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□ AnArcheology for AnArchives: Why Do We Need—Especially for the Arts—A Complementary Concept to the Archive?

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We have read it *ad nauseam*, and Michel Foucault has spelled it out in all theoretical brilliance with his collective singular *archive*: as the ideal totality of the formulations of the conditions of our existence, as the ultimate happiness on earth,¹ the archive serves to organize mental and enforced orders in the shape of appropriate structures and to preserve, with a tremendous amount of effort, the memory of past orders. Its first and foremost medium is language, especially in the shape of grammatically correct texts. This is the type of mediation through which we learned both the art of critique and the linear depiction of history. The classic archive is the externalization of historical consciousness, thereby documenting a consciousness fundamentally tied to power.

The utterances, objects, and artefacts produced by artists and thinkers closely involved with the arts are liable to end up in these archives. Once this happens, archivists, librarians, and curators transform heterogeneous objects into structures to whom they are and will remain profoundly alien.

The dismantling of Harald Szeemann's working and thinking laboratory Fabbrica in the Swiss village of Maggia for the archival and library-related purposes of the Californian Getty Research Institute represents a special type of deconstruction. The extremely "individual methodology" (Derieux 2007) with which Szeemann invented, developed, and arranged his exhibitions and artistic objects, has been dissolved into the general and universal

1. An expression I owe to the German writer Heinrich Böll.



FIGURE 1. AnArchive Fabbrica, Harald Szeemann, Feuilleton Süddeutsche Zeitung (photograph by Siegfried Zielinski).

order of a hygienically organized, representative cultural research archive (Figure 1). In even more extreme fashion than Szeemann, Peter Weibel switches between theoretical and artistic production, the organization of museums and research undertakings, installations, and books. This opaque material chaos is, under his own supervision, currently being transferred into neatly labelled transparent containers, gigantic file folders, and digital storage systems (Figure 2). In the hands of museums and collectors, Dieter Roth's legacy of early generative art and his anarchic sub-archives, such as his chocolate and mould museums as well as his equally obsessively compiled video diaries, have turned into aesthetic arrangements, as if, from the very beginning, they had been created with archival index cards in mind. (On occasion Roth himself ironically anticipated this practice, for instance by exhibiting his art in Leitz folders.) Paradoxically, the 140 monitors on display at the 2013 Venice Biennale showing his daily life were only able to exert a certain irritation when some of the screens malfunctioned and went black like the square in Robert Fludd's famous history of the micro- and macrocosm: *et sic in infinitum* (Figure 3)! Three hundred years before Kazimir Malevich, this boldly printed black square weighing down on the paper and surrounded by four captions, refers to the infinite depths of (yet) unformed matter, the physical and sensual chaos.

To a certain extent it is up to artists and associated theorists to determine how effectively we may oppose this alienating hegemony of order. Already in the 1960s, the young Korean Nam June Paik, a student of Arnold Schoenberg's in the US with a profound knowledge of Zen philosophy, and whom I rank as one of the outstanding philosophers of time and media artists, anticipated the will to order that would descend upon energetically



FIGURE 2. AnArchive Peter Weibel (photograph by MONO KROM 2010, used with permission).

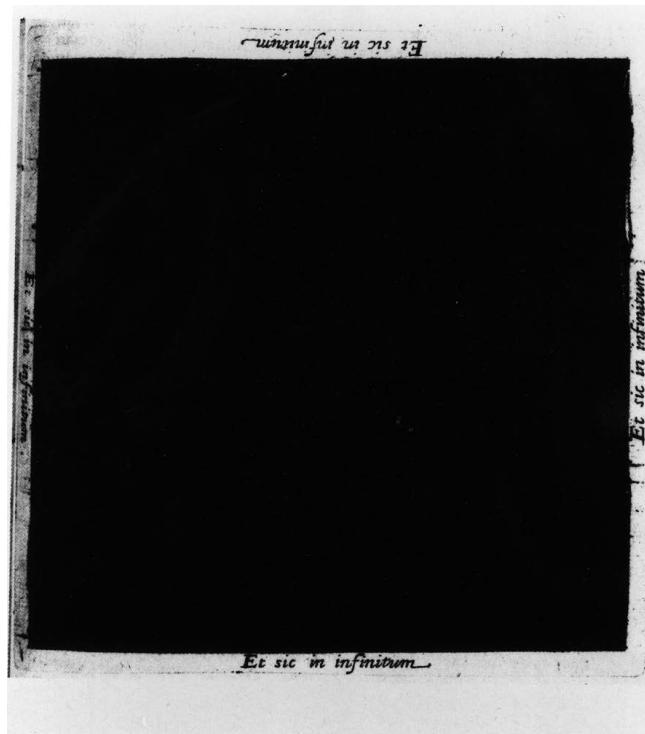


FIGURE 3. Robert Fludd's graphical black square representing, for him, eternal and unlimited unstructured matter (Fludd 1617, 27).



FIGURE 4. Werner Nekes, filmmaker, collector, dealer, anarchaeologist in his garage and laboratory in Muehlheim/Ruhr in Germany (photograph by MONO KROM 2012).

rebellious Fluxus intermedia pioneers. In a 1963 interview he critically reflected on the close proximity between musicians, composers, and publishers. Citing the example of John Cage, he addressed issues of historical consciousness and material utilization relevant to our discussion:

Why do all musicians and music publishers believe that everything must result in something of importance to the history of music? That's crazy. I told Cage: Destroy your manuscripts and tapes when you die! He thought that was too dramatic. I think it's a crime that Cage makes tapes at all.

Gottfried Michael König, his interviewer at the time, pursued the issue: "So your own works are only intended for the moment? They have no significance afterwards? Not even for you? [...] Your work only exists as long as it is being performed?" Nam June Paik responded: "Yes, that is beautiful. When I die there's nothing left. I am not producing a child" (quoted in König 1963: 32, 34).

Once they fall into the hands of curators, anarchic depots and legacies of artists (and certain scientists), arranged in *quod libet*, arbitrarily structured atelier containers, tell different sub-stories (Figure 4). It still amounts to the narrative of the unique and ingenious subject that preserves itself for the memory of others, or issues the order for preservation. "We shall survive in the memories of others,"² said Vilém Flusser, the cultural philosopher from Prague, in an interview with Hungarian art theorists László Beke and Miklós Peternák

2. Also the title of a DVD with Flusser's last interviews, produced by the Vilém Flusser Archiv at the University of Arts Berlin in cooperation with the Center of Culture and Communication (C³) Budapest.



FIGURE 5. Catalogue title page for VALIE EXPORT's big archive-exhibition in Bregenz (Austria), October 2011 to January 2012.

shortly before his tragic accidental death. That is both wish and directive. Flusser composed his letters for posterity; even when writing to his closest friends and relatives he used a mechanical typewriter equipped with thin copy paper. Whatever responses he received he rarely kept. When it came to posterity his own text was of primary importance: epistolary communication as monological utterances dedicated to the archive.

A few years ago I discussed with the Viennese artist VALIE EXPORT the gigantic dimensions of the extremely heterogeneous material she had accumulated in more than five decades of artistic production: Super 8-, 16-, and 35-mm films, countless photos, open reel videos, cassettes in all different formats, LPs, objects such as genital panic trousers (*Action Pants: Genital Panic*, 1968), installation materials, technical gadgets... Exhibit it the way it is, I recommended, in sections, in this seeming disorder of a multifold logic that serves only your particular interests as an artist, your idiosyncrasies (Figure 5). The *Archiv* exhibition organized by the renowned Austrian Kunsthaus Bregenz, however, followed a diametrically opposed logic. The extremely heterogeneous biographic fragments were squeezed into 150 identical or very similar standing and lying display cases framed by white-lacquered wood, which appeared to subject all the material to

homogeneous uniformity. At the time I thought we were, unwillingly, witnessing how already during her lifetime a protesting female artist was being transformed into a conformist historical figure. But during a public discussion VALIE EXPORT surprised me with a very interesting alternative interpretation. To her, the arrangement of formally similar frames with such different content recalled film sequences (Irrgang, forthcoming). The montage, the assembly of heterogeneous materials, moves to the forefront, allowing the fantasy of the observer to play with particularities.

From the perspective of a logic of the manifold, but also in the tradition of the Nietzschean genealogical thought praised by Foucault, the fruitless search for the one origin is as meaningless as the definition of a future, which according to Emmanuel Levinas always embodies that Other we cannot know. However, to work on the conceptualization and further development of exciting utopian spaces of possibility does not necessarily involve the abandoning of established archives. Nonetheless, I do want to make a plea for effective complements, which could also involve unusual, thought-provoking nomenclatures.

Archein (*ἀρχεῖν*) means “to begin”—but also: to be the first, to lead something or somebody. *Archos* stands for the origin, the beginning; but it also contains the leader. In the wake of Derrida and Foucault it has been frequently emphasized that *arche/o(n)* refers to the space, the official seat of the government as well as to its administrative buildings. By placing the prefix *an* in front of this construct, with its will to order and claim to leadership, we semantically unhinge the latter. The result resembles the simple opposition between collection (*Sammlung*) and cluster (*Ansammlung*). However, the prefix does not—as in German—serve to indicate a prior state; rather, as in Greek, it implies a counterdraft. It gestures toward liberating the archive from the most important institutional entanglements history has imposed in it. Anarchy—proclaimed the anarchopacifist and philosophical writer Gustav Landauer (1870–1919)—is the liberation of man from the idols of the *state*, of the *church*, and of *capital*. The way I view the arts, there is no reason for them to worship any of these idols, let alone all three.

In his recently published late Paris lectures, Michel Foucault makes use of an anarchic pun. At the end of a critical passage about his own work as a historian he remarks that he had a method in mind which makes no more use of power than is acceptable: “So I will say that what I am proposing is rather a sort of anarcheology” (2014: 79).³ Connotations of anarchy, though politically up to date, would be socially inappropriate, so he passed on them.

To me, *anarchives* are a complementary opposite and hence an effective alternative to archive. I consciously refer to them in the plural (Giannetti 2012).⁴ Following a logic

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3. The semantic proximity to the political contexts of anarchy from which this attractive word developed does not preclude its commercial abuse. In 1999 the French media theorist and curator Ann-Marie Duguet named her wide-ranging 1999 collection of artist DVDs *Anarchive – Archives numérique sur l’art contemporain*. So far, editions of Michael Snow, Antonin Muntadas, and Thierry Kuntzel, among others, have been published (see <http://www.anarchive.net/>). *D’Anarchive* is a label specializing in predominantly black and white fashion. See also *The Valaco Archive*: <http://valacoarchive.com/an-archaeologue/>
 4. The entries on “Archive” and “Anarchive” were written by Moritz Hiller, who is currently writing his PhD dissertation on Friedrich Kittler’s estate under Wolfgang Ernst and me.

of plurality and wealth of variants, they are particularly suited to handle events and movements; that is, time-based sensations. Just as the anarcheological sees itself first and foremost as an activity, anarchives are principally in an active mode. They do not, however, lay claim to leadership. Nor do they claim to truthfully know where things come from and where they may be headed to. The origin is and remains a trap. Anarchives do not follow any external purpose; they indulge in waste and offer presents. Basically, they are indebted to a single economy, that of friendship. And friendship, as Georges Bataille would have it (1971), is characterized by an acute feeling of strangeness in the world, which we occasionally share with others.

Artists and researchers need both: archives that collect, select, preserve, restore, and sort in accordance with the logic of a (dispositive) whole, and the autonomous, resistant, continually reactivated *anarchives* geared toward individual needs and work methods. It is the utopia, the non-place, which in an ongoing process reshapes and reinterprets the materials from which memories are made. Anarchives necessarily challenge, indeed provoke, the archive: otherwise, they would be devoid of meaning. Caring for anarchives may help prevent the many idiosyncratically designed particular collections from changing into a rule-bound administrative apparatus. It may even enable us to celebrate the past as a regained present. The artist and philosopher David Link is currently demonstrating with his *Archaeology of Algorithmic Artefacts* how this may be achieved (cf. Link, forthcoming).⁵ The reconstruction of the missing parts of the source code for Turing and Strachey's love letter program and the restarting of this impossible communication by means of a simulated hardware of the Manchester Ferranti Mark I garnered him the prestigious Tony Sale Award of the British Computer Restoration Society.⁶

The philosophical director Jean-Luc Godard belongs to a select group of late twentieth-century artists who not only had a discernible aesthetic impact but also collaborated in the discourse about their artistic work. As a recording technology cinema itself exhibits features of the archive, he noted in a book-length interview. It is "made from the same raw material as History"; it is "the registrar of History" (Godard and Ishaghpoor 2005, 83, 88). Yet in his own legacy, the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (dir. 1988–1998), Godard steadfastly pursues an alternate anarcheological path. "Cinema Truth ... Factory of Dreams":⁷ The immense depot of one hundred years of cinematic history assembled from billions of individual images, Godard declares, is a factory for the manufacture of emotions; an implicit reminiscence of Ilya Ehrenburg's *Factory of Dreams* (1931), but also of René Fülöp-Miller's legendary *Fantasy Machine*, which as scandalously early as 1931 linked the commodity analysis of the cinema industry to psychoanalytic ideas. Godard as an analyst of the dream factory or *Fantasy Machine*—that is a role he assumed with great passion and knowledge even before the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Godard is the Aby Warburg of the time-based image. The archives and vaults of the Paris Cinematheque and many other

5. One form of publishing this project is David Link's forthcoming book with the same title.

6. See Ward 2012. The work was exhibited in 2010 in the Bristol Arnolfini arts centre (cf. Giannetti 2014). In the essay "Künstlerische Anarchive - Herkünfte als Ressource für Zukünfte" (Zielinski 2015) I discuss a few examples, like the huge containers of David Larcher, Werner Nekes, or Dieter Roth. There will be an adaptation of this text in English ("Artistic Anarchives – Derivations [Herkünfte] as Resources for Futures") in Buckley and Conomos (forthcoming).

7. My translation of one of the text inserts used by Godard in the first part of the film.



FIGURE 6. “cinemasurplus”: caption by David Larcher underneath this photograph taken in his anarchivic depot in Kensington, London, 2012 (used with permission).

depots, his own immense collection of electronically stored films and classical, modern, and popular music, are assembled and condensed in fleeting, minimal fragments, as if in a magic ball of memory and incantation. In the course of this audio-visual reconstruction of cinema history the filmmaker himself turns into an object of analysis: “I imagined [...] that, starting from this past, I could see my own once more, like a psychoanalysis of myself and my space within the cinema” (Godard 1980, 22). And like a reminder, a phrase from *Le gai savoir*—Godard’s explicit 1968 cinematographic homage to Nietzsche—thrusts itself into the first colliding image and sound combinations of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: “Chance is structured like the subconscious.”

The result of this anarchaeological image and sound analysis is a *Poetics of Relation* (a beautiful term borrowed from the philosophico-poetical tool box of Martinique poet-philosopher Édouard Glissant). It is not a history that raises any claims to generalization—



FIGURE 7. “drumsort rustydusty-w” (caption and photograph by David Larcher 2012, used with permission).

which is precisely why it represents it so well. Godard’s archaeology of past presents of the cinema is supremely idiosyncratic. It is both testament and manifest: a firm plea for the production of one’s own history from the material surrounding the individual in the midst of which he is able to move with competence. “Every eye mediates for itself”, to quote a phrase from the beginning of the video film, which is inserted like an appeal into the first part of the *Histoire(s)*. The latter word, in turn, is decomposed into its syllables and rhythmically rearranged: *His toï toï toï re ...* History is your business! Recount it according to your aesthetic abilities and your knowledge! Film turns history, a matter of thought, into an extended thing whose temporal structure, too, may be worked on.

The *Histoire(s)* do not represent *the* history of film. They turn it into a Heisenbergian *potentia*—the wave function of film history, as it were. In order to become the 1 objectified history (Godard prefers to use the numeral designation) it has to pass through the act of recording: “No recording, no measurement,” notes Nick Herbert in his proposal for a “Really New ‘New Physics’”: “Only those interactions in nature that leave permanent traces (records) count as measurements. [...] Only record-making devices have the power to turn multivalued possibilities in single-valued actualitis” (Herbert 1999, 102).

At the beginning of parts 2A & 2B of his *Histoire(s) du cinema*, Godard writes the title of the film with a hideously squeaky felt marker onto a white carton of his production firm Sonimage. Then the first sentence—a slightly abridged Oscar Wilde quote—appears: “To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is the proper occupation of the historian.” That is the open secret of anarchives and anarcho-archeological practice. Both insist on the utopian potential within archaeology. As well, it refers to the search for a world not identical to the one we experience(d). Essentially, this means to oppose the factual space of past presents with—to use Winnicott’s term—a *potential space* and let both, however tensely, approach each other. We know this from psychology and philosophy. Not only is the freedom of the individual will compatible with the notion of a preordained world, it inhabits it. One is unthinkable without the other. *Organizzar il trasumanar* (to organize transgression)—with this beautiful paradox Pier Paolo Pasolini described the essential dimensions of his work as poet, painter, and director. The free artistic will evolves from the insight and the sentiment, that the factual, experienced world is limited and full of ruptures, incompleteness, and dissonance. It is one of the privileges of art to productively transform the resulting suffering by means of the creative process. Creative energy amounts to the ability to transgress the finitude of our existence into a more open pluriverse.

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