other repositories with no such facilities) and in giving advice to other services in the UK and internationally. Jenkinson's list of qualities of the professional archivist includes 'more than a little of a Bookbinder and Repairer, with a touch of some of the "allied crafts"' (Jenkinson 1948), because he believed they could not direct craftsmen on the basis of theory alone. Yet again, these more physical interventions are rarely discussed in histories of archival practice, but it is from these men and women that the professional conservator emerged.

The craft basis of conservation practice has long been acknowledged (Wardle 1971, 2; Padfield 1990). Craft has been described as a body of knowledge with a complex variety of values, and this knowledge is expanded and its values demonstrated and tested, not through language but through practice. It makes craft difficult to write or even talk about with clarity and coherence. (Dormer 1997).

Despite the focus on the physical makeup of archives typical of the conservator's approach, therefore, specific discussion of the craft element of conservation and acknowledgement of the material qualities of archives are rarely found in conservation manuals, where their materiality was viewed primarily as a risk, through documents' vulnerability and propensity to decay. Associated recommendations are presented as a 'how to', rather than a 'why', and focus on the chemicals and treatments involved, rather than identifying types of damage, the documentary qualities that should be retained or the resultant changes to a document's materiality after conservation (Johnson 1919; Langwell 1957; Wardle 1971).

Archival studies

By the later twentieth century, the gradual expansion of archive services and archival education programmes produced manuals and textbooks and ongoing debates over the nature of the profession and the content of its education. The need for practical experience, either as a precursor or companion to the more theoretical aspects learned in the classroom, was always deemed essential in the UK archival education system. Despite this dual emphasis, neither the criteria for programme accreditation drawn up by the Archives and Records Association (or the preceding Society of Archivists) nor the subject benchmarks published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education specify elements of what might, by Dormer's definition, be defined as the 'craft' of archival practice. The experienced practitioner gets a 'feel' for the expected condition of collections, their likely use and significant features which can inform their management but which can be difficult to articulate via standardised rules and procedures. As well as the power enacted through archives management, which has often been discussed, there is a creativity involved which is less readily apparent and – in the drive to standardisation – has tended to be overlooked. This is particularly evident in descriptive practice, where no two individual archivists' descriptions of an archive would match, revealing the creativity and crafting involved, even within recognised standards. Nevertheless, in writings about archival education, the craft element has tended to be dismissed as a precursor to professionalisation, as in Roy Schaeffer's (1994) discussion 'From Craft to Profession: The Evolution of Archival Education and Theory in North America'.

It is nonetheless evident that the material dimension of archival work was a draw to many entering the profession. Michael Cook has reflected that 'Many of us were enthralled by the strongly visual and practical aspects of the work' (Cook 2013), whilst J.H. Hodson felt that

> The years immediately after the war were a golden age of collecting, discovering, pioneering, and communication. In sunny search rooms the dusty tang of freshly opened parchment tingled the nostrils of youthful acolytes of a new order, zested by a delicious pot-pourri of newly burgeoning antiquity, purposeful scholarship, educational altruism and sensitive organization.
>
> (Hodson 1972, xiv)

The sensory qualities of archives have rarely been so enthusiastically lauded. Nevertheless, national and international standards created to communicate the existence and significance of archival materials to potential users have offered few opportunities for articulating their material dimensions. Those published since the 1980s tend to be based uncritically on the requirements of the majority user group, which was then historians, who – as we have seen – at that time prioritised informational content over other archival characteristics. Archivists, particularly Jenkinson, had emphasised the importance of documenting treatments which

might affect evidential value (Jenkinson 1922, 78–79, 200; Christopher 1938, 122–123), but this was not required by the international standard for archival description, ISAD(G), although potentially included within the 'Archival history' head (International Council on Archives 2000). ISAD(G) offers little encouragement for recording archival materiality: documentary forms are only one element to be included within 'Scope and content'; the 'System of arrangement' is defined as much in terms of intellectual as physical arrangement and 'Physical characteristics' are defined only as those affecting use. The proposed new standard, RiC, offers more opportunities for physical description information, but without prescriptive guidance, its application will depend on local or individual practice (International Council on Archives 2019).

The establishment of archival studies as a discipline (i.e. a body of knowledge to be learned and standards of excellence agreed by the community) has involved much critical re-reading of the canonical works of archival literature, especially the holy trinity of Muller, Feith and Fruin (2003), C.H. Jenkinson (1922) and T.R. Schellenberg (1956). Nevertheless, this scholarship has been selective, omitting numerous contemporary authors whose significance has therefore been downplayed, discussing only those elements of the original texts that speak – positively or negatively – to modern concerns. For example, it would not be evident from most modern assessments how much of Jenkinson's work relates to the physical as opposed to the moral defence of archives (to use his own terms), emphases also found in contemporary writers such as Charles Johnson (1919), G. Herbert Fowler (1923) and H.G.T. Christopher (1938). Nevertheless, Jenkinson's importance for conservation practice was well recognised by his peers and there are occasional glimpses of his sensitivity to the unique materiality of individual documents, highly influential on practices at the Public Record Office (Cantwell 1991, 388). For example, the British Records Association's Technical Section, which took as its 1949 focus the new technique of lamination, records that Jenkinson's talk: 'strongly deprecated any system that automatically subjected every document to the same treatment without regard to the particular needs of each …' (British Records Association 1950). Jenkinson's *credo* in respect of the importance of documents' original material qualities is also highly evident in the assessments of Continental archival practices made by his disciple, L. Herman Smith, mentioned above. Smith condemned a variety of varnishes for consolidating and protecting documents, used in a number of national state archives because they rendered the paper and parchment crinkly and brittle, whereas the animal size applied to documents at the PRO was not only cheaper and less flammable but also 'restores to the paper the quality which it has lost' (Smith 1938b). In the Algemeen Rijksarchief, in The Hague (the fiefdom of Professor Fruin), he regretted the use of Japanese paper which he found widely commended because its yellowish colour tended to disguise the newness of any repair: 'Here there is a definite and rather deplorable departure from the accepted [i.e. Jenkinsonian] view that manuscript repairs should never be disguised or made so intentionally fine that they are not immediately apparent to the naked eye' (Smith 1938b). However, at the National Library in Vienna,

he approvingly noted that the philosophy for repair of bindings was exactly what was recommended by Jenkinson at the PRO: reusing surviving portions as far as possible and retaining any which cannot be reused; retaining original sewing and reusing sewing holes, and keeping a note on the flyleaf of exactly what has been done in order to distinguish new work from old (Smith 1938a and b). In all these examples, emphasis on preserving as far as possible the existing material qualities of the documents overrides access to the textual content or convenience to researchers or curators and implies sensitivity to the potential significance of archival materiality.

The skilled remedial treatments mentioned above are now carried out by professional conservators, whilst less specialist and more holistic actions are a shared responsibility, undertaken by a conservator or an archivist depending on staffing. This gives archivists an ongoing concern for materiality in a physical as well as an intellectual sense; nevertheless, much recent literature has tended to downplay this aspect of the professional role. In particular, Greene and Meissner's advocacy of 'More Product, Less Process' (MPLP) advocated for minimal processing in order to facilitate access (Greene & Meissner 2005, in the process vilifying what they saw as the fetishisation of physical rearrangement and item-level preservation actions such as the removal of metal fastenings, castigated as 'overzealous housekeeping, writ large' (Greene & Meissner 2005). Once again, we see some archival tasks being demoted via their implicit feminisation and inappropriate prioritisation of the material over the intellectual, the craft over the strategic. Although numerous arguments have been made against MPLP on preservation grounds, I am unaware of any that has justified the retention of archival items in their native state, rusty paperclips, acidic folders and all, in the same terms as maintaining original order: as providing evidence of the physical context of records creation, for the researcher.

Since the early 1990s, post-modern theories have exerted notable influence on archival scholarship but, yet again, their emphases have tended to downplay the significance of materiality. For Foucault, the Archive is a concept or metaphor 'the law of what can be said' (Foucault 1972, 129), not so much an institution with a physical dimension as a practice or set of practices. Meanwhile the structuralist and post-structuralist derivation from linguistics and literary criticism, with its consequential emphasis both on the verbal content of texts and the interpretation of non-textual objects as texts, meant that the ideas of power, of memory and identity central to post-structuralist analysis tended to focus on the construction and use of archives in terms of human roles and relationships, rather than considering the interdependence of the human and the non-human in the form of records. Roland Barthes was undoubtedly sensitive to the materiality of the writing implements he used, and, in his later writings, Derrida identified the material affect of textual objects, describing paper as a medium which 'gets hold of us bodily, and through every sense' (Derrida 2005, 42), whilst later editors of their work have emphasised the materiality of several post-structuralists' work, through exhibition and facsimile publication of their research notes. Nevertheless, the overall impact of

post-modernism on archival studies did not serve to emphasise its material inter-
ests. Instead, archival theorists have tended to focus on aspects of post-modernism
emphasising the truth-claims exerted by archives and the potentially oppressive
power of both records and recordkeepers. Some such powers relate to the materi-
ality of the archive, for example, deciding what to keep can result in other records
being permanently dematerialised, but the driver is intellectual rather than phys-
ical, for example the Code of Ethics of the Archives and Records Association (UK
and Ireland) states that records disposal 'must not be solely driven by resource
limitations', such as lack of space (Archives and Records Association 2020).

Nevertheless it was also among archival theorists most engaged with post-
modern ideas that a concept of the archive as a material entity began to emerge.
In the widely cited volume of essays entitled *Refiguring the Archive*, to which
Derrida contributed, Achille Mbembe identified the status of the archive as being
situated both in its materiality and beyond it, in the stories the archive makes pos-
sible (Mbembe 2002). In particular, an interest – usually originating outside the
discipline of archival studies – in overlooked and/or marginalised stories, speaks
of the lives and experiences of individuals and groups such as women, those iden-
tifying as LGBTQI+ and other oppressed or minority identities, often absent from
traditional histories and with a restricted or misrepresented presence in govern-
mental archives. Such approaches recognise the importance of non-textual objects
within archives, physical traces of lives which might otherwise go undocumented,
whose very presence testifies to a life lived and can provoke a powerfully affective
response (e.g. Cvetkovich 2003; Cifor 2015, 2017; Dever 2010, 2015; Jones 2011;
Mosmann 2016). Such items began to be collected by community and alternative
archives but their value is now widely recognised by more traditional collecting
repositories and boundaries between these types of repository are in many cases
breaking down. Archival studies now endorses personal and community archives
as legitimate entities, worthy of recognition, analysis and promotion, and accepts
that the knowledge of those with personal understanding of the values, including
material values, of their contents needs to be recognised, captured and shared.

Another strand of scholarship within archival studies exhibiting concern with
materiality is archival history – the study of documents from the past and the prac-
tices by which they were created, captured and accessed. Its scholarly methods
are both textual and 'archaeological', the latter forming clear development from
the traditional skills of diplomatic, extended to consider changes to the structure
of the document, relationships between documents and the physical context of the
document in terms of its creation, storage and use. As Wolfe and Stallybrass write
of their evidence:

> When a document was intended to be preserved, whether in a state archive or
> in the muniment room of a country house, this is usually revealed by material
> signs of its attachment to other similar documents (e.g. filing holes, filing folds,
> and endorsements)
>
> (Wolfe & Stallybrass 2018)

Peter Horsman has referred to this approach, of which he was an early exponent, as 'archaeological archivology' (Horsman 1999, 47). Such studies have helped to identify systems of archival creation and management, how and by whom documents could be retrieved. Such studies are emergent however and the detailed research required by physical analysis means that they are at present limited to overviews or individual case studies.

Conclusions

In all too brief detail, this chapter has highlighted a number of areas where the materiality of the archive can be identified as an issue of concern, study or celebration, with the first generally being of the highest priority. For recordkeepers, responsible for preserving archival holdings and making them accessible, the materiality of the archive has understandably been seen largely as a problem to be controlled rather than a quality to be investigated or eulogised. Scholarly users of the archive have tended to settle on archival information, the content of the texts contained within the archive, rather than their individual medium or the physical presence of their collective entity. Indeed, undue attention paid to the physical carriers of information was widely perceived as a distraction from the serious work of the historian, whilst the affective qualities of archives could be dismissed as emotive irrelevancies. The specialist understanding of archival materiality possessed by recordkeeping professionals, both archivists and conservators, is a form of craft knowledge: difficult to convey verbally and therefore hard to uncover using normal textual methods of scholarship. Moreover, for practitioners seeking to establish their professional identity and scholarly credentials, an emphasis on theoretical principles over hands-on and experiential knowledge may have seemed more constructive. Until their re-evaluation by feminist, queer and post-colonial scholars, therefore, the material qualities of archives have remained a largely invisible presence within writings about archival resources and practices. Yet, as I hope to have shown, they have shaped the understanding and treatment of archives by both scholars and curators. To further investigate the history of material awareness, we need more studies of the history of archival practices which draw on the methods of 'archaeological archivology' and further study of the history of archival conservation, whilst to develop it within future professionals we need better integration between practical and theoretical education, hands-on appreciation of documentary materials at both micro and macro levels and greater recognition of materiality in relation to descriptive practices. To foster these, greater recognition of what archival theory and practice both have brought and can bring to the study of materiality is long overdue.

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Chapter 2

'The true object of study'

The material body of the analogue archive

Sue Breakell

Reflecting on time spent with the archive of Beat writer William Burroughs, writer and rare book dealer Ken Lopez wrote:

> As rich as Burroughs' novels are … they pale beside the archive, which is his actual work. As spinoffs or products of that work, the books themselves seem almost desiccated in comparison to the main body of his work–this archive–like tree branches broken off the main, living, growing trunk.
>
> (Lopez 2005)

Foregrounding the very material presence of the archive, his remarks contrast with archival scholar Hugh Taylor's observation that archives and documents tend to be seen as 'providing reliable information in support of other material culture, and [are] therefore materially "invisible"' (Taylor 1995, 9). Lopez's words suggest that the archive is the place where the continuous narrative 'text' of a life, and of a life's work, is represented and may be experienced. Literary scholar Oliver Harris takes this still further: Burroughs's archive, he asserts, is 'the Real Thing, the true creative product, and therefore the true object of study and interpretation' (Harris, 2007). This chapter similarly frames the archive not only as the primary unit of production, but also as a material body in its own right, with a three-dimensional object form, drawing on literatures for object analysis as a means of investigating the independent agency of the archive in a triangulated relationship between creator, archive and viewer. It starts from an understanding of archives as part of a material environment, their creator's home or workspace, and this is particularly true if the work documents a creative practice that also took place in that same space, the studio itself functioning as 'an instrument, a state of mind, a site of attention' (Jacob & Grabner 2010).

In archival theory and practice, the fonds is a body of archival material generated by, and retained together from, one source, with evidential value contained in that form (Eastwood 1992). The fonds does not imply, or aspire to, comprehensiveness; it is not all the records created by an individual or institution: thus conceived, it would include sent letters, or material which is known not to have survived (including, in some cases, through the custodial processes of the archival

institution). Rather, the fonds frames the entity as bearing the material imprint of all these processes on its form and evidential value over time. As one text, one work, one continuous material body of a life, with all its rhizomic associative connections (Robinson & Maguire 2010) – the fonds can be analysed as a single three-dimensional entity which, particularly in the case of the archives of individuals, we must 'interpret and represent … on [its] own terms' (Meehan 2010). This body is not materially monolithic but bears the material imprint of its construction, woven from its component parts into a system. This system has been dynamic and therefore mutable and changeable in the creator's lifetime, so that the structure of what is received is 'a snapshot of a moment in time' (Nesmith 2005, 264). Any user of archives will have their own examples of these kinds of encounters, but I write from the perspective of visual arts archivist and academic, drawing explicitly on archival practice and on the material and affective nature of my own encounters with the archives of artists and designers.

In particular, I will draw on Jules David Prown's seminal methodology for material culture analysis, investigating 'the information encoded in objects' (Prown 1982, 7), as a means of setting out the value of this approach to the archival fonds in particular. Prown defined material culture as 'the study through artefacts of the beliefs – values, ideas and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a different time' (ibid, 1). While the disciplines of archive studies and material culture have evolved in separate trajectories, exchanging 'artefacts' for 'documents' here would provide a passable definition of archival research. But Prown's proposition has particular value here precisely because object analysis makes accessible different kinds of information which are not always detectable in other disciplinary modes; as such, from its origins in archaeology's study of pre-literate artefacts, it offers an alternative to text-based historical sources in modern history. In doing so, Prown says, we circumnavigate some of the unconscious beliefs and biases associated with a particular cultural environment, in this case a conventional, text- or content-based archival research.

Further, the archive has not only a spatial or physical extent, but also a temporal or diachronic one, through its past – its studio/home context – and into its future use and interpretation by the creator, by custodians and by viewers of all kinds. Through such encounters, each component has the potential for infinite relationships and repurposing, both with its own separated parts (the sent letters held by others outside the archive's material frame) or by being placed in other contexts, whether as part of an individual's own research, or within a curated digital collection which may offer the promise of completeness to which the archival fonds does not aspire. The model of object biography (Kopytoff 1986), widely used in material culture, also acknowledges the relationship between the archive and its creator: 'a person is composed of all the objects they've made and transacted… these objects represent their agency', and 'objects become invested with meaning through the social interaction they are caught up in' (Gosden & Marshall 1999, 170) In the case of archives particularly, such interactions can include deliberate interjections from the creator that reach beyond their lifespan and can heighten the

materiality of the encounter and make manifest a triangulated and dynamic relationship, otherwise largely implicit, between user – or viewer-participant - creator and the archive itself. Specifically, I will consider how this triangulation can be used to articulate the tacit knowledge gained through the archivist's privileged access, which may be inaccessible to other users who cannot experience the archival fonds *in toto*.

Analogue archives of visual practitioners may include material forms such as sketches, notes, and myriad visual and textual manifestations of creative practice. Engagement with these separate recorded creative gestures within the material or physical mass of the archive speaks of more than just the mechanics under the bonnet, a deconstruction of the finished product, or a carrier of a developing idea which is diachronically oriented only towards a future, more evolved version of itself. The sketch or prototype is often – in the analogue world at least – in essence as well as execution distinctively 'other' than the finished item, materially and affectively. It has a pleasure of its own, offering a direct way to the artist and their creative imperative: not simply through the aura of the 'hand of the artist' and the spark of creativity it can seem to re-enact, but through a materiality redolent of the private impulse, rather than the public consumable. Here, an idea may be explored and tested, rather than asserted or self-consciously declared. It may explode onto the page in its material embodiment: in the informality of a gesture which we may experience as freer, looser, less regulated or finished. Burroughs's contemporary and friend Jack Kerouac considered his own archive to bear the authenticity of the spontaneous gesture, which lost something in its excision or correction for publication (Harris 2007). There is a quality in the archival fonds that cannot be disassembled with its component parts or is lost in that disassembling.

My focus on the particular conditions of the visual arts archive, particularly the accumulation of labour it bears witness to, is illustrated by reference to several practitioners' archives. Although the visual arts have seen particularly fertile discussions of archives, little archival literature specifically addresses visual materials (Vaknin et al. 2014; Breakell 2015). Visual arts archives were mostly held within larger national arts museums, with their attendant conventions of materiality and literacy. There, practices for managing art objects, and questions about the status of the art object within the archive, tended to shape the stewardship of archival collections, often seen as a dependent, secondary resource relative to the primacy of the 'main collection' art works (Crookham 2015). A work's placing in the archive rather than the art collection might reflect a decision that it functions as a document rather than as an exemplar of artistic value (Burns 2017), even though visual arts archives were largely still acquired in their aggregational fonds. It is perhaps because of that historic relationship with the artwork that a particular framework of material literacy tends to apply in visual arts archives, which is counter to the conventional archival hierarchy, which privileges text documentation and text-based literacy (Rekrut 2006, 2014) and closer to practices of material culture, in making non-verbal material its object and privileging the visual document or gesture. Further, this notion of the material body frames the archive not as a set

of documents, or documentation, but as itself a material object, distinguishing it from material approaches addressing individual archival objects (e.g. Rekrut 2006, 2014). For the body of the creative archive, material visibility comes not from elevating the status of its moments and fragments to equality with the work (Zylinska 2010, 156), but by seeing it as itself a single material entity, with a distinct identity.

The analogue fonds' constituent parts – a letter, a photograph, a sketch – are connected physically, intellectually and causally, representing different spatial and temporal elements, moments and transactions of the same life. These relationships are formed not just by their shared provenance, but also by the meaningful dialogue inherent in that provenance: the parts refer and relate to one another, explain and answer each other, or even contradict and fail to answer one another, in an intertextual network. The encounter with the archive is shaped by many contextual factors and interventions: the context of each part's production, the function it performs in its creator's life or in communication with other individuals at that time; its retention in some kind of filing system (or not); its placing in an institution which has its own collecting subjectivities. Engaging with the material representation of this system with a sense of the fonds accesses an enhanced and expanded body of information and knowledge. The particular nuances of context in archive theory may not be fully appreciated by researchers who encounter individual component parts of an archive using conventional finding aids. Conventional archive catalogues have evolved to focus user attention on items called up using specific search terms: by those parameters, irrelevant material is excluded from the user's awareness – they will only see contextual material if they use a browse, rather than a search function (Dunley & Pugh 2021, 9). Yet context is 'seminal for understanding the ways in which visual materials function as documents and participate in the processes of meaning making' (Schwartz 2004, 107).

These conversations between documents are part of the material impression which unfolds over time spent with the archival body, as Lopez found. Many writers discuss the affect and of the archive in such encounters (Robinson 2010; Brennan 2018; Cifor & Gilliland 2016; Dever 2014) and the way that its 'materiality holds the emotions of [its] creators, and elicits emotional responses in those who behold [it]' (Lee 2016, 48). Others make reference to materiality as 'unwieldy' or 'dense' (Moor & Uprichard 2014, 1); 'excessive and overwhelming, like a spring tide, an avalanche or a flood' (Farge 2013, 4). Gwenaelle Aubry alludes to properties of her own archival accumulation: as matter (mass, physical presence) and as material (its potential for construction, transformation):

> I, like everyone, have archives, some I've created, some I've inherited; battered files, photograph albums, boxes, notebooks … when I think about them, whatever their form and the semblance of order that I've been able to give them, it is as matter: scattered, weighty, opaque. But also as a material: one day, perhaps, they will find their place in a book, still as paper, a printed trace, black on white, but one which will transform them, will deliver me from them.
>
> (Aubry 2012, 7, author's translation)

Jamie A. Lee captures the ambiguity of this 'archival body … temporally situated and yet always in motion' (Lee 2016, 34) and recognises that 'archivists and record creators also live within that body rather than only examining such a body from the outside' (2016, 39) There is a shared understanding between all these writers that, beyond discussions of affect, materiality points to subtler forms of knowledge offered by the three-dimensional archive, accessible through the encounter with it and with its creator; forms of knowledge comparable to those of the object (Lester 2018).

The internal system of the archive is, among other things, a material characteristic of the fonds, reflecting 'the cultural, artefactual importance of archival structures' (Taylor 1995, 11). If an analogue archive of unique parts are broken up and its components dispersed to multiple locations, then its originary systemic meaning is lost by its overwriting with a new one. Although each part may still appear 'quite full of use, of memories, of instructions … there is always someone who can take possession of them to pad those whitened bones with new flesh' (Latour 2000, 10), these are nevertheless decontextualised objects: we recognise the instructions encoded in their materiality, their association with a lost embodiment, but the system in which their originary meaning resided is lost.

Alongside personal papers (correspondence files; diaries; portrait photographs and the like), the archive of the artist Prunella Clough (1919–1999), at Tate Archive, London (TGA 200511), contains an extraordinary body of material components which shed a dazzling light on her creative process, of which she rarely spoke during her lifetime. It is not direct preparatory material for works, in the sense that a conventional sketchbook or notebook might be. It belongs to an earlier stage in the process: a record of thoughts, of ideas, of noticing. From these text notes, photographs and colour samples, she selected combinations which might become a work. Her gestural note-making, in word and image, a practice of daily life, becomes a connected body of raw material of creative production, its meaning as a whole infinitely richer than any component part. Seen in isolation, notes might be misread as diary entries or spare word pictures; viewed together, they begin to build a sense of the aggregation of ideas into construction pieces for a working method (Breakell & Worsley 2007, 280). If, as the writer Stephen Spender suggested, 'the imagination is an exercise of memory' (Spender 1955, 57), Clough's creative components are both products of and triggers for such exercises. Time spent with the archive can give rise to an intuitive sense of its overall modality, in the same way that a language is learnt by immersion, but we cannot access the memory a particular trace triggered for Clough: something will always elude us, highlighting the distance between the archive and its creator.

Conservators may understand material, in the context of fine art practice in particular, as 'substances that are always subject to change, be it through handling, interaction with their surroundings, or the dynamic life of their chemical reactions' (Lange-Berndt 2015, 12). We may also figure such 'dynamic lives of reactions' in the interaction of Clough's creative components – between themselves, and with the viewer who encounters them. This material waits for us to

turn 'belatedness into becomingness' (Foster 2004, 22); it is in a perpetual state of possibility. Similarly, 'interaction with surroundings' includes the performative space of encounter, whether it is the studio of origin, the private, professional spaces of the archive store or workroom, or the public-oriented reading room or gallery, each of which shapes our ability to access the affective qualities of an archival fonds *in toto*.

My own formative encounter with Clough's archive was as archivist at Tate, managing the process of its accession. My assessment of the archive's significance was based on my first encounter with it, in the studio of her executor – not in its original context of Clough's studio or home, but nevertheless pre-institutionalisation and archivisation. I next saw it on its arrival at Tate, in transit boxes, from which it was transferred to archive boxes. I subsequently shared something of my impressions of the archive's character in two vitrines for the exhibition *Prunella Clough* (Tufnell 2007), but I left Tate before I had been able to develop this embodied knowledge about the archive into any permanent record in the archive catalogue: such work was done after I left and reflects another archivist's embodied knowledge. Since leaving Tate, I have encountered the collection like any other researcher: one file at a time in the reading room. I have lost my privileged access to the whole body of material together, experiencing it only through the 'archival filter' (Douglas 2015, 84), and yet my present understanding of the archive and its affordances (Gibson 1977) is enriched and fundamentally shaped by the knowledge I have from those previous, privileged material encounters. I experienced the way that all subsequent encounters are, to some degree, mediated and shaped by the archivist's intercession, demonstrating the importance of that embodied knowledge to those whose own encounter follows, in spite of the invisibility of archival labour and knowledge (Caswell 2016).

It is easy for viewers of archives (archivists, researchers, visitors to exhibitions) to collude with the notion that the encounter with the archive brings us to the physical presence of the creator, through the things that they touched or, even more evocatively, brought into being. What might otherwise seem purely an 'act of ventriloquism' (Levy 2001, 23) by a researcher in giving voice to the archives becomes a material encounter with the creator, through the proxy of the archive. It can seem to bring us to a moment in the past, which 'generates that longed-for sense of intimacy with our research subjects' (Dever 2014, 285). This triangulated relationship, between archive, creator and user, co-creates 'chains of association' around the archive (Latour 2000, 11). There are ways in which the creator, though no longer present in the flesh, may retain a material presence in the archive that presents as a version of their life, yet has its own separate identity in its form and in the witness it bears. However they conceive of this body of material in their lifetime, there may be some awareness of its independent life and longer span, taking it beyond their control. They may try to exert an influence over its engagements: interjecting between the viewer and the archive, interceding on behalf of certain material, telling us what is important, projecting an archival consciousness through a material layer of encounter which erupts at unpredictable places – breaking the 'fourth wall'

of the performance of the archive. Here we see Douglas's 'Archiving "I"' as distinct from the 'Archived "I"' (Douglas 2015).

Such interjections disrupting the subjective encounter between viewer and archive, and the rhetoric of the archive in that encounter (Ramsey et al. 2010). They might manifest only by implication, for example, through privileging the retention of some kinds of records over others, which is nevertheless an emphatic way of shaping future narratives; or more explicitly, through annotations and commentaries, forming a direct communication with the present. Perhaps there is a sense of what the archive will say when its creator is gone and can no longer control its tongue: when, we might say, the archive is freed from parental control and comes of age. Indeed, the work of artists with collections is precisely about eliciting such independent conversations: artist Susan Hiller writes, 'the materials that attract me are the ones that seem to have a lot to say, and I collaborate with them to say it' (McShine 1999, 93) Indeed, however, creatively we may curate our own archives, the only way we can be sure to control their ultimate fate is to destroy them.

Scattered through the filing cabinets in which the archive of artist and designer Keith Cunningham (1929–2014) was stored before its transfer to the University of Brighton Design Archives were urgent messages, written in capital letters, clipped to files and featuring sticky coloured dots, such as: 'LOOK IN EVERY FOLDER!'. Although their original meaning cannot be confidently defined, they function as exhortations and appeals to those who come after. Cunningham's studio was an entirely private space until his death; and these messages speak to future visitors. We might infer anxiety and a sense of urgency in these instructions, left in an archive that no-one really knew about, in an attempt to assert longer term control over its mass. These messages also allude to the importance of the whole archival body: the importance of getting to know it, before embarking on physical changes to, or interpretation of, any part of it.

A comparison of two larger Design Archives collections presents opportunities to draw these themes together – triangulation, the material evidence of the fonds and Prown's methodology. Each archive was acquired from the designer's estate, who had begun from the body of material as it a snapshot (Nesmith, ibid.) of its form in the creator's lifetime. The graphic and information designer FHK Henrion (1919–1990), an émigré from Germany before the Second World War, started his graphic career in poster design, helped shape first the emergence of the profession of consultant designer and subsequently the establishment of corporate identity design as a co-ordinated discipline. Time spent with Henrion's archive creates an impression that, in the construction of this archive, the work, both in process and complete, of a practitioner in visual communication, is left to speak for itself, largely without documentation, thus rendering the archive more monumental, a demonstration of career prestige and achievement. The archive as received into the Design Archives prioritises and privileges the visual, an output organised in a long sequence of customised boxes, giving this material a centrality. This sense is compounded by the fact that, although the archive does contain other kinds of material – including photographs, talks and writings, and presscuttings, all of

Figure 2.1 A records storage area in Henrion's office. His studio was at the top of the stairs on the right. Visual records were stored in the boxes on the bottom shelf. University of Brighton Design Archives, FHK Henrion archive, by courtesy of the Henrion estate.

which bear witness to his successes – there is little correspondence or other text-based documentation of the commissions or creative or administrative exchanges that led to these visual outputs, limiting what they can speak of. A series of images of his office and studio spaces includes one of his archive, or records as they then were – part of his business space, but separate from the performative creative space of his studio-office (Figure 2.1).

In this successful career, secretaries and other employees managed the records, presumably to his instructions. A successful businessman-designer needed formal business structures and multiple administrators for his creative capital. Henrion's voice is represented in his talks and writings, discussing his practice, and the design profession; his own account of his own work and its contexts, as presented for

the consumption of an audience. Its arrangement, its inclusions and omissions are all part of Henrion's project to not only to document but also to narrate and classify his own life and work, through the archive. His annotations look primarily to the secretary or administrator, effectively the records manager or proto-archivist, charged with ordering this body of material as a living resource for his use; though we might conjecture whether this forward look includes a longer, public legacy. Further annotations are provided by his wife, to make sense of his archive for others after his death. His library sits close by in the same arrangement it had in his studio, standing for his creative intelligence and intellect. The archive both emphasises and justifies his status, although it also holds counter narratives of migration from Nazi Germany (Breakell 2021).

The material qualities of the archive of the designer and typographer Anthony Froshaug (1920–1984) reflect a life less organised. His creative practice did not have its own spaces outside the home: photographs of his flat after his death show the desk at which he worked, a private, rather than a public space (Figure 2.2). Unlike Henrion, Froshaug's career was neither monolithic in its focus nor associated with any kind of business institution. In a portfolio career typical of many of his generation, he worked as a freelance designer and typographer alongside teaching appointments, in which he was highly influential. These strands are experienced in the archive as a series of fragmentary episodes, such as teaching posts

Figure 2.2 Anthony Froshaug's desk area in his home, shortly after his death in 1984. Photo: David Jones. University of Brighton Design Archives, Anthony Froshaug Archive.

whose short duration, one might infer, was due to his instinctive resistance to the authority of the institution. Meticulous about his material and visual engagement with the page and its information presentation, but uninterested in the body of information that is the archive on a macro scale or its organisation, Froshaug's archive thus affects a kind of indifference to other viewers. Papers are grouped in envelopes, labelled in random ways that cannot be relied upon: sometimes by Froshaug himself or, more usually, by his executors who prepared the archive for transfer. As his executor, typographer and designer, Robin Kinross, writes,

> He was never very interested in a well-ordered archive of his life and work … The jumble is part of the process, part of the way forward. Use-value took precedence. I remember the pleasure he took in writing on envelopes, matchboxes and beer mats, or the coffee cup stains on some of his most treasured books.
>
> (Kinross 2000, 8–9)

It is a powerful material evocation, though these ephemeral receptacles of ideas, the beer mats and matchboxes have not survived to tell their stories.

Froshaug's archive resists conventional processes of assimilation and is hard to penetrate. It is a life deconstructed into fragments and trajectories, stopping and starting, cutting off abruptly both in subject and form. Its contexts, and therefore its conventional use as a historical source, are materially obscured by its fragmented form. Froshaug has no interest in presenting himself through his archive, though the archive actualises him in its own way, speaking of the contrast between his precision as a practitioner, and the unstructured administration of his life. The randomness of what is left behind can be framed as a physical expression of Froshaug's subversive refusal to conform, and his resistance to the institution through the official or formal record.

Having looked at the material impressions of these two archival bodies, I turn to Prown's object analysis, to adapt his methodology as a means of beginning to map them. Prown's methodology is designed to apply to single objects, and although he lists a number of material categories of objects, he does not include paper or text documents. Art objects such as paintings, which may form part of visual arts archives, are given their own category. This is a reminder that scholarship has moved on since Prown, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, and that his recommendations must not be taken either literally or alone; their use in this chapter is illustrative and indicative. Similarly, Prown's exhortation to 'guard against the intrusion [to the description stage] of either subjective assumptions or conclusions derived from other experience' (Prown 1982, 7) speaks to a putative objectivity in descriptive practices of both museums and archives that has long been discredited. Nevertheless, as seen earlier, many of the qualities he references apply equally to the more multivalent properties of the physical archive; and what Prown applies at a societal level can also describe the archival fonds, as an individual intelligence or mental structure. While material culture as evidence is 'the product of a cultural

environment' (ibid, 4), the archive is the product of a life. For example, he suggests that the artefact is 'the embodiment of mental structures' (ibid, 6) or 'evidence of the presence of a human intelligence' (ibid, 1); similarly, 'the fabrication of the object is the manifestation of behaviour, or the human act' (ibid, 6). Prown talks of materials and their distribution, and articulation between parts (for example, the weave of fabric, or the joints between component parts of metal or wood); these map to the way the component pieces of an archive weave together to create a distinctive shape as Prown's method signals: 'the configurations of the properties of an artefact [or archive] correspond to patterns in the mind of the individual producer and the society of which … they were part' (ibid, 6).

Table 2.1 presents the material impressions of Henrion and Froshaug's archives outlined above. Prown sets out a specific sequence of analysis: description, deduction and speculation, the first of which can be related to the standard descriptive approach to archive cataloguing. It is less easy to distinguish these modes in relation to the archive: these descriptive characteristics flow into a more evaluative set of deductions and speculations. In any case, such contextual materialities of the archival fonds do not at present have a place in the standard archive catalogue: the closest field in intention is the factually oriented Administrative/Biographical History, whose purpose is 'to provide an administrative history of, or biographical details on, the creator (or creators) of the unit of description to place the material in context and make it better understood' (ICA 2011). While there is not space here to develop a detailed designation of this information into descriptive/deductive/speculative, I suggest that the descriptive and deductive modes make possible the speculative (which is at the heart of research), and that the archivist can position their particular practices at appropriate points on this spectrum,

Table 2.1 Material impressions of Henrion and Froshaug's archives

Henrion	Froshaug
Box files	Envelopes
Image rather than text based; little textual documentation (prioritises the visual)	Text and image intermingled (archive is not the subject of visual prioritisation)
Structured/arranged (agency is unified)	Episodic (agency is distributed)
Ordered by the creator or on his instructions (speaks for self)	Chance accumulations, not ordered by the creator
Hierarchical	Flat
Interventions by wife, secretaries	Interventions by male executor
Implied viewer/reader/audience	No implied viewer, reader, no assistance to interpretation
Ruptures in rhetoric	No rhetoric to interrupt
Monolithic	Polylithic

depending on their form and purpose. Further discussion could establish where professional practice might place such information for consumption alongside the catalogue record, to include, for example, photographs of the fonds, or examples of original packaging and structures. Much of the information captured in the table is lost in the process of 'archivisation'. Yet given the myriad future other uses and manifestations of these archives, it is surely important that the evidence transmitted by the material encounter with the archival body should be captured and recorded so that its intertextuality can be retraced back to source, and its original rhetoric reconstructed.

The archival fonds is a little discussed unit of material analysis in analogue forms, yet it offers a range of methodological opportunities for understanding the characteristics of archives of creative practice and their conditions of creation, which have potential for wider application. These opportunities are excluded from present archival practice by the myth of 'objectivity' that still pervades archival cataloguing. Building on recent developments in critical archive studies about materiality, and in the visual arts field about the place of archives, interdisciplinary methods from material culture can enrich engagements with the object body of the archive, by methodologically passing from a purely descriptive mode into one which adds an avowedly subjective layer, through deduction and speculation, which subsequent users of the archive may incorporate into their understanding of the archive as a whole, even if only apprehended in fragments.

This evidentiary and contextual materiality offers readings of the archive to which the interventions and interjections of the creator contribute, complicating and triangulating the relationship between user and archive. I have shown how the application of Prown's method for material culture analysis offers new opportunities to investigate the experience of archival encounter, and for further interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation (see for example Gerritsen & Riello 2015; Pearce 1994; Dudley 2010). Some such encounters are part of the tacit and subjective knowledge of the archivist, often lost or inaccessible to other viewers. A product of the often invisible labour of archival staff, the capturing of these material impressions, supported by a method for analysis, contributes to best practice and the transparency of the archivisation process.

While we may caution the reading of the archive as a psychological text (Douglas 2015, 88), its analysis as a material object with its own context gives a discrete agency to the archive alongside that of creator, making clear the distinction between the two and allowing us better to read them as 'social and collaborative texts' (ibid, 88). The 'radical plurality' of the archive (Harris) is predicated on the complex system and structure of the whole archive, and further on the capturing of new forms of knowledge about the characteristics of the material body of the archive, in relation to the life and experiences not only of the creator but of all those who encounter it subsequently, and in the face of the material contingencies of research and interpretation.

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Archival finding aids and perceptual frames

Extending material contact points through Stephen Chaplin's *Slade School Archive Reader*

Liz Bruchet

Introduction

The ideal of an archive as a naturally and objectively accumulated entity has all but been debunked in recent archival literature. Throughout the past few decades, archival scholars have examined the ways in which archivists co-create and exert power over the archive, in part through archival arrangement and description and the creation of related finding aids (Duff and Harris 2002; MacNeil 2005; Nesmith 2002; Yeo 2010). Recent attention to the subjectivities of archival production has included the analysis of archival finding aids as socially constructed and mediated representations (Cox 2008; Yakel 2003), individually authored narratives (Light & Hyry 2002) and rhetorical genres (MacNeil 2012) that construct meaning and steer users in particular directions by highlighting and excluding different currents of information (Duff & Harris 2002). Finding aids comprise contextual and structural information about an archive collection which facilitates discovery of information within a collection of records (Pearce-Moses 2005, 168). Yet while we may acknowledge the subjective nature of these tools in general terms, individual finding aids are rarely subject to close scrutiny. Most are unattributed, particularly from the point of view of the archive user, and the conventions around their production give these descriptive tools an 'aura of objectivity' (Light & Hyry 2002, 221), making them appear as neutral conduits and stable documents (Yakel 2003).

This chapter offers a close analysis of an idiosyncratic archival finding aid that I came to rely on in the course of my work at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London (UCL). *A Slade School of Fine Art Archive Reader* (1998) is a four-volume, hand-bound index and unpublished manuscript written by Slade alumnus, art historian and former archivist, Stephen Chaplin (b. 1934). Building on recent texts which assert the value of materiality for deepening our understanding and experiences of archives (Dever 2019; Lester 2018; Rekrut 2006, 2014; Sassoon 2004), I will use my initial physical encounter with the *Reader* as a springboard to consider a number of other entry points to the Slade Archive collection and its history. I propose that by attuning to aspects of materiality that extend beyond the tactile, different trajectories and other sensory pathways through which archives, archival records, archival tools and their agents are configured can be

brought to light. Put another way, taking on board the assertion that archives are figured and storied (Hamilton, Harris & Reid 2002; Burton 2005), and that the processes, mechanisms and agencies by which this figuration takes place warrants analysis, a focus on the materiality of this finding aid helps us apprehend the highly individual lenses through which archives and archival records are constructed.

Material encounter 1: the opening(s) of Stephen Chaplin's *Slade Archive Reader*

When I first began working as a research assistant at the Slade, few colleagues knew much about the archive collection. I was told the records were upstairs in 'the archive room', otherwise known as 'the attic', two hazy descriptions for a space informally ear-marked for old things that should, or could be, kept. For others within the department, the archive seemed to be vaguely elsewhere, a recognition that some records had obviously existed at some point, and may still exist, but that these were not particularly relevant to the contemporary art school and its present endeavours. For the administrators, the archive also appeared in the form of new – and often unsolicited – papers, photographs and ephemera dropped off or mailed in by former alumni, where they sat henceforth in a file marked 'to archive' or the like. On enquiry with UCL Library Special Collections, I was directed to Stephen Chaplin's *Slade Archive Reader* and assured it would provide an overview of Slade-related holdings across the college.

Unboxing the first volume of the Reader in the Special Collections reading room, I was struck by its personality (Figure 3.1). In its physical form, the *Reader* contradicts the appearance of an impersonal document that renders its own construction opaque. Chaplin's distinctive way of binding pages of the text pronounced the volume as first and foremost a handcrafted object, an idiosyncratic creation of an individual hand.

The title of the volume's cover page was handwritten in ink, even though the main text comprised typescript pages. The volume was stiff and crackled with stale glue as I opened it. The pages flapped closed at the earliest opportunity. It was a highly tactile experience, but awkward too. The physical qualities of this hand-bound bundle of paper stopped me in my tracks, triggering questions about its creator that I would have otherwise failed to notice. An archivist I spoke to that day shared her theory that the author may have bound the *Reader* in this way to deter easy reproduction; it served to assert and safeguard his claim on the archive. I tucked this comment to one side, but my interest in Chaplin and his project was piqued.

Towards a social history of the Slade

In his foreword to the Reader, Chaplin provides a potted biography. He is an artist and Slade alumnus who later trained and taught as an art historian. After studying at the Slade (1952–1955), he studied art history at the Courtauld Institute

Figure 3.1 Slade Archive Reader, vol. 2, 1998, UCL Special Collections MS ADD 400.

(1955–1958), became Administrative Assistant to artist Lawrence Gowing (1959–1961), and taught art history at Leeds College of Art (1961–1966), before taking a teaching position at Leeds University in 1966 where he stayed until he took early retirement in 1990 in order to return to painting. At this point, Chaplin's plans deviated. He was invited by Slade tutors Jean Spencer (1942–1998) and Malcolm Hughes (1920–1997), and then Director of the Slade, Bernard Cohen (1933–), to sort and catalogue the extant papers of the Slade. These 'piles of stuff', as Chaplin would later describe them, were in 'boxes and bits and pieces', in corridors, under stairs and in cabinets, spread out across various locations in UCL and beyond, in both institutional and private hands.

In 1993, supported by a grant from the Leverhulme Trust, he began to develop this archival work into a research project, with the aim of producing a publishable history of the Slade (Figure 3.2). This history would seek to counterbalance, or at least complicate, the canonical histories which clustered around artistic success stories. Instead, his study would focus on the everyday routines of typical, non-prize-winning students and the nuanced artistic, teaching and social cultures of the studio spaces that coloured their experiences. To achieve this, Chaplin pored over the administrative records. He collated his correspondence with researchers. He sought contributions from alumni, former staff and their descendants in the form of
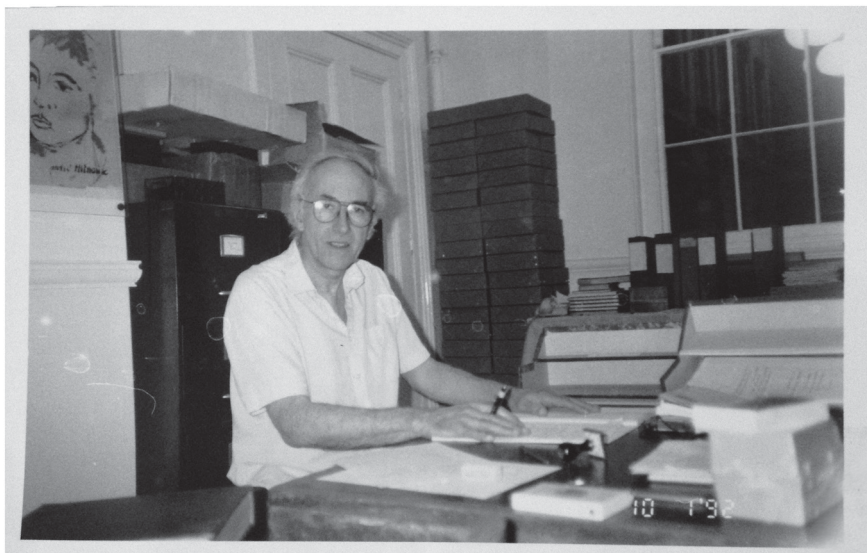
Figure 3.2 Stephen Chaplin in his office at the Slade, 1992. Image courtesy Slade Archive, UCL.

memoirs, diaries, photographs, sketchbooks and related ephemera. He conducted oral history interviews with tutors, studio technicians and secretarial staff.

The four-volume document that resulted from these efforts five years later was given the rather elaborate title of *A Slade School of Fine Art Archive Reader: A Compendium of Documents, 1868–1975 in University College London, contextualised with an historical and critical commentary, augmented with material from diaries and interviews*. It is now referred to by its abbreviated title, *A Slade School of Fine Art Archive Reader*, or simply the *Slade Archive Reader*. Despite the depth and scope of this project, Chaplin could not generate interest from academic publishers. Disheartened, but aware of the value of his efforts, he reshaped the project into the existing index and finding aid and deposited it in UCL Special Collections in 1998, where it has since become one of the most consulted resources in the collection.

Towards a project (auto)biography

The *Reader* is at once a guide and search aid for the archive collections, a record of the processes of archiving the collection, and a historical study in the form of an unpublished manuscript. Chaplin acknowledged his unconventional approach:

> The Project is unusual in that it combines archival work on 'raw' source material with research. Its 'outputs' are similarly bifurcated: the completion in

computerised form, of the archival description, together with the publication of the research findings – a full narrative report of publishable stature. There is clear advantage in analysing and making sense of the papers as they are described. Such 'sense' is best promoted by an incentive to give scholarly form to the work.[1]

His project pivots on a productive tension between archiving the existing records, and the interpretation, elaboration and co-creation of the archive towards an altogether new entity. As the traditions of archival practice assert, occupying this dual role is not without its issues; it muddies the distinction between archive stewardship and creation and puts into question the integrity and evidentiary qualities of the archival records (Cook 2009).

By the same token, the *Reader*, and Chaplin's entire exercise of archival description, centres on producing a rich body of provenancial and contextual information, and on making his interventions on the archive transparent. Throughout the *Reader*, he deploys approaches which position 'the researcher into the place of the creator' (Rekrut 2014, 245). The impact of his own personal experience is made most explicit with the inclusion of excerpts from his diaries which foreground his experience as a Slade student in the 1950s. He offers these as a case study to understand 'the average student response'.[2] This approach gives space to acknowledge and articulate the self in relation to the resulting archival research, collections and finding aid, providing a kind of (auto)biography of the archive before this strategy would be commonly used by archival researchers.[3] However, this personal accent means that the archival descriptions also serve to substantiate his own experiences and perceptions of the past, as well as his own authority in relation to the constitution of the archive. Unpacking the archive – literally and figuratively – and reordering it into this elaborated collection and text in ways which foreground his own positionality means Chaplin's archiving, the *Reader*, and his scholarly activities are bound within this self-referential frame. Yet at the same time, the *Reader* also invites users to pursue their own journey through the records. Through this configuration, the intimate and complex qualities of the *Reader* generate more openings than limitations; it is an invitation to encounter the archive as a subjective but expansive and multi-dimensional construct.

Material encounter 2: the archivist and his perceptual frames

In his introduction to the *Reader*, Chaplin describes his initial encounter with the 'raw' foundational records of the archive at the outset of the project in 1990.

The papers had been taken from Room 8 and lodged on the floor of the room at the east of the Slade. I remember looking at them in dismay, making a drawing of the heap of boxes, discarded portable typewriter and sculptured head never collected by a student. Their shelves had been removed from the Office, most of

the books and pamphlets had gone to the College Library, and personal records were under the main stairs. …

I tried to recreate Ian Jenkin's order,[4] and as this failed, to make a hierarchical sequence, from University Committees to student affairs. I took the Bill Box, a foolscap filing box as the standard unit, and created a listing which is still useful in its own right, and which formed the basis of the electronic catalogue. […] I began to ask for material from old students to augment the holdings. Shelving was bought and an order made among the disintegrating boxes.[5]

Chaplin's visual appraisal and documentation of the initial state of the archive renders it as a material entity and sketches it as an archival body. This recon-struction of the archive's provenance in physical and aesthetic terms also extends back to an earlier moment in time. In an oral history interview I conducted with Chaplin in 2013, he recalls the arrangement of these same administrative papers in the Slade office as they appeared to him when he was a student in the 1950s. The papers were kept in so-called 'Bill boxes', named after artist and Slade Professor William (Bill) Coldstream (1908–1997). These box files were covered in red card-board, which he notes in the *Reader* are 'red for Bill's aesthetic reason'.[6] He even provides their measurements, a detail that asks the reader to imagine them in scale and volume, and to conjure the effect of their presence and presentation. In the interview, he described his re-arrangement of the Slade archive as his ordering, '*with a visual knowledge* of what it used to look like'.[7] By these means, Chaplin encourages the reader to conceptualise the archive as a changeable entity that is actively formed along numerous empirical, aesthetic, epistemological and onto-logical lines.

These recollections also capture the thrill of first contact with the archive in its physicality:

And I just looked at it and thought, Well this is wonderful! Having an archive in this complete state, and I can do what I like with it [chuckling] […] I was fasci-nated by the documentary history of art, and here it was. It really was.[8]

This visual survey is coloured by the fantasy of taking hold of the archive in its organic and seemingly complete state, and the desire to have exclusive access, to take ownership of, and to bring order to the archive, and in the process, to unearth revelations and forge connections with the authentic past (Farge 2013; Steedman 2001). As Ann Laura Stoler reminds us, 'the passions for the primary, originary and untouched' are a fundamental part of the archival imaginary (Stoler 2002, 87), passions which are born by such sensorial, embodied experiences, as much as any conceptual and textual concerns (Farge 2013; Dever 2019; Rekrut 2006).

That he would perceive, recall and relay the qualities of the archive with such detail is not surprising. In his introductory text, he describes himself as a 'visual diarist' who 'paints as research'. He notes that is he married to a sociologist of visual representation, and how former colleagues at University of Leeds, including
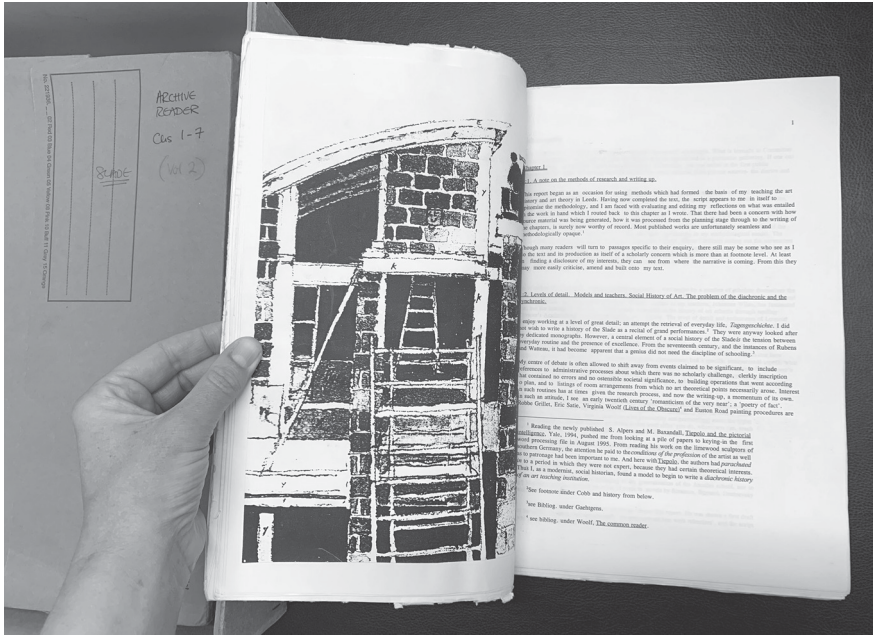
Figure 3.3 Sketch by Chaplin, inserted into the Slade Archive Reader, vol. 2, 1998, UCL Special Collections MS ADD 400.

Tim Clark, Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock brought feminist, critical and social art histories to his attention. But ultimately, he writes, these influences 'failed to dislodge my basic empiricism'.[9] His interest was in the accrual of images and texts towards a creative actuality of the observable world around him, which he refined through the spontaneous daily drawings and accompanying contextual notes that filled his pocket diaries (Figure 3.3). Using only choice paper, he constructed these pocketbooks by hand in Chinese Orihon style, in which a long strip of paper is folded concertina style, so that when opened, each side of the page can be filled and displayed. These notebooks became art objects in and of themselves and represent a key method and manifestation of his artistic practice. Yet they also function as a device through which his contribution to the archive, and the related finding aid, is refracted.

This interweaving of documentary methods and archival-artistic product is evident in Chaplin's inclusion of a number of his own sketches in the *Reader*. For instance, he adhered a photocopy of one of his drawings to the cover of the second volume. The illustration depicts the entrance area to a first-floor studio in the Slade, highlighting its architectural details. An additional thirteen photocopied drawings are interspersed across the volumes, capturing scenes in the daily life of the school. I subsequently learned that these drawings were made over the course of the project

and were copied from his notebooks. Yet in the *Reader*, the images are untitled, undated and unattributed and so the connection between the drawings and the text is not immediately clear. They do not connote actuality, as would be implied by the addition of an archival photograph, for instance. Instead, these images act as visual cues that set the stage for the interpretation of the text, the archive, and the spaces of archival production, as intertextual, multi-dimensional and highly individualised terrain that is experienced and encapsulated through a range of sensory planes and perceptual fields. Like the detailing of the arrangement of 'Bill boxes', they encourage the reader to view things from Chaplin's vantage point *in situ*, grounded in an observational, artistic and documentary stance. This way of evoking the terrain of the archive gives presence to its material, visual and spatial dimensions which also encompass the sites of artistic and archival production such as the administrative and studio spaces. In other words, the presence of these drawings expands the contours of archival description.

Hybrid positions and archival ambivalences

Yet Chaplin's hybrid position was not without its challenges. He held the role of archivist, art historian and artist-observer at once. He was the archive's rescuer, caretaker, evaluator and interpreter, as well as its subject and co-creator. When asked about his contribution to the Slade archive in his 2013 interview, he describes it as 'very complicated':

> Because [it] was Bernard's interests [to bring order to the archive], Jean's interests [to make it computer accessible] and my own, which had come really from my education at the Courtauld and through the Warburg [and] the idea of a recording of artistic production.[10]

He was ill at ease with the multiple positions he was occupying, being pulled in different directions at once. He also expresses apprehension about fully taking on the role of archivist and undertaking archival appraisal, asking himself, 'Am I going to be the one who got rid of it all?'[11] In addition, watching another scholar delve into the archive helped him realise he no longer wanted to be the person who would just 'be with the Slade papers … a person that scholars would come to and that would be it'; he was wary of being that subservient 'handmaiden' to historians (Nesmith 1982, 21).[12] Recognising this, he began to focus on his own research ambitions. Yet even so, he remained unsatisfied in this solitary position, one that was perceived within the institution as peripheral to the principle artistic teaching and research roles. Appreciating these areas of ambivalence, the inclusion of his drawings serves as a tangible and visual articulation by its author of his place as an artist-scholar, as much as that of an archivist. Through this combination of material, visual, aesthetic and intellectual expressions, the *Reader* conveys Chaplin's authorship and constructs the author as an intellectual, artistic – and self-archiving (von Bismarck 2002) – subject.

Material encounter 3: interconnected records along an archival plane

This is not to suggest Chaplin's archival finding aid is insular. Indeed it draws on and interweaves many other sources. He quotes from press articles, artists' journals, administrative papers as well as interviews he conducted with former students and staff. In turn, the records he refers to extend outward to yet other sources and each of these weaves their own material and biographical threads. For instance, Chaplin included excerpts from the diary of Slade Professor Randolph Schwabe (1885–1948) he had borrowed from the artist's estate. In the *Reader*, he takes pains to describe the material and visual qualities of Schwabe's journal.

> It is contained in nineteen commercially produced hardback volumes, with a lined full octavo page provided for each day. On a considerable number of pages there is no entry, but mostly he manages a short paragraph, and the entries can lap over the confining edge of the allocated space, occasionally with asterisked overflows and run-ons. [...] The entries, written in ink, probably during his habitual evening retirement upstairs with his papers, are in full narrative, with perfect presentation as to legibility, spelling, punctuation and syntax. [...] He developed the clear, sloping chancellery script when his letters to his daughter, Alice, away at school, proved hard for her to read. This not only makes for easy access, it transforms the dour, mass produced stationer's products into objects of some distinction. The ink, a pale brown, was especially mixed for him.[13]

Chaplin's sensory details render the man through evoking what is tangible at the intersection of personhood, records and storytelling. What could easily be a dry note on provenance is presented as a vivid biographical sketch of the artist through the characteristics of his mark-making as they are encapsulated and storied through this object. In these gestures, the *Reader* puts the researcher in contact with other touchpoints along the archival plane, connecting them to archival exercises beyond the immediate records that make up our initial focus of attention. It brings into frame the wider documentary ecosystems, practices and artefacts that support our research endeavours.

Documenting translations and transformations

Of course, not all of these interconnected sources are physical in nature. Close consideration of the *Reader* highlights the interdependence of tangible and intangible expressions of the past and the fundamental role of documentation and media technologies in weaving them together. In both the *Reader* and his student diaries, Chaplin attempts to capture verbatim comments, criticisms and instructions of tutors as recalled years later; he referred to their speech patterns and impediments and imitated their accents. His accounts are also coloured by sense memories associated with his time at the Slade: the smell of paints and pipe smoke in the life

room, the sound of caged birds in the antique room. For Chaplin, these different areas of perception and sensory engagement must also be recorded and transmitted as part of the archive.

Chaplin's use of oral history is another case in point. In his methodological notes, he outlines how the interviews were transcribed and 'written up'. Some spoken accounts were recorded and tapes deposited in the archive, but on the whole, he explains that he 'found it often both accurate and expeditious to write notes while the interview was in progress, then making an agreed copy with the interviewee' for inclusion in the *Reader*.[14] The resulting records are by nature retrospective and abridged. Information will have been distilled and much of the essence of the embodied and transitory experience will have been lost. Once again, his notebook serves as an intermediating tool between the moment of interpersonal exchange and its transformation onto an archived page, where it acquires other associations, such as the aura of factuality and authority, and the status of *that which has been archived* (Mbembe 2002). Chaplin's efforts to document the Slade along different trajectories are contingent on these exercises and tools of translation which alter our contact points with the past.

This brings us to another aspect of the story. Under the direction of Jean Spencer (1942–1998), artist and Slade Secretary and Tutor to the Students, Chaplin was also tasked with making the archive 'computerised' using UCL Library's computer catalogue system.[15] At the time, the conversion of analogue archival descriptions to computer-readable ones was an important area of activity for archives (Bunn 2016). A new spin on familiar archival imaginaries emerged, led by hope that computers could overcome messy issues with records management and information retrieval inherent to physical archives. In his interview, Chaplin summarised this vision as 'getting a computer on [the archive] so in fact whatever happened it was somehow sorted'.[16] This statement, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, is indicative of a lack understanding of the new paradigm of electronic finding aids that he was galvanised to participate in. Nevertheless, Chaplin dutifully 'keyed in' information to the relevant word processing files and catalogue system and a record of this activity is imprinted in the margins of *Reader*.[17] References to electronic files, document versions, and their file locations on floppy discs are found intermittently in the page headers. For instance, the top of page 4 of the first volume reads, 'Opened 28 Jul 1998 on c:\\ack, c:\\ack b, a:\acka, a:\ackas'. These alpha-numeric notations refer to obsolete information pathways, media and technologies that have outlived their original navigational function. Yet they are also provenancial. They date stamp and ground the *Reader* to its moment of creation and denote an important period of regeneration and alteration in the story of this archive and archival finding aid.

This digital translation also brought about pitfalls. Towards the end of the project, the computer files became corrupted and part of Chaplin's index was lost. Extending a corporeal metaphor, Chaplin writes of how this loss 'scars' the text of the *Reader*.[18] The alpha-numeric notations therefore also signify a point of vulnerability and suggest a lack of trust with the computational aspect of the project.

Ironically, they also signal a new requirement to document yet another trail of information; they serve as a kind of finding aid for the finding aid. The *Reader* thus holds within it a tension between the hopes and ambitions, and the wariness and uncertainties brought about by these new ways of describing, managing, interconnecting and accessing archival information through digital means.

In 2018, the *Reader* was further transformed into a digital artefact in the form of a downloadable, text-searchable PDF and published online through UCL Digital Collections.[19] Each volume has been reconstituted as a collection of binary-coded digital images. This digital metamorphosis undoubtedly opens new possibilities for the archival collections it represents yet it also privileges image-centric ways of grasping the *Reader* and encourages text-searchable avenues into the archive. It is a shift that brings with it the risk of conflating original records with digital ones, and 'dematerialising, dehistoricising and decontextualising' the volume in ways which foreclose insights that comes from material engagement with the artefact itself (Sassoon 2004, 195).

At the same time, in this case at least, the concern for the essence and value of the *Reader* as a physical artefact endures. When a conservator examined Chaplin's distinctive binding methods in preparation for the digitisation of the *Reader*, in line with current practice (Bülow & Ahmon 2011, 6–10) she recommended the volumes be kept intact in order to preserve the object's material integrity, opting instead for the more laborious use of weights to obtain the best opening for digitisation. Nor has the digitised *Reader* replaced the original object. Rather it co-exists with it and extends its form along other terrains of tangibility and perception that hold alternative points of connection from where our understanding of archives, their creators, carers and interpreters may emerge. In their instrumentality, these materials – both analogue and digital – co-construct our interpretation of this archival finding aid (Domanska 2006). After all, digitisation does not do away with the material qualities of records (Shep 2015), but rather replaces their historical materialities with others (Sassoon 2004). As Johanna Drucker notes, digitisation is an interpretive act and intervention, and it is this recognition that can serve 'as a critical springboard for insight' in the humanities (Drucker 2013, 12), in so far as we continue to critically and materially explore its operations within our cultural landscape.

Material encounter 4: overflowing matter

Chaplin's project was expansive even before this moment of digital transformation. The sheer volume of material that could be attended to as part of his remit, spanning over 125 years of the school's history, overburdened his ambitions. Additionally, the archive he was creating was parallel to the one generated by the institution through the more formal records management procedures of Slade's parent university, UCL. Without established acquisition guidelines and led in part by his own research journey, Chaplin was collecting and soliciting donations according

to his own intuition and logic. Indeed, an unintended consequence of Chaplin's enthusiastic collecting and recordkeeping has been a subsequent rationalisation, reclassification and weeding of the records he amassed. Yet equally, his efforts enriched the documentary records with compelling material, much of it ephemeral and unofficial, comprising personal perspectives of past staff and students which would otherwise fall outside of the University's collecting activities.

As much as Chaplin's *Reader* is a testament to his efforts to unify the school's archive and elaborate its parameters, it also testifies to archival excess. In the fore-word, he writes that the material he had been collecting since the project's origin was 'still coming in' as he wrote the *Reader* seven years later, 'overwhelm[ing] the narrative structure'.[20] The rich potential of the archive became an endless surplus of interrelated resources to grasp, map and contextualise. At this stage, Chaplin faced a reckoning with the impossibility of apprehending an archive in its 'infinite chain of documents', to borrow Dirks' phrase (Dirks 2015, 28). On learning that his written research would not be published, he resolved to 'throw everything in, including the kitchen sink'. As a result, the *Reader*, like the archive it represents, became an over-full container at risk of being subsumed by the very archival glut it seeks to hold. The volumes, Chaplin notes in the foreword, were nearly ten times as long as originally proposed. Without editorial input, the *Reader* was also left in draft form, with typos and revisions to the pagination left intact. The project stands as an unfinished work.

In the interview I conducted with Chaplin in 2013, he talked of leaving his pos-ition at the Slade in 1998 with compounded frustrations. Archival overload and fatigue, technological mishaps and reduced institutional resources all contributed to his departure. The death of two of the three driving figures in the project, Jean Spencer and Malcolm Hughes, also weighed heavily. His experiences reflect a pattern of under-acknowledged and under-resourced (Williams 2016), and often lonely, archival labour which shapes an archive with ebbs and flows of activity, conditioned by fits and starts of institutional support and coloured by individual visions, as much as by the conventions and technologies of recordkeeping.

On our last meeting, Chaplin handed me an aged sheet of drawing paper and described its provenance. He outlined how it had been bought by artist and Slade alumna Dora Carrington (1893–1932) and given to writer Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) to write his autobiography on, then passed down to artist Lawrence Gowing (1918–1991) by his wife Julia Strachey (1901–1979), niece of Lytton, who then gave it on to Chaplin a number of decades ago. As we spoke, he took a pencil out and annotated the paper with this genealogy, adding my name to the bottom of the list. I asked him how he had come to have it in his possession and he replied:

> Because … Lawrence knew I liked bits and I collect paper and different things. It's dreadful paper. Absolutely awful. It absorbs like blotting paper. And it's old and it's damp stained, and I've still got some of it. [21]

We laughed at the absurdity of it. Yet we also tacitly shared the understanding that this exchange encapsulated something elemental and graspable about our labours.

Binding things together

There may be some truth to my colleague's speculation of Chaplin's protective impulse around the Slade archive. After all, a finding aid functions not only to facilitate the discovery of information, but also to describe records in a way that 'gives the repository physical and intellectual control over the materials and that assists users to gain access to and understand the materials' (Pearce-Moses 2005, 168). While the *Reader* stretches the parameters of the genre, it is also a rhetorical device that represents and lays claim to archival records. Applying the lens of materiality onto Chaplin's rather elaborate example of archival description spotlights the finding aid as a multivalent and context-specific creation, one that can bring us into contact with subjectivities inherent to archival processes, resources and their authors. Importantly, it brings to the fore the 'impact of processors' work' on the archive (Light & Hyry 2002, 221). Chaplin's compulsion to document along different social, artistic, intellectual and sensory registers results in a complex illumination of an archive as it is continually figured and storied. The material qualities of the *Reader* invite us move our thinking from the seemingly static content of textual records and related finding aids, to consider the alchemy of time, space, people, ideas, things and media that generate and sustain this evolving accumulation of archival artefacts and information.

Equally, the focus on materiality leads us to areas of archival ambivalence and uncertainty, instability and loss that qualify any efforts to pin things down. In my role as Archive Curator and Researcher at the Slade I found myself coming close to stepping into Chaplin's shoes. Vulnerabilities abound in trying to capture and manage an ever-growing, heterogeneous archive. The development of exciting, but often exploratory resources and tools by which to trace, map and link records and resources, as well as the enticing addition of unofficial contributions and personal insights, can threaten to overwhelm core archival exercises. In this era of tremendous upheaval and instability, the flow of archival activity at the Slade recedes again, with other plots and plans left unachieved, things unresolved, papers unread and unprocessed, files and file formats withering into obsolescence and links left to erode. Contending with the material pathways of archival inheritances also means contending with one's own role in the co-creation of 'archival mess', to borrow Maryanne Dever's phrase (Dever 2019) – those areas of overflow, disorder, disarray and decay. But then again, herein lie ever more contact points from which critical insight may emerge.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1 Leverhulme Trust application form, 10 February 1993, Slade Archive, uncatalogued papers.
2 Chaplin, *Slade Archive Reader*, 1998, UCL Special Collections MS ADD 400, vol. 1, forward.
3 See, for example, Burton (2005); Dirks (2015); Stoler (2009).
4 Ian Tregarthen Jenkin (1920–2004) was Slade Tutor and Secretary from 1949 to 1975 and responsible for the recordkeeping over the course of William Coldstream's directorship.
5 Chaplin, vol. 2, p. 14.
6 Chaplin, vol. 2, p. 13.
7 Author's interview with Stephen Chaplin, 7 August 2013 Session 4, Track 6, emphasis added.
8 Ibid.
9 Chaplin, vol. 2, p. 3.
10 Chaplin interview, 7 August 2013, Session 4, Track 7.
11 Ibid, Session 4, Track 6.
12 Chaplin interview, 26 July 2013, Session 3, Track 4.
13 Chaplin, vol. 4, p. 46.
14 Ibid, vol. 2, p. 5.
15 Ibid, vol. 1, p. xlvi.
16 Chaplin interview, 7 August 2013, Session 4, Track 6.
17 Chaplin, vol. 1, introduction.
18 Ibid.
19 www.ucl.ac.uk/library/digital-collections
20 Chaplin, vol. 1, p. 3.
21 Chaplin interview, 7 August 2013, Session 4, Track 3.

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Chapter 4

Archiving with scissors

Materiality and cutting practices in photographic archives

Costanza Caraffa

In her compelling study on American scrapbooks, Ellen Gruber Garvey defines the practice of scrapbook makers between the 1860s and the 1920s as 'writing with scissors' and conceptualises scrapbooks as a form of democratic archives (Garvey 2012, esp. 207–210, 220–227). Starting out from a discussion of press clippings as modern paper objects, Anke te Heesen emphasises the function of archives carried out by presscutting agencies around 1900: through clipping, current issues were materialised and classified in catalogues that allowed them to be retrieved by clients (te Heesen 2006, esp. 95). However, one could argue that scissors do not actually belong to the tools of an archive where documents are supposed to be preserved intact for the generations to come. In the following itinerary, which takes the reader to the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, I will instead discuss a series of cutting practices that are an integral part of the daily work done in a photographic archive devoted to research. As I will show, engaging with the practices of photographic archives provides methodological and theoretical tools that help to rethink traditional systems of photographic (and archival) value. This analysis explicitly involves scholars, archivists and professionals of the photographic archive. They, together with photographers and publishers, are the actors who have been holding the scissors and literally shaping photographic documents and objects long before the advent of digital "cut and paste" techniques. Cutting will emerge as an integral part of the (material) transformation of photographs into scientific evidence. Moreover, the term 'cut' intended in a broader, multiplicitous, sometimes metaphorical sense will help to explain practices of knowledge production as well as systems of value in photographic archives.

The theme of the cut, of the portion of reality that the photographic technique cuts out and freezes outside the time-space continuum, is intrinsic to photography. It has been analysed by prominent curators and critics including John Szarkowski (1966) and Philippe Dubois (1983).[1] Their positions are historically related to the construction of a theory of photography as art. Here, I will focus on another type of photographic production: photographs in archives, the kind of photographs that were traditionally cut out from official narratives based on museum value systems. This is specifically the case in the history of art, a discipline particularly sensitive to values of authorship and uniqueness, and therefore inclined to neglect the value

of "documentary" photographs compared to "artistic" ones. This chapter deals with a hybrid institutional type that is halfway between collections and what Elizabeth Edwards (2019) has called photographic 'non-collections': photo libraries and photographic archives created for documentation and comparative purposes in universities, research institutes, monument protection organisations and even in museums.[2] They are rooted in the rhetoric of (photographic and archival) objectivity that developed in the nineteenth century, building on the positivistic concept that photography would produce evidence and this evidence would be preserved in a neutral manner in photographic archives (Schwartz 2000; Caraffa 2011a; Mitman & Wilder 2016). These photographic archives are often well sorted, catalogued and sometimes even digitised. However, their status in the academic system is very low. Moreover, a quick glance is enough (Figure 4.1) to realise that even the framing, the choice of the photographic cut alone makes any so-called reproduction an interpretation of the work of art, which cannot, therefore, be objective.

For generations, these photographs have been considered pure documentations of the objects they show, some kind of working tools now believed to be replaceable by digital duplicates. Indeed, their very existence must be periodically legitimised. In order to undo their exclusion, or cut, from more or less official histories

Figure 4.1 Michelangelo's David on photographs of the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz. Digital photograph by Kelley Wilder (2008).

of photography, it has been necessary to develop appropriate cultural strategies – one of them being the material approach.

According to the material approach, it is not individual photographic works of art, but precisely the erratic masses of often anonymous documentary photographs, which in their complex materiality demand our special attention. The urgent need to study these materials was sparked around 1980 by the boom in critical studies of the history of academic disciplines and of museums (here I focus mainly on Europe and North America – a more global perspective is beyond the scope of this chapter). These studies cross paths with the need to come to terms with the huge number of photographs that the disciplines themselves – e.g., anthropology, archaeology, art history, geography, not to speak of the natural sciences – had accumulated in archives and museums. Masses of heretofore ignored photographs were brought to light following the breakup of colonial empires (Edwards 1992). In the meantime, the advent of digital technology led to a distancing from traditional photography that could now be historicised as a medium of the past, reactivating the immediate experience of analogue photographs. Research produced since then at the inter-section between photography studies, archive studies and material culture studies considers photographs not only as images, but also as material objects (among the seminal writings Schwartz 1995; Pinney 1997; Edwards 2001; Edwards & Hart 2004; for an overview, see Caraffa 2020). They exist, act and interact in time and space, and in social and cultural contexts, including photographic archives. Along the way, photo-objects take on different formats and new, often divergent functions and attributions of meaning (Bärnighausen et al. 2019). Photographic archives are also more than the sum of the images stored in them. They are dynamic organ-isms, ecosystems in which different agents act and interact: not only the photo-graphic objects themselves, the archival structures and technologies, the various institutional and academic ideologies, but also the archivists, and finally their users (Edwards 2011, 49; Caraffa 2017; Edwards 2019). This emphasis on the agency of archivists helps to disrupt traditional concepts of the archive as a place for the neutral and passive preservation of records of the past (Schwartz 2002; Cook & Schwartz 2002; Cook 2009; Schwartz 2011). Not only the record, but also the researcher is 'produced' by the archive's practices (Rose 2000, 561).

One of these practices is cutting. As Stefanie Klamm and Franka Schneider (2020a) recently argued, cutting practices in photo archives should not be consid-ered a form of destruction, but rather a transformation of the photographic objects.[3] Klamm and Schneider's analysis focuses on two case studies that show two dif-ferent archival procedures: cutting as rearranging, cutting as recycling. The first example deals with the Photography Collection of the Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Created around 1870 as a collection of photographic models for the teaching of the arts and crafts, it had to be rearranged in the late 1960s when the entire Kunstbibliothek was transformed into a museum for architecture. The new archive cabinets and boxes were too small for the original card mounts; these had to be trimmed to a new size. Moreover, while the collection was originally classified

by typologies such as 'doors' or 'staircases', the new classification system was strictly based on topography. The photographs with their mounts were sometimes cut in two parts and the two new photo-objects resulting from the cut were put into two different sections and boxes. In other cases, the edges were cut off just to adapt them to the size of the new boxes. In this process, sometimes even parts of the photographic images were removed. As a result of the cut as well as of the rearrangement under the new classification system, the inscriptions on the mounts had to be duplicated, adapted or completed. These types of internal procedures and actions in archives are usually not documented, except by the material clues on the cardboards themselves (e.g., pencil lines as cutting guides). Klamm was able to find remnants of the cuttings in a disused folder: some few trimmed edges that matched a corresponding number of cut photographic objects (Klamm & Schneider 2020a, 176–177, Figure 18). The results of this matching were shown in the 2018 Berlin exhibition *Unboxing Photographs. Working in the Photo Archive,*[4] some- times placing the two cut parts together, without materially reconstituting the ori- ginal photo-object. The existence and biography of each of the two photo-objects created by the cut were respected.

The case study examined by Schneider in the same chapter concerns the Hahne- Niehoff-Archiv at the Institut für Europäische Ethnologie of the Humboldt- Universität zu Berlin. This photo collection documenting Central-German rural customs was established between the 1920s and 1944 at the Landesanstalt für Vorgeschichte in Halle. Its programmatic aim was to demonstrate the continuity of the German "Volk" in a way that could be easily instrumentalised even before Hitler came to power in 1933. After 1945, the collection went to East Berlin and was incorporated into the Akademie der Wissenschaften of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). It contained not only photographic films and materials, but also roughly 11,000 record sheets with photographs and data from ethnographic sur- veys. The record sheets were cut and reused. Hundreds were trimmed to cut out the pictures. These were pasted on file cards and became part of a file on rural customs that was continued with photographs taken on surveys conducted by the GDR academy – which shows among others the endurance of ethnology meth- ods between the Weimar Republic, Nazi Germany and the GDR. In this case, new photo-objects were created through reuse, material transformation and new con- textualisation. Many other record sheets were just cut into strips and repurposed as separators in folders. In this second case, as Schneider argues, the photo-objects were transformed into mere objects that got a new function but apparently lost the indexical function of photographs to hint at something else. Only apparently however: they do hint at their original context as well as, among others, at the sur- prising acceptance of Nazi iconographic elements in the photographs (swastikas, Hitler salutes) in GDR society and academia (Klamm & Schneider 2020a, 175– 176; see also Wodtke 2020). Finally, these photo-objects were shown (Figure 4.2) in *Unboxing Photographs* where they could take on a further function as exhibition items, serving the curators' programmatic aims.

Figure 4.2 Display 'Der Große Schnitt II' ('The Big Cut II') with photo-objects from the Hahne-Niehoff Archive in the exhibition *Unboxing Photographs. Working in the Photo Archive*. Digital photograph by Dietmar Katz (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, 2018).

The two case studies presented by Klamm and Schneider stress the idea that photographic documents are not just collected and preserved in archives; rather, they are produced by the technologies of the archive as well as by the work of archivists, scholars and curators as 'historically-situated' actors (Schwartz 1995, 62).

In fact, the cut is omnipresent in the everyday life of a photo archive, and not only in special phases of its history. Consider the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max Planck Institute (hereinafter KHI), as one of the ecosystems in which photographic materiality manifests itself. I, too, operate in this ecosystem as a historically-situated actor, as I have been the head of the Photothek since 2006. The KHI was founded in 1897 on the initiative of scholars from the German-speaking area and included a collection of photographs from the very beginning. It was intended to serve as a base station for art-historical research, which at that time was concentrated on Italy. For over 125 years, the Photothek has been collecting photographic reproductions of works of Italian art and architecture (Dercks 2013, 2014, 2015), selecting, cataloguing, arranging and making them available to scholars – also through cutting.

Scissors, or rather paper cutters (Figure 4.3), come to the stage very early when photographs are processed to enter the Photothek's holdings. The white borders have to be trimmed before the photographic print, according to its size, can be pasted onto one of the card mount formats used in the Photothek: standard

Figure 4.3 Cutting photographs in the Photothek. Digital photograph by Helga Auer (2020).

(c. 24 × 34 cm), large (c. 31 × 37 cm), extra-large (c. 53 × 71 cm), each corresponding to the size of a box or folder. The production of the card mounts is a fundamental step in the entire archiving process. It includes cutting the cardboard itself to the appropriate size, cutting and pasting the photograph, adding stamps and inscriptions with the inventory number, the shelf mark according to the classification system, the description of the item, as well as any additional information that may come to light in the "biography" of a photo-object, such as a new attribution of the item represented or a digital reproduction number. Cardboards are essential to documentary photographs because they allow them to perform their function as evidence: they are stiffer than photographic prints and can be held and handled without touching the delicate surface of the pictures. They also offer the necessary space for stamps and inscriptions that can be read simultaneously while examining the picture, transforming the photograph both into an institutional and a scientific photo-object (Edwards 2014). Moreover, the cardboards work as evidence of the archival history of the photo-objects themselves. The decision to paste the photographs on cardboards shapes their life and makes them dependent on their paper context.

From the beginning, the Photothek's cardboards were not, apparently, cut in-house but rather purchased already cut to the right size. Some photo-objects stemming from private collections that were added to the Photothek's holdings, such as the Croquison collection, show card mounts that had been carefully

trimmed with a cutter and the corners rounded with a gouge by the original collector. Some bear the graphite marks of the cutting line (Caraffa 2015, 32 and Figure 1). When the Croquison donation entered the Photothek in 1967, some of the cardboards had to be cut to adapt them to the Photothek's archive boxes. This was done without any concern for the material traces they presented, leading, in some cases, to the loss of important information, although not to the cut of the picture itself.

In some other cases, also stemming from private archives of art historians, it was the cardboard that was cut, producing four diagonal slits in which to insert the four corners of the print. Sometimes, either in the Photothek or by the former collector, the photographs were trimmed (Figure 4.4) to the shape of the work of art represented in them (a tondo, a gothic altar panel in a gabled frame) before pasting them on the card mounts.

This is the most radical form of the decontextualisation of the work of art that is a common feature of photographic documentation in art history. Cutting out the environment – be it a church, a museum interior, a dealer's showroom – was recommended to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the represented object (Johnson 2013). This decontextualisation was often accomplished through retouching techniques.

Retouching mainly took place on the glass plate negatives, scraping with knives, drawing or painting on the emulsion surface. These techniques were particularly important for portrait photography, but it would be misleading to think that the production of scientific 'evidence' through photography was not connected to retouching and manipulating (Wilder 2009, 52, 58–65; and more in general Fineman 2012). Most frequently, photographic documentation of works of art shows the retouching of the background that was completely painted over or covered with a paper template, cut in the appropriate shape. This is the case with a negative (Figure 4.5) from the workshop of Anton Hautmann (1821–1862), a German photographer active in Florence; an important number of negatives and other materials from his and his heirs' studio were acquired in 2016 by the Florentine Photothek.

The digital reproduction shown here was realised with transmitted light from behind the negative, in order to make its visual content perceptible: a painting representing an angel with a tambourine. The remaining part of the glass plate, in which the environment was visible, was covered with a paper template that only partially survived: it is the black surface on the left side of the illustration, which appears so dark because the transmitted light is blocked by the piece of paper (actually ochre with black overpaint). The effect on the positive, that is, the photographic print, would have been a very light, uniform surface as a "neutral" background of the painting.[5] The traces of red paint correspond to the final retouching of the contours. In other cases, to the same end, a piece of white cloth (Figure 4.6) was hung behind the object while taking the photograph, often combining this with retouching.
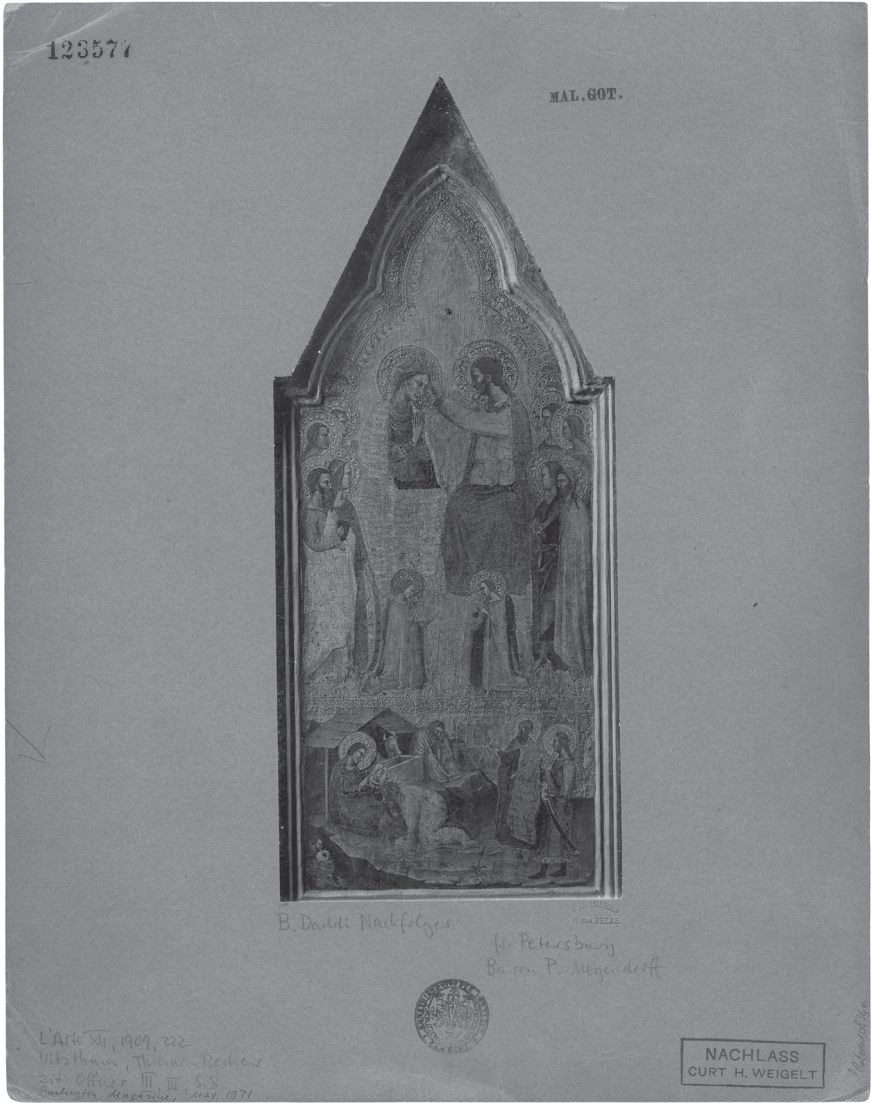
Figure 4.4 Fedor L'vovich Nikolaevskij, Coronation of the Virgin with Saints and Adoration of the Magi from Giotto's circle, aristotype, before 1910, 14.5–22.8 × 9.5 cm (photo), 30.5 × 24 cm (mount), KHI inv. no. 123577. Scan by Digitallabor KHI (2020).

Figure 4.5 Anton Hautmann, Copy after an Angel with Tambourine from the Linaioli Tabernacle by Fra Angelico, collodion wet plate, before 1862, 13 × 18 cm (glass plate), KHI neg. no. 0323. Digital photograph by Digitallabor KHI (2016).

Retouching could occur also on the positive, as it happened with a photo-object stemming probably from a dealer's archive: two silver gelatine prints depicting two helmets (Figure 4.7) were seemingly cut out from a bigger photograph, pasted together and outlined with white paint, almost certainly with the aim of highlighting the objects and preparing the image to serve as an illustration in a book or catalogue.

Figure 4.6 Premiata Fotografia Luigi Raffaelli-Armoni, Angel of the Annunciation from the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto, albumen print, before 1898, 25.3 × 18.6 cm (photo), KHI inv. no. 2390. Digital photograph by Digitallabor KHI (2009).
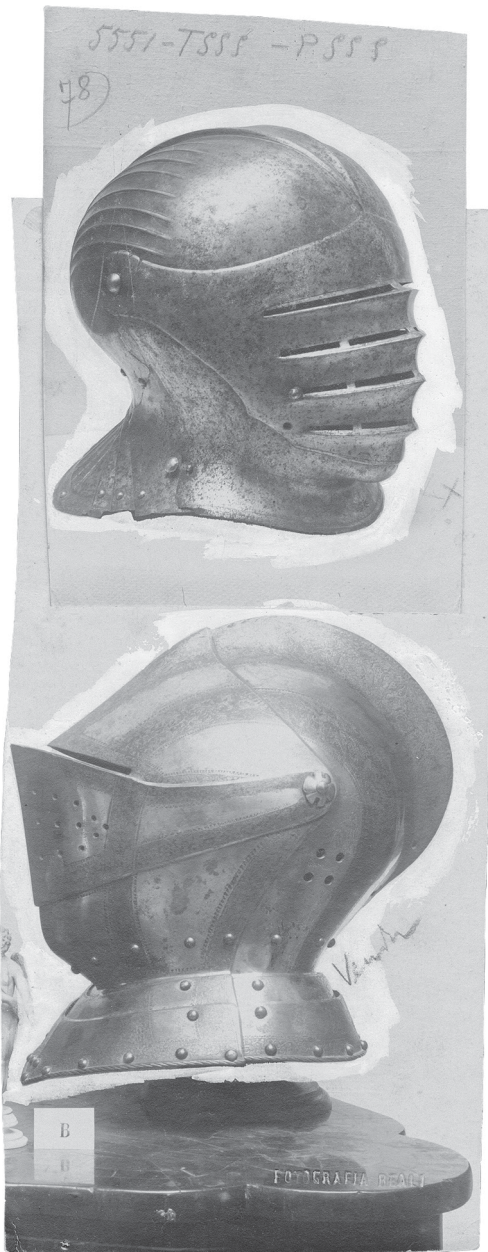
Figure 4.7 Fotografia Reali, two helmets, retouched silver gelatine prints cut and pasted together, ca. 1900, above: 9.4 × 6.6 cm (photo), below: 16.5 × 7.6 cm (photo), KHI inv. no. 615847. Digital photograph by Digitallabor KHI (2016).

Sometimes the distracting environment not only surrounded the photographed object, but it was even visible in it: this is the case with the photographic documentation of mirrors. As Julia Bärnighausen (2020) has shown, especially in dealers' photographs, the mirror surface was occasionally retouched to cut out the excess of reality reflected in it.

Retouching is a means for eliminating unwanted details that are recorded by the act of photographing but are considered disturbing by those using the picture. This practice leads back to the lively mid-nineteenth-century debate that accompanied the adoption of photography as an instrument and medium of art history. While some art historians and connoisseurs deplored the fact that photography would cut out the colours and the materiality of the art objects, others criticised photography because it does not cut out enough: it does not filter out intrusive elements such as, again, the environment, but also, for instance, stains and tears on a sheet of paper in the case of old master drawings. Early critics praised old reproduction techniques such as etching and lithography exactly because they were able to render a cleaned image of the work of art, eliminating the rest (Keultjes 2018).

Scissors are at work in many other daily tasks of a photographic archive (or in a photographer's studio), for instance, archiving film negatives. Cutting a film negative strip into portions or single frames to put them in appropriate sleeves is often a necessary conservation measure; on the other hand, the cut rescinds the temporal sequence of the frames. The use of passepartouts is another conservation and presentation form that, with the aim of protecting the fragile photographic print, tends to cut out the photographic image from its context. Passepartouts are used mainly for the proper and safe handling of fine art photographs, similarly to old master drawings. However, sometimes they are unavoidable in an archive of documentary photography, for instance, when photographs are sent on loan for exhibitions. In the already mentioned exhibition *Unboxing Photographs*, one installation was dedicated to showing the extent to which the viewer's gaze is directed and formed by the framing provided by the shape and size of the cut in the passepartout. A little experiment in a vitrine played with the reversal of the passepartout principle: a piece of ivory-white cardboard was cut in the shape and size of a photograph and laid on it as to cover only the image. The effect was an emphasis on the remaining part of the photo-object with the card mount and its stamps and inscriptions that are normally hidden by a traditional passepartout (Klamm & Schneider 2020b, 246). This is again a hint to the processes of framing, reframing and de-framing that are implicit in photographic as well as in archival practices.

Following the possible paths implicit in the term 'cut', we can momentarily move away from forms of physically cuttings to explore more metaphorical cuts that are nonetheless dense with material consequences. Indeed, a cut in a photo archive can also be intended as removal: when photo-objects are discarded, they are cut out from the "official" holdings, even if they are not physically eliminated. I continue to use the practices of the Florentine Photothek as an example, with the necessary disclaimer that not every archive functions the same way. Cutting as

discarding occurs for instance with so-called duplicates: when a "new" photograph documenting a certain art object entered the Photothek, the corresponding "old" picture was often removed and put in the boxes of the *Dubletten* or Duplicates. Over time, some duplicates were given to other institutions as exchange materials and were hence irrevocably cut off. Many boxes of duplicates are still kept in the Photothek and, for the last ten years, have been a quarry of interesting findings: from our current scholarly and archival point of view, a blurred albumen print scattered with scribbles and stamps might be much more remarkable (that means valuable) than the neat silver gelatine print of the same subject that replaced it a century ago. For a photograph, moving from one box to another very often means a downgrade, for instance, if it moves to the Duplicates, that is, to the metaphorical and physical margins of the archive. However, it can also mean an upgrade, as is the case if the photograph moves from the Duplicates directly to the special collections of the Photothek, called Cimelia Photographica.

Yet, this type of move is not intended as a process of musealisation. A well-known phenomenon, related to the fine art photography market, is the "discovery" of photographic materials that were "anonymous" up to then, with the subsequent canonisation of individuals as artists (think of Vivian Maier) or of single photographs as works of art. This process of apparent valorisation cuts the photographs from their original context to put them into an (often private) museum collection. On the contrary, moving some photo-objects to a special collection should not mean to separate them from the archive as a whole. Rather, they keep being active within the archival ecosystem. It is not a question of claiming their artistic value, but rather of drawing attention to their genuine 'archival value' (Vestberg 2008). Cutting out has always to do with value, or rather with changing values over time.

What is described here with the Duplicates can be likened to the very process of selection of new accessions that is implicit in each archive. Archival selection sanctions the (art-historical) canon not only through the inclusion of certain photographs (and of the works of art represented in them), but also through the excision of other photographs and objects. Appraisal theory focuses precisely on the archivist's active role and responsibility in taking decisions about what records should or should not be kept in accordance with societal values (Cook 2011). Appraisal is a political act because it states not only what is included, but also what is excluded (cut out) from the archive, that means marginalised, ignored, potentially destroyed (Cook 2011, 174–175).

There is a certain similarity to the (pre-archival) selection proposed by photographers' sale catalogues, too: these were the main tools that documentary photographic collections used in making their systematic acquisitions (parallel to donations and bequests) and also a kind of first-level inventory of the artistic heritage, driven not least by commercial concerns (Cavanna & Mambelli 2019). In some respects, only the works of art that were offered on the market through the photographers' sale catalogues in the form of photographic reproductions could aspire to enter the canon of art history – in his *Musée Imaginaire* André Malraux

stated that since the nineteenth century the history of art has been identical with a 'histoire de ce qui est photographiable' (Malraux 1947, 32). This is also the history of the photographic campaigns that have received funding or not: funding can be granted or cut. In general, any funding cut produces very material results in a photo archive, which can react for instance by cutting the number of new acquisitions or substituting expensive photographic acquisitions with cost-free clippings from print proofs.

If we continue to reflect on the cut as a mechanism that helps us highlight forms of exclusion, we shall draw attention to the cut in cataloguing as well as in digitisation campaigns. What information is included or excluded from the card of a card catalogue, or from the mount of a photograph, or from the corresponding dataset in a database? Which parts of the holdings are digitised and which not, according not least to the available funding? Lastly, traditional practices in photo archives tend to cut out the people, that is, mainly the archivists who, for generations, have been shaping the photographic documents and the archival structures, as if their anonymity would underline the neutrality of the archive as an institution. Rather, this human factor plays a considerable role in the reconstruction of the stories embedded in the photographs.

The Photothek is not only made by cutting; it is in itself an archive of cutting practices in art history. The photographs as objects bear the traces not only of their archival, but also of their pre-archival itineraries. Thus, many photographs in the Photothek's holdings come from donations and bequests of scholars and permit a glimpse into their intellectual and also material laboratory. In other terms, these holdings are archives of the creative practices of art history. A good example is the bequest of Gustav Ludwig (1854–1905). A German physician and art historian who lived between London and Venice, he belonged to the community of scholars who contributed to the foundation of the KHI in 1897. When his bequest came to the KHI in 1906, it was cut, that is to say dismembered: the books went to the KHI Library, the written documents and annotations went to the Institute's Archive, and the photographs went to the Photothek. This collection of approximately 2,500 pictures, mainly on Renaissance art in Venice, was inventoried in 1908 and dismembered again: the single photo-objects were separated according to the classification system that is based on the represented object. For instance, a photographic documentation of Titian's *Vanity of the World* went to the section Painting/Renaissance/Tiziano, in the box dedicated to works by Titian that are preserved in the Pinakothek in Munich as well as in other museums in Germany.

At the time of the 1908 inventory campaign, however, a few photo-objects from the Ludwig legacy were cut from the holdings of the Photothek, meaning that they were not inventoried and thus not integrated in the official study collection. Some of them were inventoried later, around 1930, others as late as 2009. I refer in particular to two groups of photo-objects related to a painting cycle by Vittore Carpaccio in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, originally displayed in the St. Ursula chapel (Caraffa 2011b, 25–36) and the reconstruction of a piece of Renaissance furniture

called *restello da camera* that included a mirror (Caraffa & Goldhahn 2013). In these cases, as well as in Ludwig's investigations about a dispersed fresco cycle by Bonifacio Veronese in the destroyed Palazzo dei Camerlenghi in Venice (see Caraffa 2019), he was faced with the task of putting together visual information (the photographs of the scattered works of art), data from his extensive studies in Venetian archives, as well as the pure reconstruction of the spatial context, which was assigned to a draftsman. Ludwig's collages (Figure 4.8) or assemblages are based literally on cut and paste combined with drawings, painted areas and written annotations. These range from the dates of the consulted archive documents to instructions to the publishing house on how to reproduce the plates as illustrations in his books.

These plates are true palimpsests with multiple and temporal layers, which reach up to the traces left on them by the archive, such as inventory numbers and captions. They fascinate contemporary viewers precisely because of their material qualities. Yet it was probably on the basis of the same material qualities (rather than their subject) that they were considered not "clean" enough to be included in the 1908 inventory campaign.

In the art market too, different forms of cutting were applied to make photographs into business instruments. Lynn Catterson (2020) has recently reconstructed such practices within the establishment of Stefano Bardini, one of the leading art dealers active in Florence in the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Bardini's photographs were used among others for the preparation of displays and auctions: groups of objects were carefully staged in his premises and photographed with a cloth behind them to cut out the background. These photographs were used as illustrations in the printed auction catalogues. In a second step, the photographs (or new prints from the same negatives) were cut, isolating each single art object. The pieces were then glued onto another piece of cardboard in the order in which they were auctioned (Catterson 2020, 85–97 and Figures 15–17). Some photographs from the Bardini company are preserved in the Photothek and document (Figure 4.9) the same procedures.

In this chapter, the cut has proven to be a very useful metaphor and heuristic category for exploring the epistemological potential of (art-historical) photo archives. Applying the material approach, I have been able to focus on mechanisms of knowledge production, reconstructing some of the practices that shape, and have shaped, photographic objects and documents over time. This highlights the role of photo archives as laboratories of the academic disciplines. Moreover, with my metaphorical scissors, I have tried to deconstruct some of the assumptions that still accompany a very widespread view of archives, photography, *and* sciences, especially concerning their presumed objectivity and neutrality. This is explicitly intended as a contribution to the international, cross-disciplinary debate on the role and function of photographs and photographic archives in scholarship as well as in postdigital societies. At the same time, it provides food for thought for a re-definition of our own role as archivists *and* scholars *and* curators.
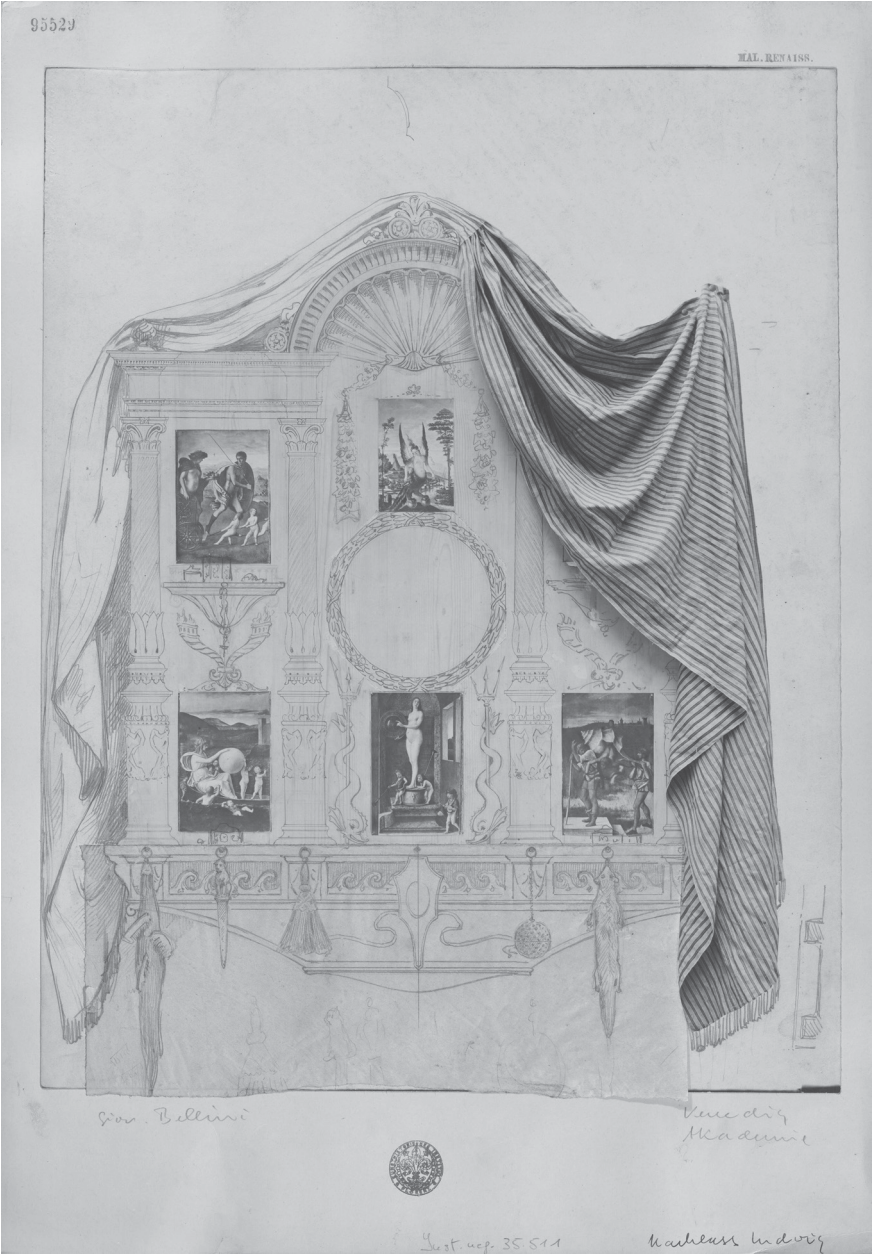
Figure 4.8 Gustav Ludwig's reconstruction of a *restello da camera* with allegories by Giovanni Bellini, Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, silver gelatine print and wash drawing, before 1905, 38,6 × 31 cm (photo), KHI inv. no. 95529. Digital photography by Digitallabor KHI (2011).

Figure 4.9 Unknown photographer, bust of a man and a woman attributed to Alessandro Vittoria, probably from the legacy of Elia Volpi, silver gelatine print, before 1918, 18 × 15.5–17.5 cm, KHI inv. no. 607441. Scan by Digitallabor KHI (2013).

In conclusion, I would like to return to the subject of the margins of the archive, which I have touched on at several times. Cutting, as Maria Luisa Catoni and Linda Bertelli (2021) suggest, always produces borders. Along these edges, together with the Duplicates and other boxes of photographs removed from the centre of the Photothek for various reasons, there is a box labelled 'Fehlende Fotos', missing photographs. Saying that missing photographs can be collected in a box may seem strange at first glance. The box in question actually contains the card mounts of the missing photographs, that is, photographs that have been stolen over time. Generally, they were torn from the cardboard; in one case, the photograph was literally cut away leaving a rectangular hole in the mount (Figure 4.10).
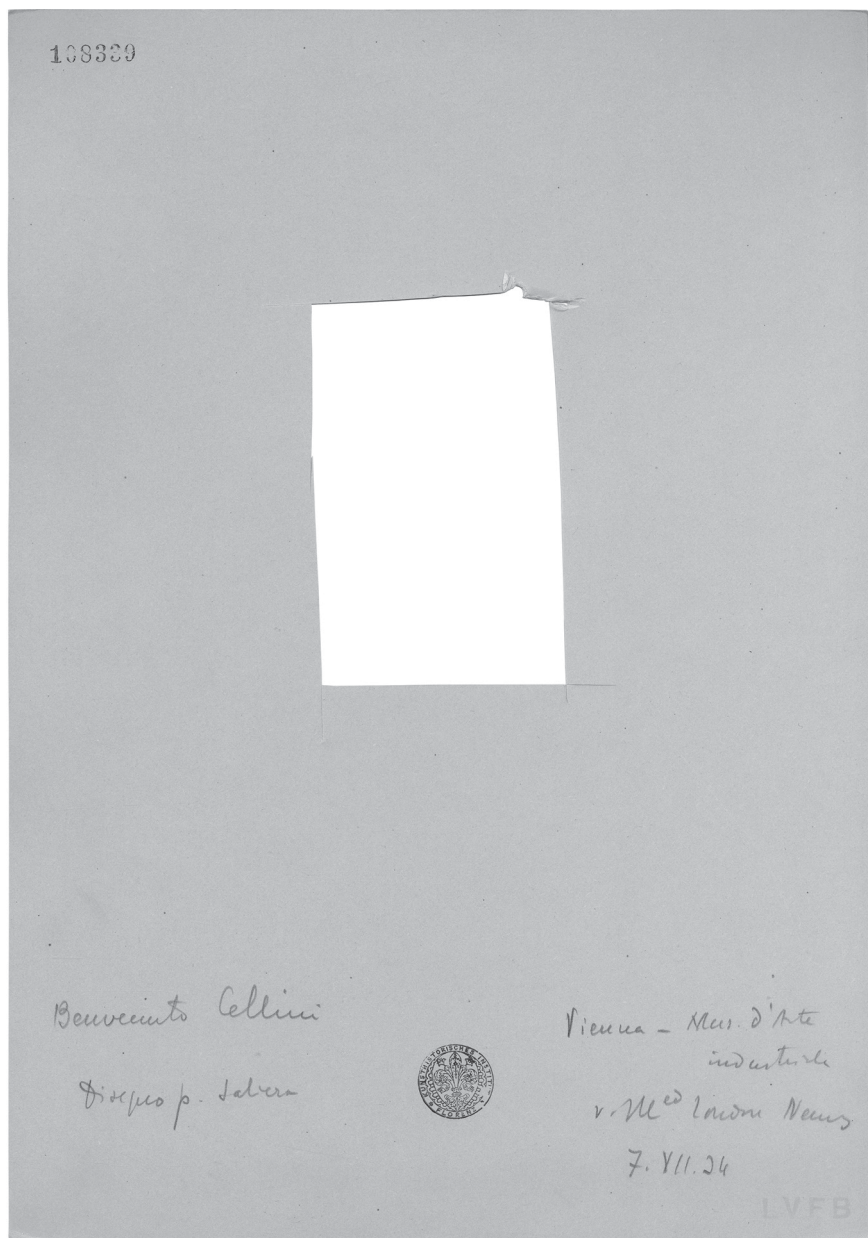
Figure 4.10 Card mount with information about the missing picture: 'Benvenuto Cellini / Disegno p. Saliera / Vienna–Mus. D'Arte / industriale / v. III[ed] London News / 7. VII. 24 / LVFB [Luigi Vittorio Fossati Bellani]', 34 × 24 cm (mount), acquisition date: 26 February 1936, KHI inv. no. 108339. Scan by Digitallabor KHI (2020).

The cardboards in the 'Fehlende Fotos' box always provide detailed information about the stolen photographs. All the inscriptions and stamps are clearly visible on the mount, so that we can read all the details about the work represented in the photograph: the inventory number that can allow us to go back to the date of the inventory, sometimes there is the photographer's name or even the provenance of the photograph. Often the date when the theft was detected by the archivists is written on a post-it. What we can no longer see is the photograph itself, either as an object or its visual content. In Barthes's terms, the cardboard with its cut can be interpreted as a reference or index to the fact that the photo-object 'has been there'.[6] Cutting in this case means loss, literally a hole that can never be filled. However, we can look through this hole to discover new photographic itineraries in the archive.

Notes

1   I am grateful to Maria Luisa Catoni and Linda Bertelli who invited me to give a key-note at the Winter School 2019 of the IMT in Lucca 'Being on the Border. History and Theory of Cut in Humanities and Social Sciences'. I had the opportunity to elaborate on this theme in a shorter version of this paper (Caraffa 2021). Many thanks to my colleagues Helga Auer, Ute Dercks, Almut Goldhahn, Pier Gianni Piredda and especially Dagmar Keultjes, as well as to Tiziana Serena for our enlightening conversations.

2   As I have argued elsewhere (Caraffa 2011b), I do not consider the traditional distinction between archive and library very helpful. Rather, I am interested in what Marlene Manoff (2010) has called 'archival effects' and I believe in the heuristic and epistemological potential of a broader definition of (photo) archive that includes different kinds of (photographic) sedimentations. See also Manoff (2004). Furthermore, I embrace Terry Cook's intellectual paradigm for archives, which shifts the emphasis 'from information to knowledge' (Cook 1984–1985).

3   See also Wodtke (2020).

4   *Unboxing Photographs: Working in the Photo Archive*, Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 16 February 2018 to 27 May 2018, curatorial concept by Julia Bärnighausen, Costanza Caraffa, Stefanie Klamm, Franka Schneider, and Petra Wodtke (www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/unboxing-photographs/) [viewed 10 May 2023]. The exhibition featured artistic interventions by Johannes Braun and Toby Cornish (JUTOJO), Ola Kolehmainen, Joachim Schmid, Elisabeth Tonnard, and Akram Zaatari. The exhibition as well as the book are part of the project 'Photo-Objects – Photographs as (Research) Objects in Archaeology, Ethnology and Art History' (www.khi.fi.it/en/forschung/photothek/foto-objekte/index.php) [viewed 10 May 2023].

5   The Photothek does not hold the print corresponding to this negative.

6   In his seminal work *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes described the indexical nature of photography with unparalleled effectiveness: each photograph confronts us simultaneously with the absence of the person or object represented *and* the certainty that it 'has been there' (Barthes 1981, p. 115) in front of the camera at the moment of the shutter click. Barthes' discourse implies a reflection on the temporalities of photography that could also apply to archives.

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Part II

With the archive

Energy

Chapter 5

Valentine's jacket

Maryanne Dever

Outside the context of the costume museum, old or used clothing is viewed with considerable ambivalence and even a little distaste. But what of items of clothing encountered in archival settings? What happens when these traces of bodies are set alongside more conventional bodies of archival knowledge? In reflecting on my encounter with the striking patchwork jacket (Figure 5.1) sewn by the writer Sylvia Townsend Warner (1893–1978) for her lover Valentine Ackland (1906–1969), I want to tease out what the touch of fabric can offer to our understandings of intimacy and materiality in a creative archive. I'm especially interested in what this jacket might offer to our understandings of creative expression and archival intimacies that extend beyond text-based study to encompass, for example, the arts of needlework and (self)fashioning. What might this jacket – once somewhat neglected but now on public display – offer to our thinking about the relations between materiality, creativity and intimacy in the lives of these women? And how can the archiving of such objects productively unsettle or extend the established terms and tools for archive-based literary research?

Sylvia Townsend Warner achieved early literary success with the novels *Lolly Willowes* (1926) and *Mr Fortune's Maggot* (1927) before going on to become widely recognised for her novels, short fiction and poetry. Valentine Ackland's published output was more limited[1] and her reputation eclipsed by the more successful Warner. She was nevertheless quite prolific and, on her death, left around 2000 poems in different states of drafting (Bingham 2008, 6). The Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland Archive is a particularly rich archival collection containing their literary manuscripts, personal correspondence and the transactional paperwork of professional writing lives. It also included the jacket under discussion in this chapter. It is not a random archival collection but the result of quite conscious and studied efforts. As Micir notes, in their later years, Warner and Ackland had 'kept themselves busy remaking wills, appointing literary executors, leaving instructions for themselves and others about how to order their posthumous lives and works' (2019, 36). Following Ackland's death, Warner progressively immersed herself in the careful sorting, editing and annotating of their intimate letters and on crafting Ackland's posthumous reputation as a poet. Warner was sensitive to the absolutely pivotal role these papers would play not only in the making

Figure 5.1 Handmade jacket sewn by Sylvia Townsend Warner for Valentine Ackland. Dorset Museum. Photo: author.

and maintaining of both their literary reputations but also for future understandings of their relationship. Ann Cvetkovich (2002) has highlighted the challenges that frequently exist for those attempting to trace histories of queer intimacy, but in this regard Warner and Ackland's archive represents a significant departure, as it not only captures a rich record of their creative outputs, but also documents the everyday dimensions of their shared lives.

While Warner's and Ackland's literary papers were recently relocated to the Dorset History Centre, I encountered them, along with the jacket, in their original location in what was then the Dorset County Museum.[2] On my first visit to the one room archive high up under the eaves of the museum, I wrongly assumed that the jacket hanging behind the door under a nondescript plastic sheath was someone's dry cleaning.[3] When I discovered it was part of the archive, I was filled with that familiar combination of curiosity and embarrassment that so frequently accompanies the desire to view and handle non-traditional archival inclusions. These feelings are generally heightened when the item in question also falls outside the more

routine three-dimensional objects we expect to encounter such as a writer's pens, typewriters and general desk top aids to their professional activities. The jacket, it turned out, was neither the only three-dimensional object held in the archive nor even the only item of fabric or apparel. In 1980, the Museum was given the opportunity to acquire for the archive a series objects that had once adorned Warner's and Ackland's home. Each item was considered to be in some way significant or telling with respect to their lives, tastes and habits. They included a 'typical' pair of Warner's brown boots ('to show the shape of her feet'[4]) resting on top of a box containing her plaster death mask, jewellery, ornaments and handmade dolls.[5]

The objects that researchers encountered in the archive were not on display in the sense of having been formally curated. They sat casually on benchtops to be seen and handled (Figure 5.2). While now in storage, in their original disposition upstairs in the museum, they lent an even more intimate quality to an already intimate archival space, replicating in a modest way the two women's domestic interior where 'beautiful objects' were 'everywhere' (Minter 2015, 47). But these objects were more than merely decorative; they recalled how domestic worlds and intimate relations are made and sustained and how 'a particularly important

Figure 5.2 Objects encountered in the archive included photos and sketches of Warner and Ackland, small tapestries by John Craske and Warner's straw work box. Photo: author.

feature of homemaking is its material dimension – those decisions and actions which mould the design of domestic materiality' (Blunt & Dowling 2006, cited in Gorman-Murray 2008, 287). In this respect, the various ornaments, artworks and tools gathered in the archive pointed to the work such objects do: how they act as triggers for, or a traces of, feeling states we associate with intimacy, desire, love and loss, something of which Warner herself was acutely aware. When, in the early days of their relationship, she received from Ackland 'two small snail-shells, one orange, one lemon-yellow, smelling of Valentine',[6] she described in her diary how she promptly 'shut them firmly into a box with a lid, for one has no defence, no possible counter-sallies against the inanimate' (Harman 1994, 71).

On the one hand, these objects and their casual display may have reflected the extremely limited curatorial resources available at the time both to this archive and to the Dorset County Museum at large.[7] But on the other, they might be taken to embody some of the possible tensions inherent in housing a literary archive within a museum and objects within an archive. While they exist within similar knowledge-power configurations, in practice museums and archives do different things. They generally house different categories of artefact and they organise and make those artefacts available in fundamentally different ways. Museums are founded on the display, study and preservation of three-dimensional objects, whereas archives focus principally on documents or textual records organised around the principle of provenance. Katie Rudolph writes of how in archival literature 'little has been said about objects in archives', particularly in comparison to discussion of 'textual, visual, and audio records' (2011, 27). She also notes that many archives do not have the right environment and space to preserve objects and that appraisal theories and techniques for conventional archival formats may not be appropriately applied to objects. The question of whether objects belong in archives is also taken up by Lisa Darms who observes that 'to arrange and describe objects as something distinct from documents is implicitly to claim that they do not play a role within the fonds, and do not provide evidence of, or information about, the actions of a creator' (2009, 143–144). Such practices, she highlights, specifically ignore or deny how an object 'embodies meaning through its materiality' (144) and how documents too might be considered as things. It is unclear whether the previous casual situating of objects alongside documents in this particular archive indicated a resolution or simply a deferral of these questions. An object movement ticket provides some possible clues to the ongoing epistemological uncertainties generated by housing objects such as Ackland's jacket in the context of an archive within a museum. This ticket records the 2013 transfer of the jacket within the Museum from 'Hanging Textiles' to the Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland Archive for the purposes of 'research'. The question of whether the move was to be a temporary or permanent one is listed as 'to be discussed', suggesting that at that point in time – and after three decades in the Museum – the jacket's proper place remained unclear. It is not surprising, therefore, that several years later I discovered the jacket behind the door of the archive and the object movement ticket tucked into the corner of a desk blotter in the same room. But while distinctions between

objects and the documents that more usually comprise archival holdings often turn on questions of the former's materiality, I question the efficacy of such a distinction both generally and in relation to this collection and this object. Such a distinction can only be sustained by overlooking how paper too might be figured in terms of its materiality (see Dever 2013) and how individual objects might be understood as constituting archives in themselves. I have written elsewhere (Dever 2019) of what a sensitivity to paper's liveliness and its capacities might offer to engagements with Ackland's and Warner's papers and of how in their very materiality these documents might generate particular affects and sensations. In the same vein, I would point to Giuliana Bruno's claim that 'clothes are such a material archive' (2014, 225), noting that while this is a loose use of the term 'archive', it nevertheless highlights the manner in which Ackland's jacket might indeed play a documentary role and sit quite legitimately within an archive.[8]

How did this jacket come to be part of the archive? It arrived separately from the objects I've described above and – given Ackland's and Warner's protracted and studied shaping of their joint archive – one might question whether they would have countenanced its inclusion. That it survived is rather miraculous as Warner disposed of Ackland's clothes swiftly in the period following her death. Within hours of interring her ashes, she was offering mutual friends their pick of 'Valentine's shirts or pullovers', as well as her 'handbags, wallets, [and] head-scarves'.[9] Such haste might appear cold, but it could equally reflect a generous desire to make mementos available those who might wish to share in the memory of Ackland, particularly given – as I highlight below – how Ackland's sartorial flair was integral to her embodied self. But there is also an argument to be made that such gestures may have helped Warner to avoid confronting the palpable traces of an absent body. This latter interpretation is borne out in a June 1971 diary entry where Warner writes:

> It is the body which grieves, grieves for the body of the lost one. I realised this as I was sorting clothes […] and took up her gloves – her paws, her little paws – and looked at her bedroom slippers. I do think her soul survives; but my body grieves and grieves for hers.
>
> (Harman 1994, 357)

Warner here invokes the intense intimacy of the relations between bodies and clothes, an intimacy that is still powerfully felt despite separation and death. Importantly, as Karen de Perthuis reflects,

> [t]o believe in the possibility of such haunting is to banish the notion that clothes are empty of the person who once wore them. Instead of inanimate, ghostly and empty, they are poetic, vital and alive; the dress, the jacket, the jumper, a body remembered.
>
> (2016, 68)

Ackland's distinctive wardrobe and its lively capacity for haunting are further attested to in a diary entry from Warner nearly a year after Ackland's death:

> The wind has risen […] I half slept, half woke, listening to it, seeing her again in her triumphal gleam and beauty; and remembering her shirts, their colours: the scarlet, the grey & silver brocade, the cobalt blue canvas-cloth, the willow green silk.

She continues:

> Then to sleep, to a dream of meeting her […] and the dark brown topcoat she was wearing.

(Harman 1994, 348)

Warner's preference for disposing of items from Ackland's wardrobe may ultimately have contributed to this jacket's survival. She gave it to their close friend Bea Howe who donated it to the archive several years after Warner's death.[10] Howe was one of the earliest witnesses to the unfolding intimacy between Warner and Ackland and, during her initial encounters with Ackland, she came to recognise her penchant for well-made clothing and expensive accessories. She recalls visiting the pair in their cottage in Chaldon Herring and the vision of Ackland in 'a silk shirt and Morocco slippers […] standing in the shadowy archways of the door [like] someone waiting in the wings to make an entrance on stage' (1985, 6). Howe likely noticed these details since she was, by her own admission, 'dress-conscious' (Howe 1981, 39). But her observations were about more than consumption, style or drama: she speculates on the way in which Ackland's very particular modes of dress may have functioned in fact as 'a kind of protective clothing such as Nature gives to disguise an animal living in the wild' (Howe 1985, 6). The museum's original paper catalogue record for the jacket had it dating from 1930, based presumably on its donor's account of the object. However, it was in fact sewn a few years later according to Warner's description of finishing it which she gives in a letter dated 4 April 1937 to Elizabeth Wade White,[11] the woman who later became a serious rival for Ackland's affections: 'And I have finished Valentine's patchwork coat of many colours, and she looks most beautiful in it' (Haring Judd 2012, 42).

   The catalogue notes describe the item as a 'tailored edge to edge jacket' lined in red silk crepe de chine. Its velvet lapels give the impression of a smoking jacket of the kind probably worn for intimate evening gatherings at home. The patchwork comprises silk, velvet, corduroy, satin and taffeta, and while it was machine-sewn, it was hand-finished with herringbone stitching 'in two strand red embroidery cotton' and edged in red Russia braid. Tiny hand stitches (Figure 5.3) reveal the detailed work of construction and finishing that the peaked lapels required. The jacket is in good condition with only minor signs of wear on some of the more fragile silken fabrics. The distinctive form of patchwork is known as 'crazy' patchwork or 'crazy'

Figure 5.3 Detail of jacket lapel. Dorset Museum. Photo: author.

quilting, the name apparently deriving from the 'crooked' and 'confused' nature of the pattern (Brick 2008, 34). Warner has set broad corduroy in muted brown and olive tones against moiré silks and taffeta shot with metallic threads of silver. 'Crazy' patchwork evokes excitement and movement as the randomly assembled colours interact to produce what Diane Young refers to as 'an aura of energy or light' (2006, 173). Importantly too, given the function of this jacket as an elaborate handmade gift in the context of an intimate relationship, Young reminds us of how colours have agency, that they can 'effect complicated ideas and relationships instantaneously' and that we often overlook how people 'communicate with coloured things' (2006, 180).

Considerable effort evidently went into making this jacket and the labour involved is an index of the emotional investment or weight that it carried. This form of patchwork is noted for its tactile as well as its visual qualities. The finish is described as 'highly embodied' and 'sensually stimulating' (Gordon & Horton 2009, 95). The riotous surface of the jacket invites touch, something its open storage in the archive made possible, but which its formal display now does not. Historians have pointed to the ways in which patchworked items generally function 'as veritable albums of collected fabrics and memories of the collecting process' (Gordon & Horton 2009, 95). It is known that Warner generally worked with significant fabrics and not random scraps in her patchworking and, in this sense, the jacket she produced is not only a new synthetic object, but also a memory object, one in which each randomised fragment carries strong associative possibilities. In this respect, Warner is presenting to a loved one an object richly and tangibly

invested with herself and with a set of meaningful associations. If we remember too that the word 'text' comes from the medieval Latin *textus*, meaning quite literally a 'thing woven' or something joined or fitted together (Howe 2014, 19), then the distance between text and textile starts to collapse and with it our tendency to position objects such as this jacket as distant from – or irrelevant to – literary investigations. For example, attention has been focused on the way in which Warner's and Ackland's relationship not only developed through a variety of texts – intimate letters, notes, diaries, autobiographical writings – but that those texts arguably constituted the very space for that intimacy to be sustained and negotiated. Margaretta Jolly refers to Warner's letters as 'epistolary gifts that Ackland in the end could not live without' (Jolly cited in Granne 2014, 781). The jacket that Warner carefully fashioned was arguably another such gift, another 'woven thing' or material expression of their emotional entanglement.

At the same time, this focus on intimacy and materiality doesn't mean that Warner's jacket-making should be read exclusively in terms of the home-made and as lacking any connection to a wider world of either fashion or creative experimentation. There are other possible framings for her efforts, including via a more flexible reading of modernist cultural production. Lisa Cohen has argued for an expanded understanding of what constitutes modernist cultural production and modernist 'experiments in living' to include 'work in textile designs, the design of furniture and other household objects, interior decoration, bookmaking, bookselling, magazine publishing and fashion'. As she highlights, 'these experiments provided a range of expression for […] women who were breaking away from their families and attempting to create something new in their lives and in the culture' (2005, 380). That Warner and Ackland are popularly imagined in terms of their rural setting in Dorset rather than metropolitan modernist coteries should not be interpreted as their complete dislocation from all things modern, fashionable and urban, especially with respect to their earlier London years. Indeed, the familiar photographic portraits of the young Warner by Cecil Beaton[12] provide a clue to her connections to fashion and the modern at that time. One of these images appeared in the pages of *Vogue* in 1927 at a time when British *Vogue* under its second editor, Dorothy Todd, was actively seeking to mix fashion news with a focus on contemporary literature and the modernist avant-garde. This suggests Warner was not entirely removed from the forum for writers and artists that the magazine provided in this period and the work that Todd and her assistant and sometime lover, Madge Garland, had done to transform the magazine from a staid fashion staple into an influential beacon for all things new (Cohen 2005, 379–380). It was Garland who introduced Beaton to *Vogue* and it was Garland again who organised a lunch for the newly published Warner to meet Virginia Woolf. But what is more tantalising is the reference to Garland in the same period wearing a multi-coloured, hand-block-printed silk scarf by Sonia Delaunay (Cohen 2012, 203). Delaunay, a multidisciplinary avant-garde artist, had pioneered the concept of 'simultanism' which explored how different colours interact to create impressions of movement and depth (Figure 5.4). This idea is perhaps most fully realised in her celebrated

Figure 5.4 Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), Simultaneous Dresses (Three Women, Forms, Colours), 1925. Oil on canvas. 146 × 114 cm. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. Inv. no. 519 (1981.30). Photographer: Artelan/Alamy. Reproduced with permission.

simultaneous dress ('robe simultanée') of 1913 in which a dynamic patchwork swirl of colours and fabrics move 'in a set of interlocking arcs of color across the body' (Cohen 1978, 180).

Warner may not have been directly influenced by – or even aware of – Delaunay's designs, but the early decades of the twentieth century were a period in which experiments around the properties of colour featured strongly in art and design. This was evident in the innovations in textiles, interior design and bright colour block work associated with the Omega Workshops (1913–1919), the artists' collective of which Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant had been co-directors, along with

Roger Fry. Notably too, bold and colourful dressmaking was one of the more prof-itable aspects of the Omega Workshops, their strikingly modern fabric designs echoing the block colours and dynamic designs of Matisse and Kandinsky (Garrity 1999, 39). Bea Howe remembers Warner sewing brightly coloured cotton curtains for her Inverness Terrace sitting room onto which she embroidered appliqué figures 'who came to be known as Duncan and Vanessa' (Howe 1981, 40). Indeed, Howe's recollections of the first days of her friendship with Warner in the 1920s place them in proximity to the Bloomsbury set, in particular the writer David Garnett with whom Warner would forge a lifelong friendship.

Several years later when preparing to welcome Ackland to the first cottage home they were to share in Chaldon Herring, Warner was again endeavouring to use colour and texture to create something original, expressing pleasure at the 'eider-downs in their scarlet madapolam [sic] covers' and her 'egg-shell porcelain coffee cups, white outside, lined with sugar-almond pink' (Pinney 1998, 13). Warner's eye for decorative details is further confirmed in her description in a letter to Ackland from April 1946 of new acquisitions she had seen at the Tate Gallery: 'a Gertler, Duncan's portrait of Vanessa, and a *Bonnard!*'. As the exclamation point suggests, she was particularly moved by the new Pierre Bonnard (Figure 5.5), writing:

Figure 5.5 Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), Le Café (Coffee), 1915. Oil paint on canvas. Tate Gallery (N05414). Reproduced with permission of Tate Images.

> It is a table, spread with a cherry and white checked cloth, a tea-pot, and at the
> further side two women and a dog with tea cups. But the whole centre of the
> picture is just the painting of the chequered cloth, and it is terrific.
>
> (Pinney 1998, 206)

Scholars of modernist interior design have pointed to the connections between women's efforts to create new styles and forms of domestic space and their desire for new forms of intimacy that challenged the confines of heterosexuality. Indeed, as Jasmine Rault observes, at this point in time, interior design with its 'potential power to create new modern things (bodies and subjects)' was 'perfectly poised to generate that slippery space of sapphic modernist becoming' (2010, 37). In this respect, Warner's colourful efforts in sewing, embroidery and homemaking arguably double as the material expressions of a wider and historically more telling set of creative imperatives.

Beyond the jacket's making, what of its wearing? Fashion and self-fashioning were intimately connected for Valentine Ackland. The London studio room she occupied when she and Warner first met is described as 'covered in drafts of poems, books, expensive accessories and beautifully tailored clothes' (Harman 1989, 108). Her transformation from London debutante to aspiring poet was marked in a series of dramatic changes in personal styling. Indeed, one of Ackland's most enduring and successful creative achievements was arguably her strikingly elegant appearance. In July 1925 on the day of her ill-fated wedding to Richard Turpin, she opted for an Eton crop and never again wore her hair in any other style. Her escape from the marriage some months later was signalled in the purchase and wearing of a pair of men's flannel trousers as she continued the work of remaking herself from the outside in. With her distinct styling, complemented by a smooth, cropped hairstyle, Ackland successfully fashioned a new modern identity for herself. Warner described her look as that of 'a young, fastidious, urbane pirate' with 'a lappet of smooth hair' (Harman 1994, 71).

But Ackland's particular performance of androgynous style was not altogether unusual for the period or for a woman of her class. As Muzzarelli notes, 'both as a symbol of gender identity as well as a manifestation of feminism, dressing in male clothing at the beginning of the twentieth century became one of the most interesting emblems of "something modern"' (2018, 274). Neither can her styling be taken as an unproblematic signalling of a certain set of sexual desires. Indeed, while the figure of the boyish or man-dressed woman has come down to us as a pervasive image of lesbianism, Laura Doan has provided a very detailed critique of the assumption that such sartorial preferences in this period were always and necessarily an announcement of sexuality, arguing that what we now take to be 'visual icons of lesbianism had more to do with the fashionable boyish or mannish female or indeed of twenties fashion in general' (1998, 669–670).

Through a close analysis of sources such as the fashion and society press of the day, Doan identifies how a certain 'openness and fluidity, allowed some women, primarily of the upper middle and upper classes, to exploit the ambiguity that

tolerated, even encouraged, the crossing over of fixed labels and assigned categories' (1998, 670). Trouser wearing by women which had been tolerated during the First World War re-emerged in the late 1920s to become synonymous with fashion, youth and high-society sporting activities, while the figures of the Modern Girl and the Boyette became staples of *Punch* magazine satire. Doan identifies how it was only with the 1928 obscenity trial over Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* that 'the Modern Look and the Lesbian Look would […] converge' (1998, 686). Even so, in the years following the trial, the levels of knowing recognition of this codification of dress and desire were perhaps not as widespread as all that. Ackland, for example, in a 1931 diary entry recounts various awkward and amusing moments of misrecognition, before wishing that 'Lesbians could wear a distinctive dress, as men do'.[13] However, as Rault highlights, a certain ambiguity was fundamentally necessary if sexually dissident women were to navigate successfully 'the volatile line between revealing and concealing what was seen as a culturally deviant, medically degenerate, and increasingly criminal desire' (2012, 21).

But as one runs one's fingers across the tailored velvet lapels of the patchwork jacket, it is important to remember that there can be a pleasing eroticism in this kind of ambiguity. Might this jacket evidence the way certain qualities of intimacy and circuits of desire are negotiated via fabric and the 'practice of fashion' (Winship cited in Attfield 2000, 143)? Warner makes these connections explicit when she remarks on the impact the gift of perfumed snail shells had on her. 'If you had sent me two of your shirts', she writes, 'they could not have plagued me into trembling more' (Pinney 1998, 23). Her 'trembling' naturally invokes the close relationship between garments and bodies and between the touch of fabric and the closeness of fabric to skin. But these shirts she imagines were, of course, not just any shirts, they were beautifully made and well-fitting shirts worn with style. Further, as de Perthuis notes, quality clothes of the kind Ackland favoured 'have a way of announcing their presence' (2016, 67) and they were arguably integral to the forceful erotic appeal she exercised. Even late in Ackland's life – and only shortly before her death – Warner was still in thrall to the power of her style. 'My love', she wrote. 'You look so handsome in your new coat that it would AGAINST NATURE for me to be disallowed from giving it to you'.[14] Doubtless, too, the loving possibilities of fabric and fashion provided a way to push back the inevitability of dying and death that otherwise consumed their days at that point.[15]

The idea that garments might foster flashes of desire or permit the coded articulation of sexual identities that would otherwise remain silent or closeted is captured in Warner's short story, 'My Shirt is in Mexico'. Set in wartime on a London to Plymouth train, it has Warner and Ackland as passengers and Warner as the first-person narrator. The story centres on an encounter in the dining car with an attendant – 'a middle-aged man with a good face, innocent and humane like a rabbit's' – who, in the course of polite conversation, remarks upon the Mexico label on Warner's borrowed suitcase: 'Now we looked at the label, which was printed with a gay scene of flowers and white-clothed tourists riding on festooned mules' (Warner

1943/2007, 333). This elicits from the attendant the statement, 'I've got a shirt in Mexico', and the tale of his random meeting with a male passenger whom he had engaged in small talk. He recounts how their discussion of the man's New York destination led on to the topic of luggage and clothes. The man, he reveals, 'had just a suitcase and what he stood up in' but 'he seemed so pleased with what he *had* got':

> Made me feel his suit to see what good wool it was and told all about a won-derful pair of silk pyjamas he'd been given. And you could tell from the way he spoke he was the sort of gentleman who knows about clothes – quite a dandy, in fact. […] Then all of a sudden it dawned on me that he could have my shirt. It was a very nice shirt. Providential, really – I'd bought it that very morning and was carrying it down with me. I always like to buy my shirts in London. You get better style. Well, he wasn't the sort of man you can have pretences with, so I told him straight out I'd like him to take my shirt.
>
> (Warner 1943/2007, 335)

The attendant notes that 'he accepted it so pleasantly' before revealing his delight in the fact that the man had not 'just taken the parcel' but instead 'he opened the parcel and looked at the shirt most carefully – how the buttons were fastened on and all. Examined it all over, he did' (335). He treasures the note he later received from that passenger – 'often read, always carefully refolded, the thin sheet of paper already had the air of something beginning to be historic' – telling him that the shirt had since been bestowed on 'a comrade going to Mexico'. 'It was a blue one, just right for a sunny climate' (335), the attendant reflects aloud. The spontaneous gift of the shirt creates a connection that speaks to deeper feelings and desires. As Gay Wachman observes, the story 'is an anecdote about the pleasures of mutual recog-nition in the closet' (2001, 145), but it is also about how that recognition is encoded in their mutual appreciation of, and bonding over, a well-made item of clothing or another kind of closet.

What I've endeavoured to do in this chapter is to draw out the possibilities for thinking about and working with Ackland's jacket and the collection of diverse objects from which it comes. To handle Ackland's jacket is to share an odd kind of intimate contact, one mediated through textile and touch. That quality of intimacy exists and persists because such items of clothing are, in Jenn Shapland's words, 'a kind of hinge or portal to the author's body, to herself and her self-representation' (2020, 106). While the jacket evokes the presence of the dead, it nevertheless retains a sense of life or liveliness, connecting us directly to Ackland's style, her project of self-fashioning and to the emergence of a particular kind of modern female sub-ject. It also allows us to unpack or unpick the threads of larger questions of how clothing can mediate complex and historically contingent expressions of gender, sexuality and desire. At the same time, the jacket is a lingering material trace of another intimacy, the one that existed between Ackland and Warner, something that is elsewhere documented so clearly and carefully in their extensive literary and

personal papers. As a handmade gift, it is a unique material expression of the intimacies that characterised their relationship and of the fabric of their queer domestic union. Recognising the power of such material traces of intimacy and the feelings and sensations they generate reminds us that objects such as this are far from inert repositories of historical content. As Leora Auslander observes, 'things are not just things' (2005, 1021), and as I've shown here in my analysis of Ackland's jacket, objects and things are expressive, they have presence and they matter. Further, inasmuch as they sit beyond the linguistic, such objects demand new modes of intelligibility sensitive to the materialities of intimacy and creativity and to how 'people and things have mutual biographies' (Gosden & Marshall 1999, 173). This may require us to make creative use of personal archives, embracing any strange, random and highly personal objects we encounter there.

To return finally to the question of the existence of this jacket in a literary archive. While its presence may have been considered anomalous or unsettling, it was also productive in that it prompts us to consider how any account of this couple's creative output must extend beyond their writing to encompass the art of needlework on the one hand and the communicative creativity of Ackland's appearance on the other. This suggests that rather than automatically moving to divide them, it might be useful to think of the relationship between objects and records in terms of an 'archival bond' (Duranti 1997; Rudolph 2011), focusing on what connects rather than separates artefacts and more conventional textual holdings, on their potential to illuminate one another. In this way, we can see how a jacket that was not originally conceived as part of this archive might nevertheless 'belong' and do important work by pushing us towards more experimental modes of engagement with literary and personal papers, ones that can help questions of intimacy, creativity and materiality come to the fore.

Notes

1 The most extensive posthumous volume of Ackland's poetry is Bingham (2008).
2 The Dorset County Museum closed in October 2018 for major building work funded via the National Lottery and re-opened as the Dorset Museum in May 2021. A decision was taken to move the literary papers to the Dorset History Centre where archival expertise and a public search room were available and where the collection could be cared for and accessed more readily. The collection is listed at the DHC with the reference D-TWA. I am grateful to Luke Dady of the DHC and Elizabeth Selby of the DM for this information. Objects and books from the STW and VA archive are now catalogued as part of the Dorset Museum.
3 Technically, the jacket was housed in the museum's costume store. Its presence on a hanger behind the door obviously revealed its rather ambiguous status as a three-dimensional inclusion in this archive.
4 Notes taken from a conversation with Gräfin Antonia Trauttmansdorff regarding the disposition of objects from Warner's house to the Dorset County Museum. H(L)/37, STW and VA Archive, Dorset History Centre.
5 These objects are now catalogued as part of the Dorset Museum.
6 Ackland had steeped the shells in her Fougère Royale perfume.

7 Before the planned renovation of the Dorset County Museum and the removal of the papers to the Dorset History Centre, the Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland Archive had been staffed only by a part-time honorary archivist working with museum volunteers so that research access to the archive was extremely limited. On the topic of literary archives, Raulff (2011, 161) makes the point that 'two things are absolutely essential for a successful archive. First, it requires good holdings. Secondly, it requires good users […] An archive that is not consulted remains silent, a pile of dead paper'. Moving the papers to the Dorset History Centre will likely support the second of these requirements in ways that the original location, however endearing, could not.

8 A similar line of argument concerning the object as document is explored in Darms (2009). The recent separation of the papers and objects from this collection indicates that a more conventional understanding of the distinctions between museums and archives, objects and documents now prevails.

9 Letter from STW to Joy Finzi, 15/11/69. Item no. G (left) 4/73, STW and VA Collection, D-TWA, Dorset History Centre.

10 Other friends who received gifts or bequests from Warner also later donated them to the archive. These include Margaret (Peg) Manisty, her solicitor and later one of the trustees of her estate, who in 1984 donated a straw work box (Figure 5.2) that sat on the benchtop in the archive.

11 For more details, see Haring Judd (2012). Such was the significance of this affair in the lives of the three women that the Dorset Museum includes in its new display on 'Sylvia and Valentine' (Showcase 34) a photo of Ackland with Wade White's initials engraved on the frame and a note on its provenance.

12 See National Portrait Gallery (UK) collection: www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw08012

13 Valentine Ackland, Diary 1931. Item T(LL)/5, STW and VA Collection, D-TWA, Dorset History Centre.

14 Note from STW to VA, 27 August 1968. Original emphasis. Item N (LL)/43, STW and VA Collection, D-TWA, Dorset History Centre.

15 Ackland was diagnosed with cancer in 1968. See Bingham (2021).

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Chapter 6

The archive as a site of making

Peter Lester

Introduction

Archives are material, physical and tangible. They are things that have been constructed and made. Understanding the archive as a process of making increases the visibility of the maker, bringing his or her presence into view, and thereby opening new possibilities to intellectual, affectual and emotional forms of meaning and engagement. Moreover the archive, as something made, is thus also something 'within the world', as both a product of the society in which it was made and part of the world in which it is experienced today. In this chapter, I explore the notion of the archive as a site of making, considering how a different perspective on the archive as something 'made' might facilitate new types of understanding. Such a perspective not only increases the visibility of the maker but also asserts the presence of the user.

I will consider this concept through three lenses. Firstly, I will examine how an understanding of the 'made' archive brings the process of creation into view. Thinking of archives in this way not only provides intellectual understanding around the archive, its creator and the society in which it was made, but also affords a sense of intimacy between the maker and the user today. Such a reading emphasises the material form of the archive as an embodiment of the creative process. Secondly, I will draw on the writing of Tim Ingold to consider shifting perspectives on how archives might be used today, thinking about how the researcher works *with* the archive in an organic, evolutionary way. Finally, I will consider Ingold's theory of the 'meshwork' to examine how the user's encounter with the archive acts as a site of 're-making'. Throughout the discussion, I will draw on my experience of using the David Campton archive at the University of Leicester to provide a reflexive experience of the archive as a site of making.

Processes of making

Analysis of the archive's material form and how records are written and made enables understanding around the people and society that produced them (Rekrut 2005; Clanchy 2013, 116–146). In such analyses, the presence of the author becomes

increasingly visible: perhaps anonymous, but nevertheless present in their act of making and writing. This emerges not just through what the author has written, but also through the physical act of writing itself: the bodily gestures, hand movements and posture shaping the production of letter forms (Sassoon 1993, 125). Considering the materiality of the archive is also an understanding of the processes that produced it. The awareness of the maker that results is one that emphasises a process that is physical, bodily and very much present within the world.

Within the context of literary archives, different layers of revisions give presence to the writer, who reveals a sense of themselves through their creative actions: the archive is an attestation of a 'lived life' (Hobbs 2006, 110), bringing the writer into view through their expressions and emotions on the page. This process of making has a clear material dimension: it emerges not just in *what* has been written but also in *how* it is written. Such a process increases the visibility of the writer, facilitating understanding in terms of how the archive has been made: this understanding may be experienced not only cognitively, but also affectively or emotionally. The material archive is a manifest expression of creative intent.

Here I want briefly to consider some of these concepts in relation to an archival collection I recently consulted at the University of Leicester's Special Collections. These were the papers of David Campton, a playwright born in Leicester in 1924. Having served in the RAF during the Second World War, he worked for the Education Department in the City of Leicester and then for the East Midlands Gas Board before becoming a full-time dramatist in 1956. His play *The Laboratory* won first prize in the Tavistock Repertory Company's One-Act Play competition in 1954 and was later televised by the BBC. He wrote many plays which were performed on stage, radio and for television, winning prizes from the British Theatre Association in 1975, 1978 and 1985 (Wax 1957; *The Times* 2006, 64). *The Times* (2006, 64) noted that he was 'one of the first British playwrights to write in the style of the Theatre of the Absurd'. He died in 2006.

When I visited the Special Collections, I looked at the drafts of several of his plays, including his first full-length work, *The Cactus Garden*. The first draft of this play is handwritten and features numerous alterations and additions in red ink and pencil (Campton nd. [1954a]) (see Figure 6.1). There was a very real sense of the creative process here, of Campton improving and refining his work; and this is articulated through the material markings on the page. The refinements expressed through its materiality provide the document with an embodied sense of construction. Moreover, the writer himself becomes increasingly present through these marks, not just as indicators of his actions, but also as embodied expressions of his thoughts and intentions. In this way, a sense of intimacy develops between the writer and the user, as the researcher traces the writer's thoughts and movements through the process of making.

This sense of intimacy derives through the physical contact with archival records, which itself suggests some form of contact with the writer themselves (Dever 2014; Brennan 2018; Dever 2019). The material archive thus becomes privileged
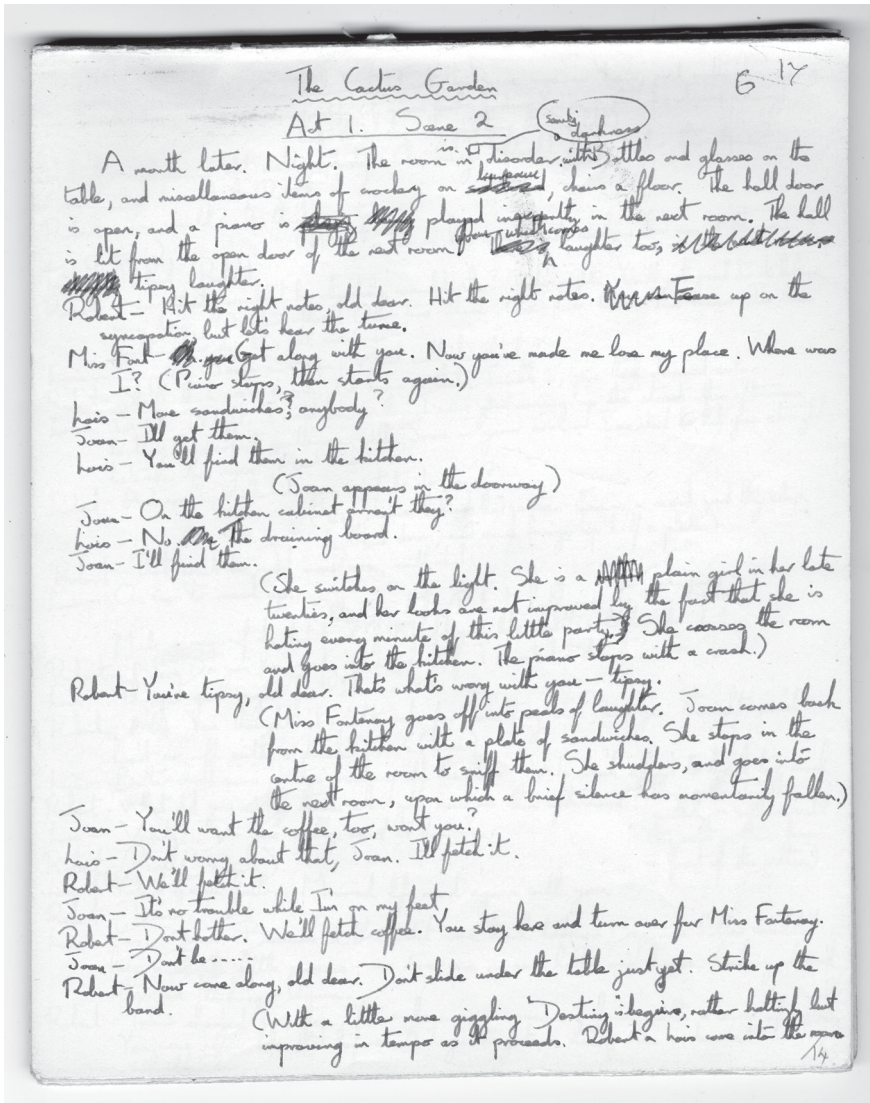
Figure 6.1 Page from a draft for *The Cactus Garden* by David Campton, Act I, Scene 2. Image: David Campton Collection at the University of Leicester, DC/1/51/1/14 © ACTAC Theatrical and Cinematic.

in such encounters, as the user and writer come to share the experience of handling the same material (Rekrut 2009; Yee 2011). As the user encounters and tangibly experiences the archive, they mimic and replicate the maker's own actions, thereby echoing the creative process that formed the archive. The materiality of archives

thus affords an indexical relationship between writer and present-day reader (see Rekrut 2009, 48). The archive becomes a site or locus of exchange, a space in which the actions of the writer and the user coalesce into a single reference point.

Returning to the Campton archive and *The Cactus Garden*, the file also includes a different version of one of the scenes in the play (Campton nd. [1954b]). Although typescript, and thus lacking the physical, gestural trace of handwritten text, this alternative scene nevertheless demonstrates how the archive as a holistic entity in itself embodies the process of making, as older parts are rejected in favour of newer ones. In this sense, the material form of the archive itself embodies a process of making. It can thus be argued that, through its constituent parts, the archive is an organic and evolutionary process; taken as a whole, it embodies creative thought and material construction. To perceive the archive in this way implies a shift in perspective, away from mining the archive for information, towards a sense of working *with* the archive in an organic process of recreation (see Stoler 2009; Dever 2019, 18). As the researcher follows the paths inherent within the archive, they recreate the process of making which, in turn, stimulates their own journey of making. This concept follows the work of the anthropologist Tim Ingold, whose discussions of material culture warrant a shift in perspective in how objects are thought about and used. To develop this concept further, I will examine his ideas in more detail and consider how they might be applied to an understanding of the archive.

Working with the archive

Tim Ingold draws a distinction between looking at things[1] as objects and looking at things as material. When things are looked at as objects, there is a suggestion of detachment, to be handled with gloves, thereby avoiding any physical exchange between person and thing (Ingold 2013, 18). Conversely, 'materials' suggest 'tactility … grain and texture … the feeling of contact between malleable substance and sensitive skin' (Ingold 2013, 18). Although what the 'thing' is might reflect *how* it is understood, Ingold notes that it is 'a difference of perspective. Householders might think of pots and pans as objects, at least until they start to cook, but for the dealer in scrap metal, they are lumps of material' (Ingold 2013, 19). Such a perspective amplifies a sensory dimension to how things are experienced and used (Ingold 2013, 20).

What Ingold is arguing for here is a shift away from a preconceived determinism resulting in an 'artefact', to a 'process of growth' in which the maker becomes 'a participant in amongst a world of active materials' (Ingold 2013, 20–21). In this sense, Ingold argues, the understanding of material culture shifts from a theory of hylomorphism, the shaping of material to embody an already-established concept, to a morphogenetic process, in which the form of the thing evolves and grows. Although the maker may have a certain intention in the making of the thing, it is the interaction with materials that defines and produces the finished work (Ingold 2013, 22).

This shift in perspective provides a frame through which to rethink the archive as something made. It points to the archive as something developmental and organic, both in its individualised form, which the maker has shaped with parchment, paper and pen; and as a composite of many documents that has emerged through a process of gathering, compiling and filing. Here, the archive is a working tool, its production active in the generating of knowledge (see Yaneva 2020). Whilst the process of writing might suggest the enacting of a preconceived goal, examining the archive through this perspective stresses a more evolutionary course of making, a process of growth in which the tangible, material character of that process is highly visible.[2]

Ingold's argument, which describes a tendency to perceive things as finished objects rather than as processes of making, suggests a form of engagement in which objects are experienced as static forms to be inspected and examined. In a similar vein, archives might also typically be understood as sources from which learning and meaning can be derived, rather than perceived as things made. As sources of evidence of past events, they might seem detached from the occurrences which they recount. Ingold's shift in perspective towards a notion of making restores to the archive a sense of presence within the world, a participant in action rather than just an observer. To understand the archive in this way, it is necessary to see it as something produced within or as part of a broader social and cultural world. This viewpoint again asserts the materiality of the archive as a tangible fashioning of materials found and used in the world.

In a different context, Ingold contrasts a 'documentary' approach to learning, studying 'about' and looking 'back', with a 'transformational' approach, which studies 'with' and looks 'forward' (Ingold 2013, 3). A documentary approach to archives arguably places emphasis on what can be learnt *from* them – as sources to be mined and from which information is extracted. A more transformational approach places greater attention on what can be learnt *with* archives, offering an alternative reading of the archive which again brings the maker and their process of making more clearly into view.

The David Campton archive is only partially catalogued so when I open the file relating to his play *Cuckoo Song*, I am not sure what I will find. The papers contained in the file have been ordered and sub-numbered and so reflect an arrangement shaped either by the archive or by Campton himself; either way, it is not clear to me what I am looking at and my working with the archive thus reflects a process of discovery.

The first item is a lined sheet of paper with text written by hand titled 'A Short History of the Reveraines' (Campton nd. [1955a]). It is a family history covering the period between 1820 and 1906, recounting the scrap metal works established by Grandfather Reveraine (here spelt Rivering) in 1820 through to his grandson John (whose father remarried in 1875 'to a young lady of a county family who bore him three daughters in quick succession and then died of boredom'). John had been discouraged from spending money during his father's lifetime but, after his father's death, his stepmother 'introduced him to another world, of beauty and taste to

which he took with more enthusiasm than discretion'; by 1906, he was 'swamped with debts'. The document includes a list of key dates at the bottom and features numerous crossings-out and corrections. It is unclear at this stage whether this is part of Campton's literary works or some other piece of research he was engaged in, although the jocular tone in which it is written suggests the former.

Following this history is a series of descriptions about various individuals who had featured in the family history (Campton nd. [1955b]). Each one provides a snapshot of the person's character and a short, potted history. This now suggests that Campton was conceiving characters within a play and presumably the short history was background for what would take place during its narrative. Each of the character studies is written in blue ink: presumably Campton used a fountain pen as the richness of the colour varies, suggesting moments when he had refilled the reservoir. The first two also feature revisions written in black ink, perhaps using a ballpoint pen; these largely comprise underlining, although it is not clear what purpose they serve; also, some crossings-out, interlineations and asterisks. The first character description is for a person named Ethelred (blue ink) but underneath is written Edward Browne (black ink), suggesting a later name change (see Figure 6.2).

The next item comprises three pieces of card, bent in the middle, upon which a synopsis for a play appears to have been written (Campton nd. [1955c]) (see Figure 6.3). This narrative focuses on an auction at Sir John Reveraine's country house and the relationships between Sir John's three half-sisters (Georgiana, Margaret and Ettie) and Edward Browne, Georgiana's erstwhile fiancé and now a long-term guest of Sir John. References are also made to Sir John's unnamed secretary and an auctioneer's man. Several farcical elements are included featuring, among other things, a set of family memoirs and a gramophone. The first piece of card is again written in blue ink but features significant alterations in red. The second is written entirely in blue ink, and any changes here appear to have happened in the process of writing, suggesting either that the first part of the text was felt to require much improvement; or that the whole text was subject to a revision that was not completed. The use of cardboard rather than a clean sheet of lined paper suggests an early stage of writing, a jotting down of ideas.

A second set of handwritten character notes (Campton nd. [1955d]), here in black ink with no corrections, largely appear to incorporate the revisions that appeared in the first set; they include brief portraits of the secretary, now named Martin Laud, and the auctioneer's man. These notes are accompanied by a more detailed outline of the play, featuring some new content.

Up until this point, my experience of these papers has been, in a sense, a 'lived' process; this was a transformational rather than a documentary encounter. Rather than analysing each piece of paper to determine certain historical data from it, I find myself following the contours of an evolutionary process, as each page opens up a new stage in the development of this work. As I read through each of the papers, my experience, in a sense, tracks the same evolutionary process that Campton had followed as he developed his play and the characters that featured in it. Whilst there is clearly a sense of an idea that Campton had for this work, there is also a very real

Figure 6.2 Page from a draft character study for the character Ethelred/Edward Browne for *Cuckoo Song* by David Campton. Image: David Campton Collection at the University of Leicester, DC/1/50/1/2 © ACTAC Theatrical and Cinematic.

sense of evolution. With no knowledge of what to expect, my encounter with these papers is likewise evolutionary, as my understanding of what is happening evolves through each new reading.

Importantly, this evolutionary process of reading is shaped not just by the words on the page, but also through the archive's material form. The shifting colours of

Figure 6.3 First page of a draft synopsis for the play *Cuckoo Song* by David Campton. Image: David Campton Collection at the University of Leicester, DC/1/50/2/1 © ACTAC Theatrical and Cinematic.

ink and the marks on the pages draw attention to the developmental process of writing, with each new iteration tracing in material form the stages in which the writing has been made. Furthermore, as the writer, Campton himself becomes more visible and closer through both the archive's informational and material content. The style of writing and sense of humour (Margaret, for example, 'needs a man but insists upon value for money') (Campton nd. [1955b]) are indicative attributes. So too the handwriting, the warp and weft of the pen across the page; whilst the corrections and additions imply a notion of the writer at work, both cognitive and bodily at the same time.

The next item in the file, however, is somewhat different. This is a typescript version of the character profiles and a detailed outline of the play, although again there are manuscript annotations in both ink and pencil. But the top sheet is a note written by Campton explaining the details of the text and his work on them.

> Notes for a new play tentatively entitled 'Cuckoo Song'. They are short, but the last few days have been spent editing them, my main idea at this stage being to give a bird's eye view of the action, and thumb-nail sketches of the characters. In the sheaf of jottings: already in existence are potted biographies of all the main characters, and a brief history of the Reveraine family and fortunes from 1800 onwards. These were necessary for me to see the actors from the inside, but they would befog anyone trying to get an idea of the play from them. In the interests of clarity the description of the main course of action has also been cut down to a minimum. This should point to five [sic] 'peaks' in the play: Georgiana's denunciation of Edward, Edward's refusal of Margaret, the destroying of the manuscript [family memoirs], and Edward's reconciliation with Georgiana.
>
> (Campton nd. [1955e])

At this moment, my experience of the archive seems to shift away from a transformational or 'lived' experience to something more documentary. Whilst I have been following the evolutionary development of a working process and experiencing *with* the archive, and thus, *with* the writer, I seem now to step away and enter into conversation with Campton *about* his work, as he explains to me his intentions. In one sense, this process allows me to understand more fully his thoughts and ideas; the writer is still clearly visible, and the text articulates the process of making which the other papers in the file embody. At the same time, this text also introduces a mediating distance from the intimate, evolutionary process that I had been following; I seem to step away from the actual *process* of making inherent within the archive, to something which *explains* what is happening. Likewise, the coincidental shift from handwritten to typewritten text distances the material pulse which the earlier documents had possessed (see Ingold 2007, 26–28). This process seems complete with the last typewritten draft in the file, devoid of handwritten changes altogether (Campton nd. [1955f]). A covering letter (Campton 1955g) addressed to Campton's agent, Emanuel Wax, shows that this copy is being sent

for Wax's consideration; it articulates Campton's own doubts with the progress of the play and introduces several significant changes to the plotline and characters. Further letters from Campton's agent held in a separate file (Wax 1955a; Wax 1955b) show Wax's influence on the development of the play, as his suggestions appear in Campton's various revisions. For me, the experience of the archive appears to have shifted; my perspective alternating to a more documentary form of encounter. Through my use of this archive, then, it is possible to theorise how the user oscillates between reading *with* and reading *from* the archive: the notion of the archive as something made remains visible, but the way in which this is experienced seems to shift depending upon how I read the material.

This discussion has sought to demonstrate a shift in perspective in how the archive might be read and understood. Following Ingold's processes of making, the archive here is seen as something that has been fashioned through a developmental and evolutionary process. By looking at the archive in this way, a closer intimacy is established with the writer through the sense of a shared experience. Yet my experience of the archive suggests that the user is likely to alternate between different ways of reading, shifting between evolutionary processes and more conventional forms of study. Significantly both the archive's informational value and its materiality seem to play a part in this process, with the tangible marks of writing in themselves articulating the creative process of making.

The archive remade

A shift in perspective towards the archive as something made, in other words, working *with* rather than (exclusively) *from* the archive, focuses greater attention on the presence and actions of the archive itself and, in turn, a more reflexive approach to its study and use. Greater attention to what the archive *does* has been an important feature of the 'archival turn' which, since the late 1980s, has seen considerable interest in conceptual understandings of the archive in such fields as literary studies, anthropology and history (see Ketelaar 2017, 228–268; Stoler 2009, 44; Buchanan 2011). This shift in focus towards the archive itself is indicative of a long-term change in perspective towards a more transformational approach to the archive (see Stoler 2009, 44). A key aspect here is a focus on the agency of the archive itself; the effects it has on the production of history and society; and the ways in which researchers engage with it (Ketelaar 2017, 235–236). Reflexive approaches to using archives have suggested the idea of a 'lived' experience, a sense of immersion or habitation among material records (see Breakell 2011, 30; Dever 2014, 288, 291; Shepherd 2016, 85–86; Brennan 2018, 7; Dever 2019). Furthermore, the work of artists and creative practitioners has revealed an increasing interest in the process of archive-making, drawing attention to modes of collecting, recording and memorialising and the types of meaning that they afford (see Eichler 2006; Magee and Waters 2011; Breakall 2011, 33–34; Buchanan 2011; Gausden 2015; Houston Jones 2015). These creative processes reveal a more transformational understanding of archival practice and a blurring of using and making.

By working *with* the archive, the user engages in an encounter with the tangible, material record. In this sense, both the user and the archive are understood as being in the world and are thus both shaped by the moment of this encounter, each actively involved in a process of *re*making. To develop this idea further, I want briefly to return to Tim Ingold and consider his idea of the 'meshwork'.

Ingold has drawn on the work of James Gibson and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to develop an understanding of how experience is shaped through a notion of being within the world. Ingold utilised Gibson's theory of experience, which argued that perception occurs not through a Cartesian concept of the mind processing inputs from the world, but rather through the whole body's experience of the environment it inhabits (Ingold 2000, 3). From here Ingold developed the concept of a 'dwelling perspective', which draws attention to experience within the world. Rather than thinking of a world 'to which form and meaning have already been attached', Ingold's dwelling perspective argues that 'the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity' (Ingold 2000, 153).

Ingold further developed this idea by drawing on Merleau-Ponty's concept of a sentient world to introduce a notion of

> movement along a way of life. The perceiver-producer is thus a way-farer, and the mode of production is itself a trail blazed or a path followed. Along such paths, lives are lived, skills developed, observations made and understandings grown … To be, I would now say, is not to be *in* place but to be *along* paths. The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming.
> (Ingold 2011, 12, original emphasis)

In this way of thinking, then, encounters within the wider world produce a '*meshwork* of entangled lines, growth and movement' (Ingold 2011, 63, original emphasis). According to Ingold, human beings, like all entities, 'should be understood not as a bounded entity surrounded by an environment but as an unbounded entanglement of lines in fluid space' (Ingold 2011, 64).

Ingold's theory of meshwork helps to introduce a sense of experience surrounded and shaped by the wider environment. Crucial to this concept is a notion of movement, of development and growth. Encounters with objects and people take place within this meshwork and bind it further as each shapes our life experiences. In such a reading, understanding of experience within the world is formed and moulded by the material, social and cultural encounters which take place within the fabric of the world itself. Consequently, experience of the archive is shaped by the encounter that takes place between the user; the material and tangible archive; and the wider environment in which this occurs.

Importantly, the meshwork helps to show how the experience of the user within the archive helps refashion and remake the archive itself. The encounter that takes place between the user and the archive is a moment in time where the paths of each

meet, become entangled, and then separate. What is significant here is that this encounter is just one of many which have already taken place along both the user's and the archive's paths, both having been shaped by these earlier encounters.

In the case of the archive, its management and description by the archivist may shape how it is understood and used by researchers. When I used the David Campton archive, the records were presented in carefully managed acid-free envelopes and wallets, the papers weighed and placed on supportive cushions. I tried to handle the records as little and as carefully as possible. They included small handwritten notes on the back of a rejection slip and a torn piece of cardboard: understanding of and attitudes towards these papers have arguably shifted as a result of their becoming archives. Likewise, the digitisation of a manuscript page from Campton's play *The Cactus Garden*, displayed on the university web site, first attracted my attention to the collection. In a similar way, other users in the search room may have interpreted, analysed and written about the archive in certain ways, leading to a sense of intimacy afforded not just with the archive and its maker, but also with other users over time (see Kaplan 1990).

Furthermore, the user's encounter with the archive now and in itself shapes the resulting course of both the user's and the archive's paths. In the case of the archive, this encounter articulates a remaking: its use in this moment becomes part of its history. This use in turn may shape its path in the meshwork by adding new layers of meaning, thus potentially influencing future approaches to how it may be understood. Importantly, it is not just the archive that is shaped in this moment: the user is also influenced by this encounter. In this sense, the archive becomes a site of *re*making, in which the archive and the user are both fashioned and shaped by their meeting.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the idea of the archive as a site of making; a developmental, evolutionary and creative process in which the presence of the maker becomes increasingly visible. In this sense, the archive, far from an untouched record of past events, is instead shaped and influenced by them. Furthermore, the archive is within the world and is thus continually refashioned by new forms of activity and encounter. Consequently, the archive becomes implicated in wider socio-political contexts, itself active in shaping broader notions of meaning within society.

Ingold's notion of meshwork, which articulates a sense of ongoing development and movement, alludes to ideas of immersion and habitation within the wider material world and, as such, suggests a sense of making or, indeed, of *re*making of broader social contexts. Such a process echoes the Derridean notion of 'archivisation', the act of archiving itself that shapes and produces knowledge and memory (Derrida 1996, 16–17; see also Lubar 1999, 13). In this reading, the archive does not just record the past but also shapes understanding of the past – what it is that makes the past – and thereby informs both the present and the future. Here, then,

the archive is an integral part of the world, shaping and developing how we come to understand ourselves, our past and future.

The unfixed nature of archives and their active role in shaping how society comes to understand itself and its past has long been an important focus of research and study (see, for example, Nesmith 1999; Cook 2001a; Cook 2001b; Schwartz and Cook 2002; Harris 2002; Nesmith 2005; Ketelaar 2008; Ridener 2008, 135–136; Stoler 2009, 22, 32–33; Breakell 2011, 29–30). What is significant here is how Ingold's shift in perspective to working *with* the archive, alongside his theory of the meshwork, provides a distinctly material character to this notion of archivisation. As I worked through the David Campton archive, I followed the contours of Campton's thinking through the material marks he had made upon the page. I became aware of his presence as he shaped and crafted his work. This sense of working with the materiality of the archive emphasises how the archive has *come into being*: the experience of the archive is enfolded within the creative processes of its making. Moreover, as I read both *from* and *with* it, I learn not only *of* the past, but also how the archive – and its maker – have fashioned my knowledge of the past. In other words, my ongoing perception of the past – and how this influences my present and future – is shaped by this material encounter with the archive. In this moment of meeting, I have become enmeshed with the archive and its maker.

The encounter with the archive is part of a tactile and textual experience, one which involves the creator, the user and society itself, as part of wider and ongoing processes of making and remaking. The materiality of the archive is an embodiment of creative action. It is also an integral part of the world, active in shaping and reshaping our understandings and perceptions of yesterday and today. Experience with the material archive can afford an intimate encounter with its maker, but it is also a process by which meaning is constantly being remade.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   Ingold distinguishes between an 'object' and a 'thing', describing an object as something that 'gets in the way', in contrast to a thing that 'draws us in, along the very paths of its formation' (Ingold 2011, 214). Here I am using the term 'thing' in a more generic sense to show Ingold's distinction between objects and materials.
2   For a worked example of these ideas, see Catherine Hobbs' discussion of the creative practice of Winnipeg poet George Amabile: Hobbs (2006).

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Chapter 7

Applications of energy

A study of artists and entropy in the material

Lisa Cianci

Chapter text

Entropy (the second law of thermodynamics) is the natural tendency for all matter in a closed system to go from order to chaos, from hot to cold, from high energy to low energy.

> An ordered entity requires a quantity of energy to create and maintain itself as an entity. Once it reaches an ordered state, it will, without further infusions of energy, gradually become disordered. From high-energy order it moves in the direction of low-energy disorder.
>
> (Abraham 1984, 95)

Archives of creative practice are subject to this law, no matter their medium or process, as are all things. Artists and archivists alike may grapple with the effects of entropy on materials, information, cultural content and memory. 'For archivists, entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics have both a philosophical (or non-scientific) function and a material or practical role' (Abraham 1999).

An exploration of creative archival and 'anarchival'[1] processes used by artists to work with the inevitable entropic tendencies of diverse media and materials, this chapter focuses on selected artists' practices and specific applications of energy to keep creative content and materials active, relevant and meaningful (low entropy), preventing the descent into disorder, inaccessibility and irrelevance (high entropy), and implications for the changing meanings and interpretations of this material over time. These concepts seem to fit with our current understanding of archives as constantly *becoming*,[2] and the requirement for continued expenditure of energy to maintain some form of access and meaningful interaction with the materials of records, artefacts and information: both physical and virtual.

The artworks and attendant archives discussed in this chapter are explored as open systems operating through *spacetime distancing*,[3] highlighting applications of energy from the artist creators and at times, other relevant participants and stakeholders – energy which comes from many sources. The creative practice archives in these cases may be the sources used to create the artworks, the artworks themselves

that have archival materials or function as archives of content, or the processes and support materials identified as archival, utilised to create, document and maintain these artworks.

This text takes a broad view of archives, fashioned by the author's personal experiences as an artist, archivist, digital media developer and creative arts educator. This positioning at a crossroads of four vocations has allowed a certain proximity to the way artists practice archival methods throughout our careers and how we work with archival materials and documentation practices. What continues to be a fruitful area of creative practice research is the form and quantity of energy expended by artists in grappling with the effects of entropy – a kind of dance we do *against* and *with* entropy, intertwined with the things that surround us in creative practice.

An ongoing fascination with 'archives in the wild',[4] *pre-custodial* and *non-custodial* archives,[5] and the artist's engagement with the materials of the archive informs this research. This engagement creates not only an artwork, but also a record of something – the recursive and cyclical paths through and between existing materials lead to the creation of new materials. The archives of creative practice that artists create and manage ourselves, and the archival materials that document the research process, may *become* the artwork. These archives tell many interesting stories: some are shared here in this chapter.

Creative practice archives in this text have particular materialities that become records of place and time and form relationships between archives, performance and re-performance (Lyndal Jones); reveal and bear witness to terrible injustices and hidden stories (Yhonnie Scarce); and remix cultural contents to challenge and subvert perceptions and identities (Soda_Jerk). These artists are brought together here because of the diversity and significance of their practices and the particular way each practice tells a story of entanglement with entropy in the material.

Lyndal Jones: rehearsing catastrophe and re-performance from the archive

Watford House[6] is a curious structure, and an enduring example of an artist's work both *against* and *with* entropy through a long-term art project. The house is both artwork and site; ark[7] and archive[8]; a structure that was the home for *The Avoca Project*, a 14-year art project for Australian artist Lyndal Jones (Jones 2020).

The Avoca Project began with the purchase, by Jones, of an old, dilapidated and uninhabited house.

> *This pre-fabricated gold-rush residence was imported as numbered planks from Scandinavia via Hamburg in 1852. The house is thus an immigrant that arrived by boat, its walls revealing stories of a former wealth and European glamour faded by the harshness of the climate and the decreasing services that are the result of globalization and climate extremes in rural Australia.*
>
> (Ibid.)

This house, situated in regional Victoria, on the flood plains of the Avoca River (Dja Dja Wurrung Country), became the centre of an international art project addressing sustainability and climate change. The project involved applications of energy by many collaborators and participants to create land works, exhibitions, events, film screenings, symposia and performances, 'always *with* Watford House rather than simply *at* it' (Ibid.).

The effects of entropy over time through the extremes of environment such as flood and global warming provided a challenging site for this project. Jones engaged in a number of activities to remake the house as 'flood-friendly' after a flood event in 2011. Sustainability projects included creating a levy bank and a package of materials to be used for future flooding events. Jones also explains that 'most things are easily moved, rugs rolled up, sandbags placed around the stove' (Jones 2019). The house is liveable both in flood and in an increasingly hot and dry climate.

Jones espouses '*waiting*' and '*working with*' (Ibid.) as concepts relating to her creative process, which can be observed in the materiality and entropy inherent in the Avoca Project site. The house was in disrepair – a state of high entropy, when Jones found the site, which made it possible for her to acquire the property and undertake the project. Entropy enabled the artist to work with and respond to the materials of the house over time.

> I believe ideas continually elaborate through a number of stages as the act of creating is itself one of becoming more differentiated, more aware of what is being offered, and then becoming more skilled materially in response.
>
> (Jones & Miranda 2016)

Time is an important factor in both what the house has become and what it is becoming through this transformational project. As with any archives, Watford House has been subject to shifting and changing of functionality, physicality, purpose and meaning over time. Without Jones' considerable application of energy, the house might now be lost or in such a chaotic state as to effectively be of no purpose.

Jones also shows us through this project how we as artists and humans are but a part of the environment – we are not operating as external agents; we are entangled with the materiality of our ecosystems. Invigorating the site of the Watford House has impacted both the local environment and the surrounding community. Jones developed the Avoca Chinese Garden[9] in collaboration with artists Lindy Lee and Mel Ogden as a part of the Avoca Project. There have also been participatory events with local residents such as flower arrangement workshops and performances that occurred in many rooms of the house, which 'could be transformational for both the performers *and the audiences*' (Ibid.). According to Katve-Kaisa Kontturi,

> Art's emergence is understood in concrete terms: it refers to the material processes in and through which art happens […] this is not about work as an individual creative effort but work as the various collaborations through which art emerges.
>
> (Kontturi 2018)

One of the major series of performances developed during the Avoca Project is titled *Rehearsing Catastrophe*, a title that suggests entropic events such as the flood. *Rehearsing Catastrophe #1: The Ark in Avoca* (Jones 2011) draws its title from the Old Testament story of Noah's Ark (coincidentally, this performance was held just weeks before the actual 2011 flood of the Avoca River). This night-time performance saw a large ark hull projected onto the house. Other audiovisual elements such as thunder and lightning were projected in and around the house and non-professional participants became the animals. Participants fashioned their own home-made animal masks and costumes, some of which were beautifully constructed from found and ordinary household materials. A procession of participants up to and through the 'ark' formed the performance event, with actor Julie Forsyth performing the role of 'flight attendant', calling the 'animals' in two by two, and Jones presiding over the event as master of ceremonies.

The image supplied by Jones (Figure 7.1) of Watford House comes from another performance from 2016 titled *Prelude 1 – Study for 15 Painters and Prepared House*. Energy is applied here by Jones and other professional and amateur participants to prepare the house for re-painting. This type of work is not usually

Figure 7.1 Lyndal Jones, Image of Watford House: From Prelude 1 – Study for 15 Painters and Prepared House, Performance, 30 April 2016. Photograph by Lyndal Jones, image courtesy of the artist.

associated with art-making practices, although it simultaneously becomes action to preserve the structure and protect the contents, action to stave off entropy and action as work of performance art. The traces of the performance remain in the very materials and fabric of the house and record the event.

Jones' long-term art projects began in the late 1970s with series of feminist performances and installations. *The Prediction Pieces* began in 1981: a series of ten performance works over ten years. These works were an interdisciplinary investigation into the nature of prediction and exist somewhere between theatre, visual art and dance/movement methods and practices. The series drew from fears of catastrophic events in the near future (such as nuclear holocaust) and played on the idea of possible futures and how we might influence or control them.

> *Central to all* The Prediction Pieces *is an examination of the act(s) of prediction … the processes through which we arrange our future(s) within our minds, and hence, our ability to plan, to intervene. It is an examination of the foundations upon which we can organise and create change.*
>
> (Jones & Cramer 1992, 8)

Each piece in the series was of approximately 20 minutes duration and included slide projection, video and audio content, live performance and, in some cases, installation. The performances included pre-determined content within open structures, which allowed for a certain contingency, for variations and multiple outcomes. Sometimes the performances were repeated as different versions of the same work. Some works had only one or two performers, others, such as the later works in the series, included a number of actors and dancers 'as elements within increasingly complex works' (Ibid, p. 8).

The texts used in *The Prediction Pieces* are carefully constructed and may appear as spoken by performers, recorded audio or visual images of texts that appear in slide projections. The texts tell stories, contain personal content, leave clues to possible futures, make predictions and often include repetition juxtaposed with visual elements and live performance.

> *I wish to begin with what must seem an outrageous proposition. I wish to talk about the future as though we could take it for granted that there will be one.*
>
> (Ibid, p. 55)

The locations where these pieces were performed and installed differed too. Sites included galleries, theatres, a cinema hall: each with different fungible elements and different possibilities for the pieces to engage with the audience.

When a series of works such as this one is created and performed, the work itself is, of course, ephemeral, but there are records and traces of the events that remain. With *The Prediction Pieces*, the archive of materials that form the residue of the original performances from 1981 to 1991 consists of not only the planning

documents such as texts, scripts, running sheets and notes created by Jones, but also the physical materials used in the performances such as slides, audio and video tapes and other ephemera such as props and costume elements.

Jones collected these records and artefacts and placed them within black lacquered boxes, each with different coloured interiors. These boxes and their contents were in turn collected by the Contemporary Art Archive, Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Sydney, Australia, and as such are an important record of Jones' significant feminist performances from the late twentieth century.

The interest here is not that the material was accepted into a collecting archive, but what has continued to happen to the archival materials and Jones' subsequent engagement with them. After *The Prediction Pieces* archive went to the MCA, a catalogue publication was produced by Jones and Curator Sue Cramer including writings and images from the archive and a text by Cramer introducing the series (Jones & Cramer 1992, op. cit.). The MCA also produced a retrospective exhibition in 1992, in which items from the archive were placed on walls, in glass cases and a video displayed on a small screen. There was also a further installation of the archival contents in 2000. Thus, elements of the series have emerged and re-emerged in new forms, providing audiences with different kinds of experiences of the series, which, however, are not *performance*.

Twenty five years after the original performances, continued activations of the records have occurred, primarily because of the artist's intent to keep working with the archival materials. Jones re-performed *Prediction Piece 7* at the MCA in Sydney in 2016 and at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) in Melbourne in 2018. The artist remains the central figure in the re-performances and the gendered nature of the original performance[10] is still timely and relevant, which enables it to succeed with contemporary audiences. These re-performances necessitated retrieval from the MCA of material from *The Prediction Pieces* archives. Much energy was expended in undertaking conservation work for the materials to be reused in the re-performances. Media such as digital recordings were in a state of disarray. Entropy continues to do its work even when the materials are in the custody of a collecting organisation.

And, somewhat reflexively, there now exist documentations of the re-performances, although Jones is very specific about the documentation of her performance work and does not allow still photography or video to be taken during her performances, as she feels that this kind of documentation dilutes the live experience. This is a view shared by Peggy Phelan who writes, 'performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance' (Phelan 1993, 146). Jones prefers to document the work visually through posed studio photographs separate to the performances, which provide records of the event but do not attempt to stand in place of it: 'the document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present' (Ibid, p. 146). In fact, after ACCA recorded a video of the 2018

performance of *Prediction Piece 7* without her knowledge or permission, Jones intervened to prevent the video footage from being shown (Jones 2019, op. cit.).

> *The archival document, whether audio-video, written word or blog, is just such a device, which the performance-maker exposes for what it cannot do in comparison to the performance itself or the performers themselves.*
>
> (Jones 2018, 309)

The archival materials were returned to the MCA after these recent re-performances. Yet, it is crucial to note that the artist's activations and applications of energy have ensured the materials' current existence in a state of low entropy.

Yhonnie Scarce: the artist's breath and bearing witness

Yhonnie Scarce's creative practice involves a very specific application of energy – glass blowing. She uses the medium of glass (silica or sand) 'which is derived from the landscape, from the materiality of *Country*'[11] (Delaney et al. 2021, 35), to explore the impact and legacy of colonisation on Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Scarce is an Australian Aboriginal artist and belongs to the Kokatha and Nukuna people. Many of her works use glass yams (*myrnong*) as all or part of her installations – the yam is a bush food that represents bodies and cultural traditions for Scarce: 'for me it's about using my breath and using my body to create these objects that refer to culture' (Taylor 2015).

   The use of glass as a material is fascinating from an archival perspective as it is not only fragile, but also incredibly stable and enduring in the right conditions. The glass yams in Scarce's work resemble bodily organs. They not only seem delicate but are also airtight, safe structures to hold the artist's breath, representing the narratives that Scarce explores in her work.

> *I create work about things people don't necessarily talk about or are too scared to talk about, [...] I feel strongly through my own personal experience as well as my grandparents' it's about bringing those stories alive and making people talk about it.*
>
> (Ibid.)

Scarce's artworks are on occasion fashioned as archives or contain reclaimed archival materials that have succumbed to entropic effects of spacetime distancing, in defiance of their original colonial contexts. 'The reappropriation of anthropologist Normal Tindale's photographs of her ancestors taken in 1928 [...] including her great-great grandmother Dinah, are acts of sovereignty and reclamation' (Browning 2021, 94). Works such as *Oppression, repression (Family Portrait)* (2004), *The Collected* (2011), *Blood on the Wattle* (2013) and *Remembering Royalty* (2018) include materials of the archive, often use containers of different kinds (boxes, drawers, jars, cases, even a Perspex coffin). These elements are combined, with Scarce's glass yams and other vessels, to represent the stories that her family – and the Aboriginal communities

she is a part of – have witnessed and experienced such as colonial trauma, environmental catastrophe, displacement and removal of children from their families. Scarce tells us that *The Collected* depicts 'scientific analysis of Aboriginal people, subjected to scrutiny in life and in death. Their graves were robbed during settlement and their bodies dissected for "scientific" research. Once complete, numerous bones were stored in museums around the world' (This Is No Fantasy 2015).

Artworks such as *Thunder Raining Poison* (2015) (Figure 7.2) and *Death Zephyr* (2016–2017) are installations made from thousands of glass yams suspended from steel wires in the shape of the mushroom clouds that resulted from British nuclear

Figure 7.2 Yhonnie Scarce, Thunder Raining Poison, 2017, hand blown glass yams, stainless steel and reinforced wire, 2,000 pieces, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist & THIS IS NO FANTASY.

tests at Maralinga, which occurred between 1956 and 1963. Maralinga is part of the Woomera Prohibited Area (or Woomera Exclusion Zone) in South Australia (Kokatha Country)[12] – a site from where Scarce traces her bloodlines. The yams in these installations are crystalline receptacles remembrancing the narrative of a terrible past. The material of glass and its entropic fragility, used to great effect in these works, is also directly related to the narrative.

> *There's a bomb site out at Maralinga called Breakaway and it was so hot that the ground turned to glass, […] Apparently when it first happened there were sheets of glass all over the landscape but now there's little shards that look like glitter.*
>
> (Taylor, op. cit.)

Initially subject to great secrecy, the Maralinga nuclear tests poisoned the land with radiation and displaced many Aboriginal people, who have still not been able to return to their Country. It caused environmental devastation and attempts to clean up the site have been unsuccessful. 'The full extent of sickness and death caused by the radiation will probably never be known' (This Is No Fantasy 2017).

Scarce visited the site at Maralinga and conducted research into the history of these events and has since travelled the world researching sites of similar devastations and genocides. Her works invoke the archive and serve as an aid to remembering. The significance of this work is in its power as a record of *witnessing*[13] – necessary due to the lack of Australian memorial sites commemorating these events (Delaney et al. 2021, 38). Scarce's work has the affective power to make us feel, think and remember:

> records are not solely representations of particular realities, but through the forces of their materiality and the presence of human bodies and activity they invoke, are affectively charged objects able to move people into new ways of being and doing.
>
> (Carbone 2017, 102)

> *Blood everywhere … everywhere blood on the record.*
>
> (Harkin 2014, 5)

A problematic and unequal relationship exists between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the records and archives of our Colonial institutions, as identified in the 2010 *Archives & Manuscripts* journal article by McKemmish, Faulkhead, Iacovino and Thorpe (McKemmish et al. 2010). This mirrors discourse from the large body of archival and philosophical texts that refer to archives and power structures (Schwartz & Cook 2017). Recognising this reality, the importance of artists' work in this field becomes apparent. The applications of energy by artists to reveal and bring to the fore those dark and hidden stories that have been suppressed or omitted are of significant cultural value.

The conventional positioning of individuals as the subjects of the archive has had a particularly disempowering effect on Indigenous people whose lives have been so extensively documented in archives, often for the purposes of surveillance, control and dispossession. Although in the past records have been instruments of oppression and the construction of a negative view of Australian Indigeneity, in the present and future they can play an important role in recovering identity and memory, re-uniting families, seeking redress, and reconciliation.

(Ibid, p. 34)

Scarce's work is empowering – for her and for all of us in moving forward with the recovery of identity and acknowledgement of history. The artworks may not appear as archives in the traditional sense, but it is in their totality, what they signify and represent, that they become important as records: 'layers of meaning in events or texts, previously consigned to history's shadows, can be exposed through creative means' (Harkin, op. cit.). There seems to be a link here in the breath that the glass yams contain and the tradition of oral histories and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Perhaps there is also a significance in the silence of the breath held in the yams – each one an archival object representing so many silenced voices. The materiality of Scarce's archival artefacts manifests as records of *culture*. The entanglement between the artist and entropy is delicate and fragile, but enduring.

Scarce's collaboration with architecture studio Edition Office, *In Absence*, was a temporary memorial installed at the National Gallery of Victoria (Cheng 2019) from 2019 to 2020. In this outdoor installation, 2,000 black glass yams created by Scarce, seep from the walls of a sombre, curved architectural structure made of dark, stained wood (McEoin 2019). When the structure was dismantled, yams and native grasses planted around the site burst forth. This collaborative architectural work with its massive scale, solidity of materials and regenerative properties made a clear statement refuting the Latin term *Terra Nullius* (*nobody's land*) (Aboriginal Heritage Office 2019)*,* a false claim purporting that the Australian continent was empty and awaiting 'ownership' by European colonists.[14] This structure was created as a material acknowledgement that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did create significant infrastructure across the land such as permanent dwellings and villages, forestry management, crop growing and aquaculture such as fish and eel traps, all of which existed for many thousands of years prior to European colonisation.[15] This Indigenous knowledge and material evidence has been eroded not solely by entropy, but also by catastrophe, intentional omission and erasure.

So too, Scarce's most recent installation *Missile Park* (2021) at ACCA creates monuments that 'reference the temporary dwellings established by the military at Maralinga during the height of nuclear testing in the region' (Delaney et al. 2021, 136). Recycled materials were used to create the three zinc and bitumen sheds that enshrine 60 glass bush plums – a food native to the Kokatha Country this

installation memorialises. Projects such as these are enabling the reclamation of these histories.

> It must be recognised that Aboriginal women have invested significant amounts of intellectual and emotional labour into the articulation and safeguarding of cultural and ethical protocols around the representation of Aboriginal knowledges, experiences, and identities.
>
> (Araluen Corr 2018, 500)

Soda_Jerk: the anarchival remix

Soda_Jerk is a two-person art collective. Its sibling collaborators[16] are from Australia, although currently reside elsewhere. Primarily remix artists, Soda_Jerk work with pre-existing cultural materials (film, digital and analogue video and audio recordings) which they rework into highly complex *soft montage*[17] video artworks. This work requires considerable application of energy: to find and access the original materials (archives of film, television and music); to select and convert the content to required digital formats; to remix the content into something new, culturally specific and relevant; and to maintain this content and migrate it forward to prevent obsolescence.

This post-production remix work may be seen as a mixture of methods for both preservation and destruction of cultural content as it seeks to subvert conventional ideas and narratives. These artists work within 'the dynamic relationship between remembering and forgetting, keeping and discarding, preserving and destroying' (Adami & Ferrini 2015, para. 2). As Wolfgang Ernst notes, 'no place can be more deconstructive than archives themselves, with their relational but not coherent topology of documents that wait to be reconfigured, again and again' (Ernst 2013, loc. 3435).

Soda_Jerk have a keen awareness of the archival in their methods and processes, however, prefer to identify as *anarchivists*.

> The term [anarchival] fluidly oscillates and shifts between the semantic fields of (1) destruction, when intended in its archiviolistic declination; (2) subversion, in its proximity to the word 'anarchy'; and (3) regeneration in its state of openness and not yet explored potentiality.
>
> (Adami & Ferrini, op. cit., para. 3)

This definition of the anarchival by Adami and Ferrini fits closely with Soda_Jerk's work and methods. The video installation *Undaddy Mainframe,* part of *The Lessons* ('a series of short video works where archival history is folded into new constellations, producing virtual proximities between disparate temporal moments' [Soda_Jerk 2014]), attests to this. *Undaddy Mainframe* takes an important piece of digital media art and '*feminist malware*' – a text by Australian collective VNS Matrix

(VNS Matrix 1991) – and regenerates it twenty three years later as a *selective*[18] remix by combining the text with instructional videos from the 1990s in an activation that not only preserves the original but also places it in a contemporary context, enabling access for new audiences.

Soda_Jerk's work falls under that category described by Eduardo Navas as 'remix as discourse' after the post-modern theories of Craig Owen whereby there is a 'transparent awareness of the history and politics behind the object of art', and where 'the object of contemplation, in our case Remix (as discourse), depends on recognition (reading) of a pre-existing text (or cultural code) […] the audience is always expected to see within the work of art its history' (Navas 2010). What interests Soda_Jerk about sampling is 'the question of how films operate as encrypted documents that carry traces of the hopes, ideations, and traumas of their particular context' (Goldsmith 2018).

In the 'gothic melodrama' *The Time that Remains* from the *Dark Matter* series, Actors Joan Crawford and Bette Davis 'perpetually wake to find themselves haunted by their own apparitions and terrorized by markers of time' (Soda_Jerk 2012). The 'spectre of the original' (Navas 2006, op. cit.) is present, but we can read many nuanced narratives and interpretations of the materials. The anarchival energy here is palpable. This approaches the Senselab definition of the anarchival where

> the anarchive is not documentation of a past activity. Rather, it is a feed-forward mechanism for lines of creative process, under continuing variation […] It is an excess energy of the archive: a kind of supplement or surplus-value of the archive.
>
> (Senselab 2017)

This anarchival application of energy has the potential to both stave off entropy and generate new work: although recursively, this new work is also subject to entropy. Soda_Jerk expend great amounts of energy to deal with the materiality of their practice as they wrangle terabytes of video and audio files and manage detailed spreadsheets documenting the myriad samples used in the work. They are ever conscious of entropy's effects on digital media.

> *A great deal of labour is involved in remastering our work because all the roto-scoping and effects shots must be re-done from scratch. While remastering, we often also take the opportunity to tweak the edit or even add additional samples – so even the project structure is something we treat as potentially fluid over our life span. […] When museums acquire our works we include a clause in the contract that any future incarnations of the work must be accepted into the acquisition and preserved accordingly.*
>
> (Soda_Jerk 2019)

Figure 7.3 Soda_Jerk, Terror Nullius, 2018, Digital Video. Image courtesy of the artists.

Soda_Jerk describe their 2018 work, *Terror Nullius* (Figure 7.3) as 'a political revenge fable which offers an un-writing of Australian national mythology' (Soda_Jerk 2018). The title is, of course, a play on the term *Terra Nullius* (as previously explained). Soda_Jerk refashion our past understanding of the 'records' with their sharply critical reordering and representation of iconic Australian content from film, television, advertising and political news broadcasts.

The film includes content such as *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Crocodile Dundee* and various *Mad Max* films[19], remixed with videos depicting conventional concepts of *Australiana*, image and sound from television, news broadcasts and sound bites of well-known and infamous Australian politicians. However, in *Terror Nullius*, the tables are turned and the animals fight back, the women are powerful and don't require rescuing from hypermasculine archetypes – the usual tropes are subverted with much gore, humour and controversy.[20]

> *We are all archivists-as-activists. Images are not objective or subjective renditions of a pre-existing condition. They are rather nodes of energy and matter that migrate across different supports, shaping and affecting people, landscapes, politics, and social systems.*
>
> (Soda_Jerk 2015, 145)[21]

Soda_Jerk open a dialogue with *Terror Nullius* that allows us to question decades of iconography that Australians were drip-fed through large and small screens alike. Some of us may recognise the original content, much of which now seems so uncomfortable and outmoded – entropy causing that slippage into irrelevance – however, it is the *spectre of the original* which also allows us a foothold in understanding the *détournement*[22] of the archive that occurs when such content is cleverly reframed. The effects of entropy, which start to break down the original meanings

and narratives of the materials used by Soda_Jerk, make possible their representation of this content.

> *It generates a critique by using the material left behind by the enemy. Like*
> *jujitsu, using the weight of the enemy against himself.*
>
> (Soda_Jerk 2015, 145)

Conclusion: propositions for future entanglements with entropy

This idea of the *anarchival* application of energy can be seen not only in the work of Soda_Jerk, but also in the work of Lyndal Jones and Yhonnie Scarce. The anarchival *excess of energy* is perhaps a way of describing artists' entanglement with entropy – all the artists in this chapter not only leverage the effects of entropy, using a 'feed-forward mechanism' to deploy the materials of the archive to create new work, but also work to stave off the effects of entropy and preserve their work and archives that are formed from and through the work.

Writing this chapter has been an attempt to acknowledge the artist as cultural worker, and in particular, these hard-working artists who have applied so much energy and forged very distinct practices. All of them demonstrate awareness of the archival in the materiality of their work and the attendant contents that support and document their creative practices. It could also be seen as a celebration of a range of contemporary creative and archiving practices that are culturally challenging in terms of future preservation activities, working both with and against entropy.

The artists discussed here apply their energies to confronting ideas around colonisation, the Australian landscape, sustainable creative practice and cultural identity within the 'increasingly overlapping environments of creation, curation and consumption of archives' (Breakell 2008). Jones works with a European structure imported to the harsh Australian landscape, both Scarce and Soda_Jerk challenge and subvert the lie of *Terra Nullius* and all it represents, opening new channels for discourse about place, culture, history, identity and how we might proceed into the future.

There are preservation dilemmas arising from the artworks and archival materials in practices such as these, dilemmas which in recent years have increasingly been recognised by collecting institutions that often have custody and responsibility for artworks and archival collections of diverse and complex materials. This text does not attempt to delve into those areas of preservation practices, it is, rather, an acknowledgement of the artist's crucial role in working towards the best preservation solutions – or towards a definition of what *preservation* could mean in the archival or even more so, in the *anarchival* sense. As Soda_Jerk explain:

> *We don't understand our work as inextricably tied to specific media formats,*
> *hardware or modes of presentation. We prefer to think of the work as something*

that can be responsive and adaptive to change. What feels like the greatest challenge is the question of what kinds of preparations can be made that would assist in guiding the management of these issues beyond the artist's life (i.e., once they can no longer be the arbiter of how the work is dealt with or translated in the current moment).

(Soda_Jerk 2019)

All artists discussed in this chapter work in ways that exemplify the complexities of practice and materiality – and all have distinct methods of applying energy in the entangled dance with and against entropy. Jones' performance work leaves material traces in the archives: in time, space and place – the artist can reactivate these traces to form new work and new interpretations. Scarce's work is material as memorial – showing us where the original records are absent or erroneous. Soda_Jerk subvert existing materials to produce new and different way of seeing and knowing.

Conclusions and propositions for ongoing consideration have emerged from researching the artworks, archives and creative practices of these artists, and by extension, contemporary creative practice archives in general.

Contemporary artists use complex methods and media in their works which include sites, events, fugitive and fungible media and projects that happen over extended periods of time. Many of these works contain, use or generate archival materials, all of which are susceptible to the effects of entropy. However, we can work *with* these entropic effects to produce culturally relevant and evolving work. In some cases (and in all three cases here), the destruction of past hierarchies of order is necessary to allow new structures to emerge.

The preservation artists undertake is significant cultural work – for their own creative practices, for the larger community, and to assist potential institutional collecting organisations that may become future stakeholders.

Not all artists' works and archives are 'collected' into institutions and organisations so there must exist a large number of *wild archives* of significant work that the artists themselves (and others close to them) continue to maintain and bear responsibility for.

Remembrancing histories through cultural content and documenting performance works are valuable activities. It is useful to capture traces of the ephemeral and materials subject to entropic deterioration, to enable reactivations of the archival for renewed creative work. However, we must recognise that the artist is central and essential to these reactivations.

These applications of energy cannot go on *ad infinitum*: entropy will eventually play its part and these materials will slip into inaccessibility and decay as will everything material (although, we might hope, not for a very long time). According to American artist Robert Smithson,

One's mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose

into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason.

(Smithson 1996, 100)

Eric Ketelaar tells us, 'history and memory are never "finished". Nor is the archive ever finished' (Ketelaar 2008). We can rework that statement a little and say that history and memory are never finished, nor is the archive ever finished, so long as we keep exploring the entangled relationship with entropy, applying energy and activating archival materials to keep our stories evolving.

Notes

1 Jacques Derrida uses the term *anarchival* in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Derrida 1996), and Hal Foster is possibly one of first to use the term in relation to creative practice, in 'An Archival Impulse': 'archival art is as much preproduction as it is postproduction: concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces (perhaps "anarchival impulse" is the more appropriate phrase)' (Foster 2004, 5).
2 'The record is always in a process of becoming' (McKemmish 1994, 200).
3 Archivist Frank Upward may be reticent to exactly define his use of the term '*spacetime distancing*' as a synonym for archiving, but it is a suggestive term that has application here with archival material that has experienced the effects of entropy, and change of use, function, purpose and meaning over time. Spacetime distancing is in play with the materials of the artworks and archives described in this chapter, and the continuum of recorded information and artefacts (Upward 2005).
4 This refers to the term 'archives in the wild' (Leighton et al. 2010, vii).
5 'Pre-custodial' in this context refers to those archives kept and maintained by artists themselves, but unlike 'non-custodial' archives, they may have the future potential to end up in an institutional archival collection. Non-custodial archives may also be pre-custodial as we cannot predict what future collecting institutions may take into their holdings.
6 Also known as the *Swiss House.*
7 The word '*ark*' has many meanings and in this context is defined as: (in the bible) a boat or ship built by Noah to save his family and two of every kind of animal from the Flood; Noah's ark; something that affords protection and safety, The Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred religious symbol of the Hebrew people, a chest or cupboard housing the Torah scrolls in a synagogue. Based on definitions from Oxford Reference (Oxford Reference, 'ark').
8 The house is an archive in that its materials record many things, and it becomes a keeping place and a site of inscription for the many events that have occurred in its history.
9 The Avoca Chinese Garden, also called *The Garden of Fire and Water*, is a reminder of Chinese heritage in the region. Many Chinese people came to that part of regional Victoria in the mid-nineteenth century in search of gold (Goldfields Guide 2019).
10 *Prediction Piece 7* involves a process whereby the dialogue is repeated three times during the performance. Each time, Jones is dressed differently: in a suit (masculine), in a dress (feminine) and finally in a more ambiguous style. The way the text is spoken also changes each time.

11 Within traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, each Indigenous language group has a defined area of land or country that the group is connected to, both geographically and spiritually. As Professor Mick Dodson explains:

> When we talk about traditional 'Country' … we mean something beyond the dictionary definition of the word. For Aboriginal Australians … we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area and we might mean more than just a place on the map. For us, Country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains. While they may all no longer necessarily be the title-holders to land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still connected to the Country of their ancestors and most consider themselves the custodians or caretakers of their land.
>
> (Reconciliation Australia 2017)

12 The Woomera Exclusion Zone 'encompasses 127,000 square kilometres, which is said to be equivalent to the size of England or the US state of Florida' (Delany et al. 2021, 32).

13 This idea of witnessing was explained eloquently by Sue McKemmish in her text 'Evidence of Me …' in relation to the *Stolen Generation*,

> it is worth thinking about the significance that bearing witness to the cultural moment has for questions of individual identity. The potent way in which recordkeeping as cultural memory evidences the past in ways which link significantly to the here and now of individual lives was illustrated recently in the reaction in Australia to an exhibition put together by Australian Archives, 'Between two worlds'. The records in that exhibition bear witness to a cruel and shameful policy that separated Koori children, particularly those labelled 'half-castes', from their families and inflicted lifelong suffering. The effect of this witnessing on younger Kooris whose families had in the past been touched by this policy was epitomised by the reaction of Michael Long, who opened the exhibition. He had been vaguely aware of the policy and its legacy, but as he viewed the exhibition he came, he said, to realise the devastating effect it had had on his people, and to understand for the first time the sense of loss and grief of family members who had been directly affected.
>
> (McKemmish 1996, 182)

14 *Terra Nullius* was not legally overturned by the High Court of Australia until 1992.

15

> The great village and aquaculture complex at Lake Condah has been nominated for World Heritage Protection, and is a credit to the community's vision and persistence. It is now acknowledged as one of the world's significant sites of human development.
>
> (Pascoe 2018)

16 Soda_Jerk are Dan and Dominique Angeloro.

17 *Soft Montage* is a term used particularly in reference to video artists such as Harun Farocki: 'Soft montage comprises a general relatedness of images, rather than a strict equation of opposition produced by a linear montage of sharp cuts' (Alter 2015).

18 *Selective Remix* is defined by Eduardo Navas as a kind of remix that 'takes and adds parts to the original composition, while leaving its spectacular aura intact' (Navas 2006).

19 *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo* (1967–1969, Umbrella Entertainment), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975, Peter Weir Director), *Crocodile Dundee* (1986, Peter Faiman Director), *Mad Max 2* (1981, George Miller Director), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015, George Miller Director).

20 There was some controversy around the launch of *Terror Nullius* as the commissioning body that funded the development and production of the film withdrew PR support just days before the launch at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne in 2018 claiming it was '*unAustralian*' (Buckmaster 2018).

21 Manifesto text cited in this chapter was sampled by Soda_Jerk from Mark Matienzo (Matienzo 2002), Hito Steyerl (Steyerl 2009) and Craig Baldwin (Attell 2001).

22 Détournement is

> an artistic practice conceived by the Situationists for transforming artworks by creatively disfiguring them. […] on the one hand, it must negate the ideological conditions of artistic production, the fact that all artworks are ultimately commodities; but on the other hand, it must negate this negation and produce something that is politically educative. It achieves negation in two main ways: either it adds details to existing works, thus revealing a previously obscured ambiguity, or it cuts up a range of works and recombines them in new and surprising ways.
>
> (Oxford Reference, 'détournement')

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Archival endings

Erosion and erasure in the film archive

Elodie A. Roy

In his documentary film *Dawson City: Frozen Time* (2016), US experimental filmmaker Bill Morrison pieced together sequences of ill-preserved, deteriorating archival footage[1] to tell the story of the now disaffected Canadian town of Dawson City at the turn of the twentieth century – as it buzzed with thousands of prospective gold-diggers. In addition to the historical moment it helps reconstitute, the footage used in *Dawson City* has a peculiar story of its own: the reels were (imperfectly, yet almost miraculously) preserved because they had been buried as unwanted waste in the 1920s, before being fortuitously excavated in the late 1970s (after which they were transferred to the Dawson Film Fund, the municipal archive; see Figure 8.1). 'Frozen Time' refers to the fact that heaps of undesirable, highly inflammable reels were buried underneath the town's ice rink for half a century, thus achieving a longevity which is unusual for cellulose nitrate film. On a more metaphorical level, it also alludes to the cultural practice of cinema as an art of preservation and a form of embalming, allowing – in the case of *Dawson City* – to freeze (and subsequently 'unfreeze') scenes from the early decades of the twentieth century. The images were frozen in time – and yet, much of the decayed footage suggests a liquid rather than a solid condition: Morrison's images ceaselessly melt away in fantastical patterns, often full of beautiful gloom and foreboding. In his work, Bill Morrison (alongside other past and present experimental filmmakers, including Stan Brakhage, Peter Delpeut, Gustav Deutsch or Barbara Hammer, to name only a few) draws attention to the radically transient medium and matter of film. What was once captured on film cannot be retained or retrieved: after a while, images combust into increasingly illegible traces – matter which viewers cannot intellectually or even physically grasp anymore, but which continues to haunt and affect them. This, perhaps, is the common tragedy of meaningful inscription eroding into noise; of messages being randomly eaten away, de-composed and altered by parasites.

A vast, inventive literature of waste – which mirrors its shifts, expansive plasticity and reversibility – has consolidated across the past 50 years. Refuse has been the topic (and, in the case of some art installations, the medium) of paintings and art projects, novels and scholarly monographs, plays, operas and films.[2] However,

Figure 8.1 Still from Bill Morrison's *Dawson City: Frozen Time* (2016). Courtesy: Kathy Jones-Gates.

outside the rich technical literature on maintenance and conservation (which focuses on practical aspects), relatively little has been said about the slow wasting or degradation of the archive and its cultural implications. In our cultural imagin-ation, the archive still frequently features as an impregnable, time-proof fortress (as epitomised in Alain Resnais's 1956 short film *All the Memory of the World*). The correspondences between waste and the archive – and their uncanny kinship, as two twentieth-century paradigms of monumental accumulation – are less readily explored.[3] Yet, as persuasively proposed by Aleida Assmann, 'archives and rubbish dumps can be interpreted as emblems and symptoms for cultural remembrance and oblivion' (2011, 369–370), for 'both have a common boundary that can be crossed by objects traveling in both directions' (2011, 369).

This chapter discusses the ambiguities of film as archival medium, exposing the particular materiality and hapticity (to reuse Marks's word) of the cinematic archive as it decomposes (Marks 2000). I am interested in the natural history of media objects and propose – after material culture theorist Fernando Domínguez Rubio (2016) – an ecological approach to the archive which recognises the dynamics of 'temporality, fragility and change' (2016, 60). Throughout, I approach the film archive as an exemplary site of material culture investigation, aligning with Herzogenrath's proposal for a joint exploration of media and materiality.[4] The film archive constitutes a multi-layered physical site, a container for various types of media objects and materials, each of them bearing distinct yet interdependent biographies and life cycles (to reuse Kopytoff and Appadurai's terminology). The composite film archive cannot be assimilated to a straight historical – or govern-mental – repository, nor does it store 'hard' facts. What makes the film archive such a peculiar and challenging object of study is that (just like its older counter-part, the sound archive) it represents an archive within an archive: for film itself, a time-based archival medium (which may only be activated or 'animated', frame

after frame, in the moment of playback) discretely stores sections of time. It is a liminal, in-between, indexical object; media objects are, to extend Bachelard's taxonomy,

> objects *that may be opened*. When a casket is closed, it is returned to the general community of objects; it takes its place in exterior space. But it opens! For this reason, a philosopher-mathematician would say that it is the first differential of discovery.
>
> <div align="right">(cited in Steedman 2001, 80)</div>

Time lies inside the film and outside it – but these are not the same 'times' – there is, on the one hand, a solidified technological time and, on the other, a more (micro-) organic performance of time.

Stopping fires, arresting time: ambiguities of the film archive

The archive appears as a site of physical and symbolic (com)motion and transform-ation – one which is corroded, contaminated by external elements and potentially wasted. Archival endings are an inevitable occurrence: every archival endeavour ultimately reveals its own limits and inadequacies. But the early materials of film – cellulose nitrate (guncotton) and cellulose acetate (also known as safety film) – degrade far more quickly and unpredictably than, for instance, paper.[5] At the beginning of the twentieth century, chemists at Kodak estimated the life span of nitrate at 50 years, describing the three-step decomposition of film: '[It] would begin to go sticky and blister; it would coagulate into a gluey mess; finally, it would collapse into a brown powder' (Houston 1994, 81). It has since been established that nitrate films deteriorate at various speeds, depending upon their storage con-dition, their composition and the aerial elements they come in contact with; occa-sionally, the decomposition process starts much earlier. In the first 20 years of its existence, no institutional step was taken towards preserving film (the first film archives – or film 'libraries' as they were then described – were founded in the 1930s). Reels would frequently and pragmatically be destroyed or sold to junkmen once they had outlived their profitability in theatres (Bottomore 2002, 188). Scrap merchants commonly extracted the small quantities of valuable silver contained within film to resell it, a practice which endured through to the 1930s (Houston 1994, 16). It was easier and less hazardous for small studios to dispose of films than to store them, especially considering nitrate film's tendency to self-ignite at about 50°C (Houston 1994, 40; Brill 1980, 268). Nitrate's safer substitute – safety acetate film – was introduced at the turn of the 1950s[6] and prematurely hailed as the best material to preserve the moving image. It is only in the late 1960s and 1970s that archivists – becoming aware of the instability of acetate[7] and conscious of the approaching natural end of nitrate – began probing more systematically into the chemistry of film, working closely with the Image Permanence Institute in the US,

and Manchester Polytechnic in the UK to understand (and slow down) processes of decay (Francis 1991, 30; Elsaesser 1995). In addition to a scientific, strategic interest in materials, the turn of the 1970s also witnessed the rise of avant-garde filmmaking, especially in the US – with many filmmakers adopting the very grain of film as their main substance/topic (Youngblood 1970).[8]

Latency and relationality of the archive

Because of its physical vulnerability, the film archive may offer itself as a more urgent, multi-temporal site of enquiry than the paper archive: it appears as a site of accelerated degradation, a laboratory of decay. The elasticity and instability of the filmic material may indeed *do* something to the production of cultural memory. It may be that the material plasticity of film modifies (or subverts) the very medium it seeks to preserve. In doing so, it might eventually displace and threaten the sovereignty of the (audiovisual) archive as a keeper of memory. Writing just a few years before the widespread practices of digital migration and conservation, Wittmann evoked the unstoppable process of filmic decay:

> Photographic material has the critical disadvantage that information stored on it remains available only for a limited time. The material decays slowly but surely, due to mechanical stresses and chemical processes. Film archives know this problem well, but with conventional methods are powerless to do anything about it, since the only current solution is to make an analog copy of the film. This means copying the old material to a newer, more stable but still photographic material. In so doing, a damaged data set is copied; one can only save data which is still there to be saved. And the copy itself begins to decay as soon as it is made.
>
> (Wittmann 1999, xxiv)

In some ways, the making of clean, human – or machine-readable copies also constitutes a form of *idealisation* or maximisation of the image: the latter is expunged – as much as possible – from whatever obstacle may hinder reading (a process which is intensified with the digital copying of analogue films).

What happens when archival documents cease to be legible, that is to say when they can no longer be approached as 'texts' or 'information'? Every audiovisual archive, no matter how well cared for, is haunted by a threat or fantasy of disappearance. There is a (real or projected) instant when the archival media object warps or crumbles, and the images or sounds it once fixed begin flickering, disappearing before the viewer's eyes. This moment of 'future loss' is especially palpable in the ageing of materials. In his 1903 essay 'The Modern Cult of Monuments', Alois Riegl was a pioneer in acknowledging the 'age value' of decomposing buildings. Riegl's 'age value' – symptomised by 'imperfection, a lack of completeness, a tendency to dissolve shape and color' (Riegl (1996[1928]), 73) – commands a novel

relation to the object as it 'addresses the emotions directly; it reveals itself to the view through the most superficial, sensory (visual) perception' (Riegl 1996[1928], 74). The notion of age value, which was to decisively inform Benjamin's concept of the aura, continues to productively illuminate the condition of contemporary audiovisual archives and paved the way for contemporary scholars of decay as diverse as Walter Moser, Tim Edensor and John Scanlan.

Accordingly, it is possible to argue for a gentle acknowledgement and revaluation of the archive's grain, surface noise and asperities. A more general revaluation of materiality (and its myriad shapes) seems all the more necessary in the supposedly 'arrested' digital context, characterised by a logic of data extraction (where cultural objects are often stripped down to their propositional content). Materiality constitutes a form of surplus meaning which, however, is not reducible to pure information; neither is it superfluous, gratuitous or inconsequential. Materiality marks the productive beginning of a relation to the world, not only in terms of physical environment but also of interrelated temporal realms. Media objects, as they disappear, seem to radiate a new form of energy, allowing for the emergence of novel relations, attachments and commitments to both past and present. Indeed, any change in physical and photochemical state anticipates a symbolic transformation as well, thus influencing ways of reading, comprehending and approaching the archive and, reciprocally, the nature of the present. The haunted dimension of the archive could profitably be understood as a form of latency. According to Gumbrecht, '[i]n a situation of latency [...] we sense that something (or somebody) is there that we cannot grasp or touch – and that this "something" (or somebody) has a material articulation' (Gumbrecht 2013, 23). Gumbrecht systematically investigates latency as a significant – perhaps even *the most crucial* – dimension of history which the archaeologist-historian must urgently (and somewhat experimentally) bring to light in order to comprehend the composite present – even though latency is precisely that which most readily eludes her grasp. It is interesting to note that the term 'latent image' was used in early photography to describe the invisible image captured by light-sensitive silver crystals prior to the development of the nitrate film (Brill 1980, 256). For Gumbrecht, it may be that the ever-present yet invisible image of history must be similarly 'developed'.

As such, it is perhaps in the archive, with its layered material configuration, that latency lies most vibrantly. Archives elicit a sensory response/contact (Ernst 2015, 39) and may even '[reorder] our sensory capacities through [their] own menu of sensations' (McMurray 2015, 268); they can be further understood as repositories and repertoires of possible 'emotions' or evocations.[9] In a dialogue surveying the significance of sensory thinking, an artist and a curator-historian discussed their experience of the museum store as

> physically self-aware, spatially intimate, and slow. I must put on gloves, handle appropriately, take care. Is this a kind of emplacement within one's own body?

The simple fact of the object in one's presence here is remarkably powerful. It's like a *provocation*.

(Blakey and Mitchell 2017, 7; my emphasis)

The term 'provocation' aptly conveys the notion of the archive as a relational site, which may invite irrational or fortuitous responses. Phenomenologically, what happens in and with the archive is a possibly troubling or mystifying encounter – a movement of attraction and repulsion, of magnetic activity – which falls outside the neater, rational linguistic grasp of archival theory (Farge 1989, 112). As such, complementarily to the abstract, highly theoretical, *concept* of the archive, there exists a practice and presence of the (resisting) archive – a practice which does not lend itself to rationalisation or formalisation. Many historians (such as Farge or Steedman, and before them Michelet) have fallen prey – with various degrees of romantic attachment – to the sensory materiality of the archive. Their writings, rather than abstracting it, bear the full weight and imprint of this encounter. In *Dust*, Steedman (2001) suggests that the actual archive inevitably exceeds the texts of – and about – the archive. It is because the archive is infinitely *more* than a text that it threatens to destabilise the centrality of the word (*logos*). In other words, the sensual materiality of the archive both exposes and undermines its textuality. When we interrogate and emphasise its sensory-material aspects, we therefore address the pre-textual and post-textual ontology of the archive: we engage with it on another level, which is *not* that of logos but may be one of aesthesis or sensation. 'Archives may be regarded as hallucinogenic substances' (Ernst 2015, 17) – they are consumed, absorbed; they give off images and sounds which were not fully there a priori but are not metaphorical or imaginary artefacts. These substances are comparable to distillations or dust images – the literal dust that Michelet would inhale and incorporate during his work in the French National Archives, hoping 'to make ink on parchment speak' (Steedman 2001, 70). More than a ventriloquist, Michelet was a 'mangeur d'Histoire' (Barthes' words), a scholar who literally '*ate* history' (Steedman 2001, 27): he metabolised the archive into history, and materiality into textuality.

Negative hands: the paradoxical materiality of cinema

The audiovisual archive, which is different from the paper-based archive, may in turn crystallise singular forms of sensory encounters. But what is the tactility of film? The encounter with the moving image is paradoxical, its materiality unobvious. The screen seems to elude or postpone touch. And cinema, which is often reductively conceptualised as the exemplary medium of the *visible*, also makes much of itself invisible (and untouchable). Watching implies and enforces a distance; it presupposes a level of – physical – detachment or abstractedness. Cinema, a literal spectacle, is reliant upon what Debord calls a logic of 'separation' (which he would explore, not without irony, through his film entitled *Critique de la séparation*, 1961). Debord famously and provocatively argued that his technologically enslaved contemporaries had become the ghostly spectators of their own lives, passively and

narcissistically involved in its recounting; looking and not reaching, not immediately touching (let alone shaping) their material environment. Individuals, he lamented, now 'lived' by proxy, through the medium of the audiovisual recording. Debord's radical position – fuelled by melancholy despair – bore faraway echoes of Plato's allegory of the cave: spectators may only touch the film from a distance[10]; they are moved metaphorically, following its unfolding almost abstractedly.

   But there may be an issue in completely alienating touch from vision – for this approach fails to recognise the material intensity of a relation which unites the eye and the hand. In her moving script for the short film 'Negative Hands' (1978), Marguerite Duras experimentally explored the links between materiality, memory and projection – offering a homage to the vertiginous tactility of seeing, and an implicit celebration of cinema's hapticity (Duras 1979).[11] Her film originated as a reflection on the 'hand traces' found in prehistorical caves in 'the Magdalenian caves of sub-atlantic Europe'. The caves, dating as far back as 27,000 BC, become a primitive, largely unconscious archive of gesture (*kinesis*), a repertory of the body. Long after the original contact between the human hand and the surface has been broken, the material trace of a human passage survives, curiously frozen. The fragile, powdery impressions seem suspended between the ephemeral (that which, etymologically, lasts 'one day') and the eternal. More than this, the walls of the pre-historical cave become a surface of projection – an archaic cinema. The handprints constitute a form of writing before writing happens; a pre-history of film before film exists. Illich and Sanders underlined that the realm of the pre-historical was, reciprocally, that of the non-verbal, the pre-textual: that which was there, fluid and floating, before the storing of time through writing, and therefore memory and the archive itself, became possible (1989, 3). Upon seeing the handprints, individuals may be tempted to place their hands upon the printed hands of those who have come before: to establish a direct contact – necessarily superficial – with distant ancestors. This also betrays a spontaneous gesture of reaching out to the past – performing a literal, magical manipulation which is akin to fiction (from the Latin *fingere*, to form or mould; Illich and Sanders 1989, 84). The body, and the hand especially, become the only 'medium' to access that vanished moment and person in time, to read-touch them as the blind read.

Media dust: the logic of incorporation

(Narrative) cinema may be described as a form of modern storytelling, where the 'words, soul, eye and hand' of the storyteller, the raw materials of her trade, are replaced with a mechanical form of recounting (Benjamin 1973, 108). One may even go as far as Isherwood, bemusedly recalling the words of a film-cutter in a 1930s London studio: 'The movies aren't drama, they aren't literature: they're pure mathematics' (1961[1946], 68). The tactility of film, which is for the most part repressed in the cinema theatre, reappears in the ageing archival medium. It is when film starts dislocating, falling apart and ageing, that its materiality becomes palpable again. For Marks,

> Both film and video become more haptic as they die. Every time we watch a film, we witness its gradual decay: another scratch, more fading as it is exposed to the light, and chemical deterioration, especially with color film.
>
> (2000, 172)

When it disintegrates film becomes at once *more* visible and *less* visible: the symbolic image gets progressively 'noisier', less legible, and another one appears. The order is reversed: the once indifferent substrate seems to speak through the thin layer of the filmed image and is brought at the forefront – so much that 'we are compelled to watch the filmed action 'through' the visible decay' (Johnston 2017, 223). Many contemporary filmmakers, working from the 1970s onwards, have engaged with decaying found footage.[12] Filmmakers such as Peter Delpeut (once the deputy director of the Nederlands Filmmuseum) have grappled with the materiality of the (passing) archival film footage, creating new works which re-call the archive. These works are reflective, answering different calls and serving different artistic visions – as such, they cannot be reduced to one another.[13]

Yet a unifying concern links them together. All of them interrogate the moment of difference; they survey the unstable zone between film as scopic and as tactile object, the overlapping of intention and hazard. The ageing film is at the interplay of its intended original image and the involuntary image of the medium. It is, perhaps, the inarticulate voice of obsolescence as it stutters through the thin, visible fabric of film. The same happens in the case of recorded music where 'we listen "through" the noise' (Johnston 2017, 223): the ageing medium, the crackle of the disc is much louder than the original sound recording, indefatigably thumping through it – producing a primitive, wordless and unstoppable noise. It is no surprise that the soundtrack for Delpeut's *Lyrical Nitrate* (1991) was created out of shellac records of operatic music, where crackles and hiss seem to converse with the disintegrating images.[14] Rather than simply positing that we watch (or listen to) films such as *Lyrical Nitrate* 'through' interferences, I believe that the visual and aural parasites become – especially in the case of avant-garde film – that which we are looking and listening *for*. The last frame of Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971), for instance, shows the film stock catching fire. The image of the burning film produces a piercing, unexpected sensation of *presence*: as if something, within the artifice of film, was abruptly made real.[15] In doing so, it also suggests something *else* – a latent image, a 'natural' film confusingly stirring beneath the cultural film. Perhaps this is where the 'entropy' of the cinematic image resides. And here it is not the intended message, but the involuntary, incoherent *stuttering* (rather than writing) of time itself, which surges to the surface. Eventually, the stutter is worth recording and preserving: as well as showing decay, the films ambivalently freeze time, reproducing and aestheticising the process of degradation and offering us a record of disintegration.

Yet the moment of material slippage or stuttering cannot be fully translated into or recuperated by (archival) discourse (perhaps because archival discourse itself often – but not always – dreams of overcoming the fragmentary nature of the archive and operates as a linking operation between its discrete elements).

Morrison captures the moment when the materiality of the archive threatens its legibility, at once disrupting and fraying it as well as our relationship with it – upsetting our means of interpreting and deciphering. It is useful here to return to Laura U. Marks's *The Skin of the Film* (2000), a robust and beautifully evocative study of transnational cinema and filmic textures – surveying discoloured patches, burns, scars and visual accidents. The age of film can be described as a form of aura (regained), a surplus, an excess – in other words, something which was not supposed to be there insistently reappears and *augments* film. Artists, rather than repressing it, actively work with this surplus meaning. They begin to engage with archival medium at the moment it falls apart; they do not approach the image semantically, but organically: not as organised meaning but as active, or potentially active, proliferating, matter. With Morrison, particularly in the evocatively titled *Decasia*, the skin of film actually becomes the whole *body* of the film itself, an alchemisation of surface and depth. The 'pellicule' (which is the French word for film strip and for skin) is literally reversed, turned inside out (Herzogenrath 2017, 17). Thus the memory work of Morrison proceeds from a logic of incorporation (embodiment) or absorption, where the filmmaker – in a way which recalls the work of visual artist Alexander Schellow – 'decides to incorporate amnesia, rather than representing memory' (Perret and Schellow 2017, 71; my translation).

If Morrison's work is occasionally criticised for its 'nostalgic' or 'romantic' leanings, the lens of nostalgia ultimately proves too partial and limiting (Baron 2014, 130). It may be that his works engage less with the past per se than with the present (or, more accurately, the state of the past in the present). They offer a reflection on the condition of memory work, bringing to light the affinity of history (as *Gestalt* or formation) with biological life. Film is approached as living organism, where '[human] livehood is inextricably linked to the life of the film emulsion' (Gartenberg 2006, 45). The practice of experimental film here resonates with a number of twentieth-century fine art installations and projects (including Joseph Beuys' works with organic materials, or the decaying sculptures of Dieter Roth)[16]: the latter further uncover the synchronicities which exist between the processes of art and the processes of life – recognising 'not only the ephemeral nature of the film stock, but also the perilous state of human life in the modern world' (Gartenberg 2006, 45). This recognition is often combined with a revaluation of everyday life and its discarded materials (for example, amateur film formats). Ian Helliwell, a British experimental filmmaker working with found 8-mm film footage, describes his practice as follows:

> I tend to select sequences that show the most visually appealing effects of deterioration, which sometimes will wipe out the underlying image. On occasions I want what was originally shot to show through and be more central; other times it may be secondary or incidental to the decay.

Helliwell's practice is one of 'telling (different) stories with mutable things' (DeSilvey 2006). He works with amateur films found at car boot sales or on eBay,
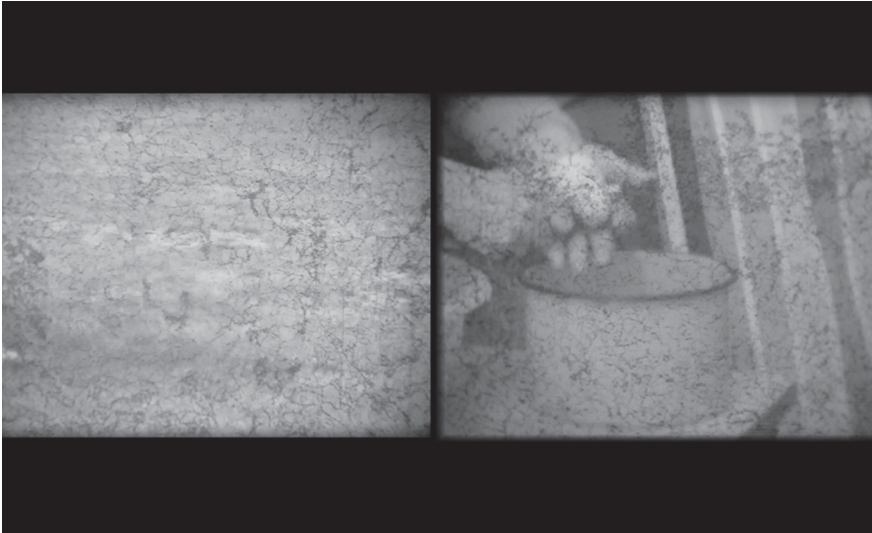
Figure 8.2 Still from Ian Helliwell's *Mobile Home* (2009). Courtesy: Ian Helliwell.

Figure 8.3 Still from Ian Helliwell's *Mobile Home* (2009). Courtesy: Ian Helliwell.

unwanted family memorabilia and throwaway footage. The short film *Mobile Home* (2009), for instance, with its split-screen showing (amongst other things) a fast, senseless repetition of daily chores (peeling potatoes, doing the dishes, hanging the laundry to dry), seems to caricature the everyday in a world where the very

possibility of everyday life has become extinct. The absence of voices or recognisable faces (human bodies only appear as functional parts or blurry fragments) lends it an air of chilling phantomaticity (see Figures 8.2 and 8.3). The fast-paced, electronic soundtrack – a hurried succession of high-pitched telephone-like tones – further adds to the sense of estrangement and generalised disorder.

As he rearranges scenes, Helliwell – alternating between the playful and the serious – brings forward the repressed potentials of the footage, reordering the material to fabricate another story – or to bring into light an implicit, occasionally brutal or disturbing, narrative of the everyday (as is also the case with another short film, *Playing Up* [2007]). Reflecting upon the surplus meaning offered by dying footage, he explains:

> Decayed analogue film media carries an extra layer of visual information, which draws our attention away from the predictable filming of reality. Its instability is capricious and erratic, and this can offer new sensations and alternative interpretations, and make the viewer aware that films don't have to be stories. […] The unusual films – where the subject matter or content is of concern beyond the family circle where the film originated – are therefore rare and immediately stand out. For me it is most often the mistakes – the sequences that went wrong or were purely inadvertent – that capture my imagination and can inspire an idea for a new film.

Appropriation of found and archival footage raises controversial questions regarding the archive's supposed relationship to 'historical truth'. It implicitly posits the existence of a series of self-referential or independent truths which are partially that of the material itself (conveying its own micro-history before it carries any traces of 'History').

Conclusion: reading decay

The fact that decay parasitically 'writes' over media artefacts does not mean that we are fully prepared (or even equipped) to decipher it. We may indeed need new sensibilities to read decay, to retrain our intellectual reflexes. Decay, which is at once pre- and post-textual, cannot be 'seized' in a straightforward or linear manner. Whilst the text is that which is there to preserve and arrest time, materiality opposes textuality: it prompts us to engage with the archive differently, on another plane. It encourages us to touch and not to read. As such, it may be contradictory to attempt to 'capture' materiality and processes of degradation through words.[17] Perhaps it is in the realm of embodied (artistic) practice that differential readings – and (under) writings – of the archive can take place.

I have suggested that materiality – and an awareness of its subtle, plural iridescences – may be more than another mode of looking at the archive. The sustained attention to materials (and parasitic micro-materialities) may prompt other, distinct epistemes and practices of the archive. Considering its materiality

(rather than its pure 'textuality') allows us to peer with more insistence into the various layers of temporalities inhabiting the archive, its physical and chemical metamorphoses, its disparate and uncertain becomings but also, perhaps more radically, into the productive ontology of dust itself. We may never be able to fully theorise that which falls apart, yet dust may become an object of partial knowledge, an indispensable companion of archival theory. There is an accrued interest in questions of materiality at the very moment that cultural practices shift towards 'dematerialisation', where touch gets alienated or forcefully reduced to mere 'digit'. It would be too simple to equate a renewed focus on materiality with nostalgia for the 'pre-digital' realm, empty fetishism or sterile 'retro-mania' (Reynolds 2011). However, to remember decay may constitute a means to challenge the sensorially impoverished digital hyper-archive – and its paralysing monumentality. Through decay, we engage with time and cultural memory kinetically. The study of decay (and its shifting refractions) may therefore help us move closer to the grain of the present – it constitutes a humble yet decisively political gesture.

Notes

1 Morrison is well known for his previous experiments with decaying footage (*Decasia*, 2002).
2 For monographs retracing the artistic revivals and cultural imagination of rubbish, see Neville and Villeneuve (2002), Dagognet (1997); for cultural waste and processes of revaluation see Thompson (1979).
3 A notable and inspiring exception is offered by the scholarship of Neville and Villeneuve (2002).
4 In the realm of sound studies, the 'decomposition' approach is also fruitfully theorised in the work of Kyle Devine (2019).
5 Cellulose nitrate, first synthesised in 1858, was initially conceived as a cheap substitute for ivory, before it was discovered that an emulsion of light-sensitive silver crystals could be deposited upon nitrate film to produce film stock for photography and cinematography (Maxwell and Miller 2012, 72).
6 Nitrate was banned in 1951.
7 Acetate had been wrongly presented and commercialised as a stable and enduring material by its manufacturers. Yet, like nitrate, it was a polymer and was therefore bound to disaggregate (Francis 1991, 30). The expression 'vinegar syndrome' is used to describe the decomposition of acetate-based film, the first symptom of which is a vinegar odour.
8 We could evoke here the works of Stan Brakhage, Malcolm Le Grice, Barbara Meter, Paul Sharits, Ken Jacobs or Harry Smith.
9 On evocative objects, see Turkle (2007). On affective materialities, memory and history, see also: Moran and O'Brien (2014), Downes, Holloway and Randles (2018).
10 Incidentally, touch is absent from the Platonician sensorium which only recognises four senses.
11 The fantasy of a sensory or sensual correspondence between the past and the present – sustained by a material remainder – is certainly a trope in modern and contemporary fiction (running from Jensen's *Gradiva*, published in 1902, through to Leonard Cohen's 1966 *Beautiful Losers*).

12 Film theorists have proposed a tentative distinction between 'archival' and 'found' foot-
     age, where the first refers to documents 'found in a bona fide archive' (Baron 2014,
     16) whilst the second is associated with documents found 'on the street, in the trash, or
     at a flea market' (Baron 2014, 16). Here, along with Baron, I suggest that the two cat-
     egories are eventually interchangeable, especially in the contemporary digital era: for
     instance, how would one call historical footage stumbled upon on YouTube?
13 For detailed, individual studies of the films, see, for instance, Herzogenrath (2017).
14 For a study of the film's soundtrack, see Johnston (2017, 220).
15 Hollis Frampton displayed a material awareness of this in *Nostalgia* (1971), which
     shows the burning in 'real time' of photographs.
16 For philosophical enquiries into art and the aesthetics of decay, see Afeissa (2018),
     Dagognet (1997).
17 In an idiosyncratic essay first published in 1964, popular culture theorist John
     A. Kouwenhoven noted how languages desensitised and desensualised the world –
     and its processes – the very moment it tried to communicate them (1982). He raised
     important – and still pertinent – questions about means of writing materiality and tried
     to develop experimental, sensory modes of writing.

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About the archive

Technologies

Chapter 9

The material archive everyday

Technologies of the filing system

Sarah Cain

In 2010, Microsoft Research published a paper on one of the technologies being developed in their Cambridge research laboratory. Called the 'Family Archive', this prototype home archiving system took the form of a piece of furniture, with shelves for physical storage, and an integrated scanner and display touchscreen on the top surface. Below the screen was a projector, and a camera that could capture a number of exposures in order to create a three-dimensional (3D) image of an object placed on the screen. An 'interactive multi-touch tabletop technology with integrated capture facility for the archiving of sentimental artefacts and memorabilia', the Archive was part of a larger project called 'The Future of Looking Back', which focused on the intersections between archival practices designed to preserve the past and the emerging interactive digital media of the future. The authors envisaged this as:

> a device which we hoped would open up the processes of family archiving in the sense of making new things possible and drawing in more of the family. We believed the technology might lead to new practices being formed or new creative landscapes being envisioned. […] In essence, by deploying these systems into real homes against a complex backdrop of ingrained social relations and organizational processes, the disruption and tensions (as well as the delight in the new opportunities the technology provided), afforded us a way of understanding archiving as it is normally played out in family life.
>
> (Kirk et al. 2010, 8)

The Family Archive might initially seem merely a charming curio: a small version of the professional archive. But this would be to ignore the device's essential continuity with all sorts of ways in which we already interact with archival technologies in our everyday spaces. The practices of the museum, the library and the office have long since become inextricably intertwined with our domestic life, to the degree that we routinely overlook the form of the archive already present within the everyday: the filing system.

The filing system underlies and shapes not just the acquisition and organisation of information, but our modern working lives; and, increasingly, our personal

lives. It allows knowledge to be gathered and made use of in archives, and also to be arranged and processed; permits experiences as well as documents to be placed within a system (and indeed, governs the creation and administration of those systems); and lends itself not just to large-scale bureaucratic, corporate and industrial structures, but also to personal organisation. In spite of the revolutions in information technology that have taken place over the past century, we still find ourselves speaking and thinking, at the very least metaphorically, of files and folders. (The very word *file* points towards this: the Latin *filum*, or thread, on which documents might be strung in a sixteenth-century office.)

What follows here is less a conclusive argument than an initial exploration: some ways we might think through the filing system as both material and conceptual; organisational and disorganisational; historically specific and temporally diffuse. As a form of thought, the filing system structures the way we encode and represent knowledge to ourselves; as a material technology, it innovates new forms of storage and retrieval. It is both an overlooked material *habitus* and a potent cultural imaginary: even, in late modernity, an aesthetic.

Technics: threads and boxes

What has happened to us that we might embrace an aesthetic in which the filing cabinet takes up residence in the home? One answer might be rooted in the proliferation of analogue and digital media throughout everyday life, and our desire to impose order on the increasing demands written media makes of our living and working spaces – the increasingly unruly sprawl of what Lori Emerson (2014) calls 'writing interfaces', as paper, print or screen. We tend to assume that the containers we use to store paperwork are simply part of the furniture: that ways of storing information are purely functional rather than meaningful in themselves. Understood, however, as a form of active intervention into how we make decisions about what to preserve, and how we then act out the storage and retrieval of that information, the filing system is itself a *technics*: a set of discursive and material practices with their own histories and structures. Technologies of organising and storing writing have become an acute preoccupation of the digital age; but they have their roots in a much longer and more varied history of the organisation of knowledge, from the tablet or papyrus to the book press and the index-card.

Cornelia Vismann, one of the few media theorists to write explicitly on the filing system, draws upon an administrative history of the file, which appears as early as the Roman imperial governments. Originally 'part of a temple dedicated to the god Saturn, to whom the invention of writing and of external order were ascribed' (Vismann 2008, 57), the specially built Tabularium on Capitoline Hill quickly became a repository of valued objects and cultural memory and the precursor for all our modern models of the state archive and its documents:

> Archive or office: one merges into the other, for in both cases the simple fact of storage generates work with and on that which has been stored. The file stacks in

the Tabularium turned into a structure with access facilities; the symbolic or virtual reference to a treasure of old texts was replaced by the real access to numbered files enabling specific, target oriented searches that were no longer subject to chance. Public records facilitated a file-based administration – in other words, a bureaucracy.

(ibid, 59)

Already part of an anticipatory mechanism of storage and retrieval, filing records makes possible the administration of state systems. The Tabularium housed the copies of administrative orders and letters, imperial commands and financial records: '[t]o guarantee that despatched commands and deposited files were identical, letters were closed, folded, and then sown through or wrapped with a thread whose end was sealed' (ibid, 60). Other early bureaucratic filing systems lacked a systematic means of storage and retrieval until the influence of Rome permeated the pre-modern world. Though record-keeping on papyri was widespread in early Egypt, and stored in a variety of containers, including wooden or wicker boxes and jars (particularly for papyri intended for funerary monuments), it was not until Roman administration brought with it an ideal of good organisational practice that, as Christopher Eyre argues, Roman Egypt began to place 'greater emphasis on the written archive of the administration as a source of authoritative record, which is to say as a tool of government control of the individual' (Eyre 2013, 343). In this way, the filing system not only began life as a necessary extension of state, even imperial, power, but also remained a point of transformation between the materiality of the stored document and its immaterial demands.

The imagistic transfer between *filum* (thread), *acta* (document or record) and *imperium* (command) would later make its way into the imaginary of early modern scholarship (probably via the French *filer*, 'to string documents on a wire for preservation or reference', Vismann 2008, 137). The 'file', the thread or string upon which bills or receipts were pinned or strung in the early modern shop or office quickly became a method of document storage in which documents were grouped – quite literally strung – together by subject matter. This generated the verb 'to file', especially in the case of the action of stringing a bundle of court documents upon a wire, and literally 'filing' them at the court – a usage which quickly emerged in early modern English. This movement from the literal materiality of the physical thread or wire in the office, to the figurative 'file' we speak of today ('I have it on file'; 'I'll file that idea for future reference'), imagines the file *both* as the location of a (paper or digital) document and as the act of presenting or storing it. The special valency of *paper* has recently become a focus of scholarly interest; significantly, right at the moment when the dematerialisation of paper into the screen seductively promises exactly that liberation in the notion of the 'paperless office'. Paper, with its reassuring materiality in the form of book, the library, the ream, equally offers us the page as the surface which opens onto the dematerialisation of writing into reading; the moment of transition between immaterial thought and material trace.

The making, trading, accumulation, storage and discarding of paper, in everything from the book and the library, to the document and the memo, or the ephemera of print media or waste paper, is, then, increasingly recognised as one of the most significant media histories of the modern world (see, for example, Derrida 2005; Gitelman 2014; Price 2019; Yates 1989b). The history of paper is not strictly coextensive with that of the filing system, but they are inextricably bound up together – if only because paper tends to be the medium we most often need to 'file': the material that embodies the 'document' as what Lisa Gitelman calls the 'epistemic object […] flagged and filed away for the future' (Gitelman 2014, 1–2). The material structures that contain and constrain it are not just those of the book, the thread or the wire, but also the shelf and the box (the drawer, the safe, the cabinet, the lockable banker's box, the briefcase, the cardboard carton). Files go into cabinets; stand on shelves like books; expand into folders and box files which sort and compartmentalise. The nesting of the file into folders, cabinets and boxes is replicated even within the imaginary space of the computer, where 'files' have 'file names', are put into 'folders', archived in 'documents' and placed iconographically on the 'desktop' (the Family Archive, with its ability to capture 3D scans of favourite objects, renamed the 'folder' as a 3D 'box' which could be tipped and rolled on a touchscreen to shake out the represented digital 'objects' within).

The paper document belongs partly to the object-world, and partly to the realm of discursive textuality – that order of circulation which Michel de Certeau terms the 'scriptural economy' (de Certeau 1984). This inevitably participates in both the private and the public spheres, since the paper document, from the early modern period right up until the start of the twenty-first century, was the main way of calling upon the individual to take up any kind of interaction with legal, financial, commercial, institutional or any other formal administrative systems. Besides personal letters, the main documentation private individuals most needed to archive took the forms of birth and death certificates, financial documentation, receipts and note-taking for personal, spiritual or educational use. The ways in which these documents were copied, duplicated and moved between the office or commercial space, and the domestic space of the individual reader or recipient, encouraged innovations in document or paper storage to be taken up and replicated within the home. The ancient inextricability of the filing system from both the bureaucracy of state power and the administrative labour of inscription generated a powerful compulsion to structure and contain. This systematising drive not only appears in the filing system's links to institutional structures, but it also appears as a form of intellectual and conceptual desire, part of the increasingly elaborate systems and material forms of organising information that characterises the intellectual labour of modernity. In its various manifestations from the ancient world to the present, the filing system makes possible the containment of writing in the places in which it is monumentalised or stored. But it also acts as a conceptual repository of knowledge, as a means of shaping professional and domestic space, and a point of intersection between writing, intellectual thought and personal experience.

Synchronics: storage and retrieval

Traces of the filing system make themselves felt in much earlier precursors of the filing cabinet and the in-tray: the bookcases, bureaux and writing-desks of the early modern period and the long eighteenth century, and their letter-racks, secret drawers and safes (see Kafka, 2012, 77–81, for a history of how the 'bureau' gave its name to the term *bureaucracy*). Fan folders (later, expanding file folders), correspondence boxes and personal libraries all acted as rudimentary filing systems within the home; and some writers made early experiments with the filing system which anticipate our later fascination with paper organisation and the furniture within which it might be stored. Ann Blair recounts, for example, early modern scholars' attempts to develop filing systems, such as Leibniz's 'note-closet', a piece of furniture imagined first by Thomas Harrison in the 1640s, and described in further detail by Vincent Placcius in 1689 in his *De arte excerpendi* (Blair 2010, 93–95). Part of an early modern interest in bespoke paper storage, the 'note-closet', or, as Placcius termed it, a 'scrinium literatum' or 'literary closet', resembled a large wardrobe cabinet, with drawers and boxes at the base, and an array of wire hangers inside the doors, onto which could be threaded metal bars inscribed with commonplace headings 'inscribed alphabetically on little lead plates' (Blair 2010, 94). Each bar had a series of hooks, on which could be hung notes and papers against each heading. In this way, the *scrinium literatum* combined a structured series of topical or subject divisions – up to 3,000 or 3,300 headings – with alphabetical ordering. At least two examples of this delightful precursor to the filing cabinet are known to have existed (one owned by Placcius and one owned by Leibniz, which as late as 1779 had apparently ended up in the royal library at Hanover); but it is not hard to imagine ways in which similar methods of organising notes, bills and papers might have been developed in many private or bureaucratic offices as, variously, more or less systematic methods of storing paperwork.

A filing system is not just a physical form of storage: it is also the abstract structure that dictates where files are placed. Alphabetisation was less common than one might think. Early modern filing systems also made use of thematic or subject sections or other considerations. Samuel Pepys famously organised the books in his bespoke 'book presses' not by alphabetisation nor by subject, but by size, in a spiral arrangement which circled around his library from press to press. (The cabinetry of Pepys's book presses was reminiscent of Placcius's literary closet in providing not a smooth shelf, but an array of physical notches for the books to slide into.) Less than a century earlier, Francis Bacon's method of organising his papers and commonplace books drew on the arrival of double-entry bookkeeping in northern Europe (Poovey 1998). A little later than Harrison's or Leibniz's note-closets, the botanist Carl Linnaeus made use of similar systematic principles in ordering both his botanical specimens and his academic notes, recording data on small slips of paper which look remarkably like precursors to the twentieth-century index-card (see Charmantier and Müller-Wille 2014).

Linnaeus, who made most of these index-notes in the latter half of his career, seems to have used them in combination with notebooks of excerpted material, letters and loose-leaf sheets of observations: 'Linnaeus's paper-based information management techniques show a curious dialectic between bringing representations – names, references, descriptions and drawings – into a fixed order, and setting them loose again for purposes of comparison and rearrangement' (Müller-Wille and Scharf 2009, 8). Noel Malcolm notes, similarly, that Thomas Harrison:

> had invented a method of excerpting information from books, which involved putting the information on separate 'slices' or slips of paper and then organising them in some sort of system which, while capable of containing huge quantities of such slips, made it easy both to find particular units of information, and to arrange and re-arrange them in different ways.
>
> (Malcolm 2004, 198)

In this way, innovations in filing may also make possible new forms of knowledge, enabling new, productive kinds of connections between different ideas, excerpts or data points held in the system – what Markus Krajewski calls, in relation to early index-card databases, 'thinking in boxes' or 'recombinatory creativity' (Krajewski 2011, 67). This raises the possibility that the great encyclopaedic and classificatory endeavours of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries might have been fundamentally shaped by how we sort and store pieces of information *as* pieces of paper.

Linnaeus's student Daniel Solander adopted his method of paper-slip filing, and in the 1760s, when he moved to England to become curator of Sir Hans Sloane's collection at the British Museum, developed this into a methodology for cataloguing specimens throughout the Museum (see Charmentier and Müller-Wille 2014, 227–230). Solander, too, both invented and gave his name to a particular type of file box, the Solander box, which to this day is used as a storage container for loose or delicate archival items, from print documents and rare books, to loose papers, objects and maps (see Caldararo 1993). A hinged file box made of durable wood, cardboard or paperboard, a Solander box is sturdy enough to be stored either on end or in stacks. Solander's successors at the British Museum, Jonas Dryander and Robert Brown, used his techniques to develop the modern card index catalogue, in which paper slips are pasted into guard books or stored themselves in boxes or cabinets indexed by subject and alphabetisation. Solander's innovations in both conceptual and physical storage underline the fact that filing systems need both material containers and organising principles. Opening the paper folder, hanging file or file box to put something in or take something out marks the point at which our conceptual and physical forms of storage and retrieval intersect: these are the moments of transition and transformation, when writing both disappears into, and appears out of, the object-world of the material archive.

If the filing system is a partly material, partly abstract system for structuring ideas or information, then early modern 'paper tools' for organising writing, such as the commonplace book, the library catalogue or even textual devices within the

book (such as the table of contents or the index), might also be thought of as ante-cedents of the filing system. Thomas Harrison's 'booke-Invention', the precursor to Placcius's 'literary closet', was termed both an 'index' and an 'ark of studies' (Malcolm 2004, 196). Familiar to the keepers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commonplace books, and practiced by eighteenth-century gentlemen-scholars from Samuel Johnson to the Neoclassicist Johann Winckelmann, the index, and its associated organising devices such as footnotes, tables, keys, compendia and shorthands, were integral parts of early modern and Enlightenment scholar-ship (see, for example, Moss 1996; Grafton 1991). All these practices increas-ingly marked a gradual professionalisation of knowledge during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which, as Anthony Grafton (1997) has argued, the record-keeping practices of historians and theologians started to form the basis of modern humanistic scholarship. The archive, which of course always functions as a repository of the past, also records something else in this dynamic of storage and retrieval: it records the traces of the intellectual labour of reading, note-taking, writing, preserving and storing. The material labour of writing is symbolically stored by and within the filing system; in its turn, the filing system anticipates something else: the labour-to-come that will take place in the future retrieval and recombination of the ideas, paperwork, administration or storage within. In fact, the filing system already represents a form of labour all of its own: the adminis-trative labour *of* filing.

Diachronics: the future of looking back

If the archive acts as the repository of significant objects, the filing system, as a sub-category of the archive, is, in contrast, not concerned first of all with the cur-ating or monumentalising of cultural artefacts – or, at least, not as it is reshaped during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead, the filing system in modernity increasingly structures the work of offices, municipal spaces and the everyday labour associated with the company and the production of documenta-tion, business correspondence and audited accounts – most particularly in the US. Part of this took place in conjunction with the institutionalisation and profession-alisation of the library: a young Melvil Dewey, for example, yoked his famous Decimal System of library cataloguing to both his founding of the American Library Association in 1876 and his simultaneous establishment of a subsidiary 'Supply Department': a commercial enterprise founded to sell Association mem-bers library equipment and furnishings that encouraged efficiency, organisation and 'labour-saving' (Krajewski 2011, 89). This company, eventually separated from the Association and renamed Library Bureau in 1881, capitalised on the emer-ging discourses of early data management – more familiar to us as library science and business studies – to sell a range of boxes, box files, cabinets, tools and paper products to an increasingly wide range of professional library and commercial cli-ents. These cabinets, especially those made for the card sizes which would become the industry standard for library card indexes, were often linked explicitly to the

proprietary cataloguing systems they depended on: Dewey's cornering of this market was inevitably linked to his success in having his Decimal System adopted near-universally in libraries across the US.

Dewey was competing with several existing companies such as the Amberg File and Index Company, which already marketed box files, flat file cabinets and Shannon files – a proprietary device a little like a cross between a modern lever arch file and a cabinet drawer, in which papers could be organised alphabetically (see Yates 1989a,b, 36). While still more like mass-produced versions of the *scrinium literatum*, these cabinets were about to be surpassed in the 1890s not only by the hanging file and innovations in index-card systems, but also in cognate developments in the ways paper documentation was produced and circulated. Over the following three decades, what JoAnne Yates has termed 'a veritable revolution in communication technology' made itself felt most significantly in three interlinked areas: 'in production, the typewriter; in reproduction, carbon paper and duplicators; and in storage, vertical filing' (Yates 1989a, 39). The flow of writing through systems and storage media is particularly literalised in informational writing like the business document, report or memorandum, which John Guillory calls 'a means of transmitting information within the large bureaucratic structures organizing virtually all work in modernity' (Guillory 2004, 112). All of these aspects of the circulation of print, paper and communication also demanded innovations in everyday archiving. The production, duplication and storage of documents became both easier and more necessary, which generated a corresponding imperative for more and more efficiency in the administrative labour of managing a deluge of paperwork.

Both of the 'labour-saving' devices of the hanging file cabinet and the card index cabinet stored documents flat and unbound, so that they could be easily removed, reinserted and rearranged within an overall system. This tended to be formed through a combination of numerical, alphabetical or subject indices. These classificatory systems might seem mathematical, logical or value-neutral; but in reality, they also encoded contemporary assumptions about the value and structure of everyday knowledge. The Dewey Decimal System, for example, combines its famous ten-point classification of umbrella disciplines (religion, pure sciences, arts and recreation, etc.) with an infinitely divisible number of sub-categories in each category, which can expand to allow new sub-fields of knowledge to be added. A book's number within this index allows it to be positioned within the physical library, to be shelved and re-shelved as the collection grows without ever losing its place within the system of classification. Rather than presenting knowledge as an encyclopaedic totality, or a progression towards a point of enlightenment, the classificatory impulse of the library catalogue reimagines its contents as endlessly branching, dividing, proliferating. In the office, the filing system imposes order on the unruly generation and proliferation of documentation to suit a Taylorised ideal of the endless production of labour in the workplace. As such, the work of storing documents or artefacts *into* filing systems anticipates their necessary retrieval for future labour and also represents the encoded labour of those who operate these

archives in the first place. In modernity, the operator of the archive becomes less and less like the role of adept or *archon* – the priest, the scholar, the scribe, the curator, the archivist – and more and more coextensive with the *user* of the filing system, often renamed its *administrator* (and it is no surprise that this period marks the rise of *administration* as a cultural concern).

The filing system's logic allows anyone who is willing to operate the code to enter into, retrieve and learn to store information, documentation or materials. Formal instruction manuals began to appear as guides for creating and utilising the perfect filing system, such as William Henry Leffingwell's *Scientific Office Management* (1917); or E.R. Hudders's *Indexing and Filing* (1916). This organised shaping of materiality by and through the codes of conceptual keys, layouts, numerical and alphabetical structures became not just more and more formalised as a 'science' (library science, information science, business management, archival science), but also more and more seemingly democratised in the first half of the twentieth century, as the technics of bureaucracy relocated from the court, the civil service and the museum and integrated into the office, the library, and the routines and spaces of everyday life. This new technocracy of organisational labour was also differently gendered. As Pamela Thurschwell and Leah Price have noted, the predominantly masculine labour of the priest, the scribe, the clerk and the scholar was, as the twentieth century advanced, reframed as the primarily *feminine* labour of modern communication: the secretary at the typewriter, mimeograph or Xerox machine; the librarian at the card index; the administrator at the dictaphone; the receptionist at the telephone (see Price and Thurschwell 2005).

The presence of these new forms of labour inserts itself throughout the early twentieth-century cultural world, especially wherever the production of 'paperwork' marks the production of works of art as well as commerce. Sven Spieker suggests that modernism's generation of 'art from bureaucracy' represents 'a reaction formation' produced out of ambivalent resistance to the 'modern dream of total control and all-encompassing administrative discipline, a giant filing cabinet at the centre of a reality founded on ordered rationality' (Spieker 2008, 1). Aesthetic objects of the period, from the Dadaist found-object to the high modernism of the notes to *The Waste Land*, increasingly registered the pressures of these new archival practices of everyday life. The American poet Marianne Moore, for example, having recently graduated from Bryn Mawr and Carlisle Secretarial School, took up a summer position in 1910 at Melvil Dewey's Lake Placid camp as a secretary and amanuensis, copyediting Dewey's writing and taking dictation from the man himself. Lake Placid was something of a curio, dedicated to Dewey's reforming zeal in matters both of healthy lifestyle and modernising office efficiency. He taught Moore his latest favoured filing techniques, including the practice of answering letters by typing the carbon of the reply onto the back of the original letter (Molesworth 1990, 80). This practice was something Moore adopted for the rest of her life, both for private correspondence and for her work as editor of *The Dial* magazine in the 1920s, and in various posts as a librarian for New York City branch libraries. Moore's familiarity with these new discourses of information

management also makes itself felt in her poems, which invokes the connections between poetic production and 'business documents and / school-books' of the 1924 version of her poem 'Poetry' as it appeared in her *Observations* (Moore 1924, 26). 'All these phenomena are important', she suggested; though this part of the text was, in later editions, relegated to the Notes which Moore included – neatly filed – at the back of her published volumes. Moore was, of course, well versed in the filing systems of the library catalogues she worked with; she also had an intense interest in practices of modern museum storage and display, often referencing in her poems the dioramas she had seen in the American Museum of Natural History. Catherine Paul records that Moore had taken ten pages of notes in her early reading diaries from Benjamin Ives Gilman's *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method* (1918), focusing primarily on Gilman's recommendation that modern archivists and curators should primarily see themselves as facilitating the public's access to aesthetic experience (Paul 1999, 91). In this role, the artist and archivist both work in tandem to sift, refine and produce a democratisation of culture and art, out of the labour of everyday curatorial practices of storage and preservation of their materials.

Moore's habit of incorporating into her texts passages from her 'reading-diary' – overheard conversations, passages of correspondence, textual found-objects and references to a range of illustrated periodicals, from *Vogue* to the *Illustrated London News* – requires not just a readerly attention to her Notes but also invites a reading into her own archives of correspondence, diaries, favourite texts and kept objects. Her own archive, which contains even more of the sources to her poems' myriad quotations and references, was acquired after her death by the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia, where it remains both as a scholarly collection and in the curious form of a diorama of her living room, recreated in the museum for visitors and scholars to inspect Moore's working library, including her furniture, her desk and bureau, pictures, *objets d'art* and various curios (which often appeared as objects within the poems, such as her beloved animal ornaments). The rest of her personal archive, not on display, contains everything from her considerable personal and business correspondence, to her clothing and intimate items. Of course, what often interests scholars in an archive most is exactly that residue of the ephemeral everyday – the tangible traces of embodied lives. Moore's archive represents, though, something of a trend in the second half of the twentieth century for the literary archive to anticipate the future labour of scholars within the archive, whose imagined paths represent the reconstructive labour required for 'looking back'. These pathways imagined by the archive contain the possibility of loss and error: of imaginary order haunting the material residue of the disappeared life.

The tension between memorialising and forgetting, ephemera and importance, the trivial everyday and what might be anticipated to be of future interest is no longer played out in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as only the preserve of those whose archives might command cultural attention. The everyday task of curating one's own filing system compels the 'user' to become the archivist and curator of his or her own personal possessions: to see life as a constant

negotiation of what to file and what to discard, a task that demands a continual movement in and out of the material world of the object, the photographic image and the print document. Not for nothing was one of the most attractive features of Microsoft's Family Archive the ability to turn real objects into preserved representations in digital space: perhaps the most seductive future of the filing system appears precisely in its ability to reorder the analogue world in digital form.

Technē: fantasy, imaginary, myth

In a clip trailered heavily by the BBC in the 1990s, the pilot episode of television serial *The X-Files* showed a repeated signature shot of an unnamed government official walking through a vast, shadowed archive of the kind of manilla box files represented everywhere in the late twentieth-century office. Depositing something within one of these boxes, he leaves through a reinforced doorway bearing the legends: 'PENTAGON: Know Your Exits', and a fire escape map which resembles a five-sided maze. Here, the visual image of the Pentagon's fire exit on the door literalises this Minotaurean imaginary of archival storage and retrieval: that within the filing system can be located a thread, which unravelled, leads to some form of truth or historical resolution. A paranoid fantasy of Pynchonesque proportions, *The X-Files*'s pop-culture success nevertheless articulated something of the visual imaginary of the twentieth-century filing system, and its significance for cultural fantasies of power and secrecy at the end of the post-war era. If Vismann's Roman bureaucracy made use of the filing system to visibly demonstrate its imperial reach, then the anti-governmental fear of the later twentieth century was that a hidden archive operated covertly as a machinery of technological state control and surveillance. The emergence and manipulation of this fantasy was intimately connected to the development of what Jon Agar calls the 'office machinery of government', which indeed made possible and sustained the British and American states in the twentieth century (Agar 2003).

   The sinister potential of state 'papers' and files drew, of course, on a real material history of state coercion and violence from McCarthyite America to the Third Reich and East Germany under the domination of the Stasi; and both Vismann and Spieker discuss the special case of art, law and government filing systems in East Germany at length (see Vismann 2008, chapter 5; Spieker 2008, chapter 7). At various points throughout the twentieth century, one's material relationship to 'official' archives and documentation could well be a matter of life or death. In the aftermath of that political era, however, the hollowed-out cultural imaginary of the filing system persisted as a potent trope of paranoia at the *fin de siècle*. In this, the paranoiac image of the bureaucratic state archive as panopticon also draws on an equally potent Borgesian fantasy of the library as labyrinth of knowledge; only, in the popular imagination, seizing the truths hidden within also offers a means of individual escape from capitalist or technological control. *Dark City* (1998) and the *Matrix* films (1999–2003) offer perhaps the most obviously Gothic reflections of this widespread trope; but in more subtle ways, the uncanny,

anarchic potentialities of the filing system were already appearing in film and television reflecting office life, from Jacques Tati's *Playtime* (1967), with its Dadaist spatial logics of cubicles and storage systems, to the moveable, oneiric quality of the office spaces in *Brazil* (1985) and *Being John Malkovich* (1999). It might be no accident that the filing system appears here most prominently as a science-fiction image, given its ability to operate across both a material, analogue register and a futuristically digital one.

The suspicion (and the desire) that alternative histories of the present and the recent past lie undiscovered in the depths of the material archive, ready to be (re) constructed and made present, draws heavily on a relationship between depth and surface that, Spieker argues, underlies our modern fantasies not just of knowledge but also of the structure of the self: 'Modern archive architecture, with its three interconnected stages devoted to the production of files (office, registry, archive), represents a prototype for the model of the psyche constructed by Sigmund Freud' (Spieker 2008, 35). In post-millennial culture, this is nowhere more persuasively imagined than in the 2015 Pixar animation *Inside Out*, in which the interiority of the self is literalised as a set of office co-workers managing an internal system of emotions and experiences. These experiences appear as spherical orbs of memories stored in a maze-like archive within the self, materialised as curved library shelves which visually suggest folds of brain tissue. Pixar's acclaimed 2020 *Soul* goes even further, imagining the ultimate system which tracks all souls circulating in and out of their different stages of existence on Earth as contained in a set of office filing cabinets, managed and overseen by Terry, a zealous spirit accountant.

The transfer between the imagined self within-the-archive and the self-*as*-archive dovetails with a post-millennial blurring between analogue and digital worlds, in which computer design increasingly seeks to naturalise itself as intuitively part of the self. Just as our experience of storing and retrieving digital information is patterned by the vocabulary and imagery of analogue media in files and folders, bookmarks and documents, so too has computer design sought to replicate the properties of the material world in the graphic interfaces of the computer screen, ostensibly to make us feel more at home in digital space. 'Skeuomorphic' design, which emulates the aesthetics of physical objects in the look of electronic icons and graphics, helps cement the imagistic overlap between the way we organise physical materials and the way we imagine the storage of digital information as *like* our experience of the material archive – the 'trash' bin, the folder icon, the layout of the 'desktop'. In reality, as Matthew Kirschenbaum has noted, the apparent transparency and seamless transfer between the two is a carefully constructed visual fantasy, a deliberate design feature that obscures not just the real workings of the computer, but also the labour behind the interface (see Kirschenbaum 2016). The material/spatial imaginary we think we see manifested in the virtual space of the computer emerges from, but is not at all coextensive with, the matter that makes up the computer's hard storage: 'a digital environment is an abstract projection supported and sustained by its capacity to propagate the illusion (or call it a working model) of immaterial behaviour: identification without ambiguity, transmission without loss, repetition

without originality' (Kirschenbaum 2008, 11). Despite promising to do away with materiality, this abstract projection draws knowingly on a nostalgic desire for the absent object-world. The systems we interact with are primarily a created aesthetic designed to draw upon a pre-existing image-aesthetic of the archive, which already encodes a 'definable and datable set of electronic practices; a recognisable spectrum of tropes, icons and graphic conventions' (Kirschenbaum 2008, 38).

What we might call a cultural aesthetic of the filing system bifurcates, then, in the later twentieth century, into two interconnected fantasies: one, of the filing system as the panopticon of (largely hidden) state or institutional power, in which control over information threatens both the dystopia of collective control and (inversely) promises potential freedom the individual who can unlock the truths hidden within the archive. The second fantasy, one which initially appears in a much more benevolent domestic guise, is the taking on of the filing system as a guide to life: a way of adopting the tenets of archival practice as a lived capitalist practice of organisation, a freedom through perfecting one's life as administration. In both these cultural fantasies, the filing system acts as a structure which unlocks the individual's freedom to take control of modernity itself (either modernity as information, or modernity as work). This appears most prominently in the huge number of books and television series devoted to teaching us how to create and manage our lives according to the organising principles of the filing system, from David Allen's *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (2001), which stresses 'the critical factor of a filing system' in managing every aspect of one's life; to Marie Kondo's hugely successful *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* (2011), and a profusion of decluttering advice and minimalist blogs such as *43 Folders* and *Zen Habits.* All of these texts exhort the reader that only constant vigilance over the filing and organisation of our physical and electronic lives can help us manage the 'overwhelm' of material objects and digital information. Even Elizabeth Emens, who in *The Art of Life Admin* recognises that administration has become a way of life for the twenty-first-century individual, suggests only that the solution is the endless negotiation of work throughout all moments of the day, in which administrative labour is only ever held off or given in to, never entirely abandoned (Emens 2019).

In this context, the Microsoft Family Archive – which never quite made it out of prototype and into more widespread production – seems rather something of a symptom rather than a cure: a wishful fantasy of domesticating the infinitely expansive archive of late modernity. Digital technologies hold out the promise of archiving everything; but in doing so, they express a tension between fantasies of freedom and fantasies of containment. This fantasy has, of course, always been active in the dream of archival spaces. Indeed, instead of understanding the filing system as a smaller, modern, domestic form of the archive, the pervasiveness of this fantasy might lead us, conversely, to think of the archive as just one facet of a much longer and broader history of filing and storage systems, one which is active throughout our everyday spaces as much as within the museum or the collection.

'Storage shapes your life' reads the subject line of an email from the Japanese home and accessories store, Muji, just now arrived in my email inbox, inviting me to file it in one of my email 'folders'. Like the Family Archive, the filing system now invites us to live it every day, a seamless transfer between the labour of organisation and an imagined aesthetic of order. Bullet-journaling, file-boxes, cloud storage and workflows drawn from management self-help media all offer strategies for containing the endless generation of print effluvia, email and electronic documents – though liberation remains an impossible dream.

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Chapter 10

The materialism of techno-archival memory

Wolfgang Ernst

Sometimes misunderstanding rules in memory discourse. Many refer to 'the archive' as a totality of material records for memory, or to all kinds of storage media, rather than to the institutional and architectural frame which defines the essential archive as organisational form (see Bornholt et al. 2016). A storage technology is not already archival. Storage refers to the material condition (*techné*) of enduring records, while the archive is its symbolic order (*lógos*). Just as the library (*bibliothéke*) literally refers to the array of (even empty) shelves rather than to the book therein, the traditional archive has been a depository and institutional framing of textual records set apart from current administration. In the media-cultural meantime, an archival subsystem has emerged, where electronic (and increasingly 'digital') records take place within a techno-mathematical archi(ve)tectonics itself. This structural and structuring l'*archive* in the sense of Michel Foucault's *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (1969) rather refers to the pre-conditioning agencies and laws of what can be recorded and symbolically memorised at all. 'The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events' (Foucault 2002, 145). Beyond Foucault's rather library-centred discourse analysis, in a media-positivistic turn, this is computing now – be it data storage and processing in the single computer, or its online alliance called Internet or 'the cloud'.

Foucault's idiosyncratic redefinition of l'*archive* is equivalent to Immanuel Kant's philosophical notion of the *a priori*, not to be confused with *les archives* in French as a term for a legal record institutionalised in state bureaucracy. In the present, operating systems are the computational equivalent to the symbolic archival order, where software files are connected on the basis of specific regularities, and highly integrated hardware circuitry rules as its material implementation. Such techno-archives are not materially endangered by despotic regimes or material violence anymore, but by software hacking.

Once linked to the Internet rather than to traditionally autonomous, autopoietic state bureaucracies, the organisation of archival records has become dynamic. After digitisation, the medieval parchment, the paper file, the photographic print, the film roll, the gramophone record and the videotape are only momentarily bound to specific materialities like the storage disc but primarily become transitory. Such

records are no longer fixed on a (ideally) permanent material storage medium but become electromagnetic latency as matrix of 'bits'. The formerly static inscription itself becomes fluid in terms of the current. The digital record still takes place in local storage and data processing units ('servers', 'hosts') but can almost immediately be migrated (and multiplied) to other places without changing its documentary identity.

To what extent does archival authority still depend on its material, physical embodiment? The traditional authorisation of the record by its unique materiality, its 'analogue encryption', becomes a manipulable function of techno-logistics. The archival authority of a record can hardly be preserved in a computational medium. Unless identified by digital forensics, a digital photograph or any other document can be altered almost without leaving a trace. Archival materialism may be reconsidered a form of resistance against the manipulations by data processing. The fluidity of binary data has often been seen as liberation from the restrictions of archival immobility (stasis), but the very primary support, the material authorisation of the archival record as monument, is its critical potential.

At the same time, algorithms allow for new techniques of archival record retrieval. Relationally networked, reprogrammable and recursive databases multiply the rigid taxonomies associated with the classical archive. Once digitised, the familiar archival record becomes subject to techno-mathematical operations; in their electromagnetic latency, bits become randomly addressable. Algorithmic access allows for the coexistence of different orders without destroying the record structure itself (as long as its rules are kept in an 'institutional' archive called Read Only Memory). But the rhetoric of immaterialisation tends to dissimulate the radical roots of such records in technical materialities. The digital record inhabits the techno-archive's 'two bodies', resulting from both the material ('monumental' hardware, *techné*) and the logical (algorithms, 'documentary' software) layers of the technological *l'archive*.

Conflicting archival time regimes

In terms of Harold Innis (1982), the archive belongs to the tools of empires which are 'biased' by time-conquering to keep legal claims and laws in long-term endurance. Technical media are defined by two reverse functions: transmission across space and storage across time. While tradition-oriented regimes privilege long-term storage media, effective administration like wireless data circulation prefers immediate transmission.

The archive is meant to negentropically maintain records in order to preserve information for future access against the material decay at work in the physical sense. Both archaeological relics and scripture-related 'historical' records from the cultural past are subject to material erasure and physical entropy, while its symbolically encoded information can be almost time-invariantly transmitted to posterity by copying. The essence of archival storage is defined by incommensurable tempor(e)alities. Archival endurance has always oscillated between the symbolically coded

'timelessness' and the entropic, obsolescent materiality of its records; in gramo-phone or vinyl acoustic signal storage, the 'record' literally refers to its material storage). But the proverbial endurance of the archive (such as the millennia-old archives of the Vatican) itself is replaced by restless reconfiguration, once such records are subject to binary information processing. The materially engraved text, once digitised, is not bound to the one and only storage medium (from papyrus to paper) anymore, resulting in an arising gap between fixed storage and ephemeral data migration at the base of such an archive.

Despite terms like 'virtual records' and metaphors like 'cloud storage', the arch-ival value and authority of analogy and digital record(ing)s still grounds in rigid media materialities. Since human cognition of digital records fully depends on such machine reading, the necessity for an 'archival' preservation strategy derives, not only for digital records but for its computational hardware as well. Functional emu-lation of hardware by software itself is a dramatic turn in archival epistemology.

The long-term archival institution itself is undermined by contemporary media culture which is both socially (Web 2.0 with portals like YouTube) and inner-technologically characterised by dynamic intermediary storage (such as 'buffering' and 'cache' memories for video frame sequences in streaming media, or 'regis-ters' for numerical calculation within the Central Processing Units in computing). The digital archive is defined by both algorithmic speed and material resistance. Conceptually, the conventional understanding of the institutional archive needs to be supplemented by a more Foucauldean, media-archaeological notion of *l'archive*. On the one hand, the well-defined terminology in conventional science and admin-istration resists metaphoric transfer and generalisations. On the other hand, com-munication engineering offers more precise *termini technici* to redefine or replace such familiar cultural memory agencies like archives, libraries and museums themselves.

Temporalising the archive and its material resistance

In conventional historical research, an archival record from the past is almost immediately understood in its contemporary contexts. Such a reading transforms it from being an autonomous physical and symbolic monument into a historical document. Foucault decided to redefine this operation, in favour of treating a record from the past rather in media-archaeological terms, as an artefactual unit in its proper materiality: '[I]t might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology' (Foucault 2002, 8) – to the intrinsic description of the technical (hardware) and logical (software) artefact. It is the radically materialist approach which makes symbols (be it literary letters or mathematical numbers) accessible for machine processing.

Archives emerged with alphabetic writing. Their understanding therefore refers to symbol operations and manipulations (letters, words). The symbolic code can be transmitted (now 'migrated') with a high degree of fidelity in copying, almost

regardless of the material support which is subject to physical ageing. The symbolic code is mostly invariant towards circumstantial change. While in analogue storage, the signal formation directly depends on the materiality of the recording medium (like the gramophone groove in its shellac matter, or the probability of electron movement in a thermionic tube), discrete, coded symbols literally abstract from its concrete embodiment. Medium materiality becomes a condition (*arché*) for operations in another archaeological sense, such as mathematical calculating numbers by position with pebbles in sand or the abacus. Al Quarizmi's erasable writing into sand in Bagdad around 800 resulted in the notion of operative algorithm. The radical reduction of the alphabet and decimal numbers to a binary measure unit called bit enabled information to rise above the constraints of matter and energy (see Wiener 1948, 166), treating sequences of letters no longer as writing but literally like computational calculi (pebbles), as material, therefore mechanisable objects.

Traditional storage media have been physically inscribed; the symbols (alphabet) or signals (gramophone) literally in-formed the device (see Sage 1953, 141). Latent storage devices such as magnetic tape for audio and video, on the contrary, only reveal their memory content in the dynamics of the electromagnetic field as induced signals – an 'archive' which human eyes can no longer immediately decipher. Archives of electronic memory media are 'characterized by latency and significant limitations on access' due to their fragile techno-material nature (see Prelinger 2009, 271). Electronic storage media constitute a sphere which is different from the scriptural regime of the classical archive, but this archival regime, on the level of alpha-numeric codes, unexpectedly returns within techno-mathematical machines.

Monumentality as suspense from the temporal economy

'Online data collections labelled archives could in fact be better characterized as perpetual transmission rather than permanent storage' (Kessler and Schäfer 2009, 276). What used to be secret spaces, secluded from public insight – the arcana of political administration and of their archival memory, the 'secret archive' – is now directly wired to the communication circuit of the present. By its de-materialisation, the archive loses its temporal exclusivity as a space remote from the immediate present (access). The electronic setting-in-motion of the traditional archive (see Røssaak 2010) invites for counter-insistence on the materiality of the archival record as a retro-effect. The material record is rediscovered in its virtue as monument, suspended from the ever-accelerating circulation of electrified economy, taken out of the contemporary, as time-critical *epoché*.

While the material record is subject to obsolescence, the very structure of the archival container is negentropically biased: a symbolic order. Both converge in so-called digitisation, where no longer the physical inscription counts, but the signal as mathematically calculated information, stored in the symbolic (binary) code.

Preserving the signal: analogue, or digital?

'Archival materialism' is no neo-Marxist or media-ecological ideology but an insistence on its physical essence. The magnetic tape in audiovisual archives is a fragile medium; the 'vinegar syndrome' as chemical disintegration of the carrier material cannot be stopped, just slowed down. The chemical analysis of endangered analogue signal storage like early video art by, e.g., Fourier Transform Spectrography, is a close, truly media-archaeological reading of such archival media materialities. Micro-technologies are at work in what discourse emphatically calls cultural heritage.

A large portion of electronic records from the twentieth century has been kept on magnetic tapes which can be read only with transducing devices. Particular tape drives, though, have often become obsolete, resulting in a significant engineering challenge for preserving the data. The migration problem of digital media data and the physical vulnerability of electronic storage media is not just a technological question, it has an epistemological dimension as well. Consider the case of the 1960 census in the US, of which the Census Bureau retained records for its own use in what it regarded as permanent storage. In 1976, the National Archives identified seven series of aggregated data from the 1960 census files as having long-term historical value. A large portion of the selected records, however, resided on tapes that the Bureau could read only with a UNIVAC type II-A tape drive. 'By the mid-seventies, that particular tape drive was long obsolete' (The Commission on Preservation and Access and the Research Libraries Group 1996a). When the computer tapes containing the raw data from the 1960 federal census came to the attention of the National Archives and Records Service, only two machines in the world were capable of reading those tapes: one in Japan and the other already deposited in the Smithsonian as a relic. The data rescue effort requires media-active archaeology, since it is no longer subject to 'collective memory'.

There are two complementary approaches to the conservation of analogue signal records: preserving the physical, especially chemical and electromagnetic properties of the concrete media body – since all media technologies are hardware in the first place. An alternative approach tends to preserve media-based memory as information, up to the extreme point of view that the material body might be abolished after its essential transformation into its pure binary information units. 'We no longer collect the carriers, clay tablets, books or floppies, just the information' (Van Tijen 1994).

In need for an archive of hardware

The digitisation of cultural, administrative and artistic articulation (be it literature, sound or video) tends to move the archive towards an informational economy of circulation, but such permanent transformations and updating still depend on techno-physical artefacts (see Berry 2016). The New York Stock Exchange Virtual Trading Floor and the NYSE Command Center were designed between 1997 and 1999 by Asymptote Architecture (Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture) to visualise

real-time high-frequency trading data, in order to detect suspicious irregular activity, and track the impact of global news events on the market. For a future cultural heritage of such time-critical media installations, it is mandatory to preserve both the 'virtual architecture' (executable software) and its material computational condition (re-enactable hardware) in emulation systems, for which documentary science has developed the notion of 'logical preservation' (Marker 1998, 296). Emulation of both ancient computer hardware and operating systems software in contemporary computers is a truly 'digitally born' answer of contemporary media culture beyond traditional archival care.

There is a micro-memory theatre where both regimes, the archival institution and the computational operation, literally meet: in the quickly accessible processor register (a term directly borrowed by engineers from archival terminology itself). The essence of archival memory, like the computer as algorithmic machine (Turing 1937), is not in its material embodiment but in its logistical structure, its so-called tectonics. The archive has been architecture (hardware) and tectonics (logistics) already, a Ge-stell in two respects: its material architecture and shelves, and actual algorithms which operate upon these data, a symbolic regime which equals the logical and the material machine.

Beyond archival materialism?

As early as 1859, Oliver Wendell Holmes identified a symbolic trade-off between the material object and its signal recording for the oldest analogue signal-based medium in the technical sense, photography:

> From now on, form is separated from material. In fact, the material in visible objects is no longer of great use, except when being used as a model from which the form is constituted. Give us a couple of negatives of an object worth seeing … that's all we need. Then tear the object down or set it on fire if you will.
>
> (Quoted from Kemp 1980, 121)

Once the graphically inscribed alphabetic record, and the mechanically engraved (phonograph) or magnetically embedded (magnetophon) signal on a material carrier has been transformed (sampled) into digital, immaterial information units called 'bits', it can be 'migrated' (virtually lossless) from one storage computing system to another. Permanence and archival endurance thus are no longer achieved in the traditional way (which has been monumental fixation, *stasis*, so far), but by dynamic refreshing, such as from the hard disc memory drive in computing.

Materialist media ecology: the techno-archive in metahistorical time

Material media have their individual, characteristic probabilities of physical endurance – *Eigenzeit*. Purely physical media differ from the software-based technologies

by embodying a fundamentally different temporal destiny. A world of difference exists between the customary phenomenon of material degradation and the new phenomenon of obsolescence of multimedia data. E-waste here becomes an issue again, in contrast to informational entropy.

While time-critical processes take place in the present, media memory deals with metahistorical times of media. For an ecological notion of deep time in media materialities, the chemical and mineral basis of technological devices is central, like germanium enabling communication industries (see Parikka 2015). Such stratigraphic insights emphasise the passage from pre-cultural matter to electronic waste as the longue durée of media. The so-called Anthropocene is intimately bound up with the material aspect of technologies and their temporality indeed, while the media archaeological approach, more specifically, pays respect to both the material constitution of media and their organising ratios (techno-logics) which extend beyond merely human durations (see Goddard 2015).

Conflicting archival tempor(e)alities: symbolic order versus indexical signal (case phonography)

The phonographic record as storage device does not only carry cultural semantic like words and music but (like any oeuvre of Media Art) is at the same time a persistent hardware memory of cultural engineering as well, by its very material fabrication – a kind of frozen media knowledge, which – media-archaeologically – waits to be de-frozen, liquified.

Bela Bartók once commented on the media memory conditions of the phonographic recordings of oral poetry by Milman Parry, which he transcribed into a musical score:

> The records are mechanically fairly good […]. Aluminium disks were used; this material is very durable so that one may play back the records heaven knows how often, without the slightest deterioration. Sometimes the tracks are too shallow, but copies can be made in almost limitless numbers.
>
> (1942)

While the body from which the song originated apparently has aged, being subject to physical entropy, the recorded signal in principle stays invariant against the passage of time.

Media archaeology is aware that any replay of signals from the technically recorded past is primarily media memory, not human voices, and that we are not speaking with the dead but with dead media that still operates. The noise and scratch of the wax cylinder are the pure message of the medium; in-between, the human voice is literally incorporated. But what has been continuously preserved by analogue recording technologies becomes quantified in the transfer to digital recording (CDs) instead of simply being analogue recording. This is epistemologically new, dramatically.

In digitising a continuous waveform with an analogue-to-digital converter, the sampling rate controls how many samples are taken per second (as it used to be 'per year' in the case of Medieval annals) – all depending on the quantisation level. Oversampling for archival purposes registers the material scratches as well; the media archivist more sensitively not only listens to the recording, but to the material 'record' as storage.

The de-materialised record

According to media philosopher Vilém Flusser (1998), an essential cultural desire is the negentropic effort to maintain order against the physical tendency towards equally distributed disorder. 'We may think that libraries and archives have stemmed the tide of cultural memory loss' (The Commission on Preservation and Access and the Research Libraries Group 1996b). But there is a crucial difference between informational (Shannon) entropy and thermodynamic (Boltzmann) entropy. Two almost incommensurable regimes are at work in the archival order: physical temporality (aggressive *tempus edax* known from allegories of Chronos in the Baroque) in the material storage media, and the coded record value on the other. While there is the progressive chemical defragmentation of acid-based paper since early nineteenth century, the mechanical deterioration of phonographic Edison cylinders, and the signal drop-outs in magnetic videotapes, on the contrary, the symbolic archival protocol persist almost invariant as long as the institutional code is guaranteed, suspended from change within time, leading to ahistorical immediacy in the moment of future decoding.

Since the essence of digital data, which is: 'information', per definitionem (Wiener 1948), is neither their matter nor their energy (see Gschwind and Rotenthaler 2010, 104), the gain of flexibility and electronic computability is paid for with a dramatic loss of material durability both on the side of the records and its techno-archival frame. When the architecture of the Cologne Municipal Archive collapsed on 3 March 2009 (see Ernst 2010), it became apparent that most records, though suffering from dirt, wetness and mutilation, materially survived the ruin astonishingly robust. In a similar way the first-generation ('analogue') audiovisual storage media like the Edison-cylinder and gramophone records, as well as daguerreotypes, photographic negatives and film on celluloid turned out to be surprisingly resistant. More delicate is the destiny of cultural memory based on electromagnetic storage; digital media, finally, tend to divest themselves completely from their material embedding. But the metaphor of Internet 'cloud storage' is a deceit, dissimulating the technical hardware roots of 'virtual' data traffic: glass fibre cables in between server farms, and the very chemical basis of transistors in silicon microchips. The relationship of algorithms in the construction of digital memories to archival memory, in digital media systems, requires an analysis of its grounding in programmable materiality (electronic circuitry) as well – inaugurating a new, truly media-philological kind of critical examination of the archival record. Therefore media-archaeological analysis still matters. Technology cannot

be reduced to immaterial *lógos* (aka software) only; it is material *techné* as well. The Silicon Compiler, e.g., developed in 1979, literally mediates between a programming language for computer chip designers (software) and the complex pattern of the integrated circuitry (hardware) (see Malone 1995).

'Computer' was originally the term used to designate the women operating calculating machines in offices of data management. The essential computational Turing machine, in its simplest form, depends on material surface (paper) and inscription tool (pencil and eraser) to calculate. The traditional materiality of a handwritten record on paper (with its inherent problems of durability) has been a passive storage medium so far, embedded into an external archival structure to which it was linked by paratextual meta-data.

Traditional media-archival techniques such as sound or image annotation, in digitally automated content-based retrieval,

> promise to outsource the process of tagging, naming and organising memories to the computer, using complex algorithms to approximate a kind of 'machinic vision'. […] far from representing the dematerialisation of the object, digitisation represents a significant shift in the way in which memory is constituted.
>
> (Sluis 2010, abstract)

When processed through a software machine (the algorithm), records become readable, writable and executable 'and therefore the material is provided with the ability to "speak" for-itself' (Cox et al. 2015, 134); instead of meta-data by tagging, there is, rather, hashing, recovering sub-archival data patterns from within. The symbolic order already implies the machinic (see Kittler 1991). When this machinery is not processed by human performance but coded into machine operations, the archive becomes (electro-)technological itself. In advanced bureaucracy, archivists faced the transition of records for manual computing (paper slips, counting cards) to electronic data processing (see Dollar 1992). With punched cards, the carrier itself became a techno-archival record prone for machine operations – be it human, or machine (see Von Oertzen 2017). With the transformation from alphabetic lists to numeric tables ('data'), one and the same paper technique makes its records accessible for automated tabulation like the Hollerith machine for accelerating the late nineteenth-century US census. 'The technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future' (Derrida 1996, 16 et seq.).

Rethinking the 'archive' in terms of its technological laws

For memory in cyberspace, the notion of the archive has already become an anachronism, a metaphorical hindrance. Its records management might rather be described in topological, mathematical terms. The archival rule that only what has been substantially fixed can endure and be located does not count any more

(see Bradley 1999, 113). Digitalisation of stored material records here means trans-archiving. Enduring material records are 'liquified' in electronic writing and replaced by short-term, regenerative transfer (data migration) (see Assmann 2001). With the Internet, the hierarchical controls of files that the traditional archive entails have shifted to the transmission protocols itself – a new kind of 'archontic' quality.

Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964) had been explicitly inspired by Clement Greenberg's analysis of the materialities in modernist painting where the flatness of the screen (the storage 'medium') itself becomes the essential message. Applied to electrified memory agencies and especially the 'digital archive', this media-theoretical insight demands a dramatic modification, from the analysis of material and alphanumerical archival objects.

The operative agency behind the digital archive is its technological laws, ranging from the 'physical layer' (as defined in the Internet OSI model) to its data transfer protocols (see Galloway 2004). The conventional archive-tectonics has already coupled material records with symbolical addresses; within the so-called von Neumann architecture of computing, though, the difference between data and addresses can be suspended, such as in the 'hashing' concept of data encryption and retrieval according to memory content rather than by addresses.

Still, within mathematised machines (alias 'computer'), the archival regime as symbolic regime returns more inhuman than ever. But it does not directly depend upon being processed by human archivists and users anymore; it is rather coupled to electronic materialities, the programmable circuitry in microprocessors. Once provided with algorithmic intelligence, it can perform itself according to its internal material and mathematical laws – *l'archive* and technology merge into one.

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Paper tensions

From flipbooks to scanners – the role of paper in moving image practices

Amanda Egbe

Introduction

Let us consider a film when it is screened outside of the context of film exhibition in the cinema auditorium. In this new consideration, we can think of a film in its various aspects of materiality, rather than its exhibition format as either celluloid or digital print. I am proposing here to think about film through another medium, that of paper. A film's cinema release brings forth a graphic display, like a movie poster hanging on a billboard, adverts in newspapers and magazines, stuck to the side of moving buses or on the walls of train stations. Even when filmgoers visit the cinema, they can view large-scale posters and character cut-outs as part of the *mise-en-scéne* of the modern cinema experience. Collectors and enthusiasts can collect film postcards on sale or free at cinemas, film shops, galleries and museums. This paper paraphernalia of the moving image has allowed the cinema-goer to take home a non-celluloid aspect of the film. The portability of this form of reproduction allowed cinema to imbed itself in the everyday cultural aspects of our lives long before the digital turn.

The film theorist Thomas Elsaesser asserted the need to rethink cinema to understand film history and cinema's place in our culture. The moment(s) where the perceived rupture of the digital allows us to go beyond seeing the development of the audiovisual as one improvement after another is, for Elsaesser, a moment to rethink 'historical change' as both linear and non-linear change (Elsaesser 2004). This approach to film history as media archaeology is a way to think through how we understand moving image technologies in their materiality. By utilising a media archaeology of paper and relating this to film, we can consider how the material and immaterial interweave to shape our understanding of certain film practices, particularly when it comes to preserving film. Seeing film as part of a more comprehensive network of technologies of the moving image, rather than its pinnacle, is a critical approach to media history, building upon the 'new film history' (Elsaesser 1986) and the variants of media archaeology (Strauven 2013; Parikka 2012).

Paper is a medium that finds itself a converging point for other media, this proposition relates to how paper acts to formalise information into a document. Film

companies reproduced their films as printed matter in early cinematic technologies such as the Kinora or pre-cinematic mediums like flipbooks. Copyrighting films as paper prints formalised the film as a medium. In the afterlife of cinema, its representation and reproduction of film in its archival form reflect the moving image as a document. When we explore several technologies and expressions of cinema that existed in the pre, early and digital cinematic history of film and how they interrelate with paper, we can understand how we validate cinema through technological methods and cultural practices.

Let us set out an archaeology of paper and film, at first concerning early cinema and pre-cinematic technologies, and then practices of archiving film in the analogue and digital realm. We can understand the ontology of film through the production of film documents; through methods such as reproduction and duplication that show how interrelated technological techniques and cultural practices co-produce what film is.

Some critiques of media archaeology argue that its materialism fetishises technology or at least relegates human agency (Winthrop-Young 2013). One of the most critical figures in media archaeology is the theorist Friedrich Kittler. In his analysis of the shift from literature to technological media, he asserted that media 'determine our situation' (Kittler 1999). This statement has been taken to highlight a technological determinism that relegates human agency in how we come to understand the world because what is permissible in terms of knowledge, according to Kittler, is determined by the ways technical media transmit and store information. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, in his opening remarks in the special issue on Cultural Techniques of *Theory, Culture & Society* (2013), reflects how the cultural-technical approach is a 'viable alternative' to some of those accusations of Kittler's 'pronounced anti-humanism in combination with the scorn Kittler heaped on nebulous constructs like "society"'. Cultural techniques as a corrective to media archaeology attempt to keep the valuable elements of Kittler's media theory whilst escaping the instrumentalism and determinism of previous forms of media study based on Kittler's work (Winthrop-Young 2013, 14). The question of how technology impacts culture need not be a binary consideration when thinking archaeologically. In recovering histories of media objects, beyond linear narratives, we can also account for them within social and cultural terms. The approach to media history in the section on *Reproduction and media documents*, through Bernhard Siegert and Lisa Gitelman, aims to ease the dualistic concerns of some methods of media archaeology by considering the cultural practices that co-produce technology. These approaches lend themselves to thinking through different chains of operations, technological and cultural, between film and paper, which lead to specific practices within filmmaking, archival processes and inventions and innovations of film technology. We conclude by focusing on the role of the scanner operator, a protagonist whose subject formation is produced alongside the process of making the archival document.

Film, flipbooks and postcards

In the history of pre- and early cinematic technologies, many accounts of the overlap with print technologies show that other mediums transformed the emerging cinema. An illustration of the connection between print and moving image technologies includes how entrepreneurs utilised new optical technologies to augment their businesses. By the late nineteenth century, studio photographers such as Bamforth and Co. had recognised opportunities for capitalising on optical technologies such as the magic lantern, by manufacturing magic lantern slides. Bamforth and Co. could further develop their business and diversify into film production with a studio set up to photograph slides (Brown 2005, 237). The company formed a partnership with the Riley Brothers of Bradford, whose moving image technology supplemented Bamforth's photographic skills and the ability for making 'connected narratives' learned from the live model performances of lantern slide productions (Brown 2005, 237). Bamforth's also broadened out into manufacturing postcards through reproductions of their magic lantern slides, attaching words and poems as a supplement. These postcards productions, which Bamforth and Co. developed into sets of images, soon became collectable items. The factory environment of their studio provided the technological means for the production of slides, postcards and film, and the space in which they also harnessed the understanding of their audiences' cravings, to produce a unique set of products. The First World War meant the company stopped making films, but they continued to operate and expand through manufacturing postcards. The story of Bamforth and Co. as one of the largest producers of postcards in the world and their foray into film production via studio photography and magic lantern slide is also a story of their viewers. The expectations and imaginations of audiences helped co-produce these mass entertainments, in the way entrepreneurs, by competing to satisfy viewers' desires, developed content which reflected and played to their audience's wants. In Richard Brown's (2005) recovery of Bamforth's film production history, its importance to British film history was not solely in developing narrative construction in films, but the distinct character of their films. The interplay between magic lantern photography, postcards and film combined with local audience's expectations about the types of characters and behaviours they expected to see based on local knowledge, led to the shaping of films which injected a level of originality to often repeated tropes.

Overlapping print and optical media at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was never a one-way enterprise. Optical technologies did not render print media obsolete; instead, they elaborated on new forms and extended old ones. These optical technologies relied upon the audiences and conventions of the older technologies. Visual imagery and motifs of the new optical technologies, such as the dissolves and fades of the phantasmagoria, were reflected in printed texts such as newspapers, postcards and books.

Writers' intra-textual use of optical motifs was replicated by a more material crossover between optical recreations and the publishing industry. The success

of the various optical shows led to many attempts to recreate the same aesthetic effect through games, books, prints and domestic devices.

(Plunkett 2005, 13)

For example, Robert Barker, the seventeenth century inventor who patented the Panorama, saw his invention miniaturised in print for home use. However, the domestication of the medium had a variety of facets to it. The transforming landscape of newspapers in England, which saw new forms emerging, such as illustrated newspapers, also arose alongside experiences of optical technologies that were producing audiences accustomed to a changed sense of their place in the world. The Panorama itself is an example of a technology that transported its viewer through locational imagery.

Another facet of the overlap of print media and optical technologies was in the production of handheld versions of pre- and early cinematic technology such panoramas or flipbooks, domesticated through their appearance in weekly periodicals such as newspapers and their miniaturisation as toys. Cinematic technologies such as the cinematograph, a hand-cranked film camera and projector, influenced flick books, or flipbooks. Children's books publishers produced flipbooks in large numbers at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Plunkett 2005). These early moving images or motion picture books used early cinematic films, which enlarged upon specific qualities that emphasised the innovativeness of the technology, namely movement. The earlier film sequences that the flipbooks plundered for the most dramatic effect were those that contained movement, such as dancing.

The Kinora was a small mechanical device; a hand-cranked flipbook, a domesticated early cinematic device developed by the Lumière Brothers. The images were organised as a rotating reel and were displayed where the users could view the consecutive frames of the photographic prints through a small viewfinder. You could turn the handle with enough or as little force as necessary to control the images as they flicked through the device to give the illusion of movement. The Kinora was an apparatus devised for the home, not viewable by more than one or two people at a time. By re-photographing the popular motion pictures reels available in the public arena to a smaller format for use in private, the emerging industry could find another purpose for a medium that was still to find its standardised form as cinema.

The manufacturers of early moving image works could feed into the print media market by creating derivations of their films to produce crossover products and technologies. The focus of these 'cross-media' products (Brown 2005) reflected the cognitive appeal of the optical technologies, such as the illusion of movement and the ability to transport the viewer to other locations and times. The above considerations of the interplay of paper and film outline the technological overlap, how print technologies could reproduce the moving image, and how film derived images extending the vistas of established print audiences. From postcards to panoramas, not only were new sights co-opted into existing print forms, but also producers could bring new motifs of the moving image into literature and print culture.

Creators were embedding new techniques of seeing into this print culture, changing narrative structures and disciplining the viewer, as outlined in works such as Jonathan Crary's, *Techniques of the Observer* (Crary 1992). The techniques of flipbooks and Kinoras require hand and eye coordination to produce the illusion of the moving image through the pliable thumb or the hand-cranked machine. The choice to use sequences of movement, such as people dancing in these domestic reproductions of film technologies, materially embedded through tactile activity an immaterial aspect of the concept of the moving image, producing it as both metaphor and actuality. This activity yields not only an idea of the technology, but also the subject who utilises the technology.

Reproduction and media documents

Within the context of cinema, copying film has developed through several technologies and practices. Duplication has been a significant factor in formalising cinema, particularly as a concern for pirating or 'duping' films. The Bamforth and Co. films were often reproductions of well-known recent films (Brown 2005), as an effective business strategy given the lack of copyright protection for movies at the time of their original productions. Delineating ownership of the content and artefact helped develop different elements in the network of technologies that latterly comprised cinema. Yet, as Elsaesser critiqued, a history of cinema technologies does not fully express how the uses of cinematic instruments become culturally embedded, particularly considering the impact of digital practices. The legal copy or original document poses a question of who may copy and how they copy. Reproduction in this sense falls into the category of professional and amateur practices, or domestic and commercial. Lisa Gitelman's and Bernhard Siegert's insights into technologies of reproduction offer a framework to articulate this concern as a chain of cultural and technological operations that interact rather than a cause-and-effect model. These operations produce objects: artworks, documents and make subjects: artists, designers, archivists and historians.

Examples of reproduction in the history of art highlight the interplay of technologies and techniques that permeate artworks and art practices. Siegert's concern for what design is, in the context of art history and the Renaissance workshop, aims to resist the idea of the artist as the centre of the creative impulse. By considering how the concept of design is permissible, Siegert's approach articulates the space in which visualising strategies, technologies and codes come to form the artist, the act of art making and the artefact (Siegert 2015, 123). Siegert's example gives a framework for thinking how the Renaissance workshop as a space is like the photographic studio in the exposition of Bamforth and Co.'s utilisation of optical and print technologies. Bamforth and Co.'s studio is a space where technology and technique interweave; what is permissible as a film can be viewed as a cross-medium exchange of evolving practices, people, protocols and technologies.

Artists in the Renaissance workshop used mechanical means of projection to copy drawings onto surfaces. Artists would reproduce drawings by placing a Velo (or veil) between the artist and the object. The artist could use the Velo to trace the outline of objects on walls or windows, seeing that object and the world divided into a grid of horizontal and vertical vectors. Dürer, Alberti and Leonardo also constructed similar developments of the Velo to produce images with perspective, techniques that used charcoal and powder, and the punctuation of holes on a cloth to help create guiding lines. These techniques, according to Siegert, were not just for reproduction but also disciplined the artist's eye and hand. These practices involved hosts of assistants working on frescos and paintings and included specialists in drawing particular elements such as clouds, skies or backgrounds. For Siegert, this 'trace of material culture' (Siegert 2015, 139) highlights how drawing as a medium calls into existence spaces such as workshops, collaborators and specialists, becoming an instrument for disciplining the body by offering control and correction mechanisms in the act of drawing.

New cinematic technologies, as seen with the photographic studio of Bamforth and Co. similar to the Renaissance workshop, drew in new collaborations, specialists and techniques that spanned photographic, print and the latest cinematic realms. To consider how the material culture also disciplined both hand and eye, a further look into the reproduction of paper documents discloses the co-production of subjects and technologies.

In paper reproduction, the photocopier is one of the most ubiquitous copying instruments in the past century. In Gitelman's media history of the photocopier, 'xeroxing' became a co-production of user and technology. The photocopier was as an office device that sat between carbon paper and the Photostat, in that it would produce between 5 and 20 copies. It went, however, beyond those numbers, as users found an array of applications that far outweighed the initially proposed usage (Gitelman 2014).

Photocopying, until its digital convergence, that is, its technological and conceptual shift, had been a single operation. The Pentagon Papers exemplifies this concept. The Pentagon Papers being both the name for the US Department of Defence report into the Vietnam War and the case of the military analyst Daniel Ellsberg, who copied and leaked these documents. *The New York Times* published the leaked papers in 1971 due to the increasing resistance to the US's military activity. Ellsberg's role was to copy, edit and curate his version of the Pentagon Papers through his use of the xeroxing machine in a friend's office (Gitelman 2014). The curated and edited version of the government documents came about as Ellsberg and his helpers used scissors and masks to remove notes, page numbers, margins and 'top secret' markings from their copies. The report they were re-versioning had already been a process of collected copies and 'photocopies of photocopies, photocopies of transcripts of cables, photocopies of mimeograph copies, and so on' (Gitelman 2014, 89). This making and remaking made the document a flexible copy that Ellsberg archived and copied again and again. Photocopying became a

large part of US office life from the 1960s, making documents became a structuring practice of life, with copy shops proliferating high streets and office blocks. To read documents was to do so through 'the disciplinary structures of modern bureaucracy, including its media of documentary reproduction' (Gitelman 2014, 103).

The analysis of how the photocopier makes documents through the Pentagon Papers case goes beyond media histories that see only stories of innovation to the diffusion of technology. With the Renaissance workshop or Bamforth and Co., the technology used new spaces, interactions and techniques. Photocopying understood within its bureaucratic and legalistic frameworks, the sets of operations and processes chained together allow us to understand the Pentagon Papers as a co-creation. It is a history that produces a 'subject' who pushes the button, crops the page and reconfigures pages in the context of office workflows. The Pentagon Papers gained its validity as a document, created through the process of duplication and editing. Gitelman's subject comes out of the bureaucratic world of office work. Technology and the subject are filters through which the document passes. Evidence of the material cultural trace is through the Pentagon Papers and the immaterial in Ellsberg the xeroxing whistle-blower. In the account of the Velo, we find the trace of the workshops, through the artistic practices, that produce the material documents, drafts, designs and the immaterial artist. This subject has their vision and hands disciplined through the technique. The intangible here becomes the performative and gestural practices of the button-pushing, redrafting and editing through masking with the photocopier, or the use of light and cloth, punctuation and charcoal powder with the Renaissance workshop and the Velo. The approach here lends itself to Bamforth and Co. and how the new cinematic technologies produced new subjects and practices, not only in optical technologies but also in their overlap with print technologies such as postcards and newspapers. This approach opens up ways of considering the impact of the digital shift in terms of reproduction practices with archival film.

Archival film, paper and printers

Early in the development of film as a business, it was necessary to duplicate the negative of a film (original film) to screen it for an audience. The two earliest forms of reproduction were contact printing and optical printing. The Contact Printer works by exposing the original negative onto the raw stock of film by bringing the emulsions of both films together through contact. The other form of duplication is optical printing; the raw stock has an image focused onto it via an intervening lens system to duplicate the negative (Read and Meyer 2000). Like the Velo mentioned above, the Optical Printer acts as a projector system that reproduces the image. Rather than drawing by hand, the added camera records a copy. Reproducing the film image may be utilised to produce a copy that is adequate for distribution purposes, used to make additional copies in other formats. While duplication in the film archive context is about preserving the image, producing a print that maximises and matches the material information of the original print.

The other significant use of the Optical Printer beyond special effects and standard copying is in the film archive, where 'duplication' may be a necessary step in the restoration or preservation process, facilitated by a range of printers (Read and Meyer 2000). The Optical Printer offers advantages over the Contact Printer in its ability to allow for the duplication of damaged films, the ability to enlarge and reduce the image, to reframe horizontally and vertically. Due to wear and tear, improper storage, or numerous other reasons that have led to a damaged original, the archivist aims to produce a print from the film by printing it onto another roll of film. The process of re-photographing rather than a simple contact print offers options to the archivist to overcome challenges such as the shrinking of film, damaged perforations, scratches and deterioration of the original film negative. Film archives differ between contexts of national archives to local niche archives and are not only concerned with the duplication of a film. Archives are aware of the creative dimension in the reproduction process of a film in their collection. The archivist does not pragmatically reproduce and duplicate. There is always a concern for what is changed, the difference engendered by the new photographic process. Intangibles can't immediately be pointed at when considering reproduction as a mirror of the original film. The creativity involved in restoring a film includes those decisions made even in the process of duplicating it. It prompts further questions similar to those raised by Siegert concerning design and the Velo and by Gitelman regarding photocopying and the document. What is at stake in the duplication of the film image? One consideration is the historiography of film.

As mentioned in the introduction, the film archive has played an essential role in understanding film history. Elsaesser's 'new film history' developed from the re-evaluation of early cinema that deconstructed the teleological myths of film origins (Elsaesser 1990). One area of interest in film history has been the Paper Print Collection[1] (Grimm 1999). This collection of over 3,000 films preserved on paper came about first as part of Edison's attempts to copyright the film technology that he developed alongside his assistants such as WKL Dickson in the latter part of the nineteenth century. By registering their first film tests as a series of photographic images, that is, a contact copy of a film on card paper, they could secure the copyright of their efforts. Between 1894 until 1912, the US protected movies as paper versions (Op den Kamp 2018; Grimm 1999; Loughney 1988). After 1912, the process of making paper copies and depositing them for copyright purposes became redundant as the US Library of Congress could store films as nitrate copies at this point. However, long after these initial copies on nitrate film had deteriorated through decay or the film material reused for other purposes, this enterprise of making paper copies of films emerged as a resource for a history of the earliest experiments in film.

In the 1940s, the Library of Congress began to bring these paper prints back to the screen. Carl Gregory, a cinematographer and engineer, used his expertise to help with the Paper Print Collection. Gregory repurposed an Optical Printer utilised for conveying film, to manage the handling of the paper prints (Gregory 1944). Much like the archival practices of today, the Optical Printer had to cope with wear,

shrinkage and different film standards. Projects to reanimate the paper prints have occurred many times in their lifespan. Each effort has seen the development of film technologies applied to the reproduction of viewable prints. Duplication of the paper prints onto 16 mm film occurred between 1953 and 1967 and, in the 1980s, was printed onto 35 mm film. It was in 2003 that the US Library of Congress sought a digital alternative. Archivists were using computers to automate processes where possible. The Kinetta film scanner was an option that shifted the strategy from frame-by-frame registration of the image to one that utilised a continuous film movement to capture the image in 2K resolution (Kreines 2009). The Optical Printer, like the photocopier, proliferates within its oeuvre of the film industry. It brings with it the development of specific skills and techniques for producing its output. The growth of such technologies mirrors those of the Velo mentioned above, a process of bespoke elaboration before the process becomes more standardised and industrialised. The user at this stage is an artist engineer, developing techniques that connect the technology to both new affordances and older regimes of operation. The process becomes discernible with the optical printer as the technology shifts towards a digital framework, to scanners.

Scanners and pixels

Returning the Paper Print Collection to projectable films is a history of the shifting technologies of film duplication, moving from paper registration to digital files. The move to scanning allowed for gentler treatment of the paper prints while still being able to output to 35 mm. Scanning works differently from the process of the Contact and Optical Printer because it creates a digital file. With a scanner, the source of light that illuminates the film is 'refracted by an optical system to be focused on a sensor that is composed by a set of independent photosensitive elements, which correspond to the pixels of the digital representation' (Flueckiger et al. 2018). The digital scanner stores colour information with three values, for example, RGB or YUV. It gains correct colour through three digital images that correspond to specific spectral regions of the visible range. Digitisation of film in this way aims to have the most accurate reproduction of a film's colours translated digitally to the image projected on the screen. This translation highlights the significant difference between the optical and contact forms of reproduction of the film image.

A survey of the current range of scanners in use in the digitisation and restoration process of archival films was carried out by the DIASTOR project (DIASTOR 2013).[2] It was apparent that most commercial scanners performed well in scanning subtractive three-colour processes. These represented the dominant technology in film production since the 1950s, matching the reflection that the bulk of film heritage fit this parameter. This observation, that the technology, once it is at a diffusion stage of development, tends towards a more generic broad standardisation, also means it obscures the wider range of techniques, gestures and collaborations necessary to trace the interconnections that brought the technology into being. Standardised scanners pose a problem for historical films with different

colour profiles, such as tinting, as well as for archival processes, as they cannot capture and render variation. The elements of film practice that involve tinting, which required dyeing the film and reassembling it, are akin to the drafts of the assistants and associates working with the Velo in the Renaissance workshop, or the cropping and masking with the photocopier in the example of the Pentagon Papers. Understanding whether a piece of archival footage was tinted instead of some other colour process requires exploring the film material itself. It involves a consideration of the different practices of tinting, alongside the use of colour in the specific narrative flow of the film. The standard scanner flattens out the technical experience from the detail and gesture needed in contemplating the archival print. It obscures the collaborations and overlaps of disciplines that produce the technology and the creative decisions in the film's structure.

To judge a set of properties across the range of archival film scanners, including the Kinetta film scanner, the DIASTOR study (Flueckiger et al. 2018) created a set of properties. These included the scanners' ability to handle different film formats to their framing options and the quality of the light source and sensor. The DIASTOR approach to film scanning considered not only the objective factors for rating the qualities of the various scanners, but also the subjective factors. It did this through independent tests and a group of 'qualified' individuals, who could make subjective decisions on the quality of the final projected image, thus providing a combination of material properties and industry workflows (Flueckiger et al. 2018, 82). The analysis points to an acknowledgement that scanners, like the Velo or the photocopier, produce a set of immaterial traces in the actions and gestures of the scanner operator. The DIASTOR project example also creates a material trace in the production of a film document, the outputted file represents the ingested knowledge and scanner operator know-how. This knowledge, such as colour depth, sprocket hole distances, marks on the border of frames and damaged film, registers both material concerns and operational traces of cultural spaces and practices.

The subject formed in this archival film digitisation process, the scanner operator, is disciplined through the structure of their activity. The commercial workflows of scanning echo the office workspaces and Renaissance workshop that produced their specific techniques of identity. The workflows of the scanner operator are disciplining, through the technologies of colour depth and frame positioning, aligning and adjusting, utilising the scanners user interface and moveable parts to correct and adapt, in the Velo's fashion. They do not need these techniques in the standardised machine; mass production obscures these gestures through ready-made scripts and user interface design. We can consider amateur gestures as a partial corrective of the disciplined professional subject. However, in the archivist's lab, the document only comes into being through the interplay of the document and user. The performative technological exchange in the practices of duplication outlined above highlights that the document and user, the technology and cultural artefact are in constant interaction. Immaterial cultural practices are informed by and inform material concerns for techniques and technology within this space.

Conclusion

Elsaesser's request to rethink the mapping of audiovisual culture presents an opportunity to readjust our thinking from linear narratives of films' history or technological determinations of the relationship between subject and object, between film technology and user. Instead, tracing the materiality of our film culture can help expose how we can link various techniques to gain a different insight into what film is in other contexts. The approach taken throughout this chapter has been to utilise media history and cultural techniques to consider the forming of film documents and film practices such as duplication through shifts in technology, such as digitisation, and how this shift has material and immaterial aspects.

Examples of the photocopier or Velo illustrate a critical conceptualisation of the subject. This subject is formed through the exchange of technical and cultural operations. Siegert's historical exploration of Renaissance design practices has chains of operation that demarcate the varying notions of design. In Gitelman's exposition of the photocopier, a more careful reading of subject formation is rendered. It offers a way to disentangle more deterministic analysis of techniques that produce documents. In building upon their approaches, we have sought to consider the shift to the digital in film practice, *apropos* Elsaesser's instruction to think anew the relationships of technology to practice.

The shift from a general history of paper and film to a narrower conception of film practices within the archive reveals how media archaeological approaches can broaden out our understanding of the digital shift in media, without turning to technological determinism. Instead, a reading that sees the flow of exchange between networks such as print and optical helps us discern a medium's performative and technological material or immaterial aspects. The always interwoven relationship of paper and film, illustrated by print media technologies and their overlap with early cinematic technologies, highlights that a history of such mediums is not a teleological one. A focus on duplication allows us to understand what types of operations it permits in the flows of culture and technology of digitisation, specifically when considering this process with archival film.

We understand the scanner operator and how the film document comes into being through the differentiation and elaboration of prior and evolving practices. The document and the subject substantiate themselves through *doing*, through standardised machines and operator techniques. Paper, scanners and optical printers implicated in methods of duplication and reproduction always produce interlinked documents and subjects; the shift to the digital may represent an opportunity to trace past techniques by developing new gestures and in so doing bypass the notion that human agency is relegated. It will be necessary to draw out these same gestures again through new practices when future standardisation renders them invisible.

Notes

1   Paper prints were the mechanism by which copyright of motion pictures was first established in the US by depositing a paper copy of the film at the Library of Congress in 1893. The collection of the surviving 3,000 plus prints continues to be housed at the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division.
2   The DIASTOR project is a collaboration between academic research institutes and the Swiss film industry concerned with digitisation and restoration of archival film. The project's main research was carried out between 2013 and 2015 and aimed to bridge 'the gap between analog film history and film technology' (DIASTOR 2013).

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Chapter 12

Expressing materiality in archival records

Athanasios Velios

Introduction

A core aim of archival practice is easy retrieval of records. This chapter discusses how to enable retrieval based on criteria around materiality, focusing on conceptual modelling of archival records. The term 'conceptual modelling' refers to the practice of analysing specific things described in records (instances, particulars) to define generic abstract entities (classes, universals) and the ways that these are linked (properties/relations). Classes are described through properties based on significant characteristics of the instances that they represent. Different documentation systems can be mapped to a common conceptual model to allow querying across these systems. The conceptual model is called an *ontology* and the CIDOC-CRM[1] (ISO 2006) is one such model discussed in this chapter. But let us start with an introduction to documenting materiality in archives.

Value of material descriptions

Observations of materials and techniques evidencing the production and life of objects can help support statements about provenance, which are fundamental in archiving. The value of material evidence in archives has been argued for decades. Much of the contextual information and narratives of archival items depend on the materials and techniques used in producing them and their preservation state. For example, Lester cites sections of Duranti's article (Duranti 1989, 15): 'It is impossible to understand the message fully without understanding the makeup and articulation which the author chose to express it' (Lester 2018). Similar arguments are provided by Hughes (2018) when considering Derrida's archive in relation to the materiality of his documents. Typically, the carrier description is central to interpreting evidence in the case of reproductions. The photocopy of my passport has less validity than the original, whose materiality validates the content (i.e. my name, date of birth) for border control. When choosing archival items for an exhibition display, an original is preferred over a photocopy despite both depicting the same content at a symbolic level.

Current tools for describing materiality

Despite recognising the value of materiality in archives, there is limited practice for documenting it. Referring to Magee and Waters (2011), Dever (2013) Lester highlights that most cataloguing software offers limited capacity for describing materiality in archival items (Lester 2018). Rekrut (2006) looked into archival standards, in particular the ISAD(G) (2000)[2] sections on physical description, and criticised the fact that information kept under 'Physical characteristics and technical requirements' is not part of the contextual description of the archival item but part of information about access. The arguments conclude with:

> Overall, existing archival description structures do not explicitly support recording physical characteristics as evidence that contributes to understanding the records, their creators and custodians, or explain the relationships between the physical information and the other information present, such as text and images.
>
> (Rekrut 2006, 28)

Let us extend this enquiry to selected national guidelines and local implementations of ISAD(G). References to the physicality of objects in the *Manual of Archival Description* (Procter and Cook 2017) are limited to 'extent', indicating volume and handling. Section 2.5 of the implementation of ISAD(G) by the Society of American Archivists *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, Second Edition (DACS) (2015), on 'Extent',[3] includes references to physical description again in relation to volume and access. It also includes a promising note stating: 'Further details about quantity and physical characteristics may also be provided in the Scope and Content Element (3.1)'. Section 3.1[4] then states: 'The documentary form(s) or intellectual characteristics of the records being described (e.g., minutes, diaries, reports, watercolors, documentaries)'. This is inadequate for recording materiality, but it recognises the value of material descriptions for interpreting archives. The section then refers to the requirement for defining 'content' of archival items and physical description may be included only if it is relevant to 'content'. That decision is left to local repository policies.

The 'Encoded Archival Description' – EAD[5] which implements DACS and ISAD(G) follows the same principles. The EAD documentation[6] states that element <physdescset>[7] indicates extent and type of holding without reference to materials or techniques used in producing or modifying items.

More recently, the 'Records in Context – Conceptual Model' (RiC-CM)[8] formalises types of information (classes) appearing in cataloguing systems (e.g. archival records, dates, archival authorities such as controlled vocabularies) alongside their related attributes. Section 3.2.2 'Information about Representation' of that document describes manufacturing techniques of the carrier with entries provided by a controlled vocabulary – a structured field dedicated to describing materiality. Section 3.2.3 'Information about Carrier' includes information about the medium and physical characteristics of carriers. These offer a way to encode the physical

description of the carrier beyond access and volume. The more inclusive approach of RiC-CM reflects the increasing importance of materiality in archives.

Despite these efforts, the limited capacity of archival standards to aide material descriptions has led to archivists not investing resources to produce them, and archive professionals whose work focuses on materiality, such as conservators, often keeping their records separately. Recently the National Archives in the UK commissioned a separate conservation documentation system to the main catalogue partly because of that issue (Pahlsson-Giddings 2018). This lack of provision for describing materiality means that archival records are incomplete, and any material records are separate and often incompatible. This restricts research in archives and reflects the normalisation of biased records which undermine materiality as significant historical evidence.

Reasons for inadequate tools

Dever (2014) hypothesises why materiality is not part of mainstream archival documentation: scholarship promotes the conceptualism of words carried by archival items and used for intellectual syllogisms. Descriptions of physical things tend to be more factual than conceptual. Another argument is the demand for sharing, i.e. reproducing text independent from carrier. Sharing at symbolic level is easy because of the abstraction of content, while sharing at physical level is constrained by the materiality of things. This focus on the symbolic level has led to archival records shifting towards content and neglecting physical descriptions. As a result, researchers and archivists lack the training to produce descriptions for material attributes. This in turn emphasises content, in an ongoing circle undermining materiality. Properly documenting materiality can break this circle.

In the following sections, I will consider the CIDOC-CRM, a generic model which allows the connection of conceptual content with descriptions of materiality. First, I consider the kind of information that archive users may request from cataloguing records.

Querying materiality in archives

I have been unable to locate a systematic analysis of how researchers query archives to retrieve material attributes in the available bibliography. The nature of an archive dictates the questions around materiality that archivists may be asked, but it appears that in most cases materiality is experienced as a consequence of querying for content and not for investigating questions around materiality *per se*. Next, I explore general studies around archive query patterns.

Types of queries

Archivists are increasingly interested in users' questions when working with archives. Research on classifying these questions has been done in the past as noted

by Rhee (2015). Sundqvist (2015) wrote about abstracting the use of records based on the type of questions asked by users. Grogan (1992) identified different categories of user questions which were later improved by Duff and Johnson (2001) based on a sample of email enquiries to archivists. This categorisation reflects the duties performed by the archivist in relation to the enquiry and not the specific types of information requested. It includes categories such as: 'fact-finding' (archivist undertakes research on behalf of the user) or 'material finding' (resources about a subject, i.e. 'material' is used here to mean archival items). Questions about materiality are not reported but could fit in these categories as shown by two fictional examples:

- What is the geographical origin of parchment trade in the region from which the certificates for the academic degrees of graduates held in your collection are made?
- I would like to confirm the date of a photograph based on the technique that has been used to print it. Do you have information about the printing technique of this photograph?

Sundqvist (2015) refers to categorisations of types of use of archives including Miller's (1986) two categories: (a) 'event-oriented, concentrating on specific events, persons, policies …', thus providing answers to simple questions, and (b) 'process-oriented, analysing process, structure and change', thus providing answers to more complex questions that require an understanding of the history evidenced by the archive. It is interesting that Sundqvist refers to a third category proposed by Pugh (2005) called 'applicational use':

> That is when a document in itself, its intrinsic value according to Pugh, is of interest for the user. I.e. there is a particular record that is relevant in a particular situation. This is not necessarily related to information content, but could, for instance concern material characteristics or to verify legal status.
>
> (Pugh 2005, 6)

Therefore, while reports on queries in archives do not refer to materiality, the idea does appear in more conceptually complete categorisations.

Given that identifying characteristics of materiality in archives has not generally been the focus of archival research, perhaps we can consider categories of information recorded in other domains which are closer to material culture, such as conservation. This will help us identify elements of materiality that are worth describing to answer potential queries.

Conservation records for archives

By observing the *materials* and *techniques* used for the production of an item, conservators can compare with previous observations from items of confirmed

provenance. This comparison allows one to assess whether an item is produced in an unusual way and therefore enrich evidence around provenance claims. My experience from interacting with bookbinding historians is that book production techniques indicate place and time of binding. Even mechanised ways of producing archival items can be analysed in sufficient detail to indicate provenance.[9] This information is used to make decisions about the value of components when treating objects to ensure that historical and material evidence is preserved.

Objects are often considered in relation to their *component* pieces. Ash et al. (2014) describe prints in terms of materials and techniques. They recommend that the support and the medium of a print are described separately. A set of syntactic rules is proposed, for example:

> Use 'prepared' to describe a surface coating applied by the artist to isolate the paper surface and add texture or tooth, as for metalpoint or pastel. Use the form 'on [support] prepared with [color] ground'. […] Example: Black and white fabricated chalks over graphite on paper prepared with pink ground.
>
> (Ash et al. 2014, 20)

This includes the description of the ground as a separate component of the print. In another example, they mention: 'Use the preposition "over" to describe the relationship of layered media. […]. Example: Black chalk with red and white chalks over charcoal on paper' (Ibid, 18). This includes a description of the production technique used. The syntactic rules proposed can be considered a way to create structured data inside free-text fields and are a testament to the value of structured data in descriptions of materiality.

The *production* of an item may be considered a collection of events, i.e. often an archival item is not produced in an instance, but as a result of a history reflected on its material. If we consider the production of a volume of bound papers in an archive, the following events happen at different times and places and with different materials and techniques:

- event 1: paper production
- event 2: document printing
- event 3: binding volume with document

Associating a single date with an item often does not make sense because of this continuous process of production/modification. The value of event-centric documentation has been highlighted before (Velios and Pickwoad 2019) but it is still rare for documentation systems to allow production/modification events to be recorded. Instead, sometimes they are included implicitly. For example, Ash et al. state:

> Whether the artist has repurposed old materials (e.g., a used envelope, brown bag, or printed advertisement) or purchased a commercial or decorative paper to use as a support, address the artist's incorporation of pre-existing imagery when

describing the work. If a previously printed image (e.g. a photocopy) contributes to the meaning or visual impact of an artist's work, use the more specific form 'on found [photocopy, newspaper, etc.]' instead of the more general form 'on found paper'. This acknowledges the presence of a found support while distinguishing the media applied by the artist from the pre-existing imagery or media. Example: Soot and spit, stick-applied and wiped, on found printed envelope

(Ash et al. 2014, 21)

This information is used to capture significant provenance events in the life of an object which are evidenced through materiality.

In 'Models for expressing materiality', I will discuss an alternative way of encoding such information using structured data which will allow unified querying of both material and content information about a document based on events.

Archival items with long histories interact with their storage environment. That interaction leads to alterations which conservators are able to analyse and estimate the *condition* of storage for corresponding periods of time. These in turn can be used to support arguments about provenance and the responsibilities of custodians. For example, the presence of insects or mould could be an indication of storage in an infected or damp environment, respectively. In other cases, the wear of items provides information about demand for access. For example, in photographic transparency collections, it may be that the more faded transparencies are consulted more often.

Starting with conservation, and in addition to the categories of information described above, I am going to consider documenting materiality from a broader perspective which will also include material interactions outside conservation.

Conceptual records of materiality

In this section, I am attempting to articulate how materiality is understood and used at a conceptual level by researchers outside the context of conservation. The purpose of this exercise is to understand how archival records of materiality can be structured so that the work of those researchers can be assisted. The summary which follows here does not reflect the richness of discourse in the field but it is selectively reduced to highlight elements about the mechanics of retrieval for frequent cases.

The discourse on *performance* and archives is broad. Two important areas are:

a. The encounter with the archive considered as performance, which involves capturing the experience of engaging with archival material at a physical level. For example, the memories triggered by sense stimuli when browsing archival documents. This includes the concept of archival practice constituting performance as described by Cook and Schwartz: 'a greater sense that in our [archivists'] daily practices, we [archivists] are performing from a script' (2002, 184).

b. The performance being considered as archival practice, where the re-enactment
    or embodiment of archival memories are used as part of the archiving process,
    in the sense of story-telling. An example of re-enacting the archive is given
    by Clarke (2013) where a group of people identified as the 'Performance Re-
    enacting Society' considered memories of events captured in the archive by re-
    telling and re-enacting the stories of these events through their own perspective,
    thus becoming the archive.

This discourse is not formalised and therefore proposals for describing archival
items in relation to materiality and performance may be premature. Archival prac-
tice through performance celebrates the changing nature of re-enacting and should
not be fixed in a catalogue description. On the other hand, fixing the description of
performance to ensure permanence is desirable. In either case, performance can be
described as an event or activity with links to places, periods, people/groups and
objects/items. This structure should be supplemented by reference to ideas and
concepts used as part of, or evolved from, the performance.

Another important area of discussion which reflects fundamental questions
around archives is the difference between *symbolic content* and *carrier*. As men-
tioned in the section 'Reasons for inadequate tools', reproduction maintains the
symbolic value of archival items independent of carrier impacting validity and
authenticity, as with the example of the passport photocopy. The study of medieval
texts often focuses on changes of symbols from older to newer texts due to errors
during manual copy. In other cases, the condition of the substrate is important. For
example, the use of iron gall ink often has a detrimental effect on paper substrates
rendering the symbols illegible. Isolating the symbols through a process of replica-
tion depends on the materiality of the carrier.

Interpreting a symbol without considering its carrier also often leads to misin-
terpretations of evidence. For example, while studying photography at a university
course in the early 1990s, our teacher would model for us. Imagine a black-and-
white photograph of the teacher by one of the students. The paper photograph is in
sepia effect characteristic of photographs shot on the Ilford XP2 film.[10] This film
indicates a specific socio-economic context. The XP2 can be developed through
colour C41 processing,[11] i.e. relatively cheaply on the high street, which resulted
in the unintentional but characteristic sepia effect on the photographic paper.
Now imagine a photo of the same teacher shot by another student in black and
white using a digital camera and passed through a digital sepia filter then printed
on a high-resolution inkjet printer. This indicates a completely different socio-
economic context, that of access to digital equipment and software and perhaps a
nostalgic take on photography. The study of the symbol, i.e. the teacher's portrait,
indicates a student exercise. The study of the symbol alongside materiality may
reveal a narrative around equal opportunities in learning and the under-funding of
universities.

Documentation around the materiality of archival items to assist the inter-
pretation of symbols and retrieval of historical evidence is linked to production

techniques, materials and their condition alongside contextual information about them. Such types of records could assist researchers working in archives and who are increasingly interested in context. Therefore, interpreting symbols without reference to materiality produces biased and incomplete results.

Another relevant area of discourse is how content on carriers is *rendered*. In the case of a printed document, light is enough for reading. Reading documents on microfiche requires a microfiche reader, which offers a different experience. The symbolic content of a film or a movie can be observed by using a projection machine which turns the static nature of the individual frames into a dynamic one. The impact of such equipment to the overall experience of the archive is a significant discussion in archival studies.

Having established some types of records needed to capture materiality, in the next section, I will consider the CIDOC-CRM and its capacity to provide a model for encoding such records.

Models for expressing materiality

In the previous sections, I identified types of archival records which can be used for querying archives based on criteria about materiality. Their value increases when combined with queries about content, especially across archives. Models such as the CIDOC-CRM and the RiC-CM[12] allow combined querying by harmonising records from disparate documentation systems.

The CIDOC-CRM is an event-centric model, i.e. it describes the history of things by establishing the sequence of events that things have participated in. This event-centric approach often appears strange to cataloguers who have typically adopted an object-centric way of considering collections, but it is useful as it does not favour a particular view of the object at a specific time but takes into account the impact of historical events on it. The CIDOC-CRM has been developed based on the examination of cataloguing data from Western museums whose records include richer materiality descriptions than archival records. In order to accommodate the variety of practices observed in different types of museums, the CIDOC-CRM is expressive enough to make it applicable outside museums. FRBRoo[13] and more recently LRM[14] have emerged from the librarian community for cataloguing and they are based on the CIDOC-CRM: they are CIDOC-CRM extensions. An extension is a collection of classes and properties which follow the principles of the CIDOC-CRM but are more specialised for a specific domain. As such FRBRoo and LRM can provide the domain-specific expressivity for libraries while allowing materiality to be described through the more general CIDOC-CRM classes and properties. This is achievable because the extensible structure of the CIDOC-CRM allows querying at different levels of detail depending on expertise. This also means that co-production of records is possible using the CIDOC-CRM. For example, an archivist without training in documenting materiality may invite an expert to develop that side of documentation. The two can work independently – even in

separate documentation systems – and produce compatible records conforming to the CIDOC-CRM structure and without losing expressivity in their individual domains.

As explained in the 'Introduction', examining the capacity of a model to express information in a domain is done through mapping of examples of recorded information to abstract classes. In the next section, I will undertake this exercise with the CIDOC-CRM and the types of information I have identified in the previous two sections. The CIDOC-CRM Special Interest Group (SIG)[15] has published several versions of the CIDOC-CRM. I am referring to properties and classes which have not changed significantly over the development of the standard.[16] Some of the examples which follow refer to the archive of the late British conceptual artist John Latham (JLA),[17] which is physically located in the artist's former residence and studio[18] with an online repository of much of the digitised collection under the title 'Archive As Event' (AAE).[19]

Models for physical description

The CIDOC-CRM defines production as the event ('E12 Production') after which the item's identity is recognised, i.e. the coming into being. The class 'E24 Physical Human-Made Thing' and the more specific 'E22 Human-Made Object' can be used to describe archival items. The archival item is linked to its production by the property 'P108 has produced'. The techniques of production are linked through 'P32 used general technique' and the material is given by 'P45 consists of'. Production events can be split into sub-events ('P9 consists of') to describe production in different levels of detail for items with multiple components. Items and parts of items are connected with 'P46 is composed of'. The same is used between the whole archive collection ('E78 Curated Holding', a type of 'E24 Physical Human-Made Thing'), and the single item ('E22 Human-Made Object'). Figure 12.1 outlines this structure with an example from JLA document with number 1786[20] and title 'Is this a new art form', where a newspaper was photocopied at some point and subsequently annotated with by John Latham.

Records of an item that has changed significantly during its history should include related events which have modified it. Annotating JLA1786 is significant. CIDOC-CRM class 'E11 Modification' can be used to describe it. The critical question is whether the act of annotating the photocopy has produced a new thing altogether since we may no longer consider the photocopy of the newspaper as the essential quality of the item but instead consider the annotated text as the element which provides the identity to the object. If that is the case, then 'E81 Transformation' can be used which models the production of a new thing (new identity – manuscript by John Latham) with the parallel destruction of the old (old identity – photocopy of newspaper article). Figure 12.2 shows the relations between production and modification and Figure 12.3 shows the concept of production through transformation.
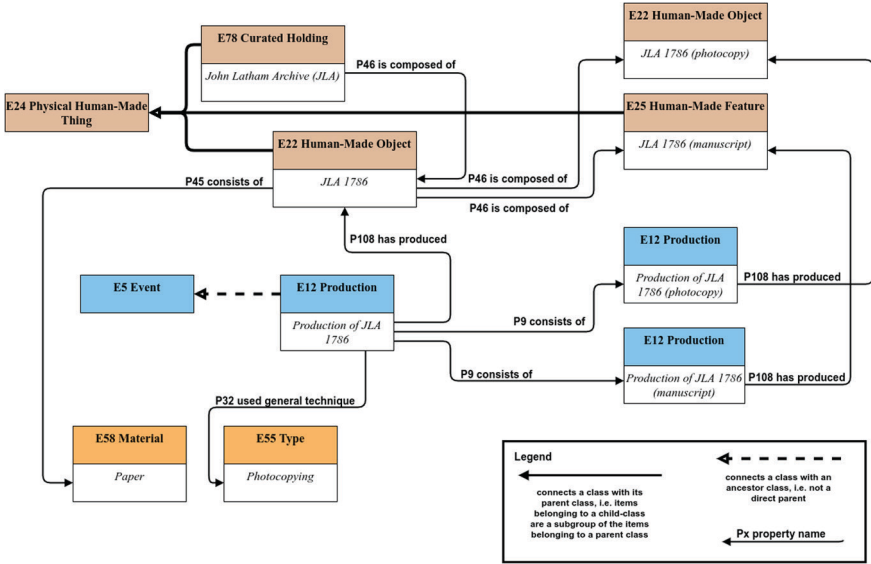
Figure 12.1 Production and sub-production.
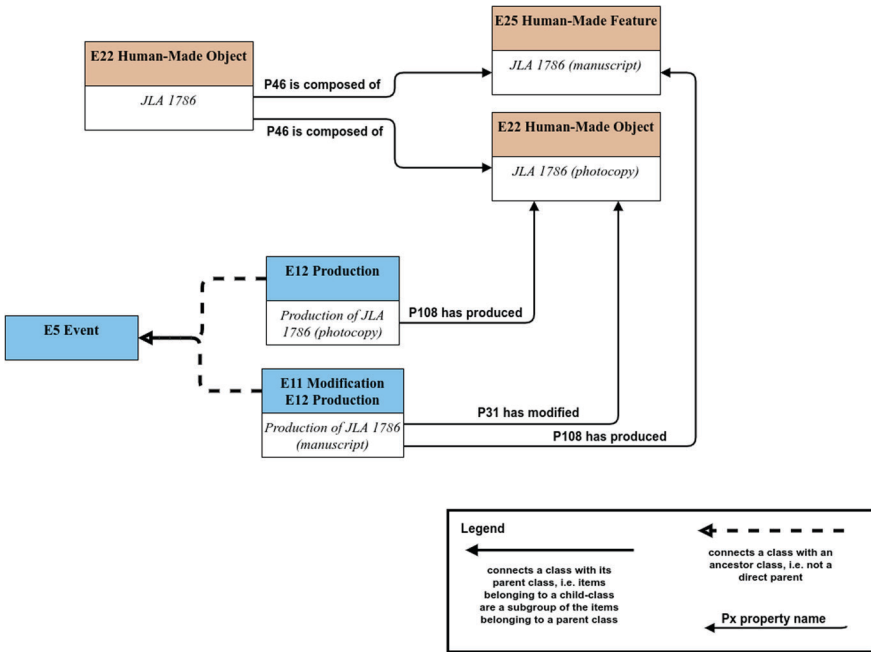
Figure 12.2 Production through modification.
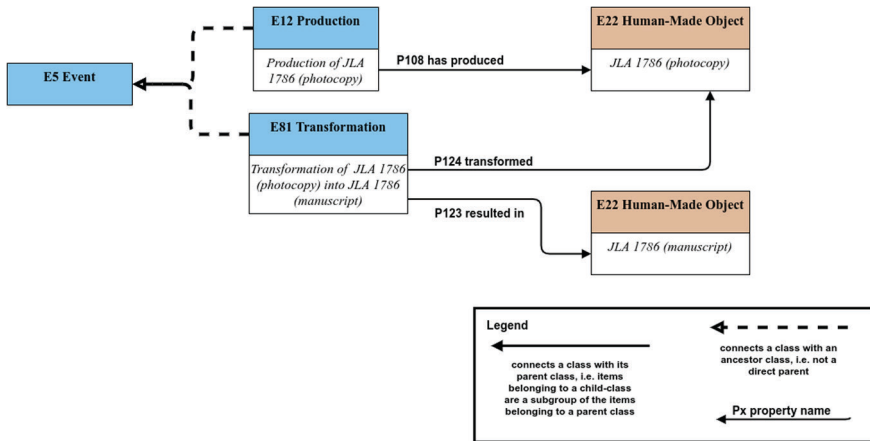
Figure 12.3 Production through transformation.

A catalogue featuring database fields corresponding to production and modification classes and properties would allow researchers to query a collection on the basic information around materiality of production.

The CIDOC-CRM also offers classes for describing *condition*. 'P44 has condition' allows archival items ('E22 Human-Made Object') to be connected to the class 'E3 Condition State' to describe the state of preservation over a given period. This structure is adequate for the majority of cases where archivists wish to record condition but does not allow the identification of individual areas of damage, for example, when a stain caused by a rusty paperclip needs to be recorded. An alternative structure would be to employ the class 'E26 Physical Feature', which can be used to describe the evidence of damage of an item (such as the rusty stain). Such physical features are the result of natural processes of deterioration. There is no purposeful production event and instead the class 'S18 Alteration' should be used, which does not imply agency. Note that the class 'S18 Alteration' is not part of the core CIDOC-CRM classes but belongs to another CIDOC-CRM extension which is called CRMsci and it is often used in the field of conservation. Figure 12.4 indicates how the two options for encoding condition can be used.

Models for performance

As described in section 'Archives and performance', we could consider two types of performance interaction with archives: (a) the encounter of the archive as a performance and (b) performance as archiving practice. Both are activities purposefully undertaken by human agents. The CIDOC-CRM class 'E7 Activity' is appropriate to model them. Significant related information are the location ('E53
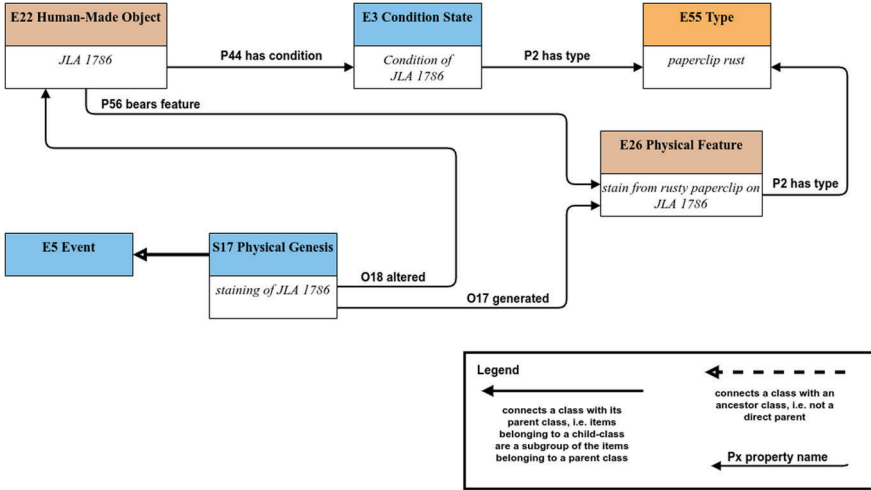
Figure 12.4 Condition of physical things.
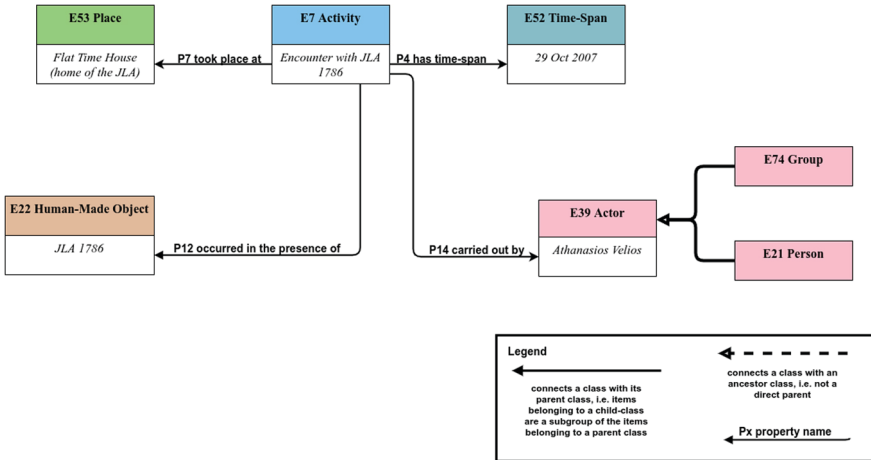
Figure 12.5 Generic classes for capturing performance.

Place') and the time ('E52 Time-Span') that the activity took place, the individual archival items ('E22 Human-Made Object') consulted and the people who undertook the activity ('E21 Person' or 'E74 Group'). These details would allow researchers in archives to retrieve answers about when and where a performance took place alongside the people and things that were involved. Figure 12.5 shows the properties that link the aforementioned classes. More specific information may need to be captured in either case as explained next.

Encountering the archive also means describing the experience of exploring archival items. There has been little systematic discussion on what the nature of this experience is and how it can be encoded but it appears consistent with the following ontological categorisations. Handling archival items and the liturgical nature of retrieving them from storage cause a series of observations by the agent which rely on senses. It is possible to describe observations in the CIDOC-CRM by using the class 'E13 Attribute Assignment' which is a type of activity. This allows connecting any archival item to any set of qualities that the agent experiences during the encounter. It also allows specifying the type of observation that is taking place during the encounter. Figure 12.6 shows how an observation for such an encounter can be encoded.

A simpler way of documenting encountering an archive may be through establishing the activity ('E7 Activity') of the encounter and associating it using a CIDOC-CRM property such as 'P15 was influenced by', with a term from a controlled vocabulary indicating the qualities observed. This approach results in faster documentation but less detailed records.

A performance following the exploration of archival items is an activity about those items therefore the same property of 'P15 was influenced by' can be used to describe it. In some cases, performances are re-enactments of events described in the archive connecting (a) the archival item, (b) the event that the item refers to and (c) the event of the re-enactment. Establishing these connections may require
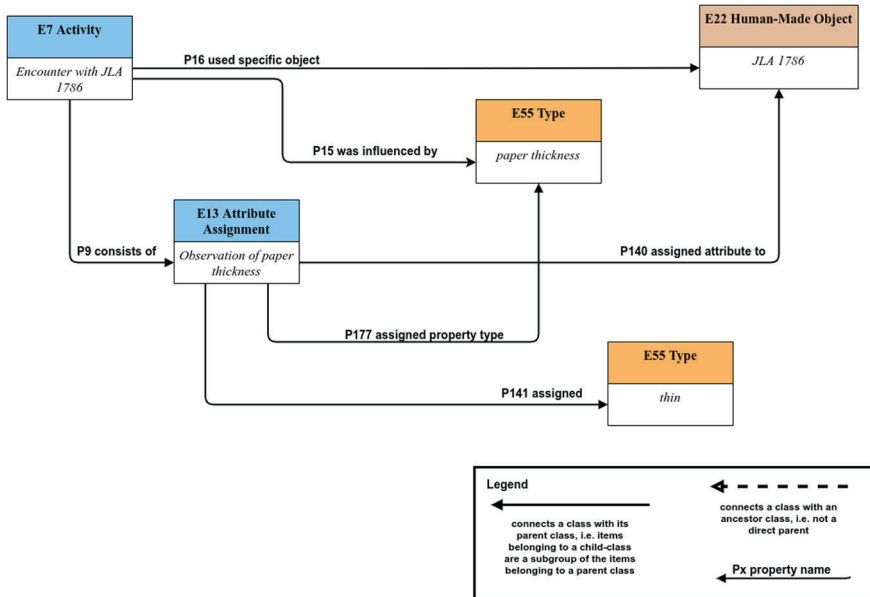
Figure 12.6 Observation during archive encounter.

the use of other properties such as 'P16 used specific object' which can connect archival items with the performance activity and 'P129 is about' which can connect the content of an archival item with the event that it refers to. Connecting the performance with the original event is more complex. Property 'P17 was motivated by' can connect activities with causes. The scope note of the property mentions: 'This property describes an item or items that are regarded as a reason for carrying out the E7 Activity. For example, the discovery of a large hoard of treasure may call for a celebration […]'[21] and the question is to what extent a performance in response to the archive is caused by the original events described in it? The cause of the performance may be a commission or a research project and I am unable to think of an example when the original event also caused a performance/response to it. Therefore, property 'P17 was motivated by' is inappropriate in such cases. 'P15 was influenced by' is correct but rather imprecise. 'P134 continued' may be applicable if the intentionality of the original events and the performance is shared. Articulating a new property to describe embodiment/re-enactment is possible but would require community consultation to agree on the definition.

Models for content

The CIDOC-CRM specifies the property 'P128 carries' which can connect an archival item with its content, typically described with 'E90 Symbolic Object' or 'E73 Information Object'. 'P106 is composed of' allows for partitive relationships. It is possible to match parts on a physical archival document to specific content carried in that part. In Figure 12.7, a model connecting the materiality of an archival item with its content is shown.

As mentioned in section 'Rendering archival items', the materiality of archival items is often experienced through rendering equipment. From the researcher's point of view, the materiality of the archival item is that of the rendering equipment, so previously described models may still apply. Additionally, in the microfiche example, viewing the screen of the microfiche reader is a separate observation activity requiring equipment ('P125 used object of type'). The viewed image is described by the class 'E73 Information Object'. This is independent of the carrier and remains the same no matter how the symbols are observed. Therefore, rendering content on the screen of the microfiche reader, viewing the microfiche under a magnifying glass or looking at the original archival item on paper should result in the observation of the same content, i.e. the same instance of 'E73 Information Object' but experiencing it differently.

Additional complexity exists when observing the carrier through different rendering machines which may result in different experiences. For example, looking at a 16-mm film frame-by-frame under a loup renders a different experience than looking at it through a projector at 24 frames per second. The nature of the equipment highlights different aspects of the same content carried by the film. The identity of the moving image as a whole is different to the identities of the individual frames which are possible to observe without a projector. We could consider that
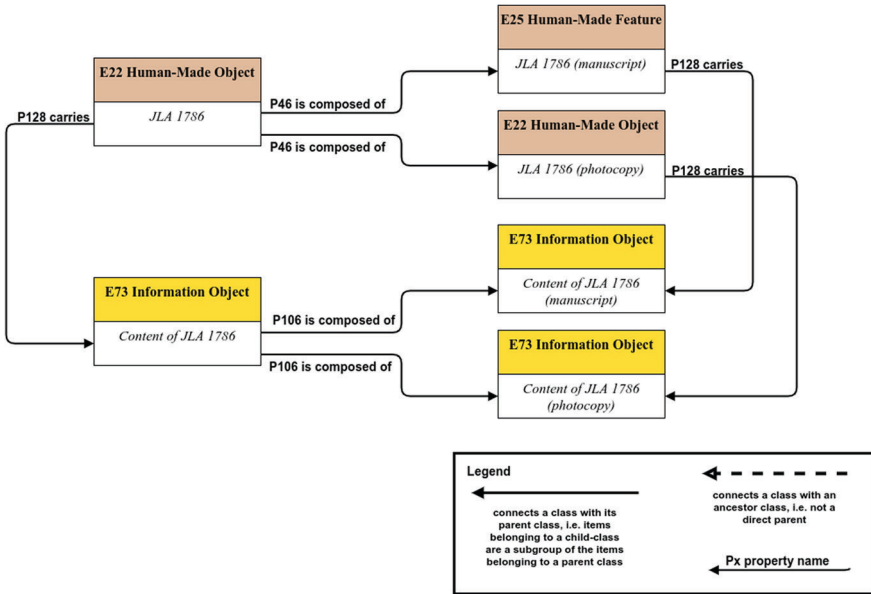
Figure 12.7 Archival item as content carrier.
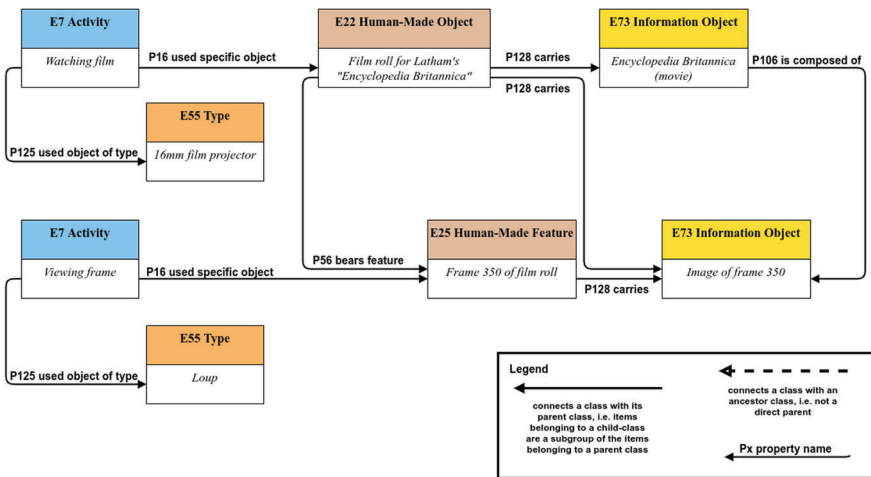
Figure 12.8 Experience archival items through equipment.

the same archival item (the film) carries multiple symbolic objects and it is the type of activity that allows their observation to take place as shown in Figure 12.8.

The discussion about the ontology of the interaction with the materiality of archives as presented in the previous sections is not a complete account but covers

a large proportion of cases providing a framework of thinking about documentation. In the following section, I conclude this discussion with some brief points about system implementation.

Implementation

In the previous sections, I explored the potential of the CIDOC-CRM to express the types of information and relations required to document our interaction with archives in relation to materiality. There are two aspects to consider regarding implementation[22]:

1. Adopting documentation systems with capacity for inputting information on materiality is essential. Given that a) standard archiving tools do not make sufficient provisions for materiality and b) institutions which already have a documentation system in place would be reluctant to replace it, one recommendation would be to adopt a separate system to describe materiality of archival items. This should be customisable and allow new fields to be added so that the models presented above (or similar) can be implemented. The two systems can then be mapped to a generic model such as the CIDOC-CRM and integration of the records can take place at a higher level in a separate retrieval platform. The latter task can be implemented at a later date. This would mean that current infrastructure is preserved and extended.
2. Creating records on materiality also requires ongoing investment for cataloguing. Training for archivists on identifying and recording material evidence is necessary if such expertise is not available. Conservators and researchers with experience on material culture have a significant role to play by seeking interaction with archivists within their institutions with the objective of documenting materiality. Providing additional time for conservation staff to produce such records on materiality could also be an option. Integrating existing records from conservation documentation systems with archive catalogues could be a rapid first step for making more records on materiality available.

The current classes and properties provided by the CIDOC-CRM allow a broad range of types of information around materiality in archives to be encoded. Its extensible nature means that additional properties can be defined if needed. Considering the alignment of the emerging RiC model to the CIDOC-CRM will provide a common model across both traditional archiving systems and systems documenting materiality.

Such activities will allow the creation of interoperable data, i.e. data that can be combined with data from other sources to assist research on materiality, enhance the narratives produced in archives and highlight the dependency of conceptual ideas on matter. This will be a step towards addressing the archivist's responsibility of balancing the current bias towards content description in archives.

Notes

1 'The Conceptual Reference Model': an ISO standard produced by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Committee for Documentation (CIDOC), www.cidoc-crm.org/

2 www.ica.org/sites/default/files/CBPS_2000_Guidelines_ISAD%28G%29_Second-edition_EN.pdf

3 https://saa-ts-dacs.github.io/dacs/06_part_I/03_chapter_02/05_extent.html

4 https://saa-ts-dacs.github.io/dacs/06_part_I/04_chapter_03/01_scope_and_content.html

5 www.loc.gov/ead/

6 https://github.com/saa-ead-roundtable/ead3-toolkit

7 www.loc.gov/ead/EAD3taglib/index.html#elem-physdescset

8 www.ica.org/en/records-in-contexts-conceptual-model. Note that this is currently a consultation draft. The comments here apply to version 0.1, but they should also be consistent with more recent versions.

9 For example, see Heudt et al. (2012) and Tsai and Liu (2013).

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilford_XP

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-41_process

12 Because RiC-CM is currently in an early draft stage, it is difficult to consider it for querying materiality in archives at present.

13 FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographical Records) is a standard for bibliographical records by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, 2009). FRBRoo is the conceptual model extending the CIDOC-CRM classes and properties to reflect the FRBR principles (https://repository.ifla.org/handle/123456789/659).

14 LRM is a model consolidating IFLA standards including FRBRoo (https://repository.ifla.org/handle/123456789/40).

15 A group of documentation experts working under the auspices of ICOM CIDOC on the development and maintenance of the CIDOC-CRM.

16 Readers are advised to consult version 7.1.1 (currently the latest version) as well as the ISO version from 2006.

17 www.ligatus.org.uk/jla/

18 http://flattimeho.org.uk/

19 www.ligatus.org.uk/aae/

20 www.ligatus.org.uk/aae/node/3580

21 p. 125 in CIDOC-CRM version 7.1.1

22 I am fully aware of the financial pressure on institutions while making these recommendations and fully appreciate the complexities of resourcing such efforts.

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Part IV

Beyond the archive

Expanding the frame

Lost Unities

The materiality of the migrated archives

James Lowry and Forget Chaterera-Zambuko

Figure 13.1 'Bring back our archives', Tshepho Mosweu, Botswana. Photographer: Thabiso Archie Ramalepa. Language: Setswana. The UK National Archives' series FCO 141 holds 304 items from Botswana, listed in the catalogue as Bechuanaland.

The Migrated Archives and the *Lost Unities* exhibition

The Migrated Archives are records that were taken to Britain from 37 of its former colonies as they became independent. Though many of the independent governments and their archivists have been requesting the return of these records for decades, the British government did not admit to possessing them until 2011, when four Kenyans who had suffered abuse in British detention camps during the Kenyan liberation struggle successfully sued the British government for compensation. It was through these legal proceedings that the records were finally 'discovered' in a storage facility belonging to the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

With the exception of a few files that have been retained by the FCO, and whatever was destroyed during the decades they remained hidden, the Migrated Archives are available at the UK National Archives in Kew, London. Not only does the distance between their current location in London and their places of origin foreclose access for many potential users, but the limited extent of their cataloguing means that many whose only engagement with them is through the online catalogue can only guess at what they may contain. The records have not been digitised, and although numerous countries with claims over the records have indicated that they would be satisfied with digital copies, there are no plans to digitise the records at the time of writing.

The archivist and archival studies scholar Nathan Mnjama has detailed the claims over these records from across eastern and southern Africa (Mnjama 2008, 2015; Mnjama and Lowry 2019), and claims from India, Malta and several Caribbean nations have been documented (Auer 1998; Lowry 2020). These claims have been ignored by the British government over the decades since the end of empire. Currently, it is the British government position that they are UK public records as defined by the Public Records Act of 1958, though it has been noted that the official position on this has waivered over the years (Banton 2012).

In response to the British government's ongoing refusal to engage with the claims from its former colonies, in 2020 the Museum of British Colonialism, a virtual space established by Tayiana Chao and Olivia Windham-Stewart to facilitate 'global conversations about British colonialism and its legacies', launched the *Lost Unities* exhibition online (Museum of British Colonialism, n.d.). Curated by Forget Chaterera-Zambuko and James Lowry, *Lost Unities* is described as an 'exhibition for archival repatriation'. It seeks to 'repeat and make visible the claims …' by showing images of archivists holding placards demanding the return of the Migrated Archives. *Lost Unities* is cumulative, and archivists and others from the 37 countries affected by British archival expropriation are invited to participate. To date, participants come from Botswana, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

There are 2726 items of Kenyan provenance in FCO, 141, 583 items from Zambia, 304 items from Botswana and 15 items from Zimbabwe, but the actual volume and nature of what was taken to the UK is not known (Banton 2012). As
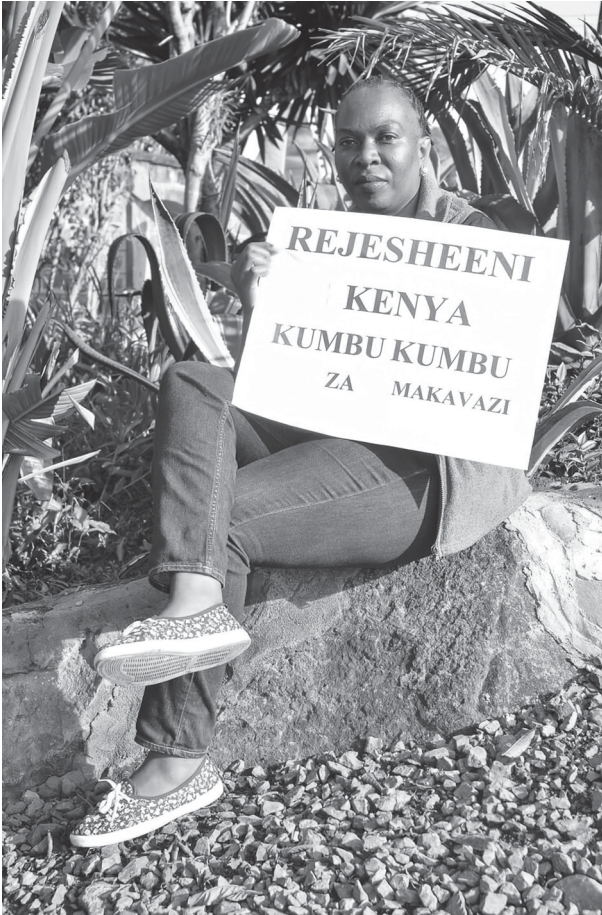
Figure 13.2 'Return back Kenya's archival memories', Juliet Erima, Kenya. Photographer: Jael Gudu. Language: Kiswahili. The UK National Archives holds 2726 items of Kenyan provenance in FCO 141.

white colonial settlers were retreating from the resistance of liberation fighters, some records were burnt, some were thrown in lakes and some were whisked to the UK, but no one can confidently claim that the Migrated Archives is all the archival material that was removed.

The materiality of the Migrated Archives

In this brief essay on the materiality of the Migrated Archives, we use Ala Rekrut's simple yet expansive definition of materiality; 'the material expression of human

ideas' (Rekrut 2014). Records, whether physical or digital, are the material expression of ideas about rights, obligations, commands, etc. (Lowry forthcoming). As material instantiations of ideas, records necessarily take up space – shelf space, server space, and as Bonnie Mak has put it '[t]o matter is not only to be of importance, to signify, to mean, but also to claim a certain physical space, to have a particular presence, to be uniquely embodied' (Mak 2011). If all records 'claim a certain space' then the Migrated Archives makes a particular kind of claim about space that is rooted in the possessive logic of colonialism. Records 'have a particular presence', yet displaced archives do this simultaneously as they leave absences, materially in repositories, referentially in catalogues and spectrally in the lives of the people(s) they document. Hidden in the bowels of a British government building for many decades, the Migrated Archives left empty spaces in the archives of 37 of Britain's former colonies; spaces that are still empty. Today the records occupy space in the UK National Archives, where researchers can be admitted to the reading room to consult those files that have not been closed by the FCO. Understanding these records through the space they occupy, the presences and absences they instantiate, their distances and journeys, offers insight into the meanings of their material displacements.

Here we think about Rebecca Abby Whiting's 'records-in-motion', which builds on the theorisation of object itineraries and semantic genealogy to name the phenomenon of records becoming different (changing meaning, value and substance) through the decontextualisations and recontextualisations of the processes of displacement (Whiting 2022). In a 2019 article on the Migrated Archives, James Lowry referenced a letter written by Mbiyu Koinange requesting permission from Kenya's colonial administrators to visit his incarcerated father (Lowry 2019). This letter travelled from Banana Hills post office, via Limuru to Kabarnet. In the long and secret process of appraisal through which the British destroyed or removed records from Kenya, perhaps this letter went to Nairobi and then out of the country to another colonial holding, or perhaps directly to London. Approximately four and a half thousand miles. What do these records-in-motion mean while they are in London? Heavily filtered, they are the partially sanitised traces of an imperial bureaucracy that many in Britain choose to remember as a positive, civilising force that brought roads, education, science and medicine etc. to much of the world. Not violence, dispossession and erasure. What these records *mean* in London is an archival nostalgia for an imperial fantasy in which Britons are welcome, even feted, in every exotic place and British culture is a gift to a wild, barbarous world. What would the records mean in their original contexts? Possibly many different things, but one must be an understanding of the everyday acts of administrators who made decisions about infrastructures, languages, economies, governments, codes, punishments and borders that the peoples of the 37 former colonies live with or without today. As for changes in value, the journey of these records-in-motion has elevated these records from the everyday paperwork of civil administration to a symbol of the unfinished business of decolonisation. Finally, Whiting's work

Figure 13.3 'Bring back the archives of Zimbabwe', Forget Chaterera-Zambuko. Photographer: Geraldine Farai Zambuko. Language: Shona. FCO 141 contains 15 items from Zimbabwe, listed in the catalogue as Southern Rhodesia.

returns us to the question of the material: displacement has involved the physical alteration of these files, weeded, reorganised and combined into an artificial series.

Long journeys. Distance and proximity. Much archival scholarship has contemplated what it means to be close to archives (Steedman 2002; Dever 2013; Farge 2015). Marika Cifor describes a moment of closeness with the archive, finding a hair on the lipstick of the trans woman and sex worker's rights advocate Victoria Schneider:

> For me this hair is an alluring and abject object that profoundly alters my relationship to the collection and its creator, partially permeating the boundaries between us. While this fragment cannot close the vast distance between an archival object and the life it represents (Arondekar 2009; Rawson 2014), it does cause me to feel 'embodied and ephemeral' memories (Rawson 2014: 25), which highlights the 'absent-presence' (Carter 2006: 223) and value of bodies in the trans and queer communities in which I live and do research.
>
> (Cifor 2015, 646)

This 'absent-presence' that affect's Cifor's encounter with the archive is suggestive of many possible future moments of embodied meaning-making that are forestalled by British possession of the Migrated Archives. Displacement privileges the material encounters of one readership over another, a disparity that is racialised and colonialised in this case. Didier Nativel has captured the problem precisely:

> Indeed, to investigate is also to experience affective materialities within one's body in contexts where … the colonial relationship continues to cast a long shadow and the sense of a 'theft of history' (Goody 2007) persists in scientific asymmetry and a geopolitics of archives that remains inegalitarian.
>
> (Nativel 2019, 22)

Thinking in terms of distance, by now we have moved from *space* to *place*. Place is material. Territories may be notions, but place exists physically. In archival studies, there is a growing body of work that addresses the significance of place. Anne J. Gilliland's work has long been concerned with records in diaspora and exile (i.e. Gilliland 2015), James Lowry has argued for various approaches to replacing records (Lowry 2019), J.J. Ghaddar has recently developed the concept of 'provenance in place', an understanding of provenance that 'embraces the commitment to undo the colonial occupation of one people's land by another today, and the archival legacies of such occupations in the past …' (Ghaddar 2022). Maria Montenegro uses provenance-in-place to show that it is through Indigenous understandings of place as provenance that Indigenous records are given their meaning (Montenegro 2022). What does a place-based reading of the Migrated Archives afford us? That question may best be answered by those who are waiting for the records to come home, such as the archivists who have participated in the *Lost Unities* exhibition to date.

What these records are close to or far from is related also to what they are *doing*. They are not merely waiting to be read. Dever asks

> … what if we took seriously the thing that is paper by looking at it rather than always overlooking it or looking through it? And what if we asked ourselves what work the paper is doing if it is not simply the neutral platform or container for words?
>
> (Dever 2013, 177)

What is the paper of the Migrated Archives doing? Many things. During the colonial era, the British administrative need for paper was met by Indian paper importers; many of the papers in the Migrated Archives passed through this commercial process operated by a racially hierarchised global economy before becoming records. These papers are also perpetuating the inegalitarian geopolitics of archives (Nativel 2019). They are making claims about the past by their presence. They are enacting the archival colour line, theorised by Riley Linebaugh and James Lowry from the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, Marilyn Lakes and Henry Reynolds (Du Bois 2007; Lakes and Reynolds 2008). The archival colour line 'reflects in records "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men", where custodianship is with "white men's countries" …' (Linebaugh and Lowry 2021). Here we disagree with Nativel's view that in "colonial worlds … it is as if the systemic violence to which the official document testifies by its very existence becomes absorbed by the progressively banal uses made of it" (Nativel 2019, 5). The violence of the archival colour line is quite present and real in that it is a material support for an extant global force by which people live and die today:

> records should be understood as a kind of force – the record-as-command – because they are able to achieve things in the world, as well as to represent things in the world, through what they say, if they endure and *where* they exist,

and 'Enduring archival displacement is made possible by the archival colour line, just as it reinscribes that line on the world map, day after day' (Linebaugh and Lowry 2021). Such are the 'complex discourses, practices and social interactions with vast temporal and geographical ramifications' that Silvia Bruzzi and Rémi Dewière say written supports in 'themselves, as well as through their articulation with the sign or signs inscribed therein … reveal' (Bruzzi and Dewière 2019). All of these things the papers do irrespective of the texts they might transmit. Paper work.

Digital technologies are often held out as the solution to the problem of place. Through digital repatriation, we can escape the tyranny of the material-in-place through distributed custody and remote access. While much of the archival scholarship on materiality deals with the anxieties around and promises of the digital, thinking about the materiality of the Migrated Archives centres the power

asymmetry that brought them to London. The same asymmetry shows through in the possibility of their digitisation. British authority over the digitisation and publication of the records only compounds the problem of dispossession, and it seems likely that the promise of remote access pushes further over the horizon any chance of seeing these materials repatriated.

Those who have been waiting for these records to come home – physically, materially, tangibly, not in facsimile – will continue to wait. Just as a digital photograph of an executed freedom fighter, ruined landscape or looted artefact is not equal to the original person, place or object, an image of a record from the Migrated Archives has the limits of an image. It does not allow one to feel the paper felt by the district officer, the indentured worker or the informant, to fold it as they folded it, to do so on the land where the record was created, to which it relates, and for whose people it meant something more or less consequential.

In a sense, the digital increases the distance between the em-placed record and its originary context. The images in *Lost Unities* each form a recurring *mise en abyme* in the negative – the book in your hand or on your screen shows what was a digital photograph, which itself shows a printed or handwritten sign, which refers to absent documents – so that it is almost as if we are standing between two mirrors, looking for an object that is always receding into the distance.

The UK National Archives holds 583 items from Zambia (appears in the catalogue as Northern Rhodesia) in FCO 141.

Figure 13.4 'Bring back the records that belong to Zambia'. Abel M'kulama C.M., Zambia. Language: Nyanja. Photographer: Caesar Ngonda.

Figure 13.5 'Bring back our records'. Edward Chimavu, Zambia. Language: Luvale. Photographer: Abel M'kulama C.M.

Figure 13.6 'We want you to bring back our records'. Charles Chilufya, Zambia. Language: Lunda. Photographer: Abel M'kulama C.M.

Figure 13.7 'You bring back our records'. Geofrey Siwakwi, Zambia. Language: Lozi. Photographer: Abel M'kulama C.M.

Figure 13.8 'We want our records to come back so that we can keep them in the National Archives of Zambia'. Caesar Ngonda, Zambia. Language: Bemba. Photographer: Abel M'kulama C.M.

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Chapter 14

Fabrications

The quilt as archive

Claire Smith

As objects that are not simply seen, but also felt, touched, slept under, presented, gifted, worn and caressed, quilts carry a deep societal and emotional weight. They are everyday, embodied items: used for sleeping, warmth and comfort. As objects of the bed and the bedroom, they also have a ritualistic weighting, playing a key role in lifecycle events: birth, marriage, death. They have long been transmitted between individuals, families and societies at transitional moments. They are by nature not simply functional, but what Leora Auslander might classify as objects of emotion: modes of communication – memory cues, 'expressions of the psyche and extensions of the body' – as well as sites of significant aesthetic investment (Auslander 2008). Their making and use might signal both pleasure and distress. Their creators understand them to have special attributes not only because of their contact with the human body, but because they reflect, sculpt and embrace crucial characteristics of human existence.[1] They, like the people who use them, are embodied. That embodiment means that they occupy a unique physical, social and often familial space.

For centuries, the bringing together of cloth in acts of piecing and quilting is something that homogenised families, both economically and imaginatively.[2] Piecing as a technique thrived in British households and workshops throughout the eighteenth century, enjoying its heyday in the mid-nineteenth century. The burgeoning textile industry fuelled unprecedented economic and social change in Britain, but it also prompted a countermove that reinforced society's most fundamental belief in textiles as symbolic and ritualistic bearers of familial narrative; and the power and mark of the hand. These items made by hand carry with them both individual and collective histories that begin with their production and continue through to their ownership, gifting and use. The textiles within them – functional, decorative and symbolic – transmit information about the society and individuals which created them akin to the written word, except in this case 'the grammar is embedded into the cloth's fibre, pattern, dye, production' and most significantly, its use (Sullivan Kruger 2008, 12).

Pieced quilts and coverlets, comprising often hundreds of textile fragments, form a particularly interesting textile practice because in their handmade form, they operate as constituents of social, familial and domestic realities. Often one

of the only surviving record systems for largely anonymised and hidden domestic histories, they might also be loosely perceived as archives: sites of familial power, knowledge-making and carefully ordered thoughts; and also of mess, disorder and decay. For the purposes of this chapter, I have embraced a very open definition of the Archive and archiving, to best align the quilt with the multiplicity of contemporary archival approaches, positioning them as texturally and textually detailed forays into the domestic worlds of the nineteenth century; of a growing industrial and increasingly middle-class-oriented society in which women worked out of the house as well as in. Sites of individual industry and family; power and emotion.

What people express through the creation of quilts is not reducible to the words that so often appear on, with or alongside them. Humanity's particular relation to things, stuff and substance means that even during a highly literate and increasingly bibliocentric period in British history, textiles played a crucial part in emotional, sensual, representational and communicative expressions of human behaviour (ibid, 12) There is however, as Katherine Sullivan Kruger has outlined in depth, an inextricable and ancient link between the power of cloth and that of the spoken and written word. As a society we have gathered words to connect the linguistic act of storytelling with the extralinguistic act of clothmaking and use. Like a piece of fabric, a story and words may be spun, woven, knitted, sewn – or even quilted or pieced together. Words tangle, unravel, knot, fray, frazzle. Ideas may have loose ends (ibid.). Text, texture and textile all derive from the same root. A storyteller or a listener can lose their thread. We have long spoken of the fabric of society, while to invent or create may be to fabricate.

Paper sits at the interface. A site occupied by both the linguistic and the extralinguistic, it is also an aggregate of textile fibres and products. Predominantly handmade well into the nineteenth century, its financial, emotional and symbolic value within British society was concomitant with that of handmade textiles. Traditionally born out of the rags of the textile trade, paper was shredded and pulped into the familiar page on which narratives were spun in inky threads. It is the carrier of text, texture and textile. It is the substrate of narratives, both visible and oblique; the bearer of patterns and marks; the key tool of domestic makers, custodians and users.[3]

It also abounds in the processes, materials, methods and conceits of quiltmaking. It is a fundamental part of the historical British piecing technique, in which it is cut, covered and stitched, before being removed to reveal the final design in fabric. It might be both transparent, a largely invisible tool of the quiltmaker; and over time opaque, where it might come to mean more because of its matter. In these pieced encounters, its sociomateriality is derived from its intimate physical and intellectual relationship to the textiles to which it is yoked.

Together, what these papers and textiles offer is a shared history; an account of how domestic materials were circulated and used beyond their overt function. They display what Leah Price, in her study of the book, has termed the 'hermeneutics of handling'; the semantics of their material history and being (Price 2012). They cemented or severed relationships; they were gifted and received; they were

bought, sold, transported, displayed, torn, worn, stored, stained, ignored, collected, prized, gifted, neglected, inherited, recycled, discarded.[4]

Some might be classed as part of artisanal, artistic, industrial or professional production circles, but the overriding context for British quiltmaking is that of the domestic (or a pseudo-domestic) sphere. In *La poetique de l'espace*, Gaston Bachelard argues that it is labour and consciousness that bring objects to life (Bachelard 1957). His description of labour importantly includes that of the domestic sphere – whether making, maintaining or using. An attentiveness to how makers imprint their own identity into the objects that they create for the home – the time taken to stitch rather than inscribe the written word, for example – reveals much of the conditions of their creation.[5] The history of quiltmaking within the home describes not only expenditures of time, physical force and shifting social and leisure practices, but through the objects left behind, a changing bodily and tactile relationship to the home and to things. In the examination of their architectural arrangement and material form, and the social practices that they enable or in some cases, promote, key information attributable to the household can be derived; how the 'pieces' – either textile or paper – were gathered, purchased, given, used, reused; often over a significant period of time. The investment of time and labour required to hand-piece a coverlet means that they might typically span generations and family members, and often reinforce an otherwise undocumented maternal lineage. They suggest how the bringing together of people and things might be both diachronic and synchronic.

Surviving objects are complex to decipher. They are, by their very nature, multi-layered. They have both vertical and horizontal elements and techniques, often resulting in striated forms and meaning. Pieced coverlets contain within them countless textiles, in turn containing countless fibres; each embodying the repetitive act of two elements working against and with one another; one fixed, the other mobile, passing above and beneath the fixed; as warp and weft; textile and thread; and quilted stitch. The facing layers of the quilts are most often an assemblage of textiles; some purchased as small bundles of fabrics from drapers and merchants as new cottons flooded the market; others relied on the longstanding practice of recycling as the collecting, curating, preserving and even gifting of small fragments of paper and fabric. Pieced examples are frequently worked over a template – most often in paper – but sometimes through other readily available household goods, including in rare instances, other textiles. In many surviving examples and accounts the templates are removed – partly to make the item more pliable and washable, and partly due to the value and labour bound up in the diminutive pieces of paper; that they might be reused in the same or similar projects.

In a handful of cases, pieced coverlets have made their way into public collections with their paper templates still intact. This chapter focuses on a small number of such coverlets, now in the collection of the V&A Museum. Many of these might traditionally be described as 'incomplete' examples, valued and collected for the study of piecing techniques and the wealth of printed cottons that they contain. In

the nineteenth century museum world in which public quilt collections first started to emerge, such objects were the building blocks of technical knowledge systems. But by redressing our perspective of such items as potential archives of texts, signs, symbols and materials – a literacy of the domestic – this question of completeness might be challenged and dissolved into broader systems of arrangement and signification. Their partial assemblage perhaps makes them the fullest description of their own thingness. They demonstrate the power of textiles and paper to articulate and evidence the relationships and functioning of a household.

One such coverlet is V&A object T.169-1978. Its accession file reveals only the donor's name from the time of acquisition (1978). The remainder of the file records the object's institutional history at the V&A. A pieced over paper example, comprising several hundred hexagonal pieces of cotton over paper whip stitched together, and a further 70 as individual, unstitched pieces, was acquired to help further the study of piecing over paper as a technique; and as an illustrative tool for the printed poplins and cottons circulating in the early nineteenth century. As Angela McShane has outlined, the paper template still tacked into the reverse offers a glimpse into the education and domestic life of a young girl in the early nineteenth century (McShane et al. 2010). The name Ann Spencer appears several times on the reverse, and the frequency of a child's hand suggests that this may have been a project started at school. The script, showing single sentences repeated on both sides of the paper, indicates classroom exercises. The subject matter reveals lessons in numeracy, grammar and history. Other papers appear to have been recycled from within the home. Personal papers in the reverse include correspondence to a 'Mr Spencer', ledger accounts and bills, including at least one reference to calico.

There is a rhythmic repetition of words, colour and pattern; 'things be, things be […]' flows across paper. This is interspersed with copy that transcribes historical events and dates – all in pieces. Archival reassemblage is possible on the basis of text type – copy book, ledger, accounts, inventory. It is tempting to gravitate towards dates and numbers as fixing points. Perhaps 1798 as the Battle of the Nile; 1810 as another date that appears out of context. Yet many of the papers are consistently dotted with pin pricks, containing no thread. These are the holes made as the needle makes its tacking stitches, passing through the paper. As the maker has apparently worked outwards from the centre, without removing any of the templates along the way, we might assume that these delicately punctured papers have been reused from an earlier project. Their dates and events are exercises in temporal deception. This is not just a patchwork of textiles, but also of text and time; pulled together through the desire to create a unified whole that nevertheless bespeaks a complex web of references. Individual paper hexagons are softened to the touch, suggesting years of handling, use and reuse. The paper reverts to its more tactile, textile qualities. In some areas the judicious arrangement of the textiles might offer a unique set of ordering principles, while other juxtapositions reveal the joys of accident and serendipitous pleasures. In reading these together, it is possible to determine what Maryanne Dever calls the 'productivity of proximity'; how they 'might come to

matter – and to mean – as a condition of their being together' (Dever 2013, 178). In her analysis, she draws on the work of architectural scientist Susan Yee, who described the day she came across a 'little parchment bag full of paper squares of different colors and different sizes' in the Le Corbusier archive in Paris.[6] Part of a system of interpretation, and demanding that their tactile and playful qualities are acknowledged by the researcher, these papers evoke the patchwork templates on which pieced coverlets were reliant. As Dever summarises, 'the question of how one piece of paper – judiciously positioned – may extend the expressive or documentary possibilities of another is one worth considering' (Dever 2013, 179). There is perhaps an argument that the pieced papers and textiles of quiltmaking constitute a similar and often challenging arrangement.

Papers carefully valued, preserved and reused evidence of both the financial and emotional worth of paper itself, and a diachronic relationship between domestic contributors to the quilt as they collected, used and archived these papers over time. In other pieced-over paper examples, the paper itself is absent, but everywhere underpins the representation and functional qualities of the covering. Jacqueline Riding has argued that a particularly complex example may have been created by a printer's family.[7] In T.9-1962 (Figure 14.1), paper is used to document the pressure, prominence and challenge of an exploding print culture and how it assimilates

Figure 14.1 Detail from a pieced coverlet that used popular printed imagery as its source material, completed c.1805 (T.9-1962). V&A Museum.

with domestic life. Highly illustrative, it brings into relief how we visually read an object. Its pictorial nature risks obscuring the information to be gleaned from the diminutive pieces of printed cloth, yet the visual iconography, printed textiles and manner of assembly all command their own forms of interpretation.

Representing not only paper but also the mechanisation and labour that made it, its places the creation of its own matter and materiality in context. In both stitch and print, it represents letters, music sheets, newspaper sheets, and the Gutenberg printing press being worked by two printers. They are definitively papery transactions that move beyond reading. It is paper made; paper presented; paper displayed. There is a precision, conciseness and pride taken in activities associated with ink and the hand, with the stitching suggesting a consistent and single point of creation. Print, pattern, pen and thread are used alongside one another to render the decoration. The pleasures of surface design and print – of cloth and of the page – are narrated in a moment in which both exploded in new and impressive ways. Tiny remnants of paper in the verso reveal that the entire coverlet was pieced over thousands of precut papers, many less than a square centimetre. The ghosts and scars of a once immense paper skeleton.

The textiles are vivid and glazed, unworn and unwashed. It appears to be an item of conspicuous and pleasurable display. Like many coverlets, it is aspirational. It demonstrates the purchasing power of its maker through access to diverse but complementing series of printed cottons; and also access to an equally aspirational series of military and literary prints, which it takes as inspiration for many of the pieced and embroidered vignettes.[8] Its context is woven into the very fabric of its being, and its design is one of splendour and power. Like the modern archive, its status is derived from a series of complex entanglements: paper and textile; the arrangement of spaces, furniture, decoration and people; both real and implied audience. Its design – with a 2m square pieced pattern intended to be viewed from above, and a decorative 30cm border designed to be viewed from each edge – dictates its viewing platform, shown to best effect when wrapped around a three-dimensional bed (or bed-like) structure. But a bed that might straddle the private and public divide; and in this instance, one of impressive scale and substance. Requiring an investment of labour stretching well beyond intermittent leisure, it describes a domestic scene in which the Regency bed might occupy one of the most prominent places in the household, intended to be viewed by visitors and guests as a site of public display – a site of labour, taste and fashion.[9] It stitches its household into history, melding printed declarations of military and naval might with the temple-like space of the household's best bed.

When viewed within the context of a museum collection or archive, such objects continue to narrate this history of domestic performance; a complex historical, cultural, political and social construct that articulates the maker's intent, status and audience. It can be read and decoded as a visual sign; understood as shared, embodied and cultural memory of the home and its inhabitants – inhabitants that might be both people and things. In its collected and conserved state, the coverlet is a theatrical, artistic, and cultural construct in its own right. Its scale and weight means that it commands

two handlers and elicits an audience. Its design is seductive and intriguing, asking the viewer to move up to and around it, privileging a close-up inspection and dialogue. It invites the researcher into the position of audience, where the absent maker/user and the traces of their touch suggest the performed and the performing. It provokes a series of sensory responses that help to articulate its theatrical qualities; a record of lives lived. It mirrors a shared memory of domestic performance in which the object might be presented, revealed, hidden, obscured, stored and created and recreated before an audience. It transcribes its role as an active agent in history.

This shared drive between textile, text and paper towards a consistent narrative is in many ways atypical of an everyday bedcover, yet it is perhaps one of the most commonly ascribed to quilts and bedcovers through retrospective analysis. More typically, text and textiles might marry over time. In a later example in the V&A's collection, the bedcover's immaterial oral history has consciously influenced its material interpretation (Figure 14.2). According to the donor's family history, T.428-1985 was made by the donor's great aunt, Elisabeth Chapman, as a marriage quilt to her husband.[10] The papers in the verso were said to be love letters between the two.

At the centre of the coverlet is a block printed panel showing flowers tied with a blue ribbon, with the printed inscriptions 'Wellington' and 'Vittoria' below. Under

Figure 14.2 Reverse of a pieced coverlet and border, completed c.1829 (T.428-1985). V&A Museum.

this central motif is a panel of plain white linen, on which is embroidered in dark blue silk a verse:

> O luck husband blest of heav'n
> To thee the Privilege is given
> A much lovd wife at home to keep
> Caress touch talk to–even sleep
> Thrice happy mortal envied lot
> What a rare treasure thou hast got
> Who to a woman can lay claim
> Whos temper evry day the same [sic]

Also embroidered in cross stitch are the names 'John and Elisabeth Chapman' and 'September 19, 1829'. The inscriber has used a slightly different shade of blue silk, and their placement suggests they might have been added after the completion of the verse, as they have been worked around it. The verse is taken from an epitaph written by William Grove and published in various formats in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including an edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1793). The epitaph was dedicated to Mary Van Butchell, who – at the request of her husband, Dr Van Butchell – was apparently embalmed after her death in 1775 and put on display in a glass case in the front room of his family home in London: a position that might have taken the place of the best bed and its coverings. The range of dates in the coverlet, including papers dating from the 1790s and a central commemorative panel produced in 1813, suggests that it may have been worked or compiled over a number of years. The tacking stitches and paper template remain in place, and the template appears to have been cut specifically for this project, bearing no other tacking holes or scars. The coverlet is also of an unusually small size for a double bed quilt of the period, suggesting that perhaps the first maker contemplated adding further pieces to the coverlet. The coverlet had a printed border added at some point in the late nineteenth century, possibly by a later family member. The fabrics are thought to have been sourced near Rochester, as some of the receipts in the template relate to commercial premises in the area. The papers still visible in the reverse of the unlined coverlet reveal a typical range of papers available in the home: ledger books, children's copy books, advertisements, newspapers and receipts.[11]

   This coverlet occupies a period in which acts of memory and memorialisation were changing. Where textiles might have traditionally been made, used, recycled and reused in a variety of household iterations thanks to their high financial and decorative value, the nineteenth century textile trade flooded the market with cheaper commercial cottons. Their widespread availability enabled a wider range of makers to view domestic textile objects as those which might outlive them. Without the necessity of recycling, they might be designed as an enduring and potentially permanent testimony to their skills, lives and memories. Each element of this coverlet is a carefully curated act of remembrance. The central textile commemorates a military victory, but also the loss of life at scale. The verse nods to a tale in which an embalmer overcame the permanent and rapid loss of his dead

wife's body through its transformation into an object of display and contemplation; the embroidery binds a married couple together long after their bodies have disappeared, while the stitches conjure the gestures of a maker no longer there. Anticipating eventual and permanent loss, the narrative of the to-be-lost person is contained in the to-be-left-behind coverlet.

Together, text and textile operate as a potent retainer of domestic, temporal and sensory memories. Psychoanalysts Serge Tisseron and Yolande Tisseron-Papetti have argued that at a particular point in the mourning process, physical contact with the coverings of a loved one not only reconnect these individuals, but can psychologically complete the survivor and make them whole again.

> Because the emotions tied to a lost person are no longer held in the psyche but deposited in certain parts of the surrounding world and melded with those objects, they do a great deal more than to fix a memory. They reunite, inextricably combined, the lost person and the part of the self that had been in contact with her.
> (Tisseron-Papetti and Tisseron 1982, 86)

As humans, we expect the things we make and use to outlive us, 'embodying and carrying a trace of our physical selves into a future in which we are no longer present. […] They provide a sensory experience of continued contact' (ibid.). It is the intense materiality of the textile document that gives power to the fading and increasingly immaterial voice and body. Acts of determination and permanence in a shifting familial landscape.

Over time, the familial-material importance of the textiles has become dependent on the papers concealed and revealed through the piecing technique. The fractured and friable nature of the papers – cut, fragmented, often illegible snatches of the written or printed word – obscures the linguistic and underscores the extralinguistic sensuality of the papers, giving rise to the speculation that they might be love letters. Illicit correspondence, perhaps, deliberately encoded and concealed. The human need to visualise and experience these papers, and the people that they represent, as a whole and complete dialogue between two lovers, rather than accepting the pieced nature of their existence, return to the act of memorialisation as a fixing and/or completion. A heightend materiality at precisely the moment in which corporeal bodies – touched and felt sensations and tangible memories – are becoming increasingly immaterial. The possibility of a more fragmented dialogue with the maker; her context; her layered approach to the people and events surrounding her, is one expressed through the material being of the object, but one that does not necessarily sit easily with the drive to make her narrative fixed and permanent. Despite this, the object does ask the question if the written word can come to mean more – or even to mean other – by virtue of the paper that it appears on. If a love letter might be seen as a correspondence – a description of love between two people – perhaps the paper evidences this relationship regardless of the words written upon it. Scraps, snippets and encounters between two lives lived, coming together in a shared domestic context. These papers do not textually describe the Chapmans or their domestic scene, but through the way in which they have been

carefully cherished, preserved and cared for, they do evidence the importance of this moment in their wider familial history. It is through the entanglement of oral, paper and textile histories – of the linguistic and the extralingustic, the material and immaterial – that the power of paper itself has been made legible, and ensured the object's survival as a document of the Chapmans' shared domestic history.

In producing the body of the coverlet, this complex interaction demonstrates its effectiveness as an archival object. The effect is pronounced, but not unique. The inter-reliance of textile and paper recurs in T.75-1937, which uses paper in multiple ways (Figure 14.3). Paper templates appear as a tool for the double-faced, intricately pieced designed; on one side a predominantly geometric pattern with a swirling, figurative garland of leaves sweeping around the outer edge (known as 'running branch'); and a geometric design on the other side that makes clever use of the woven stripes of the textiles to generate patterns within patterns. Paper appears as a template but also, as is evident through the degraded silks, as whole sheets; as an interleaving

Figure 14.3 Detail of a pieced and quilted coverlet, with materials dating to the first half of the nineteenth century (T.75-1937). V&A Museum.

layer of wadding or structural support (McShane et al. 2010, 125–126). Quilting – the act of taking the stitch through at least three layers – has been performed through the newspaper. A design of high quality piecing and fabrics, it is unlikely that this was accidental, although the variation in stitching suggests that it may have been performed by a second maker at a later date. The suggestion is that this was a quilt designed not to have its paper removed, but with paper playing an integral, material role. A part of the physical composition of the quilt, it heightens and enhances the page's usual role as substrate and support; albeit in a way that moves beyond its more typical domestic performances. The paper takes on the physical and emotional duties performed by textile – it provides not only narrative and context, but also comfort and warmth. Papers softened, abraded, used, worn, even stained. The deepest areas of damage are along fold lines. Black silks have given way very early on in the quilt's life due to inherent vice, but there is further wear as the quilt has been folded and unfolded consistently along the same lines as it has been taken in and out of use: a conversation piece for display that may have been rotated with more functional blankets and coverings for warmth during the cold months. This quilt has also been patiently infilled, nurtured over the years – the black silks riddled with degradation thanks to early iron-based dyes, replaced with more resilient and synthetic silks and cottons at they were introduced later in the century. This is an object that not only means something because of its matter, but where the matter has been augmented because of its profound meaning to the household.

The object foregrounds the importance of paper over words. It is a life lived in and through pieces. Domestic histories abound in synchronic and diachronic traces, as the quilt is made and remade over time. Degradation, guided by the chemical instability of the dyes, has revealed over time a patchwork of typescript. Transcribing the visible text, it's possible to follow the gentle, lilting movement of the text across the surface of the object:

The far…
with an even…
about half past n…
made with refuse…
White Hart booth, k…
.ridge, the flames can
…shed, and in a few n…
…contents were on fire ….
…spread to the…
hours reduced to…
…am Row; also …
…he fair: … 40 feet …
that … bags of the …
….d furniture, …
…he fair. The los…
…nst amount…

In transcribing what is actually visible, there's a moment in which the paper enforces its form, function, visibility and materiality in new ways. Apertures of loss present text as colour, shape, surface pattern. What emerges here is a transcript of degradation. The text is the template made linguistic. It narrates the loss of the silk and the visual scar left behind. Through foliage shaped patterns of degeneration and decay, glimmers of news reports now intimate chemical and bodily routines; the light, darkness and even smells of the home that the quilt occupied; reactions to its environment. It reinforces memories inscribed in places that may no longer exist in the same form; sensory impressions, connections to the past.

The spaces and ellipses of the quilt's material being underline its fibrous make-up and reveal key relationships. The quilt inhabits a moment of being at the point (or more accurately, points) of creation, but a further and varied state of being is arrived at through layered and nuanced processes of decay, involving the inter-action of materials with their environment. This effectiveness is communicated to a sentient, perceiving audience in the experienced and shared moment of the study room. The materials have agency as intermediary between the maker and spectator, not only through a visual response, but also a sensory one; projected via surface, colour, form, smell, sound, feel, movement and weight. The quilt draws attention to the processes of its own creation and use, by what it reveals or conceals, through folds, tears, wear; by the way it organises itself to its former environment; its composition and proportion. It can highlight or even generate gesture and stillness from its handlers. The curious rigidity of the paper skeleton constantly reverts to its former fold lines; the sound of papers approaching their stress point as they gently creak and crackle, dictating a sentient museum han-dler's response. The quilt replies to the domestic environment even when sited within the museum, these folds and bends reliant on years spent in a linen chest. What it provides is a series of encounters; an interaction at the stress layer or point of contact with past and current people and spaces; an ongoing sensory and visual dialogue with the spectator, whose own embodied sense of what it is like to be covered and contained comes into play. What Donatella Barbieri, in her ana-lysis of performance archives, describes as 'the activity of imagining an on-going physical adjustment and response to other physically present and absent bodies' (Barbieri 2012). Yet in this case it asks us to imagine the weight and feel of an unusually papery covering.

In the layering and behaviour of these materials, the form and function of the quilt is transformed. Much more than a covering, the binding of paper and textile changes the fundamental behaviour of both. The coverlet becomes a curiously jointed, artic-ulated and delicate envelope, where not only cloth, but also the page, cloaks the human body. In such instances, it is impossible to ignore the matter of the paper, which becomes a semi-flexible skeleton that in some areas holds the item rigid; in others it has been softened and abraded, its fibres reverting towards the cottons and linens from which it originated. It is also impossible to fully decipher the text without compromising the textiles. Materially and metaphorically, they have a sym-biotic relationship. But where the textiles give way, the paper continues to support

its woven and pieced companion, rendering the design, spaces, places and intent of the maker visible. Collectively, such quilts ask if we might move towards an understanding of these unnamed makers as archivists of their domestic landscape.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 In her study, Auslander makes the point that makers understand everyday objects have special attributes because they mirror human existence;

> They, like they people who use them, are embodied. That embodiedness means that objects occupy space and cannot be in two places at once, and they are mortal, although their life-spans may be much longer or shorter than those of the people using them.
> Our awareness of this point, I would argue, is heightened in quilts, which may well be the first or last item that the body touches, and have a particularly strong connection to our own sense of embodiment (p. 13).

2 Katherine Sullivan Kruger makes this point in relation to the wider use and exchange of textiles (Sullivan Kruger 2008, 12).

3 For an analysis of paper as a tool and an overview of recent scholarship on paper's place in the history of knowledge, see Jardine (2017).

4 Price makes this point in relation to the book, but the same might be said of other material objects circulating in both commercial and domestic spheres (Price 2012).

5 Auslander further underlines this point, where she states that

> an attentiveness to how 19th century French artisans related to the things that they made reveals them to have been as preoccupied with the sensuousness of the labour process and the beauty of their creations as with the conditions of that labour.
>
> (Auslander 2008, 13)

6 Yee, S. (2007) 'The Archive', in Turkle, S. (ed), *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 44. Cited by Dever (2013, 179).

7 Riding, J. (2010) 'His Constant Penelope: Epic Tales and Domestic Narratives', in Prichard, S. (ed), *Quilts 1700–2010: Hidden Histories, Untold Stories*. London: V&A Publishing.

8 For further details of the prints that inspired the scenes, see Riding, J. (2010) 'His Constant Penelope: Epic Tales and Domestic Narratives', in Prichard, S. (ed), *Quilts 1700–2010: Hidden Histories, Untold Stories*. London: V&A Publishing.

9 For a history of the bed's place and importance within the household see McShane, A. (2012) 'The Bed and the Domestic Landscape', in *Bedtime Stories: Beds and Bedding in Britain 1650-1850*. Leeds: Temple Newsam House. www.academia.edu/4072343/_The_Bed_and_the_Domestic_Landscape_Bedtime_Stories_Beds_and_Bedding_in_Britain_1650-1850_Temple_Newsam_House_Leeds_21-22_June_2012?auto=download [accessed 14.01.2019]

10   A genealogical trace reveals that Baker's ancestor, Elizabeth Chapman was born around 1801. In the 1851 census, she was living at 41 London Road, Strood, Kent, the wife of John Chapman. John was born in Hull in 1813 and may have moved to Kent as an economic migrant. By 1851, he was working as a brick maker on the local brick-fields, which provided work for many in the area. They had two children; William (born 1842) and Ann (born 1844). By the 1871 census, John and Elizabeth Chapman were living with John and Elizabeth Baker at 16 Temple Street, Strood, Kent. John Chapman's profession is listed as labourer. John Baker, a junction engine driver, was the grandfather of Stephen Baker. William Chapman married and had a son, William Charles Chapman (born 1865). In the 1881 census, they are listed as on board the vessel, *Harriet*t.

11   For further details of this coverlet and its papers see McShane, A., Christie A. and Turner, A. (2010) 'The Chapman Quilt: Texts, Myths and Mysteries', in Prichard, S. (ed), *Quilts 1700–2010: Hidden Histories, Untold Stories*. London: V&A Publishing. pp. 125–126.

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Chapter 15

Performing gestures towards the archive

Queer fragments and other ways of mattering

Ben Cranfield

I am thinking of a fragment. It is a specific fragment, but, for my purposes here, it does not matter what it is. Whilst it certainly matters if this fragment exists as a projection on a screen, a piece of paper that could be easily torn in one's hands, a movement of the body, or as sound waves emanating from a source, it doesn't matter which. What matters is that it is specific, in the sense that it is a particular gathering of data-matter. As what Deleuze might call a virtuality or Whitehead 'pure potentiality' (Massumi 2011, 67–68), this fragment does not yet have any meaning. That is to say, it is not yet interactive – it does not yet participate in any network of human and non-human signification. It is all latency. My primary concern here is, how does this fragment, not yet actualised, come to matter?

Now let me say that this fragment is an archival one. Immediately this item exists in tension. The archive, as a structure of ordering, attempts to contain fragmentation. Through methods of categorisation, encasement and meta-data and, first and foremost, judgement, the items in the archive are made to 'belong' (Mbembe 2002). They no longer float freely but exist structurally. The structural surety of the archive exists as an indexical promise that it speaks to the entity in whose name it has been conjured into being – a person, an institution, a function or an idea (or a combination thereof). As Says Mays has argued, this attempt to 'fit' the archive to the thing that it is supposed to be archiving is an attempt at closure. For Mays, to 'finally wrest the very stuff from all this stuff, without remainder, without more stuff, is to fall into the condition of archive fever' (Mays 2013, 142). The primary function of the archive, to record that something has taken place, relies on its structures of verification that aim to defragment that which it contains. And yet, the indexical claim also means that which is in the archive and the archive itself are partial; they are understood to be necessarily fragmentary, incomplete bits of another time persisting in the present. As potential evidence, the archival item, despite and because of the best attempts of the archive, remains fragmentary – complete in its incompleteness.[1] It is the particular understanding of the archive as a place of legislative potential, of commencement and commandment (Derrida 1996, 1), that helps decide how the archival fragment will come to matter. If the archive gives the fragment its first-level significance, by enshrining it as a document of something or someone, then it is the practices of law and history that make the

archival fragment matter.[2] It is through these disciplinary exercises that the arch-
ival fragment takes up its performative role as evidence within the emplotment of
History (White 1987, 44).

   I share Hayden White's concern for underscoring the way in which History is a
political act of the present and not simply a medium for the transmission of the past
(White 1966; White 1987, 58–82). However, my concern here is not for History,
per se, but for those archival fragments forced to do History's bidding. I am not
suggesting that we foreclose on our desire to understand the present in relation to
what has come before, nor am I wishing to give up on the use of historical narra-
tive to render events meaningful, and I am certainly not saying that the value of
documents as evidence be refused. Rather, I am interested in other ways in which
the matter of the past, that is, after all, also matter of the present, comes to matter;
how the fragment becomes radically present in ways that do not explain away its
irruptive potential *as* matter in the present. More specifically, I wonder what it is to
encounter the archival fragment in its uncertain state as simultaneously document/
trace and matter/presence and what work this might do in changing ideas about
who and what matters and how. To do this, I will turn to a practice from the field
of contemporary performance/art that does not engage with what might be con-
ventionally understood as archival matter (paper documents, photographs and the
usual stuff of archival research), but that puts into radically uncertain relationship
the material of the past and the material of the present in ways that challenge the
neat narrative progression of past-present-future through the use of other types of
matter to produce other forms of mattering. The often celebrated quality of per-
formance, that of its presence (Phelan 1993, 146), means that its materiality and
its forms of mattering seem to be indissociable from its location in the present.
However, performance, even the most improvised and spontaneous sort, relies on
the elsewhere of previous performance, whether rehearsals, remembered move-
ments, genealogies of practice or recollections by audiences and performers alike
of prior experience – what we might call its archive – that makes the perform-
ance legible as such. Indeed, it is the status of that little piece of matter that exists
absolutely in the present as performed here and now, but is at once only possible
because of what has come before, that I want to suggest offers a way of being other-
wise with the matter of the archive. This piece of matter, that I chose to call the
'gesture', is the subject of my discussion below. What I want to explore here is not
what the particular matter of the gesture is, but rather how the gesture performs a
particular extra-communicative function that offers a paradigm for thinking about
the archival fragment as both here and now, and then and there.

Archival bodies

Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church is a complex, mutable
and expanding suite of performance works by Trajal Harrell. In the M2M (made-
to-measure) version of the piece that I saw at the Barbican Art Gallery (the piece
also comes in (XS), (S), (M), (Jr.), (L), (made-to-measure) or (M2M) and (XL)

versions) in 2017 (Moore 2014, 8), Harrell performed solo (this is not always the case), carefully and deliberately moving through a range of different 'looks'. Each look comprised a particular form of dress and a series of movements, although pieces of clothing and types of movement appeared in more than one 'look', linking and blurring the specific set-pieces. In fact, as a first-time watcher, it was not clear to me how much was tightly pre-planned and choreographed and how much improvised. Either way, it is a moot point, as what was clear was that each movement, expression, pose, garment, action, look was, at once, exactly part of this particular iteration of the performance in this space and time and recalled from sometime/somewhere else. Each 'look' and each movement within each 'look' came with an implied genealogy; not a history as such that could be used to explain it away as pure quotation, but, rather, a clear sense that this is not entirely of the now, that these looks were somehow rearranged from a storehouse of looks past.

It might seem strange to explore the mattering of the archival-fragment-as-matter through the fleeting form of contemporary dance. But, I want to propose, it is exactly by looking away from what usually matters *as matter* that another way of approaching the space between past and present, trace and material can emerge. Furthermore, to look away from the archive as a place of documents, to the performing body as site of archival enactment is to reverse an important function of the historical form of the archive: the codification of the body within its structures of informational capture. Allan Sekula's foundational essay, 'The Archive and the Body', made the compelling case that the documentary form of the photograph and the bureaucratic form of the archive were put to mutually supporting use by the desire to render the individual body and the social body knowable and, therefore, controllable (Sekula 1986). This idea of bodies assumed knowable through archival capture and the attendant problem of fixity I will return to below, but for now I want to suggest that Harrell inverts this relationship between the body and the archive. Rather than capturing the body through the archive, he captures, holds and unfolds the archival through the body.

Writing on Harrell's *Twenty Looks* invariably recalls the question that Harrell has given as the origin point of the work: 'what would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ball scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmoderns at Judson Church?' (quoted in Moore 2014, 9). Whilst I don't believe that this question explains the work, it does point to a particular temporal relation that initiates the work. Firstly, it recalls two distinct dance traditions (voguing/ball scene and post-modern dance) and spaces (the balls and Judson Church), that are called the specific 'elsewhere' of the work. I would call these 'elsewheres' archives, in the sense that they offer Harrell not so much traditions in which to work, but a body of traces and 'a general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (Foucault 2003, 146), from which to draw. Secondly, the 'what if' puts a speculative time into the frame as a way of invoking an imagined past into the present that, through its 'what if', also offers a future-orientated potential; how might things be different if this history had occurred or, more importantly, *could* have occurred? Consequently, the work offers a conflation

of archives of past material, with a fictional historical time (the what-if), a pro-jected speculative future time (maybe this), within the present time-space of the work (actually this). For Harrell, this is less an exercise in historical recovery than an act of creating 'an impossibility that invites us to rethink the possibilities we can have today' (Harrell quoted in Moore 2014, 3).

To call *Twenty Looks* archival places the work within a recently developed under-standing of contemporary performance that renders the body as archive. Andre Lepecki has identified that 'turning and returning to all those tracks and steps and bodies and gestures and sweat and images and words and sounds performed by past dancers paradoxically becomes one of the most significant marks of contemporary experimental choreography' (2010, 29). Lepecki calls this the 'will to archive', an adaption and reassessment of Hal Foster's archival impulse, that renders the arch-ival less nostalgic and more generative (ibid.). Working with Deleuze's concepts of compossibles and incompossibles, Lepecki's will to archive is not about drawing on references for an evidentiary or historical purpose, but, rather, engaging with the never complete process of realising the possibilities contained within that which has already been (ibid, 31).

Crucial in what Lepecki outlines is the function of the body not just as record-ing medium or repository of the archive of dance's past movements, but as the realising substrate for that which might have been and, virtually, already is part of what has been. In the examples Lepecki gives, the particular archival nature of the body – its ability to pull from the virtuality of past movements generative moments of newly actualised presence – and dance – as a particular space for the expression of this archival relation – are made explicit through the performed relation between an extant piece of material and its re-actualisation in re-embodiment. The 'will to archive' is, then, the wish to render the body performatively referential, but, still, generative; not simply destined to repeat, but wilfully recollecting and recom-posing past matter into present reality and future possibility.

Undoubtedly Harrell's *Twenty Looks* does just this, in that it is a demonstration of the generative nature of recalling and recollecting. But it does so specifically as an act of archival instantiation. Stuart Hall argued that all acts of archival formation are political acts of constitution, not just because they provide the tools for histor-ical work, but because they produce a space of active (re-)collection. Hall called such a process a 'living archive' (Hall 2001). Building on this idea, I believe that *Twenty Looks* is a living archive because it attempts at once to contain and expose the fragmentary nature of material traces, as matter that exists both in the here and now and in another time, elsewhere. At the same time, the 'archival' nature of the work, like any bureaucratic archive, maintains the possibility of these traces acting as witnesses in the present for a reassessment of the past in order to 'commence' a particular future – specifically as moments of reassessment and recollection, as much as original and generative acts of reshaping material, what Hall calls the 'active, dialogic relation' in which the archive stands to 'the questions the pre-sent puts to the past' (ibid, 92). This is the temporal complexity held in Harrell's question discussed above. What might seem a rather playful and simple question

of 'what if' becomes, as an archival enactment, a calling into being of traces and fragments to witness an imagined potential past that asks questions of the conditions which have led to the circumstances in which the 'what if' has becomes a provocative, necessary and possible (if unlikely) question to ask. That is to say, by enacting fragments from the two 'archives' of the Judson Church and the ball scene, Harrell instantiates a third archival scene, a no-place where the two are fused and entwined. However, *Twenty Looks* is not just an invocation of an imagined archive composed from the wilful crossing of two extant archives, but the formation of an archival will across the iterations of *Twenty Looks* itself. The seriality of the work makes manifest its own self-reflective historicity that marks another trope of contemporary dance in which an explicit retracing of a piece across time creates a reflection on the archival performance of self, as an unfolding referentiality in and through time; the becoming of self as a constantly referential archival process. Speaking about this phenomenon through the work of Jennifer Monson, Jennifer Lacey and Meredith Monk, Alison Bory reveals that the recovery of the past is an ongoing process of the present and past meeting and changing each other through the dynamic of the archival moment of re-embodiment (whether that be a human body or another sort of embodiment, such as film, exhibition or text) (Bory 2015). This matters because, as Hall implied, to make sure that this politics of the archive is 'alive' requires a reflexivity to be embedded within the archival mechanism itself, something which queer archive theorist and practitioner Jamie Ann Lee has been calling for through the incorporation of Queer Methodology into archival work (Lee 2017). The fictive archive established within both the singular instance of *20 Looks* and in the series *Twenty Looks* not only belies the presumption of fixity in the archive, and the fixity of identity, but also squarely locates the politics of the archival constitution (which is never complete) as a political act in the present.

If, as I have implied, *Twenty Looks* is archival because it structurally enacts a relation of past material in the present with an implied futurity beyond the historiographic, what, then, is the form that allows this to manifest? And, more pertinently to my question posed at the outset, what of the archival fragment itself? Does the very matter that Harrell is working with, all those recollected, recalled, channelled, reworked, remembered and recomposed pieces of movement from a conjured archive of exceptional-everydayness, matter? And if so, how so? I believe the answer to all these questions lies in a form that is attendant to many discussions of performance and certainly to the work of those concerned with the archival turn in performance: gesture. Indeed, gesture is the key to the works Lepecki and Bory discuss and sits right at the core of *Twenty Looks*. Gesture could be said to be both *Twenty Looks'* content and method. Gesture is that which links the movements of *Paris is Burning* to the Judson Church and that which allows Harrell to connect past and present. It is, I contend, that which acts as a conduit between the exceptional and the everyday and the past, present and future.

To start with the 'content' of *Twenty Looks*, it is a *tour de force* of exceptional-everydayness, or everyday exceptionality. This could be said to be the shared territory of the ball scene and the post-modern dance scene. The now famous and

popularised terms of the ball scene (realness, walking, serving) all indicate the need to exceptionally perform the everyday and make the exceptional (the cat walk, high fashion etc.) appear every day (effortless, 'natural'). Whilst, as implied above, all performance (or any meaning-making practice) is intertextual, composed and conditioned by what has been and is, and, in that sense, archivally referential, the ball scene is explicitly so, placing the habituation of observed attitudes, styles, mannerisms (all that Bourdieu would have called habitus) at the centre of a successful 'look', it is, in this sense, a distinctly archival practice. As Madison Moore describes it, 'voguing is a style of dance that borrows the language of its iconography and movement from poses seen in high fashion magazines' (2014, 8). But as Moore also says, the 'serving' of the look is more than borrowing or imitating, but 'a battle with yourself, a radical challenge to constantly deliver a compelling performance that upsets everything we think we already knew' (ibid, 5). This is not mere pastiche, but a reclamation of the excess of the everyday, away from the death of repetition – the petrifying space of normativity – by the 'living' of exceptionality within the margins of those spaces to which those of the 'scene' had been denied access. This is not about the fetishisation of marginality, but about the taking-possession of a future-orientated desire for a different way of living in the paucity of the here and now, even if the empowering and subversive possibilities of that taking-possession come with strict limits (Butler 2011, 81–97; Harper 1994, 90–103).

However, as Harrell slowly and purposefully struts down the barely demarcated 'cat-walk' of the gallery space, these ball scene moves have none of the ostentatious glamour of the ball scene but are tempered by a stripped-back, raw intensity. This rawness is present in every detail, from the clothes that are strikingly ordinary (a rubber washing-up glove replaces a long evening glove) draped carefully over the back of functional chairs awaiting Harrell to slowly clothe himself in them, to the looks he casts out to the audience that are as vulnerable as they are fierce. This is the everyday anti-theatricality of the Judson Church that blends and jars with the arch mannerisms of the drag-ball. I am tempted to say here that post-modern dance enacts the transubstantiation of the everyday into exceptionalism in reverse to the ball scene, but this is not quite so straightforwardly an opposite direction of traffic. It is true that post-modern dance came to dethrone dance as the exceptional site of movement through the radical interrogation of everyday movement within the rarified space of dance (Banes & Carroll 2006). However, just like in the ball scene, the use of repeated gestures from a studied everyday rendered the everyday excessive and extra-ordinary in the demanding scene of post-modern movement; in the ball scene, this could be the strut of a cat-walk model, or the puffed chest of the Wall Street trader (Harper 1994, 90–91), whereas in post-modern dance, this could take the form of eating a sandwich or combing one's hair (Banes & Carroll 2006, 61). Indeed, what both practices do is fragment the everyday into a series of gestures that can be not so much re-performed, but re-embodied *as* gesture in the space of performance. As such, the success of a post-modern dance performance, as much as a ball walk, lies not in the communicative success of an expressive

characterisation, but in the performer's fidelity to the recollected fragment. The difference between the two spaces of practice lies in the different relationships the performing bodies within those spaces had to the everyday. In the ball scene, all the gestures are both everyday and exceptional, because the spaces of the everyday being studied are those of privilege – middle-class, white, heterosexual, cisgender (sometimes together, sometimes sequentially) – from which the performers are themselves excluded. Whereas the exceptional everyday of the Judson Church is one that already existed as available for the performers within their everyday experience. The practices are then not so much opposing or complimentary, but parallel. What crosses the parallel lines (or tracks, to put it in more socio-economic terms) is the form of the gesture. Harrell explicitly crosses the beams of these gestural archives to produce something that is entangled. This entanglement also disorientates in a way that queers the relation between performer, gesture and archive. Harrell has spoken about people's assumption that because he registers as Black and queer, he must have been more familiar with the ball scene than that of the Judson Church. In fact, the reverse is true, Harrell having trained in the post-modern tradition and only having been an observer of the voguing tradition (D'Amato 2017). The archives that Harrell draws from are not channelled to secure for Harrell an origin point or a lineage, but, rather, by taking the material of two distinct practices and passing them through the archival process, as Lepecki describes it, of the performing body, a new singularity is created without reductive historicised origin, and with it a new set of gestural possibilities are actualised.

Gestures in time

That the gesture is profoundly prosaic and yet extra-ordinary, in that it exceeds the circumstances of its everyday functionality, becomes evident in Vilem Flusser's series of essays, *Gestures* (2014). Taking acts that might not even register to their performer as performed, Flusser dissects the particular ways in which gestures operate as sites of becoming and technical mediations. Lucia Ruprecht comments that Flusser 'subscribes to a theory of expression that [Giorgio] Agamben in his understanding of gesture actively negates' (2017, 6). And, indeed, Flusser's notion of gesture may seem quite different from Agamben's famous theorisation in 'Notes on Gesture', primarily because for Agamben the gesture is not a piece of expressivity in and of itself, nor is it action in itself, but, rather, an action that communicates simply the capacity for communication (Agamben 2000, 58). René ten Bos argues that Agamben's gesture is not for itself, nor for an end, but a support for a potential community of inclusivity: 'the politics of the gesture refers to a post-sovereign, non-exclusive, and affirmative politics. It is an anti-humanistic politics as it refuses to acknowledge a special status for human beings or for particular human beings' (2005, 42). However, despite the apparent difference, there is something in Flusser's assertion that a theory of gestures would be an 'interface theory' and it would not be a branch of communication theory, but, rather, that communication theory would be a branch of a larger theory of gestures (2014, 116), that calls

to mind Agamben's claim that the gesture is the support for and excess of communication. As Carrie Noland states, 'gesture exceeds dynamically its signifying or operational functions' (2017, 70).

What does this mean in relation to the particular matter of the performed gesture as archival fragment? It is the in-betweenness of the gesture, its suspension between action and communication, between a task to be carried out and an expression of pure information that allows it to operate as a fragment of and in time with particular potential. Because the gesture cannot be reduced to mere information to be received, nor can it be dismissed as a means-to-an-end, its materiality hangs in the air. But if it hangs in the air, it does not hang as an image on a wall, but more as a condensation, a sort of vapour trail, produced by the dynamic interaction of particular materials brought together in a certain movement. Indeed, for Flusser, gesture *is* movement (2014, 163). However, the study of gesture is more than a categorisation of a set of certain movements, say of the hand, rather: 'the facts are these: we are gestures. Through them, we come up against the events of the world in which we are gesticulating, the world that gesticulates through us, and that we "mean" ' (ibid, 69). Reading across Flusser and Agamben, I wish to posit that the particular 'expressivity' of the gesture is not as a simple signal to be received, but a complexity that arises from the unavoidable intentionality of being in the world.

Flusser suggests that a theory of gestures would be coterminous with a philosophy of history: 'If a gesture is defined as an expression of a freedom, that is, as an active being-in-the-world, then the sum of gestures (res gestae) is history' (2014, 171). If gestures are history, then to propose a theory of the gesture would be the same as proposing a philosophy of history. However, Flusser is quick to challenge this idea and proposes that, alternatively, a theory of gestures could be understood as antithetical to the philosophy of history. Whereas a philosophy of history 'regards the gesture as a "universal phenomenon" in which a "universal human freedom" comes to expression (e.g. Hegelian spirit or Marxist subjectivity)', an alternative theory of gestures

> regards the gesture as a 'quantized phenomenon' in which a specific, individual being-in-the-world is expressed in each instance, so that the expression occurs in a space-time specific to the individual, whereby an individual can for his [sic] part, be considered a knot in an intersubjective network.
>
> (ibid, 173)

If a theory of gestures could be considered the antinomy of the philosophy of history, then does this not mean that the world decomposed into gestures could be considered antithetical to history? And, if so detached from historic time, what sort of temporal relation does the gesture then hold?

The gesture as an operation distinct from history shifts focus away from causality to the shape of the movement of the gesture. This means that the linearity of history is replaced with something like a simultaneous implication of past, present and future in the singularity of the gesture. This gives the gesture a technical and

figural quality. So understood, the gesture does not just become a way of being-in-the-world *a la* twentieth century phenomenology, but a primary form of 'worlding' as the 'particular blending of the material and the semiotic that removes the boundaries between subject and environment, or perhaps between persona and topos' (Palmer & Hunter 2018). Although the gesture is intentional action, its form of action starts to look more like the movement described by Brian Massumi as an arc of an event (2011, 16–17). Although, Massumi's idea of event takes us beyond Flusser's gesture as something that can be distinguished from pre-conscious or purely 'responsive' movement, it might start to explain the way in which the gesture comes to matter within an 'intersubjective network' as inseparable from the conditions of its taking-place. Indeed, Erin Manning, a long-time collaborator of Massumi's, identifies the gesture (specifically the minor gesture) as a 'lived variation' (2016, loc 1587), by which she means a shift from within the vector of an experience. So defined, the gesture, as a micro-part of an event, becomes something that not only moves from past to present into the future, within a traditional frame of causal historical time, but exceeds and disrupts such a linearity in its particular manifestation of a past-present-future figure as a kind of polyp on the surface of the present. Understood in this way, the gesture is a piece of radical materiality operating from within the imminence of an event.

Archival gestures of queer mattering

So what of the gesture that is in some way recorded, archived, preserved, recollected, re-enacted? Extracting the gesture from its original eventful circumstance is to fragment it, to then recall that gesture through the body-as-archive is to both render the gesture archival – that is, situated amongst a scene of gestural traces of something past, connected by its provenance to a space of past significance – and to rematerialise it as a piece of data-matter participating in the event of the present. This is to hold in tension Flusser's alternative positions on the gesture – seeing it as coterminous with historic action and, at the same time, antithetical to the historical imagination through its intersubjective, technical-mediating eventfulness – and, as such, opens up the gesture to what, in relation to a different context, Massumi calls a double vision (2011, 41–42). Rather than seeing this double vision as a problem, I see it as an opportunity to understand the gesture as speaking simultaneously to causal historic time and radically present materiality, not as opposed to each other, but as part of each other. This viewpoint becomes even more complex if we consider an explicitly re-enacted gesture. The gesture, recalled and re-performed, is at once a congealed piece of pastness persisting in the present, an arc of material becoming that exceeds the conditions of historic causality, *and* a piece of action aiming at the realisation of a particular end. Whilst a referential reading of gesture that would dissolve it into language would prioritise the first understanding, and an eventful, performance-based reading of gesture would privilege the second understanding, the final 'historical' reading of gesture would see it only as the ephemeral trace of that which is really important – its causal effect. But must we choose

between these foci of attention, could we not hold these multiple ways in which the gesture as particular fragment of space-time comes to matter usefully in tension? I believe that we can and that the gesture's primary value as *archival* fragment is to locate us between a potential historical, causal meaning of the fragment and the material presence of the fragment replete with co-existent potentiality. This is what the archive as a space of incompleteness, as I have described above, makes possible. Given that the archive holds its materials in-waiting for their use as evidence then, despite the best efforts of the archive to fix that which is held in the name of the entity that sits at the top of the archival tree, it cannot know to what future evidentiary uses it will be put. Furthermore, despite those ordering fonds, meta-data and all the pre-received narratives of value that may attempt to 'know' and 'place' those archival fragments into an archival structure (be it boxed in a formal institutional archive, or be it a notional archive of the New York ball scene, with all of its movements, clothing and phrases held by collective memory in place like so many archival items waiting to be ([re])called), the endless potential of all that material-in-waiting can never quite be kept in its proper place. The very materiality of the archival fragment, however ephemeral, always threatens to exceed its status as witness. Its materiality lives. But its materiality includes its pastness – its particular qualities of being here and now and then and there. If the gesture can be understood as an archival fragment, in that it is recalled from a 'storehouse' of past movements, and, simultaneously, is enacted in the scene of the present, then I want to claim that *all* archival fragments are gestural, in that they have the potential to create an arc in the present through their co-temporality as of the 'now' and of the 'then'. The archival fragment is, like the gesture, always in movement between the possibility of speaking to the past in the present, and the potential of enacting an unrealised past in the present towards yet-to-be realised futures.

Potentiality was queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz's preferred term, borrowed from Agamben, for the utopianism held within certain archival fragments. Whilst all the archival fragments Muñoz animated through his writing were gestural in their utopian capacity to project past futurity into the present and towards other potential futures, the archive of queer gestures Muñoz assembled held for him a particular potential (2009, 1–3). He considered the gesture, in its ephemerality, not as that which has no matter, but as another form of matter that suggests another way of mattering (ibid, 81). It is perhaps no coincidence that Muñoz theorised this position from a consideration of queer club performer Kevin Aviance, whose own gestures are deeply influenced by voguing and queer ball practices. For Muñoz, Aviance's performances are marked by rupture; staccato movements that not only cut the space of the club but also produce a temporal punctuation in its conventional rhythms. Aviance uses disjunctive gestures to produce a particular, arresting queer space/time within the busy space/time of the gay club (ibid, 75). However, it is Muñoz's (re)collection of Aviance's gestures that fragments Aviance's performance by recalling specific, discrete gestures as momentary forms of worlding in and of themselves – most notably the crack of the performer's ankle as they stomp the stage in gravity defying heels. If Aviance's body is an archive – in Lepecki's

sense of a recording and reordering medium, transforming observed gestures into dynamically generative configurations – then Muñoz sees each of Aviance's gestures as archival fragments; that is, individual pieces of matter moving in an arc of time connecting past, present and future. Or, rather, mattering-moments that enact a potentiality derived from past-gestures in the present with an implied futurity created by the gap (temporal and spatial) that the gesture opens up within that moment of (re)presentation. For Muñoz, Aviance's gestures embody a queer futurity, not because they exist outside of the present of their performance, but because they occur as absolutely a part of the present – arising from within the conditions of possibility of that present and yet exceeding the normative limits of that present. It is this temporally suggestive movement that constitutes the gesture as an archival modality, performing the movement not of the archive per se, but of the archival fragment – a piece of matter connected to another place and time, existing in the present, holding the potentiality of a future manifestation. But if Aviance's body stores an archive of gestures, it is Muñoz's recollection of those gestures that re-performs them as a scene of archival constitution. Weaving personal stories of his own queer gestures (the way as a child he walked, the way he sat) and the ways in which these gestures ruptured the normative present of his family life (ibid, 67–68), with a recollection of Aviance's hyper-feminised club moves, Muñoz constitutes an archival 'third' space where the traces of queer gestures can be given not only archival provenance (a placement of significance based on historical witnessing), but that contrary archival ordering principle of pertinence (the potential material value of recollected eventfulness for and in the present). In this moment of archival instantiation, there is a claim not only for historic visibility for queer moments that have mattered, but for the on-going mattering of an overlooked type of matter. The fact that the gesture is fleeting, not easily captured, claimed or verified, does not make it insignificant, rather:

> For queers, the gesture and its aftermath, the ephemeral trace, matter more than many traditional modes of evidencing lives and politics. The hermeneutics of residue on which I have called are calibrated to read Aviance's gestures and know these moves a vast storehouse of queer history and futurity. We also must understand that after the gesture expires, its materiality has transformed into ephemera that are utterly necessary.
>
> (ibid, 81)

On the one hand, the gesture comes to matter as it is understood to document a queer moment of historic significance and, through the archival reverberation of the performer's gesture back through time, calls forth notional boxes of queer archival fragments linked through provenance to particular scenes of occurrence, or specific performers. On the other, it matters precisely because it defies explicit capture as 'evidence' and rather moves affectively through the bodies of the crowd who carry it forward into other archival-gestural futures through a principle of pertinence – how these fragments, because and beyond their significance of origin,

might be kept and shared in new mattering formations. Aviance's gestures, for Muñoz, come to matter as an archival performance that takes a fragment of elsewhere and reanimates it in the present to provide evidence of a different sort of a future recomposed from the matter of the past. The gesture is of course partial, with its arc only suggestive of another type of historical mattering, that cuts the present towards a different future. It completes its arc within the present and falls away. But that is not to say that it doesn't matter. The gesture is performed to be seen and to be shared. As such, its movement is passed on and through the other bodies that witness it, leaving a trace that may just produce another gesture that matters differently in another place and another time. Both of these ways of mattering come together in Muñoz's writing, which in itself produces something like a non-historical narrative of fragmentary recollection – a queer relation between otherwise disconnected queer gestures. I would argue that *Twenty Looks* is both Aviance and Muñoz – both the body as archive and the re-collector as archivist. Yet not the archivist who does their work to allow the historian to come and render the material event of the gesture as a ghost in the footnote of History, but the archival performer who, in Lepecki's words, performs 'difference with repetition, repetition because of difference – both operating under the sign of creation and never of failure, unleashing history and dances toward afterlives' (2010, 46).

Lost in gestures, or, towards a queer archive of supporting matter

Harrell's work holds a space where a series of previously unconnected gestures can come to matter as an archival scene of commencement and commandment of another way of mattering. This radically other form of archive I would call a queer (dis)order, after Muñoz, because it releases the archival fragment from its entrapment as evidentiary footnote in the histories to which its mattering had been reduced and instead understands the fragment as a gesture that bodies forth different embodiments. The gesture allows the gesturers to get 'lost' from fixing and subjugating forms of archival evidence, as much as it allows them to find themselves in the scene of archival embodiment. Harrell's gestural performances occupy a post-archival post-historical-legal space, because, although they are absolutely produced from the availability of a set of previously performed materials from which the performer knowingly and intentionally quotes, the gestures themselves do not melt away into a received narrative about their significance and origins but rather open the space-time of the present as a simultaneously remaking of past-present-future. I believe that this is how the archival fragment can come to matter – as simultaneously a document of a time elsewhere and a material support in the reimagining of the present. In such a way, many types of archival fragment could help support the reshaping of what matters. However, the particular materiality of the gestures in *Twenty Looks*, because they do not supply neat histories, origins or forms of evidence but instead make available the everyday and the exceptional, as necessarily a part of each other, for democratic rendition, explicitly demand a

recalibration of what and who comes to matter through what and how we choose to (re)collect.

Notes

1 For a discussion of the fragment as significant in its partiality, see Osborne (2013, 58–62).
2 Hayden White, reading Hegel, argues that the legal subject is the precondition of the historical imagination:

> If, as Hegel suggests, historicality as a distinct mode of human existence is unthinkable without the presupposition of a system of law in relation to which a specifically legal subject could be constituted, then historical self-consciousness, the kind of consciousness capable of imagining the need to represent reality as history, is conceivable only in terms of its interest in law, legality, and legitimacy, and so on.
>
> (White 1987, 12)

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Chapter 16

'That's special, we'll keep that': A conversation about counter archiving and socially engaged practice at Tate Exchange

Sarah Haylett, Lucy Bayley, Cara Courage, Julia LePla, Pip Laurenson, Hélia Marçal and Kit Webb

Introduction

Hélia Marçal: Can I ask what was the first material, physical thing that you decided you wanted to keep?

Cara Courage: The very first thing was Tim Etchells's pieces of cardboard from his *Three Tables* commission. We still have those. They're in recycling bags, but we've got big 'DO NOT RECYCLE' stickers on them.

From 29 September to 2 October 2016, three tables were set up on the fifth floor of Tate Modern's then recently opened Blavatnik Building. Alongside each table was a large piece of cardboard on which were scrawled messages in black marker, 'Table for Exchange of Stories about … ' either, 'Work and Money', 'Love' or 'Ephemeral Things' (Tim Etchells, *Three Tables*, 2016).[1] A performer was stationed at each, and over the course of the four days, anyone could take a seat, listen, speak and share their stories about those topics (see Figure 16.1). What is left of this event is scant: some photographs, memories held by the performers, participants, and Tate staff, and the three pieces of cardboard in recycling bags, stored in such a way that might at any moment risk their accidental disposal.

Tim Etchells's *Three Tables* was one element of the four-part workshop, *The Give & Take*, the first event at Tate Exchange in the autum of 2016. The intention of Tate Exchange is to work collaboratively with the public and a series of UK-based and international 'Associates', which include schools and universities, activist and community groups, arts organisations and collectives and health and well-being initiatives, to explore 'where art and society meet' through a model of socially engaged practice. Each year's activities are themed and engage with a Lead Artist. Previous themes have included 'Exchange' (with Tim Etchells as Lead Artist), 'Production' (with Claire Twomey) and 'Movement' (with Tania Bruguera). Tate Exchange's fourth year theme is 'Power' and launched with a series of workshops around digital platforms led by international art collective Hyphen-Labs.

Figure 16.1 Performer Harun Morrison and a member of the public at the Table for the Exchange of Stories about Ephemeral Things as part of Tim Etchell's *Three Tables* at Tate Exchange in 2016. Photography by Seraphina Neville © Tate.

This chapter will introduce some of the discussions that are currently being held about the materials that surfaced through the Tate Exchange programme, such as the pieces of cardboard from *Three Tables*. The text is divided in two parts.

In the first section, we introduce the practices at Tate and Tate Exchange, and the questions that are informing the research undertaken as part of *Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum*. We discuss recordmaking and recordkeeping at Tate; the role archives have in maintaining Tate's institutional memory; the material conditions of Tate's structures, and how they influence our practices. We also provide a situated account of the conversation between Tate Exchange and the project team for *Reshaping the Collectible*, detailing not only the context that has led us to engage in the collaboration in the first place, but also the key elements of this discussion and how they can be framed within scholarly discourses on archives, materiality and affect. This is followed by an edited conversation, originally held in Tate Modern on 27 January 2020. Ideas emerging across both sections are somewhat recursive, itself suggestive of the ways in which the materiality of Tate Exchange's archive is co-constituted by the structures where its relational practices are located: the museum.

The emergence of Tate Exchange and the as-yet-undetermined status and fate of materials from its programmes like the pieces of cardboard from *Three Tables*

resonated early on with the *Reshaping the Collectible* research team. This project is concerned with how the museum can support types of artworks which challenge established institutional structures – whether because they unfold over time, rely on complex social technological dependencies, or because they trouble conventional boundaries between the museum's collection categories.

The project centres on different forms of liveness, and how these are acquired, cared for and exhibited. Since Tate acquired its first performance work in 2005, the ability to purchase the rights to activate live performances has potentially changed both the museum and the artist's relationship with documentation and the archive (Finbow 2018). This recognition of the importance of representing live practice is present throughout Tate. It has resulted in the steady increase of performances added to the collection and reverberates throughout the sites as a major part of gallery programming. The project is actively investigating how this turn towards liveness has, in practice, troubled these boundaries between artwork, record and archive.

Tate has two distinct archival collections: Tate Archive and Tate's Public Records. Tate Archive collects material relating to the history of British art. Tate's Public Records are the historic institutional records. Like other national museums, Tate must manage its records in-line with the Public Records Act 1958.[2] Records considered to have ongoing business, legal or historical value are permanently retained as historic public records. Those records that are not considered to meet the criteria are destroyed.

The difference in Tate's two archive collections can be keenly felt when you consider that the Public Records must retain records that meet legislative obligations decided by external bodies: their value is not determined by the creator. While Tate Exchange captures the records that meet the public record requirements, the concern is that these records do not reflect or capture the relational and dialogic practices and processes of Tate Exchange. The unconventional and 'unruly' material being produced by Associates and public participants, while reflective of practice, do not sit easily as records within a culture of compliance (Fraser 1989; Rubio 2014). It also raises questions of ownership. If Tate Exchange's materials are held by Tate's Public Records, then these materials, produced in collaboration with Associates and participants, will be owned by Tate: is this an appropriate way forward in respect of the values of the practice at Tate Exchange?

Like other museum archives, Tate Archive is reflective of the museums changing practices and evolving values (Rudolph 2011). At times the archive has been used as a placeholder for items that do not fit the collecting parameters, and material continues to move through Tate's different collections as these parameters change and collecting practices evolve. However, in this example, we must extend our thinking to include institutional archives and recordkeeping in the art museum. Are the records being deposited at Tate under specific legislative criteria actively capturing developments and shifts in the museum's practices, values and approaches? As we discuss in our conversation, like many other institutions, Tate is actively working to question its own practices, and the thinking around these artefacts – and

how they can find a place within Tate's institutional archive – provides an opportunity to extend this discourse to include its recordkeeping criteria.[3]

The conversation at the centre of this chapter followed a series of meetings and discussions between the *Reshaping the Collectible* and Tate Exchange teams. Tate Exchange is represented by Cara Courage, Head of Tate Exchange, and Julia LePla, Planning and Operations Manager; *Reshaping the Collectible* by Lucy Bayley, Postdoctoral Researcher, Sarah Haylett, Archives and Records Management Researcher, and Hélia Marçal, Fellow in Contemporary Art Conservation and Research.

The prompt for these meetings was our mutual concern that, as Tate Exchange moves through its fourth year, the programme is collaboratively producing material which sits outside of both the institutional recordkeeping framework and Tate's collecting practices. Tate Exchange is contemplating a collaborative methodology to archive the material being generated in this space, including physical objects, which they refer to as artefacts. In doing so, they are aiming to make a record of the processes and practices of Tate Exchange, as represented by and through these material artefacts. The *Reshaping the Collectible* project is asking how Tate can make space in its collections and institutional archive for what could be considered expanded, 'counter-archives'.

Tate Exchange's archival turn speaks to a wider cultural shift where the archive takes on the huge 'emotional labour' in serving as a tool for collective memory (Stoler 2002; Laurent and Hart 2018; Laurent and Wright 2020).[4] When first articulating the criteria by which artefacts might enter Tate Exchange's archive, one phrase that recurred was 'that's special, we'll keep that'. As we discuss, this idea reflects not only the intuition that takes the lead in anarchival and counter-archiving practices but also an active collaboration with members of society whose voices, experiences and histories may not be actively represented in 'official' archival `records.

Counter-archiving is a methodology that is actively 'interrogating what constitutes an archive' (Springgay et al. 2019, 897) and their process of appraisal and selection. This is reflective of a recent theoretical reevaluation in the archival profession that acknowledges the archivist's subjectivity in practice. They go on to add that:

> Unlike static, stable and linear colonial archives, counter-archives are grounded in accountability and reciprocity. They often emerge from community-based and collaborative processes. Counter-archives build on the struggles from the past that continue to impact lives in the present.
>
> (Springgay et al. 2019, 897)

In the conversation, Cara Courage and Julia LePla allude to this idea in their intention to rethink the value of these artefacts through this counter-archival lens. If counter-archiving is understood less as a tangible thing than a process,

this methodology might be an apt fit for an extension of Tate Exchange's practice, allowing their audiences and Associates to reflect back on their experiences. The artefacts in the counter-archive can serve as material representations of these practices.

Another term that appears in the conversation in relation to this interplay between tangibility and process is 'relational objects'. The idea of the relationality of non-human agents, or things, has gained traction in studies on material culture (Latour 1996; Law 1995). In the essay 'Notes on Materiality and Sociality', materiality is produced in tandem with (and in relation to) sociality (Law and Mol 1995). Objects are produced through their relationship with material networks of which they form a part. This has clear repercussions on the way we understand objects that are produced through socially engaged practice, i.e. explicitly through processes of social interaction. In these cases, the relations that are formed in those moments are not only part of the materiality of the object itself but still create long-lasting material relationships long after the object's form was deemed complete. The 'relational objects' or artefacts, created in Tate Exchange, are part of what they want to use as the foundation for their archive collection. The moments in which these artefacts were created reflect processes of making that were framed by a visual or affective commonality. These affective relations with the materials, those that remain after a process, are part of the continuous making of the object and reveal not only what the object was, but what it is and what it can be. Scholars, such as de Spinoza (2001), Deleuze, Guattari (1987) or, more recently, Massumi (2002, 2014) or Manning (2014), call these relations 'affect'.

Affect is a reaction that is instigated through processes of interaction, which create differences from one moment to another. For example, a bodily reaction is processed through an encounter between an object and a person. That moment of interaction, in which difference is created and felt, tends to resist any normative or discursive formulation; it is activated only in each encounter. Looking at Cara and Julia's characterisation of the objects they are looking to bring into their archive – relational objects, that engage in material-affective relations in every encounter – it seems that their approach, almost counter-intuitively, will work against the possibilities traditionally offered by the archive. For instance, the affective turn in scholarship was framed in opposition to inscriptional forms of the archive (Lepecki 2010). This apparent paradox might be explained through recent discussions in archival theory, particularly those concerning what might be considered 'living archives' (Huvila 2008). These discussions draw from and posit an anarchival practice: a rejection of the idea of material sitting in 'posterity' by instead involving the people who will create and use this archive in the development of a continuous discourse that feeds back into the archive.

How can Tate Exchange retain the inherent vitality of its practice in the process of bringing together an archive of relational objects? In what ways is Tate Exchange's archival ambitions reframing what it means to have an archive at Tate? What are the material possibilities that this archive can afford?

We see that the structures of the archive can go somewhat against the point of having relational objects as a centrepiece for an archive of practices. Objects need to be accessible, they need to be handled and touched. How will this sit with more traditional modes of engaging with archival objects and procedures that tend to bestow ideas of permanence against those of change? Our conversation demonstrates that Tate Exchange has engaged with practices that result in objects whose materiality is almost as transitory as the affective practices that produce them. One example is 'Power of Materials: Coffee', where MA Design Maker students from University of the Arts London (UAL) made bricks out of the coffee grounds produced at Tate's cafés. What would it mean for Tate Exchange to collect examples of those bricks? What conditions would have to be in place for Tate to care for those objects? How would Tate Exchange's mission to bring in relational objects be balanced against standard conservation measures, which would include restrictions on display and handling? The value of these objects resides in the interactions they can create and foster with members of the audience; in the potential of those audiences to become participants in the history of Tate Exchange's artefacts. The experience of the time-based media conservation team in keeping performance alive could inform procedures for taking care of these sculptural objects. Indeed, instead of interrogating the challenges of caring for those 'unruly' objects, we pose the question the other way around – what might creating a counter-archive at Tate Exchange mean for Tate? If counter-archiving consists of a process of interrogation (as per Springgay et al.), could the collection and care of these relational objects allow Tate to rehearse collection care practices in a way that is more focused on the performativity of these as living objects?

In the next section, the project team and the Tate Exchange team reflect on these questions in conversation. The editing has been a collaborative process with the intention of respecting different voices, keeping heterogeneity whilst also adding coherence to the topics discussed. It is therefore characterised by the interplay of different perspectives that bring out important aspects to the practices of all involved. The process is also characterised by the gaps, the absence of what is yet to be discussed, determined and implemented.

In conversation: Tate Exchange and *Reshaping the Collectible*

Lucy Bayley: Let's begin by talking about the contexts from which Tate Exchange evolved We are curious about what you've described as the shift from arts educational practices to creative learning and the importance and influence of models of socially engaged practice

Cara Courage: It was a good 15-20 year conversation to bring Tate Exchange into existence. Tate's previous museum education remit included working with all sorts of partners and there came a moment where Tate thought 'we really want to do more of this. We want to push this and work in a more in depth and sustainedway'. There was this

> shift from transactional museum education to relational museum learning that asked not just 'how can we exhibit and share and celebrate the art collection?' but 'how can we use that collection to help us reflect on our day to day lived experience and the issues that are concerning us today?'[5]

It really became apparent that while it's vital that this work takes place in the galleries and is situated within the museum, there was also a demand to have a dedicated space for this kind of work. That's the beginning of the idea of Tate Exchange. Then there were a number of years of conversations with Tate colleagues, with the partners that we would work with, with other people across the sector, across education, communities and so forth, many of whom had been working with issues of social justice, or of politics and activism. So, it was perhaps inevitable that this space quickly became one that had that social practice and social engagement running through it, and a space for critical dialogue that you would associate with social practice.

LB: What does this kind of socially engaged practice bring to the museum?

Julia LePla: I think the importance of having a socially engaged practice in a museum is two fold. Firstly, it can offer a new way to look at issues – societal challenges, locally and globally – and reframe them in a new way that engages people, perhaps for the first time. Secondly, I don't think it's enough anymore to say, as a museum, that we have a great collection of art, come and look at it. You need to give audiences a space to think through, and engage with, the questions that the art raises. If you're not doing this then you're presenting them with questions without giving them a space to think through the answers.

CC: Socially engaged practice has become a very vital part of the art sector. It brings a critical discourse into the museum by posing questions about the museum's assumptions regarding what it does and why. Tate Exchange shows that Tate as an institution is up for those conversations. It brings in voices from all sorts of people from everywhere – not just from the arts, not just from in the metropolitan centres, to do whatever it is they want to do and have the conversations they want to have.

One way you can look at Tate Exchange is as a very different form of interpretation, of narrative and storytelling. For example, there was a group from the Rhonda Valleys – Valleys Kids – a Tate Exchange Associate, which used a specific piece from Tate's collection to tell so many stories about their upbringing, their work, about their landscape. For Tate Exchange, that's just as important as any

message that the artist may have implicitly or explicitly had about that piece of work. That is one of the strengths of social practice: exemplification. The object exemplifying a process, in this case of storytelling, and of place, and of memory.

LB: What do you think the legacy of this kind of practice or the legacy of Tate Exchange will be? Is this a conversation that you're having with the Associates?

CC: Tate Exchange is a space that wants to explore what happens when art and society meet. We want to know what happens what behavioural change may happen through an encounter with art or art process. The public are our copartners our participants our collaborators and are really front and centre of every thing that we do at Tate Exchange. So if we are doing our job right in supporting people to make change in their own lives then that change is our legacy.

Tate Exchange's interface with the institution is also a major part of our legacy. It is an active part of the process to decolonise the institution's discourse and practice; taking everything the institution thinks about itself and questioning it. We are in this moment, where our responsibility is to do things differently.

Through our programmes and the knowledge and practice of our Associates, and by bringing our Tate colleagues into those programmes and our practice, we hope that we can be a useful part of that process of institutional change.

JLP: We often hear from visitors 'I didn't know that the museum did this' or 'it's really great to see things like this in a museum space.' So whether we're changing people's perceptions of Tate or expectations of what an art gallery or museum can be or as is happening already driving the creation of similar spaces in other museums and galleries – that is also a legacy.

Ultimately, though, a legacy is only a legacy if what you've done is remembered. But what happens 50 years from now when all of us have left? What will the official record of what we've done look like? How do we account for moments that don't materialise until ten years later?

Sarah Haylett: The record of your legacy is an interesting point. Are you looking to the archive because you find there are limitations within the existing institutional framework for recording your practice?

CC: We have to accept we will never be able to capture absolutely everything that comes out of Tate Exchange. But I do know that at the moment we are missing a lot of depth and breadth in what we could be saying about Tate Exchange.

These relational objects are artefacts of Tate Exchange, they're an exemplification of our practice and process. And looking at the existing operations and

frameworks we had in the institution for how to archive these artefacts – to how we might keep and interpret and use those artefacts – none of these would be quite the right fit for us.

I think it was triggered by something that you (Sarah) said. I thought, 'If there was this time capsule at Tate Exchange, what would be in it?' And it would be these objects? Being out on the floor of Tate Exchange and seeing all of this work and thinking, 'We're missing this. We're losing these stories'. If in 100 years' time there wasn't a Tate Exchange, my emails, or files, won't give you any flavour of what the work of Tate Exchange really is. We are losing what the practice of Tate Exchange is in all its beautiful, tactile, smelly, noisy way. And so, relational objects have become obvious to me as something that could help us tell these stories, and the story of Tate Exchange.

We're a storytelling space, and this proposal for an archive would help us tell our story. This would need to be a living archive,[6] not something held in posterity. This raised questions about how we keep it and how we share it in ways that reflect the importance of collaboration and openness to our practice. But that's all absolutely part of our practice, collaboration and openness.

SH: Collaboration and openness are core to your practice, so do you see this archive as something that has capacity to offer space for different voices? I think this is interesting considering the Tate Exchange's theme for 2020 is 'Power.'[7]

CC: There's power in it. Tate Exchange is a space where people have said to us 'I may or may not see my self in one of the galleries that I've been to here or in any other museum' but at Tate Exchange it's a space where they hear themselves.

That's a really political thing to do. It's a very political thing for Tate to have signed up for, and the archive should be a representation of that, with people being able to co-create, generate and use this archive.

Tate Exchange is relatively new at Tate. So, we have a type of power in being able to change what it is that we're going to do. I see this archive having that same power behind it too, in flipping what and how an archive is and can be de-centring all of that discourse. That is quite a powerful process.

JLP: Archives throw up many problems and it's very easy to have an archive that leaves out many people's voices. The nature of the practice at Tate Exchange is made up of those voices that don't feature in other records be that at Tate or in society more generally. If we're going to engage with those voices, it's important that we don't replicate the kind of exclusion that happens else- where. They're not perfect but archives are one of the few record making structures that enable you to bring in different voices if you build that into the structure from the beginning. Because you're not forced to pick one thing like in a collection where you might have to select the 'most representative'

or 'best' of something. Instead it's about all the stuff that comes with it and you can have whatever you want and have multiple people feeding into it.

LB: You've said this is an archive and not a collection What's the distinction between the two?

CC: Somebody could walk in from the public look at the archive and say 'What an amazing collection of things you've go there.' I'm not going to tell them off for their language. But, 'collection' is part of the lexicon that we work with here at Tate. This isn't work that's coming into 'the collection,' which would bring us back to the idea of the art object.

JLP: If something came into a Tate collection, it belongs to Tate. Thinking back to the idea of power, then it's representative of Tate. Where as an archive of our practice still belongs to the people – the practitioners, the organisations, the individuals and groups, we work with. I think we owe it to them in the promise of any core power-sharing relationship to document that practice within an archive. It would then be an odd thing to say, 'Now we own that object that you have co-created in your individual programme. Now it's Tate's.' An archive feels less colonial, for want of a better word.

In making sure that through this archiving practice, we acknowledge it isn't just the Tate Exchange staff deciding what is archived, but that the Associates and the public will feed into it. This also applies to how the material is described. That, in and of itself, is quite an activist way of looking at the archive, particularly in an institution like Tate where records are subject to the Public Records Act and other legislation. This is about having a living archive that's available, and that continues to be used. It will not be an archive that is placed on a shelf in a box and then finished; it will continue to generate new practices and new artefacts.

Hélia Marçal: Could you expand on why you think objects and artefacts have different forms of significance within Tate? In other fields of knowledge the term 'artefact' can be very problematic.

CC: It's about the site specificity of Tate Exchange. If I wasn't in this institution but working with the same kind of project then I might choose the word 'object.'

In this context, where Tate Exchange is a process-led space, we do not put the art object on a pedestal. It's not something over which we will have sole authorship. The art object isn't something that Tate Exchange works within the same way that other parts of the institution do.

The word 'artefact' – not a perfect term by any means – has a different feel and function behind it; it removes us from any confusion or ambivalence around the notion of the art object. I wanted it to be a point of difference: these are material

things and things to be valued and have artistic merit and validation, but these aren't art objects in that loaded sense within the context of an art museum. I struggled with that word 'artefact' – and I'm open to it changing – but it seemed the most intuitive word to describe what it is that we have in front of us that would potentially be in the archive. The story of Tate Exchange can be understood by explaining the differences between the object and the artefact. In explaining that, it tells a lot of the story of Tate Exchange.

JLP: We could bring it back to what we were discussing earlier: that Tate Exchange is a different form of interpretation. In the context of museum interpretation an object is a starting point and an artefact is an endpoint. By which I mean an art object is a beginning you look at a painting and then you make meaning from there. Where as the artefact is like the end point because it represents all the stuff that has happened before.

When you go into an art gallery, you're expected to look at something. Often people go, 'I don't get it. I don't get the thing that's in front of me, I don't get the object'. In Tate Exchange – and across Tate's creative learning approach – it's not really about that thing. It's about using art to talk about other stuff. And the artefact represents that stuff: it's something material we're using as a hook to hang meaning on that we might construct after the fact.

HM: It seems that with in socially engaged practice artefacts are engaged in forms of sharing that are stimulated by but also result inartefacts.

CC: This speaks to relational object theory and that these objects take on this role allowing people to navigate through conversation, learning and discovery.[8] I think that's particularly important at Tate Exchange when a lot of the conversations we have can be quite contentious and very emotional.

I saw this in my own research, there was a project in Nine Elms in London working with a community of people on the housing estate.[9] The artist I was working with wanted to have conversations about the gentrification of that area. You can't just go in cold to someone going, 'Right, tell me what you think about gentrification in this area'. Because they may have just had their eviction letter through the day before or they might be living in a whole row which is now empty. It's emotive for all sorts of reasons. But, also, why should I tell you that?

But they got into conversation with some of the first residents on the estate, and there was a whole practice of people making go-carts out of whatever they had to hand. Bike wheels, biscuit lids, etc., and the older residents were saying, 'Well, kids don't do that anymore'. So, we decided 'let's do that then', and we set up go-kart workshops on a corner just outside of a parade of shops.

The making of it and the go-cart itself became a thing for all the generations of that estate to gravitate around. It became a way to tell the story of what the place used to be like and allowed us to ask, 'Well, what is it like now? And, what do we

want it to be?' The go-kart became a relational object and we see the same processes at Tate Exchange: the artefacts take on some importance through the process of those conversations that we have.

It's this beautiful leveller of people. Everyone is horizontal in that moment. Everybody is equal in that moment. This is the power of this artefact to do that. It's quite a subtle form of magic.

SH: In the conversations we've had about this potential archive, 'that's special we'll keep that' is a phrase that keeps coming up. Are there any criteria that appear to connect the things that have been saved so far?

CC: What they have in common is that they will have been made in a participatory process, and that we will have seen people go back to that thing again and again. It makes people smile there's an emotional resonance in some way.

That said, we work in a very emotive area, which means there is going to be a challenge of putting together collecting criteria for these things, because it can't be solely intuitive.

We have a project coming up working with the Tate Roastery.[10] They're collecting all the coffee grounds from Tate for two weeks and making bricks out of them. We've already said, 'we've got to have one of those bricks', because for that project it will be the exemplary artefact that comes out of those conversations. (See Figure 16.2.)

Figure 16.2 MA Designer Maker students from the University of the Arts London at their event *Power of Materials: Coffee* at Tate Exchange, 2020. Photography by Dan Weill © Dan Weill.

Others surprise us, we're exploring what our archive may be. We can't say that there isn't going to be a certain amount of gut instinct that will inform what we do in the future. But that won't stand the test of time. We have to develop a more objective set of criteria, but that's also the beautiful thing about the relational object, its meaning is created in relation, and we still have to be responsive to that.

JLP: If we're talking about what we want to collect as an artefact it has to be able to give us in sight into the thing that happened before. It has to be away into talking about the programme and or the practice of Tate Exchange. It doesn't have to be archetypal but it has to have story telling properties.

SH: If you're capturing these objects based on their materiality but also what it intuitively triggers in you how do you think around contextualizing that – for example, if someone later discovers this brick of coffee grounds?

JLP: That's a good question.

LB: It's also a huge question.

JLP: I've thought about that and there *is* contextual material we create anyway, like photographs, reports from participant evaluators, and so on.[11] There is this documentation that already exists. It'd be about finding a way to make them talk to each other.

CC: I would love it if we had an archivist working with us that we could put out the bat signal, 'we've got an object quick come in here!' They could take the stories and have conversations with the public and the Associate or whoever is doing the programme collectively, but also be anchored in our generative and social and participative practice as well. Our record keeping needs to be a reflection of our practice.

CC: For me, curation is a means of looking at things in relation to each other. I think there's a lot of that within what we may have that's about recording the story around a particular object, and what we have at our disposal to bring into the archiving process, across the archive and in through and out as well. There's the consideration of it in that complex way of mapping different things.

HM: I read a paper yesterday about how pervasive this idea of end of life is and how it's so anthropocentric, because they were saying when a human dies it's the end of life for them. But with their death, they generate some life around them. It's never the end of life. It's only the start of something new. I was like 'Oh my God this is so nice'. In conservation we work with live works and document them extensively with the aim of reactivating them in the future. Do you see forms of activation being part of your living archive?

CC: It would be amazing if it could because to me, a really beautiful living, breathing, dynamic archive has relevance and use for people. I wouldn't want any thing else from this archive, really.

This is the case in our restaging of Tim Etchells's *Three Tables*. It was the first programme at Tate Exchange, and it is still so emblematic of our programme that we're coming back to it. In restaging it, we've realised we have very few records of what the practice was the first time round. So, I already know that we should keep what is generated again because there's a continuing story there with that piece and we now have the opportunity to revisit and rectify that, while recognising it will tell a different story of Tate Exchange.

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Notes

1 *Three Tables* (2016) was a four-day performance developed by the artist Tim Etchells and performed in Tate Exchange by Season Butler, Harun Morrison and Deborah Pearson. Three performers seated in the open space of Tate Exchange drew members of the public into conversations and exchanges on a range of topics.
2 Tate must also comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018. It is also designated a 'place of deposit' under the Public Records Act (1958).
3 One example of Tate's decolonising research practice includes the AHRC funded research project *Provisional Semantics*. It will address the challenges of representing multiple perspectives within an evolving digitised national collection. It is part of the wider *Towards a National Collection (TANC)* project in collaboration with Tate, The National Trust (NT), The Imperial War Museum (IWM) and the Decolonising Arts Institute (DAI) at the University of the Arts, London.
4 In her 2002 paper ' Colonial archives and the arts of governance', Ann Stoler describes the archival turn as the moment where other disciplines began 'critically reflecting on the making of documents and how we choose to use them, on archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval but knowledge production' (p. 90).
    The emotional labour involved in archival practices, and approach said practices from a 'trauma informed' perspective is a topic gathering momentum and largely comes from Australian recordkeeping practices.

5 In 2009, Anna Cutler was appointed as the first Learning Director at Tate, bringing a significant shift from what had previously been defined as Education at Tate. This was reflective of changes in the museum and learning sector taking place more broadly from the early 1990s. See Pringle and Dewitt (2014).

6 The living archive is a rejection of the idea that material sits in 'posterity'; instead, the living archive fosters a continuous discourse with the people that use and create material in a way that feeds back into the archive. Eric Ketelaar discusses the opportunities the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) archives can provide communities in healing and expanding memory.

7 Previous and future Tate Exchange themes: 'Exchange', Year One (2016– 2017), 'Production', Year Two (2017 –2018), 'Movement', Year Three (2018 –2019), 'Power', Year Four (2019 –2020), 'Love', Year Five (2020 –2021).

8 The idea of relationality of nonhuman agents, or things, has gained traction in studies on material culture. In her own use of relational objects, Courage (2017) draws from Bourriaud (1998, 2006), Grant Kester (2011) and Claire Bishop (2012).

9 *Some[w]Here Research*, 9 ELMS, was organised by The Drawing Shed. Artists and the local community learnt from older people in the area about their experience of living on the estate. As part of the project go-karts were created using old soap boxes produced in nearby factories that had once been a thriving part of the community. Courage (2017) has described how these co-created objects were framed as 'relational objects':

> directly informed by relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 1998/2006, p. 160) and in rec-ognition of the durational ritual of making as the embodied third in the triad between people and place, based on Sennett's (2012, p. 88) 'invention of tradition', that aided intragroup co-operation, creating a sense of tradition and ritual in ephemeral interventions.

10 *Power of Materials: Coffee* (15 –16 February 2020) was developed with MA Designer Maker students from the University of the Arts London and was a participatory instal-lation exploring the power dynamics between coffee producers and coffee consumers. Using coffee as the material example, the event aimed to open a dialogue around who holds the power to create change.

11 The Tate Exchange Evaluation was designed as a collaborative way that would help provide opportunities for those involved to reflect on and learn from the activities that happened in the space. Year One (2016 –2017) and Year Two (2017 –2018) reports were written by Hannah Wilmot and grew out of the Tate Exchange Research and Evaluation Programme, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

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