







Acto de archivo como acto de subjetivación.  
Interés frente por la escritura de la HA en 1ª persona ⇒  
⇒ Fuente de la Historia. (1)

... un ...

Resumir el  
proceso a  
través del  
panel

los comunes" antes se llamaban:

los bienes comunes

la gestión de los bienes

etc. cómo compartir

los comunes de un texto  
es la posibilidad de la  
resiliencia  
Desplazamiento en el pensamiento →  
trabaja con archivos



ARCHIVES OF THE COMMONS II

THE ANOMIC ARCHIVE

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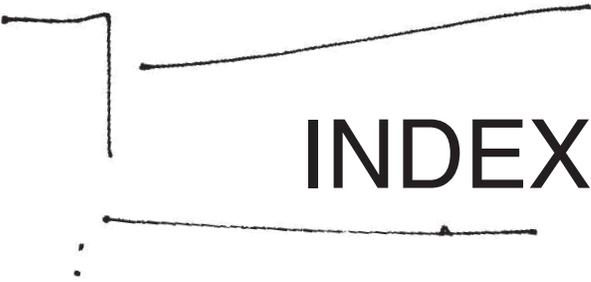
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# PRESENTATION

This publication is the result of the meetings and multiple exchanges held during the international seminar *Archives of the Commons II: The Anomic Archive*, which took place at Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, in September 2017. Since its inception in 2015, the *Archives of the Commons* series of seminars has aimed to consider the meaning of the archive in our current context, the bonds and tensions between institutional and non-institutional archives and, especially, the potentialities that open up when the foundation, management and conservation of archives are based on the principles of the commons.

This series of seminars started in 2015 through the dialogue and collaboration between three agents coming from heterogeneous institutional and organizational experiences: The Commons Foundation, The Southern Conceptualisms Network (Red Conceptualismos del Sur – RedCSur,) and Museo Reina Sofía. The first and second editions of these seminars also had the support of the Foundation for Arts Initiatives (FAI).

*Archives of the Commons II: The Anomic Archive* was co-organized by RedCSur and Museo Reina Sofía, within this broader framework of alliances and complicities and as part of a long process of joint work that has sought to challenge historical relations of hierarchy and usufruct. Reflection on the potential of the archive has been one of the pillars of the collaboration between RedCSur and Museo Reina Sofía. The *Archives of the Commons* series, which at the time of this publication, has reached its third edition, is part of the trans-institutional experiment that both the Museum and RedCSur have been conducting for the past 10 years.

The role of the archive in contemporary culture, due to its metaphorical potential and as a tool for knowledge and critical practice, has been widely explored in numerous exhibitions, publications and conferences over the past two decades. In these contexts, the archive has been analyzed from a twofold perspective. On

the one hand, after recognizing the “archival turn” of the late 1990s, artists have resorted to it as a source of primary information and as a formal structuring device and heuristic tool. On the other, the renewed interest of artists and historians in the archive has given visibility and relevance to its features. These features derive, to a great extent, from the archive’s links to power, vigilance and the imposition norms for the conservation of collective memory, experience and identity.

The second edition of *Archives of the Commons*, entitled *The Anomic Archive*,<sup>1</sup> proposed to reflect on the current situation of the archives, as seen from an uneasy, not accommodating perspective: is it possible that archives of art and politics experience *anomie* as their way of existence? In what sense can an *anomic* archive become an archive of the commons? How does an *anomic* archive respond to market progress?

What do we understand by *anomic* in this context? One way to understand *anomie* is related to the economic deregulation that capitalism imposes when introducing archives into the market. We are currently witnessing the inflation of the financial and symbolic value of the art/politics archives, and the decontextualization effect of the practices they account for, resulting from the transformation of archives into commercial merchandise.

In September 2017, however, we asked the participants in *Archives of the Commons II* to think of “anomic archives” not in this sense, but rather as documentary collections constituted through a process based on needs, and not on external decisions or mandates alien to the objects that constitute the archive itself. So understood, the anomic archive would break with the absolutist and all-embracing character of 19th century archives, and could be conceived as one of the possible materializations of the concept of “archive of the commons”, which challenge the premise of “the archive as law.” The anomic archive challenges principles that seem naturalized, such as the principle of

property – but also received ideas, glossaries, keywords and the categories these keywords classify. *Anomie*, i.e. “that which is without law”, can become a perspective from which to redefine the principles of the commons so that they become a form of commitment and collective work, necessarily situated, challenging the institutional standard criteria of archive management and conservation.

Although *anomie* refers to what is not governed by a law and is, therefore, at the mercy of chance, our conception of the “anomic archive” implies that practices that challenge institutional norms can be structured according to other organization systems, which may give – or are already giving rise to – different versions of history. The questions that we wanted to tackle in this seminar, therefore, had to do with these two apparently opposite poles: how to prevent the economic deregulation of the archive? And also: how can the possibilities opened up by the invention of new organization systems for the archive materialize?

In recent times, we have witnessed the emergence of alternative and independent experiences of archival management and production that do not necessarily take into account historically determined principles and regulations. Many of the archives presented in *Archives of the Commons II* explore different dimensions of the commons, questioning even the very reasons for the act of archiving. If the commons presuppose abandoning the logic of property, working against the privatization of knowledge and giving up the consideration of the public as state patrimony, the challenge is to find collaborative forms of production, organization and circulation of knowledge that operate outside state structures. The experiences introduced during *Archives of the Commons II* multiply the ways to implement access to different types of archives, favoring new writings and re-writings of history, which can be reworked all over again in a continuous movement.

The purpose of *Archives of the Commons II: The Anomic Archive* as well as of the present

<sup>1</sup> The term “anomic archive” is taken from Benjamin Buchloh’s essay on Gerhard Richter’s work. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “El Atlas de Gerhard Richter: el archivo anómico”, in *Fotografía y Pintura en la obra de Gerhard Richter*. Barcelona, MACBA, 1999.

publication, which brings together the seminar's presentations, is to move forward in this debate, as well as to contribute to formulate the conditions for alternative and radical archival practices.

The 2017 seminar, which gathered participants from Latin America, Africa, Europe and the United States in Madrid, was organized in lectures open to the public, and in a series of presentations around three topics. This book replicates the organization of the seminar, structuring its contents in two sections: the first part brings together the lectures, which had a transversal spirit, while the second part gathers the various archives' presentations, around the three seminar themes: "Institutional policies: tensions, alliances, reinventions", "Grammar and methodologies" and "Access and socialization".

The transversal lectures addressed issues that reverberate in the ways of understanding and archiving shared by many of the projects participating in the seminar. Among these issues were archives understood as an act of registration, subjectivation and assertion of existence (Philippe Artières); the polycentric and de-hierarchized archive (Charlotte Hess);<sup>2</sup> the weaknesses of the technological fallacy, both in terms of conservation and in terms of resistance to manipulation (Daniel G. Andújar); and the scientific and political risks involved in the decontextualization of archives (RedCSur).

As for the presentations, the "Institutionality policies" group analyze forms of institutionality of independent archives, the strategies they employ, the tensions generated by their condition and their way of (re)signifying themselves in order to resist the logic of accumulation, homogenization and universalization of the archive, or to find alternatives to this logic. How do these experiences constitute institutionality? What kind of alliances and relationships can they establish with institutional frameworks of a specific cultural tradition, such as museums, universities or documentation centers? What formulas have been used to dismantle, from a perspective based in the

principles of the commons, the dichotomy between "public" and "private"?

Presentations in the group "Grammar and methodologies" sought to collect and interrogate methods of systematization of heterogeneous archives which, in different ways, return to, exceed or reinvent the knowledge proposed by traditional archival sciences. The aim was to analyze how dominant narratives are constructed, and to develop alternative forms of organization or structure for documents. Throughout the different presentations, the following questions were addressed: how are the cataloging and inventory criteria expanded? How to approach anomalous documents and challenge "keywords" as the dominant forms of organization? What kind of articulations can occur when the functionality of the documents and their uses are taken as the starting point? How are silences and gaps in the archive – that which the archive does not include or reject – problematized?

Finally, the debate on different strategies of "Access, socialization and visibility" sought to share forms of collective production of knowledge from archival projects that reverse privatization and epistemological reification, and explore technological disobedience as a way of declassifying content and calling into question the notions of authorship and copyright. The aim was, in this case, to propose common use policies, interrogating the power of the virtual and the Internet as access tools, but also considering their determinants and limitations. For example: how do idiomatic and geopolitical aspects affect these practices of access? What archives and documents enter the field of what is accessible, and which ones remain outside?

During the seminar, presentations in all three groups took place simultaneously, which meant that the audience had to choose in which one to participate. As a result, none of us who attended the *Archives of the Commons II: The Anomic Archive* seminar was able to have, at the time, a global perception of the

seminar contents. Therefore, this publication offers the first chance to access to all the presentations in the seminar. But this book is also – or so we hope – a space where, through reading – which is always subjective –, new underground bonds and dialogues can be activated between the different projects that were presented at the seminar. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the authors of the texts, as well as to all the people who have collaborated so that this publication becomes a reality. We are confident that the unending activation exercises that these texts can trigger will spread the need to collectively think about the potential of the archive's common uses and ways of doing, and to share critical strategies and work methodologies that agents, collectives and institutions are already developing in different settings.

The Editors

<sup>2</sup> Sadly, collaborations from Charlotte Hess and Javier de la Cueva could not be included in this publication.

Seminar Program

ARCHIVES OF THE COMMONS II  
THE ANOMIC ARCHIVE

Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 28 – 30 September, 2017

LECTURES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

**5:00 p.m.** – Welcome and Introduction, with Fernanda Carvajal, Mabel Tapia (RedCSur) and Mela Dávila Freire (Museo Reina Sofía)

**6:00 p.m.** – Lecture by Charlotte Hess

**7:30 p.m.** – Lecture by Alessandro Ludovico

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

**4:30 p.m.** – Lecture by RedCSur, Fernanda Carvajal, Mabel Tapia

**5:30 p.m.** – Lecture by Philippe Artières

**7:00 p.m.** – Lecture by Daniel García Andújar

PRESENTATION TABLES

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

**1. INSTITUTIONALIZING POLICIES, TENSIONS, ALLIANCES,  
REINVENTIONS**

**10:30 a.m.** – Museo La Neomudéjar, Néstor Prieto

**12:00 p.m.** – Interference Archive, Lani Hanna

**2. GRAMMARS, METHODOLOGIES**

**10:30 a.m.** – Flat Time House, Gareth Bell-Jones

**12:00 p.m.** – Center for Curating the Archive, Nancy Dantas

### **3. ACCESS AND SOCIALIZATION**

**10:30 a.m.** – Piracy Project, Eva Weinmayr

**12:00 p.m.** – Desobediencia Tecnológica, Ernesto Oroza

### **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30**

#### **1. INSTITUTIONALIZING POLICIES, TENSIONS, ALLIANCES, REINVENTIONS**

**10:30 a.m.** – Archive Node, RedCSur, May Puchet

**12:00 p.m.** – Fundación YAXS and Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (LACA), Maite Muñoz Iglesias

#### **2. GRAMMARS, METHODOLOGIES**

**10:30 a.m.** – Archivo del Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia, Graciela Carnevale

**12:00 p.m.** – Artpool Art Research Center, Kristóf Nagy

#### **3. ACCESS AND SOCIALIZATION**

**10:30 a.m.** – Copyright and Creative Commons, Javier de la Cueva

**12:00 p.m.** – Archiveros sin Fronteras and Desarrollo Archivístico de Chile, Paulina Bravo





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1. TRANSVERSAL  
TEXTS

# TEMPORARY AND DISTRIBUTED LIBRARIES: BREAKING BOUNDARIES, CREATING NEW RESOURCES

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## Introduction

Libraries are evaluated as superfluous and outdated entities by common sense, especially because “everything” seems accessible from computer networks, particularly through the small computers in our pockets that we still call “(smart)phones”. And yet, libraries are still efficient systems for the preservation and the sharing of knowledge produced under high standards,<sup>1</sup> often just impossible to retrieve online, or not yet digitized anywhere. Beyond any fetishism for the book as an object, physical libraries provide spaces that facilitate the meeting of people and fellow experts, creating concrete opportunities to learn and improve knowledge.

While physical libraries are the outpost of a social kind of sharing, digital libraries enable enormous accessibility, but they do not necessarily build communities – often, they do the opposite. By setting up “temporary and distributed libraries”, they can reclaim their historical role and deal more efficiently with the rapidly evolving contemporaneity.

## Digital Libraries and Custodians

The digital library is a concept belonging to the current digitization of every medium and content, often fostered by the so-called “online giants”, eager to create specific types of assets. One of the proven examples is Google Books, admittedly created not to be the most comprehensive digital library, but to serve as the most sophisticated corpus of text-based Google’s AI services.<sup>2</sup> But there are also other huge, spontaneous and unauthorized digital collections online: millions of publications in the form of files, such as Library Genesis or Sci-Hub, to mention the most inclusive, but also specialized smaller collections, defined and technically quantified as “personal portable libraries”<sup>3</sup> when they are offline, exchanged on a personal basis and small enough to fit into portable storage. These libraries embody (sometimes unaware) one of Aaron Swartz’s leading thoughts: “We need to

take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world.”<sup>4</sup> This is also one of the founding principles of the self-appointed “custodians”, a group of intellectuals pushing citizens to act through the scanning and sharing of content. In their words: “We are all custodians of knowledge, custodians of the same infrastructures that we depend on for producing knowledge, custodians of our fertile but fragile commons. To be a custodian involves, de facto, downloading, sharing, reading, writing, reviewing, editing, digitizing, archiving, maintaining libraries, making them accessible. It involves being useful to our common knowledge, instead of turning it into property.”<sup>5</sup>

Custodians made a mirror backup site of the very valuable Ubuweb collection in 2016,<sup>6</sup> and collaborated with the huge archive.org platform, based in the US, which started to plan a whole backup facility in Canada after the election of Donald Trump as president of the US, fearing a new wave of digital censorship.<sup>7</sup> Artist and writer Kenneth Goldsmith, a custodian and founder of Ubuweb, has used backup strategies in both ways: the digitalization of content as a liberating paradigm on his own platform, and the re-embodiment of digital content into print in his *Printing The Internet* project, where in one occasion he printed out 250,000 pages of pirated JSTOR documents (as a tribute to Aaron Swartz) in an exhibition at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf.<sup>8</sup> The concept of preserving so as to avoid censorship has also been embodied by French artist David Guez in his project *Humanpédia*.<sup>9</sup> Here he quotes the basic strategy used in Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451*: asking people to learn by heart a single Wikipedia article, in order to become a living functioning backup of an almost endless digital content.

Most of the above projects are meant to build shared and liberating digital libraries on a global and personal level, with no self-imposed boundaries, a principle brilliantly synthesized by Marcell Mars: “When everyone is a librarian, the library is everywhere”. But this

statement, in principle, doesn’t necessarily imply that these DIY libraries should be exclusively digital.

## Temporary Libraries

In between the huge classic libraries and the big digitized ones, there are various types of smaller efforts, bringing the library concept and often its working system off the institutional walls. As a starting point, let us consider Alberto Manguel’s statement that “every library is migratory”,<sup>10</sup> made in connection to historical examples of small libraries travelling with famous warlords, such as Alexander the Great, who carried a copy of the *Iliad* in his military campaigns, or Napoleon, who, in similar trips, took with him a wooden box with history books about almost every country.<sup>11</sup> A more recent example of migratory libraries can be found at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the first projects to bring selections of books to areas located far from libraries took place. These books were carried by means of transportation which have evolved from carts to cars and vans, and since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century have started to be usually called “bookmobiles”.<sup>12</sup>

1 Ray Kurzweil, *Google and the World Brain*, DVD, directed by Ben Lewis. Barcelona, Polar Star Films and BLTV, 2013.

2 Ibid.

3 Henri Warwick, *Radical Tactics of the Offline Library*. Amsterdam, Institute of Network Cultures, 2014.

4 Aaron Schwartz and Aporvearyan, *Guerilla Open Access Manifesto*, 2013.

[http://globalarkivet.se/sites/default/files/documents/2013/bis\\_2013\\_1\\_s.18.pdf](http://globalarkivet.se/sites/default/files/documents/2013/bis_2013_1_s.18.pdf) [Accessed December 1, 2016]

5 D. Barok, J. Berry, B. Bodó, S. Dockray, K. Goldsmith, A. Iles, F. Snelling, “In solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub”, 2015. <http://custodians.online/> [Accessed December 1, 2016]

6 Custodians Online, “Happy Birthday, Ubu.com!”, 2016. <http://custodians.online/ubu/> [Accessed December 1, 2016]

7 Daniel Tencer, “Archive.org Moving To Canada Over Trump Censorship Fears”, The Huffington Post, November 30, 2016.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/30/archive-org-canada-trump\\_n\\_13330492.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/30/archive-org-canada-trump_n_13330492.html) [Accessed December 1, 2016]

8 “One Artist Is Printing 250,000 Pages of Pirated JSTOR Documents”, *In Tribute to Aaron Swartz*, Rob Walker, *Yahoo Tech*, April 4, 2014.

<https://www.yahoo.com/tech/one-artist-is-printing-250-000-pages-of-pirated-jstor-81684193816.html> [Accessed December 1, 2016]

9 Marie Lechner, “Humanpedia, mémoire vive”, *Libération*, May 9, 2011.

[http://www.liberation.fr/eclairs/2011/05/09/humanpedia-memoire-vive\\_953761](http://www.liberation.fr/eclairs/2011/05/09/humanpedia-memoire-vive_953761) [Accessed December 1, 2016]

10 Alberto Manguel, *The library at night*, New Haven (Connecticut), Yale University Press, 2008.

The structure was simple: a modified vehicle was filled with publications, which were lent in the place where it was parked following the usual public library scheme. In some underdeveloped areas these cars are still used, but the concept of establishing independent libraries has been since then further elaborated in different approaches, defining the contemporary concept of “DIY libraries”, which is nevertheless serving focused small communities.<sup>13</sup> The Prelinger Library, founded in San Francisco in 2004, for example, has a remarkable collection of 50,000 image-rich 19th and 20th century historical ephemera, periodicals, maps, and books, mainly donated in order to be available to the local community of artists, writers and activists, remaining independent from the institutional libraries system.

The Prelinger Library is the young ancestor of the so-called “DIY libraries”, which recently have started to spread in North America. Their goal is to share among a restricted community a small and usually quite focused collection, build up by a few bibliophiles, in a private space collectively rented and Wi-Fi equipped, through a monthly membership fee. In Williamsburg, Brooklyn, Wendy’s Subway is a classic example dedicated to the history of revolution and the avant-garde. The books are non-circulating (they can be read only in the library), but one of the main concepts embodied here is to explore “the social life of the book”, as Rachel Valinsky, one of the founders, affirms, and how to “activate the book beyond the shelf and have people engage with the idea of the library more broadly as a place of coming together.” They are rewriting classic library rules, benefitting from their limited amount of users and their small environment, but also opening it to lecturing and other types of social-based activities. Maru Calva, founder of the similar Biblioteca Aeromoto in Mexico City, says: “We dream about it being open all the time, and always having someone researching or giving a lecture or learning something.”<sup>14</sup>

This social approach goes beyond the so-called “citizen libraries”, or spontaneous

bookshelves placed in public space in order to facilitate free book exchange (like BookCrosing, Little Free Libraries, Ourshelves, etc.), as it pushes a community to better organise, develop or gather and manage a collection, and starting from there, to devote space and time to a shared interest in specific cultural fields, with the opportunity to learn and discuss further.

My formulation of a “temporary library” relies on a similar concept, based on breaking the classic library’s boundaries. Classic libraries are open, but physically very centralised, so breaking these boundaries (metaphorically represented by the library walls) means bringing publications in new places and, ultimately, expanding and redefining their public role in a more contemporary sense. A “temporary library” would be a curated selection of publications which reflect on a relevant topic, possibly also with a local/national character or declination. When curators agree what the selection will consist of, a minimal physical library is built by asking publishers to donate these publications (or they are acquired), and a specific space is devoted to consultation, typically during a compatible event (a festival or a conference with similar topics), eventually granting the opportunity for attendees to get in touch with publishers through a list of contacts, in order to compensate their donation. Finally, when the event ends, the temporary library is donated as a “special collection” to an established institutional library, but under the condition that it will be lent to other events upon request, and shipped back when such events are finished.

Under this approach, the curated selection is able to attract new types of readers, who can then be connected as well to the publishers’ community, finally contributing to create a public resource which is meant to last and hopefully to travel, releasing even more of its knowledge potential. If different “temporary libraries” (with compatible or similar topics) are created, at some point they can be ideally gathered together in a single place for a while,

proving minimal redundancy and locally built richness in that specific topic that would be probably impossible to grasp in a classic library.

In a way, such “temporary libraries” metaphorically break the monumental character of the library and its physical centrality, and allow for external qualified interventions to be integrated into their systems.

So far, three temporary libraries have been already developed: the temporary library for Transmediale (2017), co-curated with Annette Gilbert and donated to the Universität der Künste in Berlin; the temporary library of Latin American new media art, open during the ISEA 2017 conference, co-curated with Andrés Burbano and donated to the library of Universidad de Caldas, in Manizales (Colombia); and the temporary library of Portuguese media art, opened during the 2017 xCoAx conference, co-curated with Luisa Ribas & Miguel Carvalhais, and donated to the library of the Faculdade de Belas-Artes da Universidade de Lisboa.

### Distributed Libraries

While temporary libraries are meant to create new mobile library resources, the concept of a distributed library is based, instead, on the observation that a lot of cultural “scenes”, particularly some which are art- and media-related, are misrepresented in official cultural repositories, in particular in libraries. On the other end, there are plenty of unofficial repositories of publications about these cultures, usually assembled and hosted by small institutions, critics or journalists. These collections of publications form altogether a “distributed library” whose content is mostly absent from library catalogues. This distributed library approach is about supporting the online publication of the respective catalogues, being then searchable altogether. In particular, *Neural* magazine has developed a web platform (the Neural Archive) that facilitates this process, runs through free software, uses the most basic IT standards and is free to be downloaded and used through Github. The whole software

11 Vincent Cronin, *Napoleon*, London, Collins, 1971.  
12 Bookmobile, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bookmobile> [Accessed December 1, 2016]

13 Max Pearl, *The Rise of DIY Libraries*, May 7, 2015. <http://www.vice.com/read/the-rise-of-diy-libraries-430> [Accessed December 1, 2016]

14 Alberto Ruy Sánchez, Margarita de Orellana, Clara Marín, Quentin Pope and Michelle Suderman, *Bibliotecas de la Ciudad de los Libros*, México, D.F., Artes de México, 2012.

platform allows any collection to be indexed by scanning the publication's covers and entering the bibliographical data. With a few working partners, the next fundamental step would be to create a small vertical search engine that would search all the different "distributed libraries" –or rather, their respective catalogues– altogether, creating an important tool for researchers in a specific area which is, in this case, new media art. In fact, it would result in a collaboratively-compiled bibliography, extremely specialized and, very importantly, based on the physical books preserved in the respective physical spaces of the participants. Even if probably none of the small entities would be able to grant a real public access to the respective physical collections, such a way of working would guarantee proper indexing and preservation of specialized cultures.

Beyond intrinsically taking public responsibility for these collections, once the catalogue is published one of the most crucial challenges would be, at some point, to structure the data in a way which is compatible with the current library standards, forming an independent conceptual "other side" of the library system, perfectly searchable and compatible.

Distributed Libraries can grow even more and faster than classic libraries because they are not constrained in a single place. They reflex more deeply, then, Manguel's contemporary definition of the library as "An ever-growing entity; it multiplies seemingly unaided, it reproduces itself by purchase, theft, borrowings, gifts, by suggesting gaps through association, by demanding completion of sorts."<sup>15</sup>

Preserving knowledge under these conditions assumes new values which rise from social needs and self-organizing networked structures, so that the distribution of knowledge itself becomes a strategy rather than a limit. While Kittler underlined the remarkable difference between "transmission" and "storage" in media, and their respective values, in a Distributed Library system the "transmission", obtained through the networked infrastructure,

becomes fully functional to the storage, needed to preserve the physical copies, in a way that they are mutually necessary rather than being in competition.

## Conclusions

"The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities",<sup>16</sup> and physical libraries are the outpost of the social sharing of knowledge, while digital libraries create shared access but not necessarily communities. Mostly, it is the combination of the two that could have a relevant social impact. The selection curated in Temporary Libraries is meant to let interested readers progress and learn about consistent (curated) titles. Furthermore, by being placed in a public space during public events, they allow the creation of a space for dialogue where the shared knowledge affects fellow interested people and experts.

Temporary Libraries are meant to accomplish both goals, being temporary as social installations, then transforming themselves into stable cultural resources.

Distributed Libraries, instead, allow focused collections to emerge and be publicly acknowledged, intrinsically compiling extensive bibliographies and becoming valuable and strategic repositories.

Finally, the role of the citizen librarian, dealing with these types of structures, should embrace both tasks: s/he should be a custodian aimed to preserve, share and duplicate, when needed; but also a shaman who knows these collections so well as to be able to guide other citizens in the discovery of new connections, and to establish new social and cultural relationships.

<sup>15</sup> Alberto Manguel, *The Library at Night*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> R. David Lankes, *The New Librarianship Field Guide*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2016.

WRITING  
THE  
MURMUR  
OF THE  
WORLD

PHILIPPE ARTIÈRES • IIAC EHESS-CNRS

For 20 years, I have tried to respond to this summons, to this mandate from Michel Foucault: "Write the murmur of the world". In order to do so, I have had to dispossess myself, to divest myself – I have had to depart.

To depart for the mound of papers, for what has remained outside, what has been neglected; to depart in search of minor archives, those that elude the interweaving of the Web. Those archives that do not become treasures. Those archives that are tossed out before being sold. Those archives that, before being gotten rid of, get rid of you. To depart in search of gusts, blasts of existence that have withstood or escaped the violence of the archivist institution. I have made myself a "smuggler" of life. I appropriate what has been left behind, rejected, at the bottom of the box. I do not loot in castles or museums; I go gleaning in the dump yards.

In my bedroom and office, not far from the chest where I keep my personal papers, a few meters off from the bag in which I set up my body archives (hair, teeth, X-rays and other scans), there is a gray box containing the remains of other dead people. A mass grave of papers. I found them in the rubbish dumps of history. An impressive correspondence between a mother and her son, a set of books to be read, certain medical records from the 1920s, other records from a health and social institute, the back of a photo portrait where a woman wrote a few lines, the letters of a child at a summer camp in the 1950s, shopping lists, postcards...

If, as in Cologne or Port-au-Prince, archives were to be demolished, would they vanish into an enormous hole...? What if what was expected to be there forever were to be burned...? We would then have to deal with those few vestiges of the past, those "bits of nothing". To write history after G. W. Sebald; in other words: to write by means of absences, of voids.

Admit, at last, the existence of gaps.

Why would this not be an opportunity for historians? Practicing the minor archive as abandonment; not undertaking some insatiable, unstoppable search, but rather accepting the unexpected, surprise, disappointment and, above all, impotence. Seeing not frailty, but rather force in it. These papers are fragmentary, they are full of holes, absences, flaws. The principle of exhaustive understanding must be given up: our jigsaw puzzle will always have most of its pieces missing. It is necessary to accept that the essential eludes us, that we will know nothing more than a part, that we are producing nothing more than a frail narrative of the past, with many areas of shadow. About the lives of most people of centuries past we barely know a few gestures, a few instants, a few of their intentions. What remains is an immense silence, a great void. The minor archive obliges us to this stripping-down, to divest ourselves of our certainties as sages and step into a world in which nearly everything has disappeared.

You will say that I am simply a quitter, that this relativism opens the doors to revisionism. However, it is precisely when we remain in our towers of wisdom that we enable revisionist discourses. It is not a matter of collecting the counter-archives, but rather of gleaning some common traces from the past out of our waste bins. This is exactly what Emanuel Ringblum did in the desperate, brilliant gesture by which he set up the archives of the Warsaw ghetto when the Nazis were destroying a culture, a language, a world. The ghetto archivist became aware that it was essential, above all, to preserve that which would not be preserved: the "plan B", not the glittering objects, but the rest.

But let us make no mistake: in this quest there is no taste for the archive, nor mystique. By preserving the minor archive, what matters is not to save the world from oblivion. There is a need: the need for being so close as possible to the truth, to our precariousness. It is necessary to break with the idea that the history of humankind resides in the peace treaty, in the archives of the great, of the scribes, of the powerful or of minorities. We need to break



with this logic, which posits that the times of war and oppression are the most important events in our history by the mere fact that they are strong in archive production. And yet we know nothing, or next to nothing, above all the other days, the days without cannons, without glory or terror.

Undoubtedly, it is for this reason that literature came to relieve our silence, to refute our impotence. What would be our knowledge about the 17th century without Cervantes or Shakespeare, about the 18th century without Louis-Sébastien Mercier, about the 19th century without Balzac and Zola, about the 20th century without Pierre Michon, Annie Ernaux...? Note that here I am deliberately mentioning writers that historians usually quote.

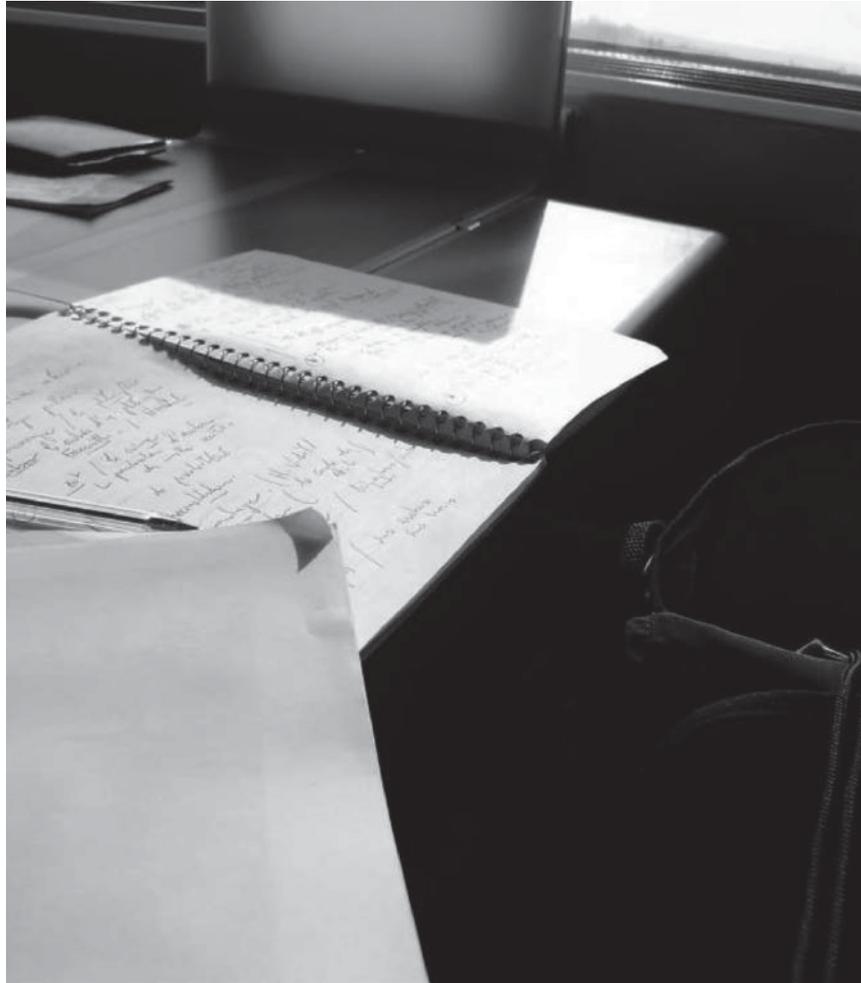
We know little about our past, and this is a part of our condition. Nothing will be availing

against it: nor digitization, nor the more or less ambitious enterprises aimed at re-collecting the common stuff of our days.

The “compendium” series of the National Library, or the efforts underway to archive the Internet, result in nothing. The past escapes, but undoubtedly we have to see, in this loss, the truth of our nakedness. Undoubtedly, the future will be even less preservable. The frailty of media, their expectation for an extremely short life, means that we will be entering more deeply into oblivion. We have no reason to complain or to worry. It has always been this way, and no doubt we must interpret this fact as a call to praise the stripping down, the letting go.

Strangeness, small vestiges, have their beauty. Let us defend not the beauty of the monument, but rather the beauty of the banal, the common. You will hold up to me the majesty of a manuscript of Flaubert, the greatness of a notebook of Proust; I will pull from the bottom of the box a letter sent to Foucault by a prisoner whose words recount the daily life of confinement in 1971. I will also show this album of a coach builder from the city of Meaux, which unravels life in a garage along an entire century. The matter is not to oppose a noble archive to a grossly crude one, but to prefer, rather than the overload of the author, the austerity and aridity of the orphaned document. A few clumsy words, fragilely written on a sheet of paper. Some people will be moved by that stroke of the x drawn in place of a signature, by the meagerness of the medium. A displaced cult, since its beauty comes from the fact that, in it, the single is joined with the multiple. Who knows who wrote it? When was s/he born? What life s/he led? Many people may have been able to write it; they are commoners. They are faceless, and the rare trace they have left us is at once fragmentary and banal, exemplary and unique.

All the same I have chosen them, or, at any rate, a meeting, an encounter, has taken place. I found them one day, often a Sunday, on the sidewalk of a boulevard in Paris, on a





small square in Brussels or Lisbon, in a village of the l'Oise, in a New York parking lot. For a few bank notes I bought from a stand in an antique fair, in a flea market, in some sale of used objects, a case containing old papers. I do not buy blindly; I pay attention to what I am spending, I keep my small change. The encounter has taken time; the minor archive has been found at the bottom of a cardboard box, mixed in a jumble of other "papers of no importance". I have pulled them out with my own fingers, my eye has been drawn to their physiognomy. My eye is often mistaken, and pulls to the surface documents that, to be

sure, have certain attractiveness, an external oddity about them... But it often happens that the thing is not really interesting, it is too anonymous, too waifish or too gray. The minor archive is not an invoice, it is not some professional document. If it is a matter of some gray archive, then it is organized with other documents. In rare instances I choose a single piece, but I usually give privilege to a small set, a small sheaf or a notebook, a diary... Once the choice is made, the reading often takes place at a distance, when I return home, sometimes days or even weeks later. Once the archive is there, there is no more pressure,

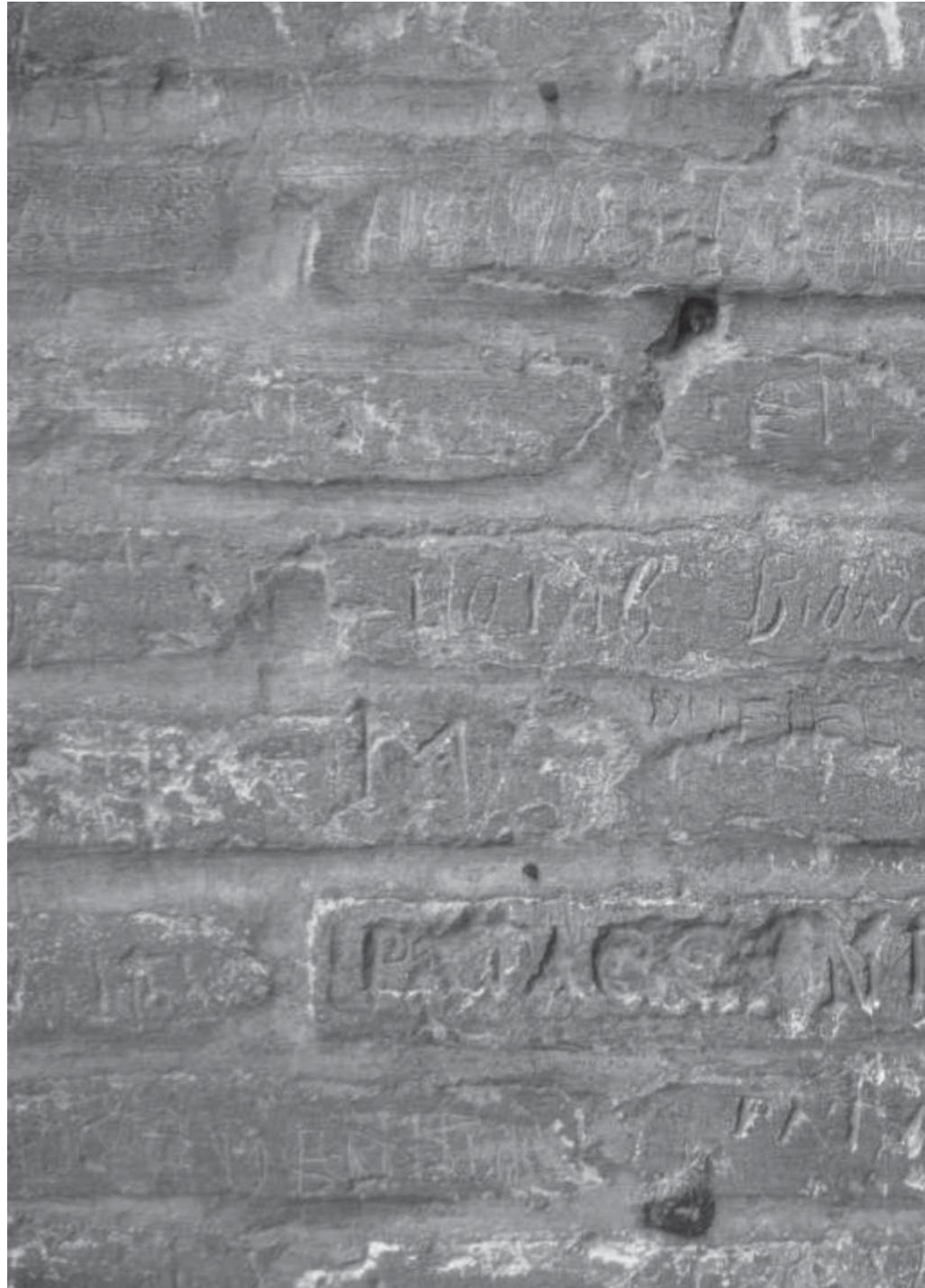
and a favorable period will be necessary to read it: availability, enough attention.

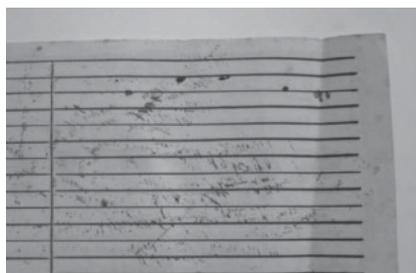
This takes time, and one wears down too, because there is no prior context, no available bibliography, and few tools. We immerse ourselves in the unknown, getting into the archive with tied hands and feet. One starts to resemble the archaeologists who find some fragments of an object buried in the earth



and have to imagine for themselves the object those fragments belong to: one? More than one? Which one(s)? Our knowledge is no longer effective; it has to be invented. We put everything onto the table and

look at this formless mass of torn papers with no head or tail. The scrutiny begins. We decipher the documents one by one, open the envelopes, attempt to establish series... An unprecedented operation for anyone accustomed to consulting the inventory, asking for the right card, opening the correct folder and finding what he is looking for. Here, there is nothing of the sort. I am alone in front of these plural writings. I attempt classifications, small piles. I attempt to locate the missing documents. I number, I take notes, I shut out the intruders, I set about to sew the ensemble of pieces of skins, hides that seem to me to sketch a figure, tell a story. I leave everything in that state. Later, some hours later, I return, undo, eliminate more pieces. The jigsaw puzzle is even more fragmentary. It resembles those ancient vases of which only one or two fragments have been found, but which restorers have put together on some sort of neutral support. We guess what the vase was once like, and yet we do no more than guessing... Some people would consider that this does not make much sense. In my search for the archive's space I reconstruct a story with its darker areas.





Historical science, at this point, would seem to offer few results, but – can we be sure of that? The census that operates with the minor archive is a valuable re-counting. Out of this *bricolage* operation, which is not pure *montage*, plural figures arise and say as much as the quantitative history. Let us agree that it is not a question of entering into some individual history that abandons the project of the social sciences, but rather to take as a start these composite figures, born out of the minor archive, to produce a true polyphonic narrative. These archives allow the writing of a history with multiple voices, the voices of a chorus.

The moment always arrives when an inventory of this non-treasure must be made. One cannot always be delving into archives. We discover, therefore, that what we have inherited is this chorus, and that we must preserve it. There is nothing philanthropic about this enterprise. This chorus, which these anonymous figures, these individuals with many heads, compose my wild genealogy. These traces do not belong to any great man – those I have left for others to be studied –, nor is it possible to build any biography about each of them. They make up a forest with its shadows, its clearings, its old firewood. This forest is where I come from: a thick forest, suffocating at times, often troubling.

In this place, I may well lose my way. And yet, is it not intrinsic to memory to be a territory constantly demanding exploration, a land where the deeper we go, the more everything we think we know fades away?

In brief: a dispossession.

AT A PRECARIOUS POINT

BRITAIN 1971

# AGAINST THE ARCHIVE: THE END OF THE DIGITIZATION PROCESS

How we show, how we look at archives  
A. J. J. J.

The way human beings conceive their surroundings and their relation to them determines all their activity. Such conception has been completely different depending on historical periods and the way it was culturally interpreted in each of these periods. The introduction of new technologies into daily life, the irruption of Internet and other communication systems, the widespread use of computers and electronics in contemporary society, the influence of the technologies of information and communication (TIC) and the consequences of globalization are having an indisputable transforming effect on contemporary society, as they are dismantling old ways of thought and altering the earlier systems by which we used to relate ourselves to our surroundings. Visual language is the most valuable tool for artistic practice, but at present the "visual" attribute is specifically linked to our contemporary digital territory: digital spare time, digital advertising. Art has lost the hegemony and influence on the visual imaginary that it used

to have in the past. What is even worse, it has partially lost its potential.

The conflict of interests that this model involves is apparent, and the radicalization of positions is merely the prelude to the confrontation required to change a model that no longer makes sense. This change should enable a revolution addressed to breaking with the ruling hierarchical concept and toward the development of new tools to interpret our reality more adequately.

Our current society is evolving out of a markedly post-capitalist period towards a form in which the State plays a lesser role and knowledge gradually becomes the socially differentiating element. Traditional mass media – that is, radio, television, and the written press – can no longer maintain their position as fundamental pillars of a structure that keeps bureaus too far off the ground. Schools are already losing their monopoly as providers of instruction. In

the knowledge society, we must reinvent the educational system; we must learn to learn. Post-capitalist society is placing knowledge at the center of wealth production: what matters most is not the quantity of knowledge, but rather its productivity. In this society of information, the basic resource will be knowledge. The desire to use knowledge in order to generate more knowledge must be based on an enhanced effort at systematization and organization; it will require lifelong learning.

This may be the moment to cease producing news, to stop making blind images in support of the authority or of certain interests of the capital. This does not necessarily mean ceasing to work with images. What I mean is that we should think more about how these images have been constructed, what their structure is like, what meaning they have.

The structures we create condition our perception of reality. Mathematical knowledge (present



Archivo postcapital (1989 - 2001), 2006-2014  
Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart.  
Archive, installations, architecture.  
Series of interventions. Different countries and contexts. Variable dimensions. Variable measurements.



*Liders*, 2015  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.  
Photo: Joaquín Cortes/Román Lores.  
Architectural intervention. Three hundred posters,  
100 x 70 cm.  
Installation at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía,  
Madrid, Spain .



*Los desastres de la guerra*, 2017.  
Documenta 14  
Neue Galerie (Neue Hauptpost),  
Kassel. Archive, installations, puzzles,  
model, book, cartoonists.  
Fifty seven digital prints on paper and

archive materials. 61,5 x 44 cm (each ).  
Francisco de Goya España, 1746 - 1828.  
*Yo lo vi (Lo vi)*. Sheet 44 created in the  
1810 decade and published in 1863.  
Etching, dry point and burin. 14 x 18-cm.



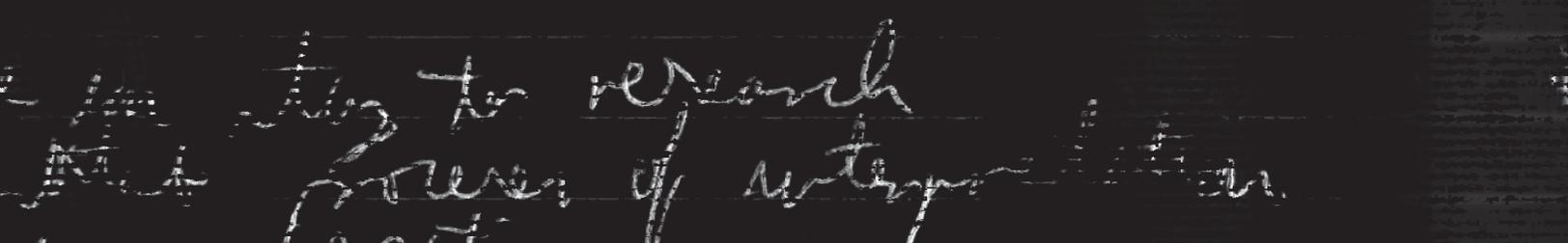
in the algorithms that govern the network) is a construct and, as such, it is constantly rebuilding itself. Everything we are able to construct, we will also be able to alter. This extended body will transform into a strategic site of resistance against standardized interpretations of the digital media as control mechanisms and mediation forms for capitalism. Our reaction to media bombardment clearly shows digital media's capacity to build up tension and tests our resistance. We are turning ourselves into occasional mediators, subjectively filtering the information that makes up part of our most immediate reality, and we do so automatically, almost professionally, unaware, distilling reality on a whim, according to our preferences. To guide, to manipulate, to interpret, filter, condition, orientate, mediate, prioritize, organize hierarchically... Against all of these we try to fight, albeit unsuccessfully. Too much power – even for oneself.

The new generations are educating themselves subjected to structures and tools that force them to do things differently. Their vision, in a world immersed in a digitalization process by which much of our visual heritage is being

transferred from its formal physical format to digital supports, will be different from that of their predecessors. All this information is being deposited in containers occupying a new sphere close to public space, re-localized, decentralized, provided with great visibility and accessibility. Yet this sphere opens up a number of uncertainties regarding individuals' capacity for managing a constant flux of information from a giant archive which is continually elaborated and transformed, and which is hard to take in. In a sense, space's former materiality is clearly dissolving into a new notion of space broadened by new forms, functions, and social meanings.

Public space itself, as an expression of society, is undergoing a process of structural transformation toward being organized and expressed through a set of interconnected nodes. We understand the node as a double conception of physical or digital space in which connections of other physical or digital spaces with the same characteristics partially converge. The latter are, in turn, also nodes. These nodes are interrelated non-hierarchically and form a den-

se, complex network in which places, people and objects interact, establish relations, and communicate by simultaneously performing emission and reception. Because the structure of this network is not too hierarchical, it is difficult to identify its center and periphery, since each node, by technical definition, takes on qualities for emitting and receiving at the same time. It is also difficult to try to differentiate North from South, who the watchers are and who is being watched, where above and below are, where here and there are, what far and near are. Earlier social and spatial structures are broadening or migrating toward an informational space whose components may be hard to identify by means of metaphors of the physical world. New technologies of information and communication are transforming social practices, and these, in turn, reshape our old notion of space. They also give citizens back their capacity to participate in distributed networks which are not easily controlled politically, and to combine, in a certain way (and through different technologies), deliberative and participatory aspects which seemed incompatible with older models.



Ver Poes

El Arte



Large knowledge containers and information managers must transform their structures. The very concepts of public library, archive, museum, which so far have remained faithful to the principles that justified their existence since their creation in the 19th century, must adapt their functionality to a new reality. In this new reality, the public library, which has always used information as raw material for its activity, must transform itself into an institution with a vast potential, emphasizing that potential in access to information, permanent training and cultural records, in a new milieu of digital contents and fast and affordable communication networks. Our notion of a library should privilege its quality as an access gate to the information society that prevents technological advances from aggravating the social exclusion of certain collectives. Libraries will have to change, leaving behind their notion as places, as physical realities delimited by the walls that enclose their facilities, to turn into logical entities and service centers. Digital libraries are utopian in the full etymological sense of the term, since it is not possible to locate them within specific spatial coordinates.

We are no longer interested in knowing who the guarantors of information are, who store it up. We'd rather want to know who can help us transform information into knowledge useful to fully develop our lives.

*Los desastres de la guerra*, Metics Akademia, 2017. Documenta 14 EMST — Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo, Atenas. Installations of mixed media. *Modelos liberados* (2016-17). Seventy five printed models in 3D. Atlas, Hacking the Canon (2016-17). Thirty six digital prints on paper. *métoikos\_mouseion, arte factum\_replica\_factory* (2016-17). Fifty two black and white photographs.

vests Publishing LARA Readers

# GRASPING THE INAPPROPRIABLE DISPUTES OVER OF THE USE VALUE OF ARCHIVES

« ... THE SOCIAL SCIENCES – ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHERS – SHOULD FOCUS ON CREATING THE CONCEPTUAL, TECHNICAL, AND MATERIAL TOOLS TO RESIST THE PILLAGING, BOTH OF MATERIAL RESOURCES AND OF PEOPLE (LABOR OF HANDS, BRAINS) OR, AT LEAST, HELP US TO SURVIVE TO IT. »

**SILVIA RIVERA CUSICANQUI**

How should we think about our practices as researchers, archivists and theoreticians in co-existence and in “phase” with our environment? How to position oneself from an ecosophic perspective of the common as a way of being in the world? What forms of organization, activation, and even common production are possible from this perspective? Both natural and social resources – human and non-human – cannot be thought of in a fragmented or divided manner.

The work of Red Conceptualismos del Sur [Southern Conceptualisms Network] (RedCSur) is inscribed in a perspective that strives to disarticulate notions of property and colonialism that weigh as much on Earth and the cosmos as on knowledge and forms of action. In this sense, in its Founding Declaration, the Southern Conceptualisms Network adopts “a strategic use of the term ‘South.’ It is used with the purpose of intervening in the geopolitical

segmentation of Latin America, within the current hemispheric conjuncture. The geopolitical condition of the “South” is not used as a metonym for the geography of Latin America, but as a discursive tool for dismantling “centrality” and reversing the epistemic “marginality” through which global “conceptualisms” have been historicized. Through the strategic and geopolitical use of the term “South,” the Network seeks to ensure that the Latin-American stance is informed not by a reclamation of some regional cultural identity, but rather, that it allows the rethinking and revision of the strict dichotomies that divide center and periphery, canon and counter-canon, first and third worlds, western and non-western”.<sup>1</sup>

Rejecting the capitalist ideologies of appropriation, RedCSur is established as an affective-political community with forms of self-organization where the historical division between theory and practice is inoperative.

<sup>1</sup> Red Conceptualismos del Sur, “Manifiesto instituyente”, available at: <https://redcsur.net/es/declaracion-Instituyente/>

Begun in 2007, RedCSur is a platform which today brings together around 50 scholars and artists from Latin America, Europe and Canada. The Network defines itself as a platform for research, debate and collective position-taking from Latin America. The platform is currently organized into four core areas or “nodes”: research, publications, web<sup>2</sup> and archives, each of which has at least one delegate and regularly holds virtual meetings. Each node connects work teams around the various projects the network is conducting. A coordinating team includes the delegates of each node plus two coordinators.

RedCSur has arisen at a moment in which the documents and archives of Latin America’s artists and collectives have begun to turn up on the radars of major museum and academic institutions, especially in the United States and Europe. In this framework, RedCSur emerges with a positioning that does not point to one single front, but refracts into a number of focuses. On the one hand, it was motivated by the wish to construct a space for collective work and reflection that might adopt a geopolitical stance from the South (conceived not as a geographical but rather as a strategic point). On the other hand, it could intervene in what has turned into the current, generally accepted forms of plunder, concerning, among other things, art archives.

Historically, archives have been thought of in their mnemonic dimension, i.e. the possibilities of being guardians of memory. Without ignoring this dimension, RedCSur envisions a contemporary relationship with archives which aims to think on them from their possibility of producing and generating familiarity and affection vis-à-vis the present, since it is in the present that we find the only framework in which we give sense to the past. As part of its working policies, RedCSur makes available not only the reflections that have arisen from the research it conducts but also the raw materials that construct and enable that research, opposing and responding to policies of withholding and privatization of knowledge

and of academic production. Establishing archives and opening up access to them is in itself a form of producing narratives; at the same time, it is a strategy we do not carry out without evident tensions, above all in a setting that increasingly valorizes archives in the art market and in the dizzying processes of disabling multiple meanings and homogenizing them under the guise of plurality. Accordingly, we recognize that RedCSur is not some agent external to the valorizing process of the archives with which it works. It is our research work that has managed to inventory, organize and build documentary collections which, in many instances, were previously in disuse, abandonment, ruin or neglect, and which lack conditions for their maintenance, protection and access. The members of RedCSur, being investigators, went from being passive appropriators of documents and information to actively redistributing information and presenting situated views of their material, directly contributing to producing communal bases which not only socialize images, texts and videos, but also expand their *modi operandi*. This implies constantly going back to the time gaps and the convergences between desires and practices. It also implies knowing that, although desires don’t always translate into practices, they may provide us with images that broaden the horizon of the possible and open up perspectives in a labor we know is to be long-term. Amid the tensions and negotiating of interests generated between the agents who take part in the establishing of archives – artists, researchers and curators, as well as museum directors or collectors interested in acquiring archives – the network seeks to dispute meanings and intervene in the practices of archives.

Having tried out various ways to organize, manage and socialize archives, RedCSur has come to set out a policy for archives posited to “contribute to the indivisibility, preservation and public accessibility of archives of Latin American art, promoting their presence in the places in which their practices were produced.” This network policy is far from being

<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the web node changed its name to “activations node”.

taken for granted and is constructed within an often conflictual force field. This ethical commitment does not *a priori* reside in the way in which artists conceive the relation with their archives, and in this sense, a policy the network tries to inoculate. The network organizes its action with the intent that its program be desired, appropriated, constructed through the collaboration of its members, in alliances with other agents.

In this way, we aim to work from the singularities of each archive, from their potentials and differences but also from their deficiencies, assuming in each moment the place of enunciation from which work is carried out, a place of enunciation which is at once personal and collective. It is thus that we permanently confront the requirements of standard systematizations, the demands of neutrality, in the long protocol of archival norms; these structures compose and determine the discipline of the archival, and we continually reject them. Without denying the value of those structures, the work of our network takes on other formats, follows other paths. Perhaps, most clearly, from the research and exhibition project *Perder la forma humana* (Losing Human Form),<sup>3</sup> it was possible to formulate, as a work methodology, the figures of *affinities* and *contagions* which are ways of thinking and doing, attempting to oppose the professional, “departmental” fragmentation and, in contrast, undertaking network labor as a stratum with various folds to it. Research, and the collaborative forms of writing, operate through affinities and contagions, as do the institutional alliances which RedCSur establishes in its directive policies. At the same time, as happens with all work with archives, there hovers the treacherous specter of wanting to encompass everything, of imagining a possible totality, of adding more and more, of not leaving out this or that, a sort of incessant search for the archive’s holy grail. There is the clear risk that, as can happen with the paradigm of the Internet, the excess of documents ends up transforming itself into a kind of “memory of dis-remembering,” of

non-memory, whereby the overaccumulation of information ends up repressing historical memory, and our bodies end up lying under those heaps. It is a matter, then, of elaborating both one’s own methodologies as tools and the frameworks from which, with mistakes and accurate assessments, to work toward the construction of an *inappropriate* archive.

This inappropriability may be thought of in three related senses; on the one hand, the inappropriate may be part of a trait inherent in every archive, related to the impossibility of totality we have just mentioned. On the other hand, the inappropriate resides in the construction of possible senses, or rather, in those senses that elude us, that we cannot grasp, that slip away before we can name them. In this aspect, the inappropriate is manifested out of the interstices of the archive, from its faults, its gaps. Lastly, we also think of the inappropriate as the disarticulating of the logics of property which characterize the establishment of archives. In this sense, an inappropriate archive alters, from within, the center placed in the owner or in the property itself in order to promote its use value.

So, even if it is only recently that RedCSur has attained its status as a legal entity, it is not an institution, as a university or a museum would be. RedCSur does not try to garner a legacy of its own as an institution; it is not related to the archives, from the logic of property, but rather, it tries to promote collaborative forms of use and organization of the art archives from the bottom up, in a context of the institutional and political precariousness of archives in Latin America. We also know, of course, that there are other forms of accumulation that have to do with reputational and symbolic heritage to which we are no strangers; the value we contribute to generating in the archives no doubt also falls back on the symbolic patrimony of RedCSur, which at the same time we try to neutralize through various strategies.

RedCSur works from a perspective of archive use and in particular from an instituting use

of those archives, conceived as shared or communal. When we say communal, we are thinking anew of putting in crisis, through the practice or “use,” the logic of property. It is the tension between property, understood as an exclusive and nominal decision, and the communal, more than the tension between the public and the private, that motivates our *modi operandi*. Since our starting premise that every archive, in addition to modulating singularly its configuration and rules, takes refuge in structures of various juridical-programmatic character, we posit that the public/private dichotomy is insufficient for understanding what occurs in each case. The network develops a policy of flexible alliances producing multiple configurations and gathering diverse experiences: from the personal archive open to the users in the house of the artist who has harbored it, to the archive functioning in an autonomous space independently operated by a group, or the archive ceded to a museum or a university. In each case, there are multiple agents (institutional and extra-institutional) who collaborate in the archive institutionalization and access. In all cases, entities are produced which break with the logic of exclusivity (it is our insistence, in our work, that archives be neither withheld nor closed). In the experiences we have collaborated, the personal archive is not entirely private, nor those which are institutionalized have ceased to be used by the artists who ceded them. Nor have they subsumed to the logic of the museum or the university. Not only do the institutions act upon the archives, but our practices and methodologies for working with the archives also act upon the institutions, transforming them, no matter how minimally, in accepting other criteria, other ways to catalog, to organize, and other policies of access to the documents – even from starting to imagine them as possible. If, then, it is the tension between the logic of the communal and that of property, which animates our practices, it must be said that the possibility of communal use of archives which the net mobilizes, does not, in any totalizing and continuous way, operate on the archives with which we work (property,

3 *Losing the Human Form: A Seismic Image of the 1980s in Latin America*, Madrid, Reina Sofía National Art Centre (October 26, 2012 - March 11, 2013); Lima Museum of Art (November 23, 2013 - February 23, 2014); Buenos Aires, Museum of the National University of Tres de Febrero (May 20 - August 17, 2014)

capital, also carry on their work there). On the contrary, the possibility of communal use of the archives is a process marked by small triumphs as well as by contradictions, flaws, and blind spots.

In this text we seek to think about the possibility of archives without property, promoting its use value. In this sense, we ask ourselves how we should think about the use of the inappropriable. RedCSur seeks to think about the archives as the production of a commons, and the user of something communal is not an owner. The notion of use may name quite different things. The proprietor or beneficial owner of some good may, to be sure, use it. In contrast, as Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval point out, “the use of a communal asset does not proceed from some broadened or shared property,” but rather from “the co-obligation that prevails between those who at once have use of what lies outside of property.”<sup>4</sup> At this point it may be important to point out: the researchers on the web not only “extract” knowledge of the archives, but rather their use of the archives implies a commitment, as well as a co-responsibility with the ways to imagine, gain access to, and organize that archive.

We are, at present, in a context in which the very category of property is going through a change, and has been expanded, extending toward new forms, such as use and access, which are having a decisive importance in the transformations of contemporary capitalism. In this sense, the Internet offers an enormous field for the extension of the economy of communications, in which the most important thing is no longer the sale of goods, but rather the commercialization of uses of goods and access to services. This model speeds up the logic of capital accumulation (in the “educational, cultural, cognitive and relational sphere”), boosting the formation of large oligopolies which concentrate the property of the media of access and satisfaction of needs (the consumption media). As a path for the socialization of archives but also as an intrinsic methodology of RedCSur, one fundamental

tool has been the Internet, which, as we know, today constitutes a device for circulating information and, at the same time, a speed-up vehicle for capitalism and for the control of the population, which breeds forms of subjectivation. As already occurs with many platforms for group labor, the Internet is, and has been, an enabling condition for RedCSur and at the same time one of its fields for intervention. We aim to have our practices take on and problematize the fact that, even if technologies are imposed as neutral, they leave in the shadows the material and economic structures that make them possible. The immateriality of the Internet subsists thanks to the materiality of submarine cables and the ever-so minimalist constructions that contain the servers, as well as the economies of extraction (for example, the case of lithium). On the other hand, as the Argentine sociologist Christian Ferrer<sup>5</sup> has suggested, in order to function as such, the Internet needs to legitimize information production as a form of knowledge, which seems to prompt our return to the paradigm of positivism, whereby the decontextualized datum takes precedence over the construction of knowledge. And this purported access to unlimited information, which grows increasingly boundless, leaves the subject in a state of permanent debt, since it is impossible to access all information.

Since 2009, our work with archives has allowed us to observe that the purchase of archives (or a part of them) by collectors or museums does not necessarily stand in opposition to the openness and accessibility of those collections on the web, in a context in which the very category of property has changed and broadened, so that today property rights have been diversified and include rights of access, use and control, in the same category as property rights. Thus, on many occasions, the commercialization of archives falls within a logic of (alleged) “free circulation,” which enhances their value.

The “archives in use” platform (*archivos en uso*: <http://www.archivosenuso.org>) is the

critical device with which RedCSur is experimenting with ways to socialize documents. It is a platform which is not associated with any available institutional web site, being available (for now) only in Spanish, which gives it less visibility within the Internet’s geopolitical distribution. *Archivos en uso* has allowed us to think how to create conditions for working out protocols and commitments in joint use of the art documents with which we work, outside the logic of charging for rights of accessibility (as do various other portals for art archives). In turn, this virtual platform has led us to think about how to counteract the incorporation of archives into an economy of signs which enlists them as a mere exchange value, and thereby yields operations of homogenization, producing equivalent values for different “products.”

When RedCSur began its work, one of its major concerns was to “unframe” or broaden the ways for historicizing the art archives with which we work, in order not to inscribe them in linear, modernizing, and universalist narratives that might tend to place them in some out-of-phase or delayed position in relation to the Northern experience. Ten years after the birth of RedCSur, the geopolitical map has been altered. Today the North appears as less stable, in a setting in which not only the concentration of power has shifted, and the State is no longer the main player in the political game, but rather transnational-global capital. In the context of the expansion of globalization, the widening of artistic canons has sped up, not without the effects of leveling, homogenizing and decontextualizing. It may be that today the problem is not so much being placed in a time-gap but rather the way in which the temporal acceleration flattens the textures and agitations of different spatialities. The dispute, then, is about trying out lateral narratives and bodies of knowledge from the archives, which produce opacity with regard to the Internet’s universalizing transparency and which, at the same time, make vibrate the dense contextual conflictiveness of the documents. What we propose is to carry out a materialist work of

4 Pierre Dardot y Christian Laval. *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au XXIe siècle*, Paris, La Découverte, 2014

5 Diego Genoud, “Christian Ferrer: Como voluntad de poder, la técnica va por delante de cualquier control”, *Diario la Nación*, June 26, 2016 available at: <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/opinion/christian-ferrer-como-voluntad-de-poder-la-tecnica-va-por-delante-de-cualquier-control-nid1912179>

friction, a rubbing with and between documents, which can allow us another form of contact with historical contingency, with what was has been, and still is, unforeseen.

To come back to an intensive notion of use, we know that access on the web is not enough. Today, more than ever, archives have incorporated the value of exchange, and the Internet is a platform that intensifies their value. That said, incorporation of the value of exchange in archives does not bar their use value, which is, after all, a value free of wear and tear, free of loss, in which, however, some transformation is always taking place. A transformation which allows us, to come closer, however slightly, to grasping the inappropriable.

PRECARIOUS POINT

BRITAIN NOT  
INTERNATIONALIZING  
HUMILIATED

INSTITUTIONALIZATION  
**POLICIES.**  
TENSIONS,  
**ALLIANCES AND**  
REINVENTIONS

understanding

**GRAMMARS**  
AND METHODOLOGIES

curiosity under  
familiar phrase

**ACCESS**  
AND SOCIALIZATION

multiple

why?  
criticality

PDF 7

How we show how we look at archives  
Archive fever

violence inflicted academics  
sim. structural system

IMBATED ARCHIVE - MAN MAN REBOL LIA  
Archives subject to tampering /  
wonder - experience / attention, DISTRACT

multiple readings / - care & criticality ?  
are not purely colonial  
abstract /  
complex histories

NON STARK  
West based Archive

## 2. PRESENTATION

WAR & DION TABLES

opinion on the potential for archives to  
provide multiple readings  
Material should not be held at all

# INSTITUTIONALIZATION POLICIES. TENSIONS, ALLIANCES AND REINVENTIONS

INSTITUTION - state zero - nothing

↳ concepts "no exists"  
↳ outside of time

depto al B.O. CANNON ← APLICAN ESTRUCTURA SOCIAL!

↳ B.O. Bang :: point of transition

INSTITUTION - state zero - nothing

INSTITUTION - state zero - nothing

INSTITUTION - state zero - nothing

<sup>traveller's</sup> ARTISANAL CONTEMPORANEOUS:

Women Pilgrims  
The Open Sky

1 . . . : search of time

Mabel - invited me  
 Mela - Hamburg  
 more Physical Art than art  
 Archive on Great  
 Responsibility - community - all in common of order  
 Notes of Community at Art  
 Red Conceptualism  
 Red Sofa  
 Red Sofa  
 Red Sofa

ON MATERIALITY,  
ARCHIVES  
AND MEMORY  
ON THE  
TRACES  
OF VIDEO ART

NÉSTOR PRIETO  
FRANCISCO BRIVES

44 Museo La Neomudéjar

Memory is a frail weapon, a tool that alerts the general spectrum made up of materials, movements, formats, territories and critical postulates related to official written history. We call it a “weapon” because it breeds violence about the given hegemony and enables re-readings, or an opportune occurrence which, in archaeological terms, unearth for us a wealth hitherto unexposed. The notion of creating a center for documentation and research on video art in Spain (Centro de Documentación e Investigación del Videoarte – CIDV) arose out of the clear-cut realization of the cultural lag and heritage loss of video artists throughout Spain.

The trace of the historical narrative of video art requires urgent investigation; examples, investigations, are so few that we are scarcely aware of the trail of those who, in their theses or publications, have seriously dealt with the accessible memories. The territory of video art lacks penetration into its nature, diversity of languages, genres and subjects. The materiality of videoartists is sustained in a frail medium, it is a trace that can be erased forever by a simple stroke. The containers that store the work are just that: mere media, capsules or records that only enable us to contemplate the works. From the perspective of an archive, certain aspects of this singular nature, of the devices it requires and the frailty of its formats, present a significant level of complexity, costs and impossibility for preservation over time. This is, no doubt, the first hurdle that the CIDV has come up against since its inception. Beyond the number of works, the compendium of names, the filtering of theories, our heaviest worry has to do with how we will be able to preserve the heritage we are trying to take care of.

When people hear of the idea of creating an archive, they immediately think of some compilation of discs, cases or materials to be stored. The archive’s likeness to a library and its tasks is one of the perceptions that hover over the neutral thought of interlocutors. For us, however, building up an archive requires that the first thing we think about is how to preserve the material... even before we possess it.

How can an archive be structured to preserve such singular materials? How can or should we construct such memory? Over CIDV’s first two years we devoted ourselves precisely to

that question: thinking, reflecting on the most correct way to consolidate a space for the memory of video art. A group was created for thought and debate, doubts were shared and shifted, and partnerships sought out. In those moments of firm decision, materials didn’t stop pouring in: they kept coming in every month. With each donation, pressure mounted as to whether our decision was the right one. Our partnerships with Mexico enabled us to have a strategy: we twinned with the LAA – Laboratorio Arte Alameda and, through that bond, we began to grow aware that the work of an archive takes time, that nothing is ever finished for good, and that flexibility is always required to incorporate new knowledge. The Spanish Biblioteca Nacional provided us with key advice: “Don’t start recording or registering anything before you have figured out correctly and efficiently how you are going to do so. The choice of a recording system will be the most important decision you make in the archive, since once you have started, if something goes wrong, there will be no going back... Unless you start the work you have done so far all over again.” We will never be grateful enough for this good initial piece of advice.

Spain has no history or protocols for conserving video; the *videothèques* that began working with VHS functioned like a video club. Their records did not go beyond the mechanics for registering a book, for which reason our dream of creating the registry with attention to genres, disciplines, and authors did not fit within the software databases designed for libraries. In themselves, these databases were very poor. So the complexity of the nature of video and its still unrigorously defined categories confronted us with the need to create a specific interface which, in addition, would serve us for exchanging data with other online archives.

Institutional meetings to strengthen and advocate for the decision to create this archive came up against the ineptitude of the higher-ups, the absolute ignorance of what video art is and what it represents as a cultural legacy, and ultimately, indifference or an outright lack of interest. The Spanish Ministry of Culture has turned into a sort of *parvenu* enterprise that does not represent the interests of culture, nor is concerned with the legacy of artists. This must be said loud and clear.

Had we followed the wake of nonsense and lack of interest of public administrations, we would have never created the CIDV. Indeed, constant rejection made us all the more aware and stubborn in our determination to see through our proposal for an archive.

It is important to clarify that this archive is not a collection, nor is it a selection of the best artists, nor a distributor. A large misunderstanding occurs when even professionals refer to webs that group together a given spectrum of artists and take these to be online archives. The key feature of an archive is the spirit that inspires it, the philosophy it is premised on. Creating an archive is like drafting a law. It must be inclusive and integrative, opening, non-exclusive, unerring, certain. With these premises, an archive should gather together the highest possible number of voices, diversities, and categories that can provide a narrative encompassing the broadest possible map of the reality of video art in Spain. If the archive should cater to a subjective desire, we would be creating a curatorship, or producing a selection of artists corresponding to a particular taste, a genre, etc. The spirit of the CIDV is far broader. The real idea consisted in gathering together the highest possible number of voices from video art, taking stock not only of historic, famous, well-known artists but also rescuing those who probably didn't have the fame, good fortune or necessary support, yet went on all the same, working with this medium through their artistic careers. These traces, once collected, will give us a wide vision of the true meaning of video artists' production for our heritage.

Once we solved our doubts about the archive's nature and its classification protocols, we faced the absence of categories and definite genres that could be inclusive beyond the search for labels or themes. Once again, we undertook research tasks intended to shed light on the genres and categories that video art has come up with. The bibliography that tackles this question is quite scant. Researchers commonly focus on the historical narrative, almost always foreign, highlighting the emblematic figures of video art, who invariably are acclaimed in the United States, Germany, etc. Yet there are only few studies about the variety of genres, their classification and differentiation. We only found general labels, such as "video creation", "video dance", "digital art", "video performance", etc.

How to devise a categorization that can reflect a specific genre in a world as hybrid as video art? In the arts, all disciplines encompass their genres. By definition, "artistic genre" is a specialization or division based on formal and thematic criteria into which the various arts tend to be categorized. For the *Dictionary* of the Spanish Real Academia de la Lengua, it is a way to group works of art arranging them into "different categories or classes... according to common characteristics of form and content."

What happens with genres in the case of video art? How do we create a categorization of genres, and which ones, in any case, have manifested themselves in particular in different territories? Are there, perhaps, specificities by temporality? By territories? By themes? Are Catalonia's video artists different from those of Galicia? What historical issues have affected the creation of one or another theme or genre?

In the first video art conferences we organized in 2012 during the IVAHM Festival, Liliana Orbach (Israel) spoke about the evolution in the video art of her country's artists. She commented that, at its inception, video art was much more political, and that over the years it drifted toward a certain aesthetic abstraction. Is the same thing happening in Spain? How will we be able to answer this question, if there is no basis on which to research and draw conclusions?

In 2016, CIDV presented in Mexico the result of an investigation made within the archive's holdings, which included proposals for 20 different genres of video art and nine subgenres of video performance. These conclusions were put forward within the educational conference *Inscribir/borrar el tiempo de la materialidad*, promoted by LAA – Laboratorio Arte Alameda and EMCRYM – Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía. Moving towards a theory which can help us understand the media is relevant, since it will surely have an effect on the specific creation of materials that can be studied or imparted in educational programs.

At present, CIDV faces the challenge of reviewing its holdings and transferring them to a new support apt for preservation purposes; and also of generating labels, genres, records and ar-

chival criteria. The Spanish company Mountain has offered to sponsor our project by providing us with 60-tera storage capacity, so that we will be able to pour in it the collection that we have compiled for the past five years, which contains already over 7,000 entries. The agreement with Mountain has enabled the acquisition of technical equipment for the archive, and the planning of its growth for the next five years.

Among recent acquisitions, we would like to highlight the acquisition of the personal archive of María Pallier, director of the TV-program *Metrópolis*, who donated its videos from the 1980s to CIDV, including over 170 authors and some 600 works dating back to a decade that has scarcely been collected in the history of video in Spain.

One of the complexities common to archives is the choice of software that can be compatible with other platforms, and its hypothetical connection to the web. European archive policies have developed a series of free software which would supposedly favor the exchange of archives with other countries through online connections, and the mobility of materials across the Internet. However, despite so much debate, investment and gimmicky policies, we are still light years away from turning archive holdings into truly common goods, accessible and open.

Against the backdrop of this paradigm of policies and international models, we are considering to use Koha Cobli, an open source system for integrated library management; or the Europeana network and its software system, which has favored the creation of the program *Hispania. Directorio y recolector de recursos digitales*. They are both alleged saviors of our archival holdings and champions of international policies for the shared use of culture and the safeguarding of digitalized collections... And yet the fact is that, seen from the perspective of an independent archive, these networks are exclusive, not in the least easy to integrate with other humbler resources, and have created a barely accessible elite for institutions sidelined with institutional politics. Koha Cobli, for instance, is a free software system which requires an approximate cost of 3,500 euros a month in order to run. This amount varies depending on the programming you want to apply, and on the complexity of the programming needed.

The dream for inclusiveness and intertwining with other archives that CIDV has clung to smacks up against the wall of an economic perspective geared to large institutions operating at fever pitch. This is the real challenge, despite the advances made and the philosophy developed by the European Community as inspiration for these tools. After a number of years using these software tools, it is now time for us to think about whether they are valid and efficient.

With regard to complexity concerning the forms of presentation and the materiality we confront with this archive, I would like to venture some reflections, some of which were already announced by Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." We should consider the value of the copy, its reproduction, the format, the materiality it generates, in themselves highly important reflections we have grappled with. Also the drifting ramifications of video art, and certain aspects of the impossibility of registering its very own performative materiality, such as in the work of artist Anders Webers, where the material is in itself an excuse for the performance and the value of the work is, *per se*, the copy, given that it destroys as much as the original produces. How can we, from the archive's perspective, record and register that aspect? How can the work of art be archived if it has, in its very nature, traces of the ephemeral?

As a final reflection, I would like to point out the relevance of the conservation policy by recalling the complaint of the artist Paz Muro regarding one of her works. Paz Muro is the author of *Libro Blanco Geometrías de la Paz* (White Book Geometry of Peace). This work accounts for the existence of a performative condition resulting from the collective intervention of the public. In the seventies, the artist made an action at the Colegio Mayor, calling on the public to prepare the *White Book Geometry of Peace* which was to be written by the students themselves. This book, after a ritual reading action, was burned, and its resulting materiality, the result of the performance, has been preserved to this day. When the Restoration Department of Museo Reina Sofía recently broached the possibility of remaking the burned book, Paz Muro raised her complaint: "The burned book is the artwork".

# TRANS|FEMINIST/ KUIR ARCHIVE

ELSA VELASCO  
PATRICIA RODRÍGUEZ  
MARÍA GIL

## Origins

The Transfeminist/Kuir Archive was born as a part of Museo La Neomudéjar and almost as a natural outgrowth of the activity that takes place in it: this sort of contents has been a constant in the center's programming and it is not alien to the background to the people in board.

Thus, tracking the project's antecedents is useful in order to construct its history. One of its various points of departure was the creation of an Office of LGTBQ Affairs in the setting of the Valle del Cauca in Colombia, as a result of the mediation between LGTBQ groups and the Valle del Cauca's mayoral office. As early as the end of July 2015, the Museum housed the photo installation show *Ora Pro Nobis*, by Diana Martín-Lapeña, who metaphorically portrays the queer world through religious symbolism. Along the same line, in the context of IVAHM – Madrid International Festival of Video Art, held in 2015, the exhibition *Fluid Femininities* took place. In *Video Art and Sexuality as a Political Manifesto*, new performative and sexual imaginaries for deconstructing identities were depicted through post-porno and video art.

These experiences brought forward the need to supplement the program with some teaching apparatus. Somewhat with this aim in mind, we came up with the conference *Dissident Constructions, Gender and Other Aberrations*, held in June 2015, when we gathered a fair number of queer fanzines.

In October of the following year, we started a new process of collecting in order to increase our documentary funds. And in January 2017 we witnessed a second activation of our archive which materialized in the event *Déjà-vu*, promoted by Thibault Gautier, where the video installation *December 26* was presented and various round tables about the production of fanzines and LGTBQ activism were held, with the participation of Silvia Maggi, Silvia Radicioni and Federico Armenteros – Distribuidora de Peligrosidad Social, La Radical Gai, BollusVivendi, and Abertura Vaginal, among others.

After these activities, and when the volume of materials grew

considerably, we made the decision to give them a physical space of their own – the office in the hall of the *Generador* at Museo La Neomudéjar – and an archival structure adapted to its singularity, coherent with the materials this archive would bring together and with the character and history of the Museum that houses it.

## Classification

It was then when we began to look for an order of classification for the ensemble that would allow for its better understanding. We considered that the best option would be a system of triangulations. We distinguished, with this aim, three thematic high points, or *nuclei*, which take the contents from various, mutually complementary perspectives. Thus, first we classified documents depending on whether they derived from *activism* which might be classified into publications (magazines and fanzines); documents that keep the memory of activity spaces, starting with those generated and circulated by queer discourse – which, we think, constitutes a highly relevant aspect often ignored (if not shrugged off) by other platforms –; and, finally, documentation of similar – also fundamental – manifestations and actions.

The second structural axis would be what we call *artivism*, which refers to records in every sort of medium of artistic expressions that tackle this sort of contents. We should not forget that the archive is part of Museo La Neomudéjar. It is through these contents that it is connected to the CIDV – Center for Documentation and Research on Video Art.

Finally, our third structural axis would be the *historical representation of the movement* made by general media or by media independent from the activists. This would encompass, therefore, the way LGTBQ groups have been portrayed by mass media in studies and publications, as well as their image in the clinical and the legislation fields.

This structure had the intention of providing a reading of the history of the LGTBQ movement from a multiplicity of viewpoints. For similar coherence reasons, we made efforts to

cover all of the Spanish territory as regards the point of origin of documentary materials, with the aim of decentralizing narratives and searching for singularities.

Yet, it should be pointed out that this is not a closed set, but rather a matter of a constantly growing organic structure. We receive donations which, on occasion, come from active groups that deposit here new productions or prior publications. On other occasions, donations are the result of the vital activism of individuals who decide to yield collections they have preserved by their own personal efforts. At times, Museo La Neomudéjar even acquires documents that are considered relevant.

### Management

The model of administration and management of this entire infrastructure was articulated over time, as the archive and its related activities were developing. The need for management materialized in an “autonomous working group” comprising people who offered to collaborate temporarily in the project. At this moment, this group comprises three people: María Gil, Patricia Rodríguez and Elsa Velasco.

Probably because we were connected to the initiative in a more or less early phase, the task has fallen to us to define the archive’s way of operating, and the performance protocols that will guide work in the documentary collection.

At first, our priority was to tackle the tasks of organization and description of the materials. The adopted process starting after the reception of documents would be the following: new acquisitions are to be included in an inventory and deposited in baskets, where they are kept until they can be catalogued in greater detail. We have developed a marking system that gathers the most relevant information about each document, so as to build up a database which facilitates the retrieval of documents for consultation. After that first inventory, documents are wrapped individually in paper for preservation purposes and kept in cardboard file holders inside a closet that serves as their storage place. Before arriving there, however, they may be exhibited for some time, if it is considered that they have

a special interest for the public of Museo La Neomudéjar. In fact, the archive is open as an exhibition space whenever someone is working on it as a user.

Once this issue was solved and we could gather the first experiences of requests for consultation and study of the sources, we had to face the question of access. From the outset, it was clear that we wanted maximum freedom and would try to avoid the restrictive practices that characterize other archives, establishing a system more consistent with the nature of the materials and the philosophy of Museo La Neomudéjar. An open-participation discussion panel was organized with the aim of drawing out some concrete guidelines for action. In this discussion it was concluded that free access would have to be limited in some cases in order to guarantee the protection of activists: those documents which might entail sensitive features in the sense of risking the legal security of their authors would be restricted. As for all other documents, we decided that we would apply the principle of free access to all researchers – with the exception of commercial uses, in which case each request would be considered.

Another concern lies in the preservation of the documents. Apart from establishing measures for preventive preservation – as is the case of storage in paper wraps –, we are trying to digitalize documents so that they can be consulted without putting their material integrity at risk. Copies are made in order to serve loans to other institutions, and are exhibited for consultation in the archive walls, to further avoid the deterioration of originals.

### Activation

Ever since its inception, the Transfeminista-Kuir Archive of Museo La Neomudéjar has been a space for life lessons, for memory, for self-esteem. One of various initiatives was the seminar *Dissident Constructions, Gender, and Other Aberrations* held in 2015, during which, as mentioned above, we collected a significant number of fanzines now included in our archive.

The topics dealt with by authors in the publications housed in this archive are of great social and artistic value for retracing the history of LGTBQ activism since the 1970s, a decade which sti-

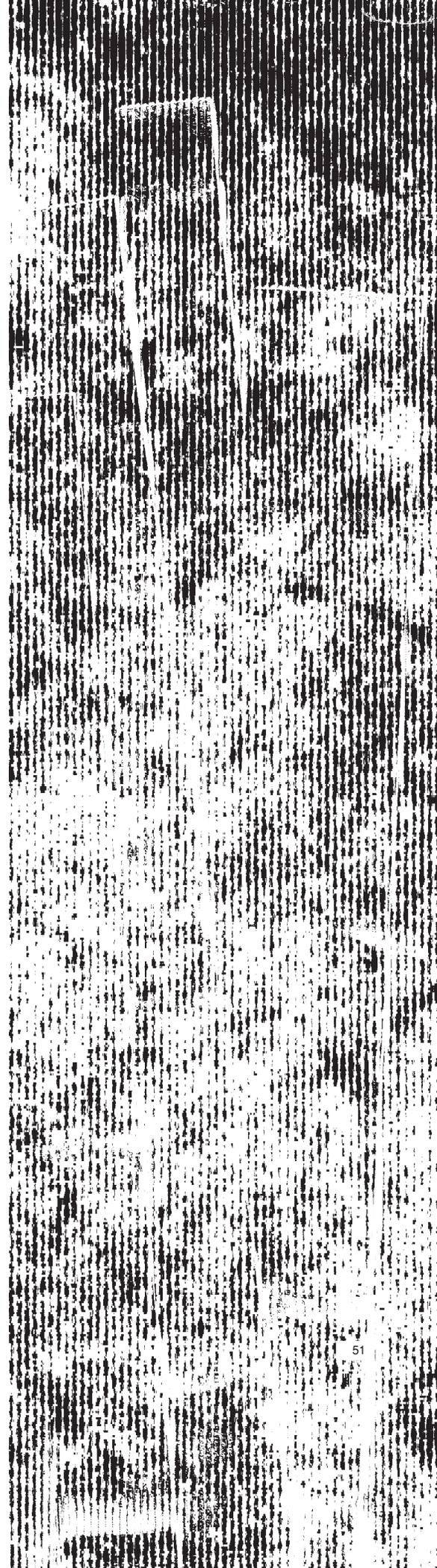
It experienced the Franco dictatorship and its “Ley de Peligrosidad Social” [Law of Social Danger]. But the internalization and reflection on the material has arisen a certain concern suggesting that the nature of our Archive should perhaps not remain a merely static and sterile container, but rather turn into a living and radical space that encourages visitors to empower themselves, create further reflections and generate consciousness.

Taking as a starting point this vital need to keep the Archive alive, we have begun to plan a series of activities and proposals intended to give visibility to the Archive and all the material gathered in it. One of the first proposals along these lines was a project entitled *Retiro sin Retiro*, chosen to be produced within Retiro Experimental, an initiative of the local Madrilean government. In the context of this initiative, citizens’ laboratories were conducted to organize an anti-homophobia *gymkhana*, or set of competitions, which took place on June 11, 2017. This project took off from a publication of documents of the collective RadicalGai, triggered by a homophobic aggression in the Retiro Park in 1993. It sought to discuss and denounce situations of discrimination and harassment which members of this social group were still suffering, over 20 years later, in their neighborhood.

Alongside the activism promoted in the neighborhood surrounding Museo La Neomudéjar, other activities have been promoted to identify materials and themes related to the Archive through the creation of Reading Clubs, free of charge and open to all. In these Reading Clubs, participants are invited to discuss texts and create other new materials, so as not to limit the Archive’s scope to the mere melancholy of the past but, rather, to generate activism and creative practice out of historical activism.

Other upcoming projects include regular film screenings tackling queer themes and an exhibition at Museo La Neomudéjar that will bring to the fore the Archive’s audiovisual memory.

A fundamental part of the life and work within the Archive is the circulation of information through social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as the links we have established, through our practice, with other LGBTQ collectives with which we share interests and hope to carry out projects in the future.



**INTERFERENCE**  
ARCHIVE:  
THE  
**IMPLICATIONS**  
OF **COLLECTIVE**  
ORGANIZING  
ON  
**INSTITUTIONAL**  
STRUCTURE

LANNI HANNA  
Interference Archive

In September 2017, Museo Reina Sofia and Red Conceptualismos del Sur, invited Interference Archive (IA) to participate in a conference called *Archives of the Commons II*. I attended on behalf of the collective project of IA. What transpired at the conference was a rich conversation that shed particular light on the varied, interwoven, and sometimes incommensurate conceptualization of ‘the commons’ that each participating archive or consortium brought to the conversation. I was asked to speak about the “politics of institutionality of the archives: tensions, alliances, reinventions – about how community archives achieve institutionality.” At IA we emphasize a counter-institutional approach in order to negotiate our relationship to institutions, and as a political practice we endeavor to maintain a space that does not get caught up in the motor of becoming institutional or being consumed by institutions.

In order to place Interference Archive in the context of institutionalization, the following essay briefly situates IA’s relationship to institutionalization – that is, our relationship to larger, vertically structured conceptions of institutions, as well as more centrally our own organizational structure – through two of the larger discussions that have historically taken place among IA’s organizers. First, I introduce our labor practice and how it functions counter to typical institutional processes, as well as its implications on our financial operations. Second, I discuss our material collection, access-policy, and programming as a case-study for thinking through some of the ways in which IA both works as an institution and outside of the constraints that many institutions face.

### About Interference Archive

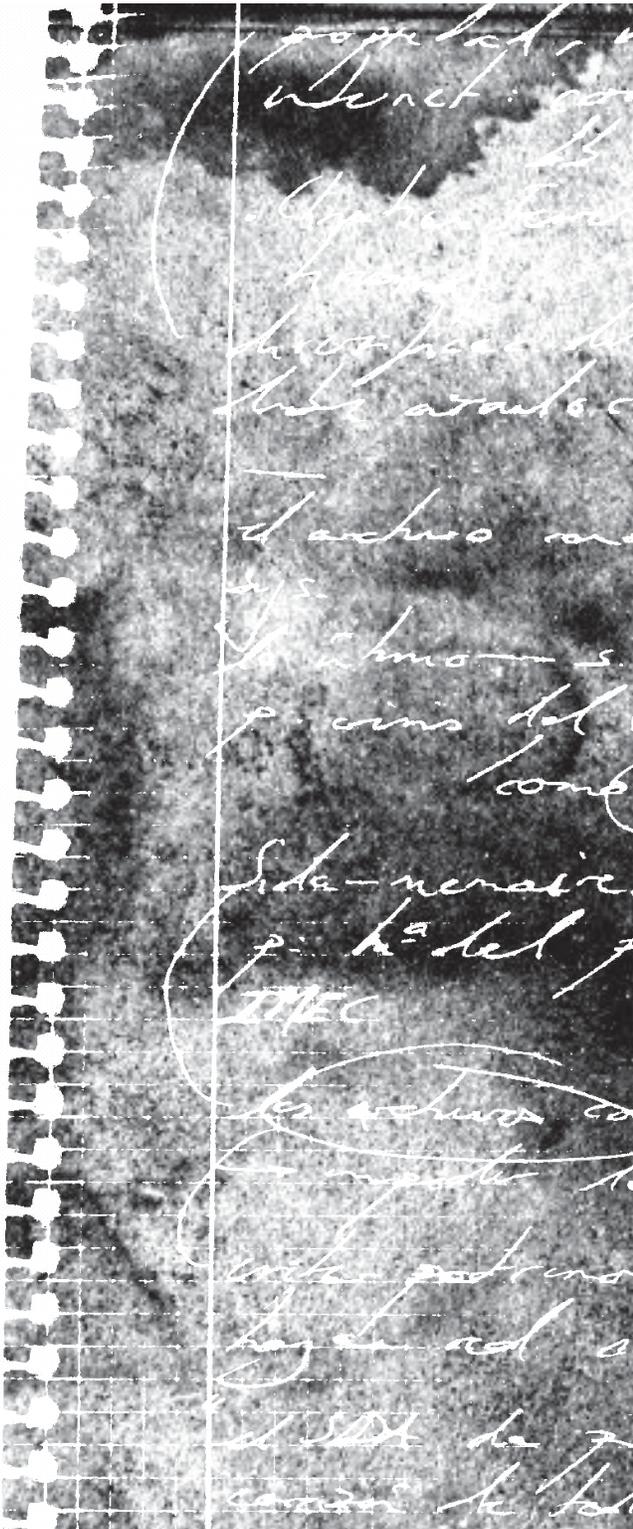
The mission of Interference Archive is to explore the relationship between cultural production and social movements as a way to tackle social and political issues. Our archive brings together people interested in social change, including educators, artists, activists, archivists and community organizers. We offer a study center and public programs including exhibitions, workshops, talks, and screenings, all of which are free and open to the public. We see regular visits from New Yorkers, as well as a steady stream of visitors and researchers

from around the globe. IA is open to the public four days per week, with at least one volunteer staff member available during each open shift. Additional events and meetings keep the archive open three or four evenings per week. Through a combination of regular open hours, programming and exhibition openings, we see anywhere from 30 to 300 visitors to the archive each week. We recently moved, settling into a new, more publicly-available location. The particularities of the new space will shift and re-open conversations about labor and access.

### Volunteer Labor as a Counter-Institutional Practice

We are a volunteer-run community space. We divide labor between multiple simultaneous and often separately functioning working groups: Administration, Audio, Cataloging, Education and ad hoc working groups for exhibitions, and other more labor-intensive programming. We have a Born Digital working group that has been on hiatus but hopes to begin meeting again soon. Several volunteers staff regular open hours and may or may not be able to additionally take part in working groups. Communication to all active volunteers functions through a rotating spokes council model. One person acts as our volunteer coordinator, facilitating delegation of labor for projects and upcoming events. I provide these details in order to clarify the ways in which we function as an organization, both within the standard definitions of institutionalization in the US (as a 501c3 non-profit) and also outside of those expectations.

The labor model of a volunteer-run organization directly responds to some of the concerns that arise out of the institutionalization of archives. The volunteer structure of IA as described above operates along a non-hierarchic model, allowing individual volunteers to engage with activities and programming in whatever ways are available to them. We also engage in serious conversations about professionalization of archival skills, considering the knowledge and skills that each volunteer brings as equal, regardless of their professional training, and understanding that every volunteer has much to learn from others.



In the United States, conversations about the political limitations of non-profits have taken place in organizational and academic circles for decades. While there are many facets to these conversations about what is referred to as the non-profit industrial complex, there are several concerns that mostly pertain to our collective thinking around standard non-profit organizational models and shape the way we organize in response. These concerns have to do with unequal divisions of power and labor, steps toward professionalization within non-profits, the excessive amount of labor towards fundraising for adequate financial support for salaries, and censorship of content that can result from receiving money from large funding bodies.

While our non-hierarchical, all-volunteer labor model provides us with a path away from some of the labor concerns we take issue with in the non-profit industrial complex, our sustainer funding model builds on this as we examine fundraising and finance issues at the foundation of professionalized, inequitable, and unsustainable labor practices in the non-profit industrial complex. Sustainers of Interference Archive – over 100 individuals and groups – provide the bulk of operational funding with additional support coming from event donations and educational institutions that bring their classes to the archive. Small grants have, to this point, only aided with additional programming costs. As a counter-institution, volunteer labor and a sustainer-based funding model allows us to be beholden to a large number of individuals mutually committed to the goals of Interference Archive. We recognize our sustainers as part of the labor that keeps IA alive, alongside the volunteers who staff open hours or participate in working groups. Our structure and operational model intentionally decentralizes power while increasing accountability.

#### Archival Collection Content, Access and Programming

UA fundamental aspect of the archival culture at IA is our open-stacks policy. Materials are available for visitors to peruse at their leisure and photograph. Interference Archive works within the philosophy of “preservation through utilization”, where the ongoing use, interpretation and re-presentation of

material, is considered a practice of maintaining and preserving the content and intent of the material in contrast to a focus on preservation of each item's formal qualities.

At IA, open-access refers to two concepts: first, visitors are not required to have any kind of research or academic credentials and are given direct access; and second, varied uses of the physical space and volunteer labor go into building, fostering and maintaining ongoing relationships with organizations and movements whose histories we archive. Much of our labor is directed towards the relationships we foster with the communities that produce the materials in our collection. Beyond collecting the cultural ephemera of their history, we are intentional about continuing to engage with these groups and collaborating with them in the ongoing work of the archive to the extent that they are interested and available. What this looks like on an everyday basis is, as Josh MacPhee (one of IA's founders) says, "the people that use the space, make the space."<sup>1</sup> What MacPhee refers to is the ways in which volunteer labor and community participation shifts and directs interest in certain projects, informing programming and other work or activities that are created in relation with IA.

## Conclusion

Unlike institutions whose budgets, grant cycles and bureaucratic structures require a focus on professionalization, fundraising and program development mapped out years in advance, IA can adapt and change activities and programming to respond to collection donations, contemporary political events, current interests or in support of the movements represented in our collection and our community. A sentiment that often confronts IA organizers, and that was voiced regularly during *Archives of the Commons II*, is that small, community based archives like IA and similar projects presented at the conference will eventually need to be subsumed by larger institutions in order to manage their survival.

This teleological progress narrative is one that undergirds the liberal capitalist project, effectively creating the justification for larger institutions to garner the majority resources under

the auspices of supporting smaller organizations. Within this particular institutional logic, the participatory labor structure of IA is seen as utopic and unsustainable. This logic has become a common-sense narrative, despite collective histories which contradict this documented in the material at IA. IA is not claiming a labor model that is particularly novel or forward thinking. In fact, an argument could be made that this organizational structure is more clearly understood through nostalgia and the belief in the effectiveness and maintenance of collectivity. IA builds its own organizational structure as well as how it negotiates its relationships to institutionality through an engagement with the histories, structures and political formations documented and discussed in the stacks of its archive.

<sup>1</sup> Video by Brooke Darrah Shuman, *Interference Archive and Mobile Print Power*: 3:30 min

# ARCHIVE **EVALUATION**

MAY PUCHET<sup>1</sup>

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RedCSur

RedCSur, an artist and researcher platform founded 10 years ago, promotes an archive policy based on an ethical commitment regarding the enhancement of the archives of Latin American critical artistic practices, with special emphasis on those created since the 1960s, which, due to their material conditions, are in a precarious situation, disjointed or without possibilities for public consultation. Our purpose is to protect their inalienable nature (i.e. their integrity and indivisibility), creating conditions for their preservation, socialization and availability for consultation by all interested parties, as well as fostering their local registration there where the experiences described in the archive took place, through alliances with public institutions explicitly committed to these principles.

Since 2009, RedCSur has developed several projects resulting in the creation of relevant archives and involving researchers, artists and institutions (both public universities or museums and civil society initiatives). On this occasion, we will present a reflection on four projects framed within that policy: the Clemente Padín Archive (Uruguay), the Juan Carlos Romero Archive (Argentina), the CADA Archive (Chile), the Mario-tti/Luy Archive (Peru), to share the experience of their work processes and to propose some elements for an evaluation that considers the possibilities and also the problems and limits of these initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

### Clemente Padín Archive

The Archive of Clemente Padín is the first project for the cataloging, conservation, digitalization and public opening of an artist's personal archive developed by RedCSur. The Uruguayan artist Clemente Padín kept numerous materials at his home, due to his activity as a performer, experimental poet, video artist and mail-artist, since the mid-sixties. He is one of the first Latin American artists to participate in the mail art network. His work was always politically driven, highlighting his struggle for human rights, resisting the military dictatorships of Uruguay and other Latin American countries during the seventies and eighties. His archive not only compiles materials related to Padín's artistic performances; it also constitutes a valuable documentary collection resulting from his active

exchanges with avant-garde poets and artists from around the world since the sixties, as a promoter of several collaborative publishing initiatives and collective projects of artist networks.

In 2010, a custody cession agreement for Padín's personal archive was signed with the General Archive of the University of the Republic of Uruguay (AGU). The first stage of conservation, organization and dissemination of the materials began in collaboration with Museo Reina Sofía, the Spanish State Society for Foreign Cultural Action (SEACEX) and RedCSur.<sup>3</sup>

The AGU is a suitable place to physically house the archive and provide human resources for its cataloging and conservation; it has the appropriate infrastructure conditions for the custody of the documentary collection and work of Padín, and a team of professionals with up-to-date criteria in Archive Science and conservation, as well as knowledge of the diverse types of materials that make up this peculiar archive. Also, its location in an institution dependent on the university aims to strengthen future research actions.

The general terms of the agreement with the AGU are as follows:

- The term of the temporary custody will be three years from the signing of the agreement in 2010. It is worth mentioning that custody is automatically renewed for periods of two years.
- In terms of the archive's accessibility, the documents in custody will be available to the public for consultation and research.
- The parties involved will coordinate a general work program, with the purpose of designing archival techniques to ensure the conservation and use of the material transferred in custody and to establish criteria for cataloging it.
- The AGU may propose and carry out research and teaching tasks with teams of researchers and archivists or chairs of the University that are not included in this agreement and by securing other forms of support. For cases which require the publication, dissemination or exhibition of the archive's documents or works, specific agreements will be established.

The AGU retains the conditions of the mentioned agreement and continuously receives new materials provided by Clemente Padín, which are included in the archive. Recently the "Cle-

<sup>1</sup> This text was written collectively by members of the Archives Node of Red Conceptualismos del Sur (RedCSur), or Southern Conceptualisms Network, on the occasion of the presentation by May Puchet/RedCSur at the seminar *Archives of the Common II: The Anomic Archive* at Museo Reina Sofía, in September 2017.

<sup>2</sup> For background information on the RedCSur archives policy see: Graciela Carnevale, Marcelo Expósito, André Mesquita, Jaime Vindel, *Desinventario. Esquirlas de Tucumán*

*Arde en el Archivo de Graciela Carnevale*, Santiago de Chile, Ocho Libros, 2015. Fernando Davis, "El Archivo Padín y la experiencia radical de la nueva poesía"; David Gutiérrez, Cristián Gómez Moya, Joaquín Barriandos, Jaime Vindel, "Políticas de archivo, Experiencias colectivas de la Red Conceptualismos del Sur"; Ana Longoni and Miguel López, "Cartografías. Un itinerario de riesgo en América del Sur", dossier inside Revista Carta n°1, Madrid, MNCARS, 2010 p. 8-15.

mente Padín Artists' Archive" Civil Association was created as a legal entity that took over the archive beginning in 2016. RedCSur does not participate directly in the Civil Association, although its commitment to the archive in custody of the AGU remains. This situation would imply to make progress towards long-term archive criteria and policies jointly adopted by RedCSur, the artist and the institution involved.

### Juan Carlos Romero Archive

The Juan Carlos Romero Archive is an initiative promoted by RedCSur<sup>4</sup> since 2009, with a strong commitment and involvement by the artist himself. In 2013, the creation of the "Juan Carlos Romero Artists' Archive" Civil Association was approved, dedicated to preserving and socializing the valuable archive compiled by the artist during his lifetime.

Juan Carlos Romero was not only one of the most recognized Argentine conceptual artists; he also had an extensive career as a teacher, trade union activist, publisher of artists' books, coordinator of artistic collectives, curator and passionate archivist who, throughout his years of training and trade union activism, compiled substantial documentation and valuable publications. The archive contains many collections, gathered since the 1950s, which bring together documents that are essential for studying artistic productions, mail art, experimental poetry, artists' books and numerous self-managed editorial initiatives, as well as political and union history and the popular culture of Argentina and Latin America. Noteworthy as unique are the collections featuring different cultural magazines, the political poster collection (from 1930 onwards) and the collection of Centro de Arte y Comunicación – CAYC.

Four years ago, progress was made in acquiring a space for the archive (made available by Juan Carlos Romero under a

free use contract); a large part of it was transferred to this space (the remaining part is still in Romero's home), and a four-party agreement was signed between the "Juan Carlos Romero Artists' Archive" Civil Association, RedCSur, Museo Reina Sofía and UNTREF, an Argentine public university. While members of RedCSur secured resources for equipment and work on the inventory and organization of materials, Museo Reina Sofía obtained research grants to advance the cataloging of the archive's priority areas (such as the collection of political graphic works, or the artist's personal archive). UNTREF found some resources to refurbish the building, an old house with significant humidity problems, and assigned a salary to the archive coordinator.<sup>5</sup>

Juan Carlos Romero passed away in 2017. After his death, the fate of the archive has yet to be decided, given that the agreement expired in October of that year and his heirs must reach a new agreement. At RedCSur we have tried to sustain a policy that combines efforts so that the archive is not destroyed or disassembled, and may be preserved and made available for public consultation at a local public institution, since it has been clear that an initiative of this kind is very difficult to sustain in the long term without an institutional structure.

### CADA Archive<sup>6</sup>

The Colectivo Arte Acción – CADA [Art Actions Collective], formed between 1979 and 1985 in Santiago, Chile, initially consisted of the visual artists Lotty Rosenfeld and Juan Castillo, the writer Diamela Eltit, the poet Raúl Zurita and the sociologist Fernando Balcells. Over time, the composition of the group evolved. Not only did its initial core membership change, but different people became involved and collaborated in the actions promoted by the collective. In this process of connections and complicities, CADA carried out risky

<sup>3</sup> The team consisted of Fernando Davis, Cristina Freire and Clemente Padín.

<sup>4</sup> The team consisted of Ana Longoni, Fernando Davis and Juan Carlos Romero.

<sup>5</sup> In January 2019 we received the alarming news that Juan Carlos Romero's heirs (the artist, born in 1931, had died in 2017) had just decided to sell the artist's archive to a private collection of Latin American art based in New York, through arrangements made by gallery owner Ricardo Ocampo. RedCSur called on the artistic and cultural community to protest and repudiate the sale and privatization of Juan Carlos Romero's archive, which means that this valuable patrimony, which should be public, will remain instead in private hands, delocalized, inscribed in the logic of a "collection of art" and also dispersed and inaccessible. RedCSur members have taken on several actions to try to stop this sale, including, besides a public campaign on printed matter, sending letters to various ministries

and institutions in Argentina so as to demand the acknowledgement of this archive as part of the country's national cultural patrimony and therefore not allowed to leave Argentina. Although the archive's final destination has not been publicly clarified yet, in spite of our efforts it has not been possible to stop the sale. RedCSur is currently preparing collective actions in response to these events.

<sup>6</sup> The institutionalization process of the CADA Archive has been retraced in detail in a book recently published: *Archivo CADA. Astucia práctica y potencias de lo común*. Santiago de Chile: RedCSur y Ocholibros, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> The team consisted of Paulina Varas, Isabel García, Jaime Vindel, Ana Longoni and Fernanda Carvajal.

artistic actions in the public space during the most difficult years of the military dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet. Their interventions aimed to break the blockade of the social memory of the Popular Unity period (1970-1973) produced by the *coup d'état*, and at the same time sought to disrupt the discipline and normalization of everyday life under authoritarianism. CADA's actions used multiple supports and connected various symbolic spaces throughout the city, from the opposition media to factory spaces, from the marginal neighborhoods of the city to the National Museum of Fine Arts, occupied by the dictatorship, or the United Nations headquarters in Santiago. They were actions with a strong utopian symbolism that articulated citizen protests, as in the case of the intervention that called people to complete the slogan "NO +" (1983).

The documents (publications, declarations, photographs, videos, recordings, objects) that portray the actions of the CADA group were kept for years at Lotty Rosenfeld's house. No Chilean institution was concerned about the risk of dispersion and destruction of the potential archive gathered there. In 2010 RedCSur decided to intervene, helping to find a way for the archive to remain in Chile and be housed by an institution capable of safeguarding it under appropriate conditions of conservation and ensuring its public accessibility. A long process then began, during which the RedCSur team,<sup>7</sup> together with Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, with funding from the Foundation for Arts Initiatives (FfAI) and institutional support from Museo Reina Sofía, reached an agreement through which part of the collection would be sold as artwork to Museo Reina Sofía, while RedCSur would work for the public constitution of the CADA Archive, which would be given under a free use contract to a local institution. It was necessary to find an institutional ally with sufficient social legitimacy, which the artists could trust and which would satisfy our expectations regarding the conditions of conservation and accessibility that we were looking for the archive.

After a long process of negotiations, in May 2016 the CADA Archive was donated to the Museo de la Memoria in Santiago. At the beginning of the process it had been discussed

that RedCSur would participate in the management of the archive through an advisory committee, but this arrangement ultimately did not occur. However, the archive was inventoried, cataloged and digitized according to the criteria proposed by RedCSur. The CADA Archive has gone from being a collection of private documents to becoming an archive open for consultation according to its own logic and with its own database, at the Documentation Center of Museo de la Memoria. A large share of the documents is also accessible on the [www.archivosenuso.org](http://www.archivosenuso.org) website. All of this deserves to be considered as a political achievement and a precedent for the institutionalization of art archives in a context of institutional precariousness and market voracity.

#### Mariotti / Luy Archive

The Mariotti/Luy Archive was established in 1981 with the departure of Francisco Mariotti and María Luy to Switzerland, after the end of the collective experience E.P.S. Huayco (1980-1981) in Lima. This archive brings together not only the group's experience but also the personal itinerary of Mariotti and Luy, their connection with the European avant-garde in the late sixties (their participation in Documenta IV), the work within the military government of Velasco during the seventies in Peru (1969-1974), the work of graphic workshops conducted by Mariotti in Cusco and other provinces of the country, as well as materials associated with the pre-Huayco scene and the electronic and artificial intelligence experiments developed during the eighties.

In 2012, the first negotiations began to try to move part of the Mariotti/Luy archive, with the intention of creating a common archive on the E.P.S. Huayco collective. It did not occur at the time because it was impossible for the former members to reach an agreement on the limits and contents of that archive. After the frustrated attempt of 2012, a new attempt was made in 2013 to negotiate the transfer of the Mariotti/Luy archive to Lima, this time as an independent archive owned by the couple of artists that included works, materials, documents, photographs and graphics from 1963 to the present. This project<sup>8</sup> was set up as a collaboration be-

tween RedCSur, Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) and Museo Reina Sofía, with the financial support of the Foundation for Arts Initiatives – FfAI.

In April 2017, a committee was appointed to establish the policies for the reception and processing of the Mariotti/Luy Archive. The different available tools were discussed first, and the ideal protocol for the treatment of the materials already submitted was drafted, designing a work plan with specific actions agreed upon together with the intention of creating long-term sustainability strategies.

The archive is currently in custody at the MALI. The organization and digitization work will begin following the completion of an initial report on the material received. Once the necessary digitization and restoration processes have been carried out, it will be opened to public consultation and uploaded on the [www.archivosenuso.org](http://www.archivosenuso.org) platform.

### Some Questions

We would like to pose some questions regarding the role of RedCSur as mediator and promoter in archive institutionalization processes. On the one hand, it can be observed that RedCSur has had successful experiences in this area, for example, in obtaining financial support for these projects from European institutions, such as Museo Reina Sofía or North American institutions, such as the Foundation for Arts Initiatives (FfAI), which has prevented some archives from having to migrate from their contexts of origin. This has been the case of the Padín Archive or the CADA Archive. On the other hand, the alliances that RedCSur has proposed with some local institutions have been more complex and have led to other processes, since these institutions sometimes impose logics that are not specific to the project, or they could absorb and neutralize them. According to these considerations, we ask ourselves: how do the artists and the institutions that receive archives value the role of RedCSur in these processes? To what extent are the efforts of RedCSur made invisible? What would be the most desirable scenario for RedCSur in these mediations?

In other cases, such as the Juan Carlos Romero Archive, attempts have been made to favor the independence of the archives, trying not to centralize them in museums or institutions that may remove them from their places of origin, or by private collectors or other types of local institutions that may privatize them. How can we ensure the long-term durability of the independent management of archives when these are not institutional archives? How can we ensure long-term accessibility when there are no regular resources?

Another important point throughout this process has been the relationship between artists and researchers. The work in the projects that RedCSur promotes has been possible due to the commitment and involvement of artists who have participated in the practices that the archives describe, and they are often the custodians or owners of these documentary collections. It is assumed that we share the same affective/political code, but when institutions or the market emerge this initial alliance is disrupted and the position of RedCSur in the processes of institutionalization becomes more complex and contentious.

One of the most important aspects of the work that RedCSur has done with archives involves the possibility of generating collective, networked reflections on the archives of critical artistic practices that have emerged throughout Latin America. One of our main goals is to promote the socialization of materials and the connection among the different archives that are being located and shaped in a large “archive of the commons.” This is an experiment which seeks to make available and publicly accessible the archives on collective research projects initiated by RedCSur or in which the latter participates in collaboration with other platforms. This is why we have promoted *Archivos en uso* (“Archives in use”, [archivosenuso.org](http://archivosenuso.org)), a digital platform for the socialization of archives based on a program designed specifically for each archive, where the categories or keywords used to describe each document emanate from the documentary collection itself, and are not imposed on the archive: we do not resort to any prior thesaurus, but instead try to discover the words that emerge from the very logic of the experiences documented there and the ways in which the archive is constructed. Our

practices with archives have forced us to think permanently about what it implies and what it means to share archival procedures and policies. Undoubtedly, the methodologies that RedCSur has been inventing have helped overcome the isolation of each case, in order to reflect and act on a larger scale of coordination and dialogue.

RedCSur has proposed considering the organization of archives as a process of permanent creation and investigation. Each case has challenged us to think about how to make classification a task that responds to the internal logic of each collection and to make the uniqueness of each classification compatible with the importance of facilitating access to users. These processes thus force us to question and reinvent the conventions of what an archive is.

Among the challenges we face, and based on the aforementioned evaluations, we believe that some are more urgent than others and perhaps more difficult to solve, such as those that have to do with the intervention and alliances of RedCSur in the different projects. We are concerned that the role of RedCSur is seen as the generator of human and economic resources “in the service of,” instead of continuing to be a promoter of initiatives whose research policies promote the critical capacity of the archives and socialize their public access. In that sense, there are new political struggles ahead and RedCSur must put all its effort and creative strength into this.

Also, it can be said that RedCSur makes horizontal connections and proposes complicities that have often been successful. But we also believe that it is not easy for all those involved to escape from the hierarchical conditions that sometimes prevail between institutions, artists and RedCSur, so that collaborations may effectively be transformed into viable and friendly practices. In this sense, it is important to have a deeper understanding of how RedCSur is viewed by others (institutions and/or artists), and also to ask ourselves what position we want and can assume when moving forward. This can be both unsettling and critical at the same time, but it is a task that RedCSur must inevitably consider in these times, even if there are no accurate answers.

Finally, for this meeting we set out to discuss and reflect on the stability of archives and their practices in unsafe conditions, which have to do with difficulties in terms of sustaining long-term commitments or overcoming market dynamics, among others. But we also ask ourselves what would be RedCSur’s ideal position in this constellation since, in addition to what has been done so far, we continue working on several projects with different archives. In this sense, we raise some questions: how do we imagine and build RedCSur’s role in archive institutionalization processes? How can we ensure the continuity and accessibility of the archives we have already worked on? How should we work to favor multiple possible activations of the archives and expand their critical value? And, finally, how can the documentary collections we work with help us expand the idea of art and politics and connect with other ways of imagining the future?



**LACA AND**  
**FUNDACIÓN YAXS**  
**TWO**  
**SELF-ADMINISTRATED**  
**ARCHIVES**  
**BETWEEN THEORY**  
**AND PRAXIS**

MAITE MUÑOZ IGLESIAS

Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (LACA)

Centro de Documentación de la Fundación YAXS

Beyond the many possible genealogies of the relation between art and archives in the historicist discourse so present today, we can say that the establishment of policies, economics and technologies for archives in the artistic context of recent years is conditioned by the crisis in the notion of institutional archives as authority, and the critique of their active role during colonial processes. And this is particularly relevant (though not exclusive) in the context of Latin and Central America, both in relation to the colonialism exerted over the countries that conform those regions, and in relation to the political régimes that carried out total or partial eliminations of archives, with the intention of conditioning collective memory.

It is precisely out of this crisis that new models of an archive – the so-called dissident archives, communitarian archives, or *anarchives* – have arisen. They compile and conserve memories displaced by official discourses, highlighting the value of the archive in relation to cultural, social and/or emancipatory movements.

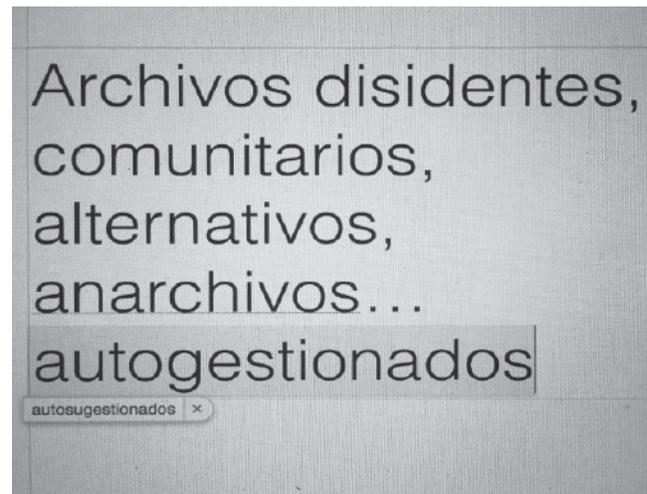
In the present report we will be speaking of the experiences of two independent archives: LACA - Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (Los Angeles, USA) and Centro de Documentación YAXS (in Guatemala City, Guatemala). While it is obvious that the geographic, social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which these two projects are framed are radically different, the two have common motivations. The urgency of filling in empty patches of documentation not represented by official narratives and the need to offer resources to the artistic and scholar community is present in the inception of both initiatives. At the same time, the two projects have built their identity not only on the basis of compiling documentation, of its treatment and making it available for consultation, but rather they have understood the pertinence of generating a reflection about the use of archival practices in the artistic context as a critical tool. This way of moving between practice and theory has led LACA and Centro de Documentación YAXS to develop active programming and to establish projects of collaboration with other actors, all these with the will to

deepen the complex notion of the archive and its role in contemporary society.

These projects - along with so many others implemented under the same reflections about the impact of archives as authority and their influence in the handling of historical discourse- have discerned the need to generate, preserve and make accessible alternative archives, which offer voices not represented by the structures of institutional powers.

At their bases issues such as subjectivity, imperfection or incompleteness are present as opposed to the alleged objectivity of the authoritarian archives. Relevance is placed on the gaps, which are understood as a form of documentation, and the potential of the absences, omissions and the lost and fragmentary memories, as well as the coexistence of multiple and even contradictory narratives.

Both projects are presented by making a review of the motivations that launched them, the teams that manage them, their acquisition policies, their fonds, the system of self-administration that allows their independence, their collaborations, their public and educational programs, as well as other related activities, such as the publication of books.



Screenshot of the computer's persistent proofreader, marking "autogestionado" (self-managed) as a non-existing word.

Los Angeles Contemporary Archive – LACA

Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (LACA) is a self-administered project fostered at its inception by artists and managed by a plural collective of actors, for the purpose of compiling, preserving, studying and circulating contemporary creative processes through the documentation they generate.

The city of Los Angeles has various institutional mechanisms that have occupied themselves with documenting artistic practices. These institutions, however, have done so from a historicist perspective, concerned with documenting a selective past conditioned by the history of art and by its associated market. The Getty Research Institute – an institution of reference in the compilation, handling and investigation of contents and methodologies – sets its parameters between the 15th century and “the present.” LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) takes in, both for its collection and for its Library and Archive, materials of a worldwide geographical range from all historical periods. It is no wonder that for both institutions, emerging artistic practices taking place in the present and, in many cases, outside of the circuits of the most obvious visibility, should go unnoticed. MOCA (The Museum of Contemporary Art), the only museum in the city founded by artists and with its eye on contemporaneity, lacks a library or an archive for researchers.

The LACA project arose in this setting and under the influence of the intense programming of the independent space Human Resources, founded in 2010 in Los Angeles and aiming to give visibility to experimental and conceptual performance practices. The urgency and need to document all these practices, together with the influence of theoretical reflections by Derrida or Hal Foster about the archive, as well as the work of artists like Andrea Fraser and her institutional critique, inspired the birth of this project, initiated by the artist Hailey Loman and the cultural provocateur Eric Kim.

Unlike all the city’s institutions, LACA focuses on the present moment, orienting its acquisitions policy to materials produced from 2013, the year of its founding, to the present day.

Similarly, it sets its geographic range of interest on Los Angeles, and on the international relations of the artists who carry on their practice in that city, stressing the importance of the contextual connections between the various materials that make up their heritage. In the same way, LACA is understood to be an opportunity to question the established concepts of archive and as an experimental space for critical thinking in which artistic investigation and public dialog find a place.

Tales of the Pink Factory  
Sunday April 24th, 3:00 - 4:30 pm

A  
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LACA



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SOFT OPENING  
LACA



LOS ANGELES  
CONTEMPORARY  
ARCHIVE (LACA)

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Samples of LACA's corporate identity.

It is curious, to say the least, that in this archive's name – Los Angeles Contemporary Archive – the word “art” should stand out by its very absence, and that its corporate identity has always used as a reference the usual institutional style of the libraries and university archives of officialdom. Two more symptoms of the constant wish to reflect on the archive's nature itself, and on the conventions of authority associated with the mechanisms of knowledge.

Today, LACA occupies a space of 185 m2 located in a shopping mall in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Chinatown. The area, conceived as an exotic tourist attraction, was designed by art directors in the film industry and built in 1938 as a Hollywood version of the city of Shanghai, appearing as such in numerous films. Nowadays the city's large Chinese community is gathered here, and in recent years it has also been populated by some young artists and independent

non-commercial spaces, in a complex movement of resistance against the gentrification that seems to have already coopted other parts of the city, such as the Arts District.

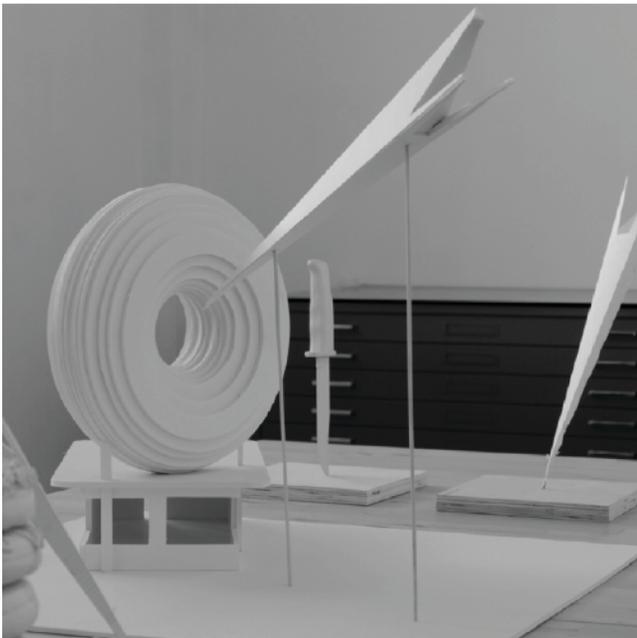
Among its holdings, LACA has around 20,000 documents, physical and digital, among which are included those of numerous artists whose practice, in many cases, is associated with research, the performative, and/or the non-production of artistic objects in the traditional sense of the term, and in which documentation takes on a relevant role.

The holdings are distributed into two main sections: Library and Archive. The Library contains mostly artists' publications, though it also compiles some reference publications and exhibition catalogs associated with the artists affiliated with LACA and its programmatic lines. Classification follows the criterion of alphabetic order by author. Only one copy of every publication is preserved, as a matter of economy of resources, and the materials do not circulate. Consultation is free of charge, and open to anyone interested.

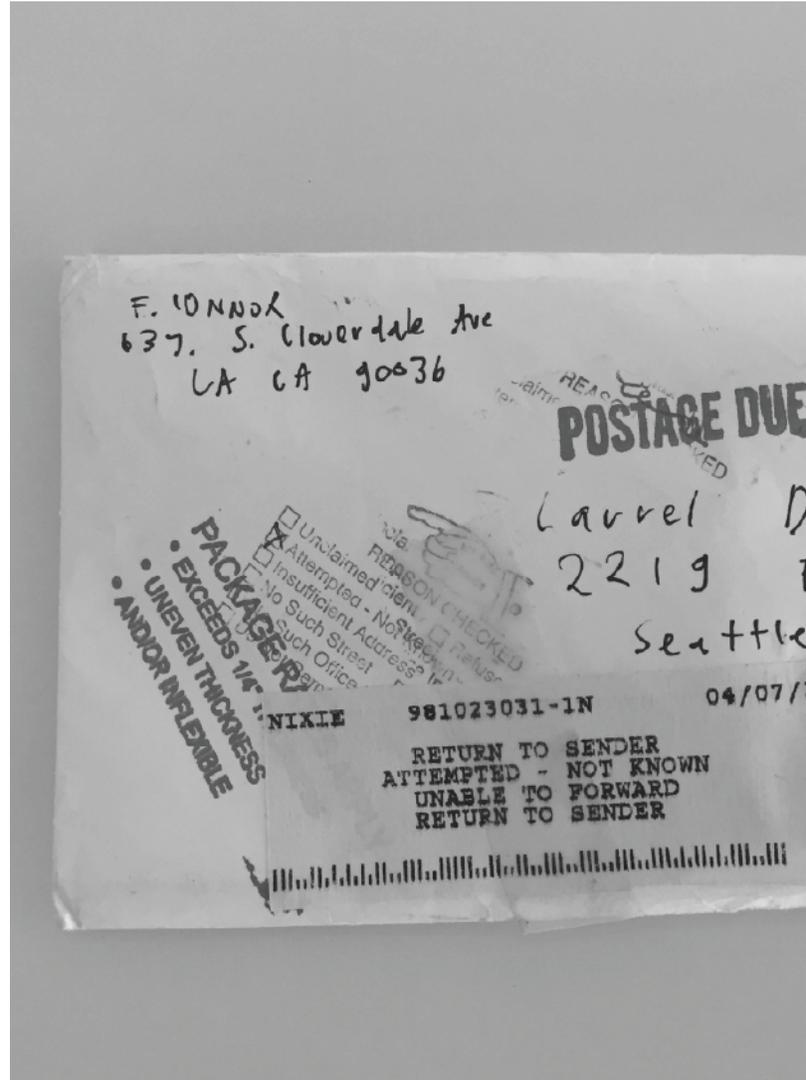
The LACA Archive contains documents for the most part unique, unpublished or published only in a small print run, in various media and formats: objects, ephemera, posters, correspondence, study and procedural documents, notebooks and photo albums. These materials stand as traces, tracks of processes and of artistic practices not oriented to objects. The Archive holdings include as well the archive of the radio platform KChung Radio, which produces over 200 shows

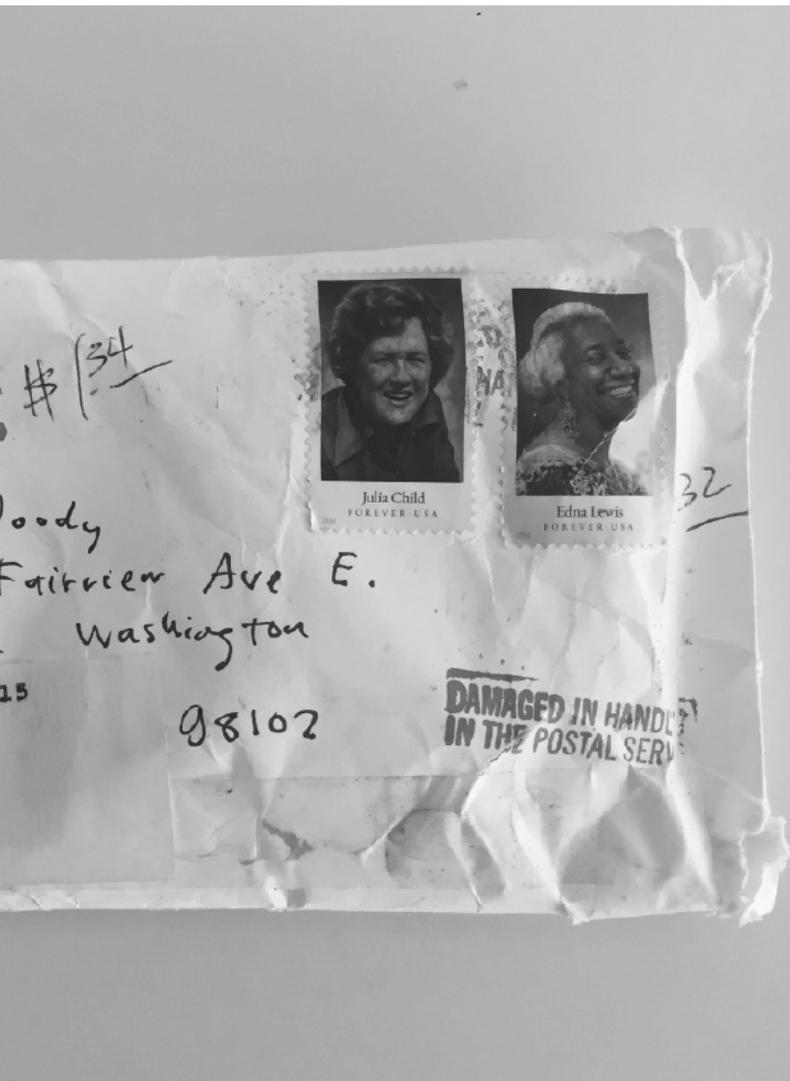


View of the shopping mall where LACA is located/ Signage inside the shopping mall/ View of LACA's venue, namely the space which serves as reading room and office.



Samples of documents held in the LACA Archive and Library





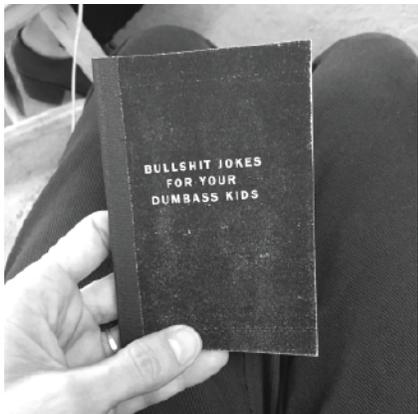
a month; the library of The Mountain School of Arts, a school founded and run by artists as an alternative to official training; the archive of the residencies program of The Villa Aurora; the personal archive of the writer and superintendent Michael Ned Holte; the correspondence of the independent publisher Semiotext(e); as well as the archive of the independent exhibition space Commonwealth and Council.

The project, promoted at its inception by artists and run by a plural collective of agents, works as a heterogeneous team of volunteers, distributed over various areas of activity. The

organization comes out of a non-hierarchical wish to avoid alienation processes of the people involved in the project and has a group of outstanding professionals from the art scene who act as advisors. Very important to the project is also the presence of the emerging artistic community, as well as the collaboration with other spaces, since compilation of documentation of art practices is something that happens through direct hand-to-hand interaction with artists and other cultural protagonists. Acquisitions are always made as consignments or donations, since the project has no budget for purchases.

As for archival handling, it follows a series of protocols for preventive preservation and uses adequate preservation materials. The space is not equipped with exhaustive controls of temperature or humidity, but LACA's aim is to avoid abrupt changes in either, and those responsible for handling documents have specific knowledge about preservation risks, thanks to training sessions with collaborators and specialist friends.

Another peculiarity of the project relates to its financing. Up to now, and ever since its founding in 2013, LACA has never received public subsidies, sustaining itself instead through private donations. The rental of LACA's space, as well as its maintenance costs, are covered by a private collector who prefers to remain anonymous. Specific activities serve to raise funds to purchase preservation materials, and to cover any unforeseen circumstances. For instance, to defray the expenses incurred by moving LACA's site at the end of 2016, works donated by over 50 local artists with ties to LACA were sold in a public auction. The thriving economy of a large sector of the city's population, as well as a fiscal system that allows for large tax deductions for investment in cultural goods, favor the maintenance of this form of financing. Unlike the Spanish system – which not only does not favor, but rather puts up barriers to any altruistic wishes –, the laws of the United States, imperfect as they may be, do offer tax deductions ranging between 20 and 50 percent of the value of the donations made to cultural organizations.



In addition to its natural function as archive, LACA extends its activity to the production of publications in collaboration with various creators and researchers. The space has a risograph printing machine and an expert at hand to guide its use. Its publication catalogue includes already 12 titles, and LACA has taken part in presentations and activities in fairs like Smoke Break LA, San Francisco Art Book Fair or Los Angeles Art Book Fair.

Last, but not least, we should mention the constant program of activities offered in this space, which has been the site of over 50 talks, lectures, performances and exhibitions so far. In all these activities, the guiding line of interest seeks to reflect on the shifting role of the archive and on the documentation in experimental art practices; to explore the potentiality of independent and artist's publications as spaces of creation; and also to encourage critical thinking and debate about questions of race, class, sex and gender.

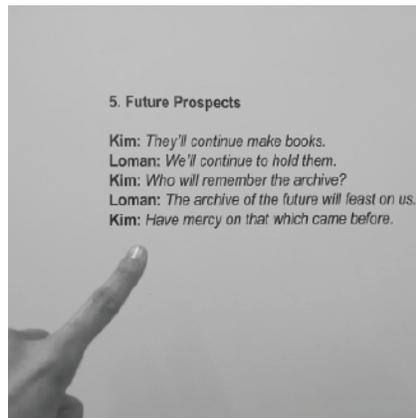
#### Centro de documentación from Fundación YAXS

Fundación YAXS is a non-profit organization whose aim is to stimulate research into contemporary artistic practices in Guatemala. The project, founded in 2013 on the basis of an investigatory process begun in 2011, connects all its activity around the Centro de Documentación.

A survey of the main historical events the Republic of Guatemala has experienced since its independence from Spain in 1821 - among them various revolutions, dictatorial regimes and a civil war -, together with the enormous weight of the colonial legacy, helps to understand the complex political and social fabric of the country today, marked by corruption, violence and social inequalities. Within this framework, it comes as no surprise to discover an institutional lack of interest in compiling, preserving and circulating Guatemala's artistic and documentary heritage; glaring in their absence are the museums of contemporary art and the documentation centers that promote and facilitate research about these matters. Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno Carlos Mérida, the only public institution dedicated to the country's modern



Some events at LACA.



Some events at LACA.

art, suffers from a lack of resources, does not include contemporary art among its missions, and was recently the target of criticism by the artistic community for the lack of clarity in its inventory, as well as in the monitoring and management of its holdings. It is not merely anecdotal that, in 2012, artists Jessica Kairé and Stefan Benchoam initiated as an artistic project the NuMu, considered Guatemala's first contemporary art museum. Egg-shaped and housed in a space two by two-and-a-half meters, this narrow wandering museum has been put forth to both give visibility to the lack of organizations and institutions promoting contemporary art in and of Guatemala, and overcome this void to the modest extent within its limits.

The pertinence and relevance of the YAXS project is based on the scarcity of archives linked to artistic practices in Guatemala, a country affected by a social and political system that has rendered these practices invisible. In this setting, in which contemporary artistic practices must struggle to avoid being brushed aside, the documentation associated with them - that less popular, more boring, less attractive sister of private collections - has been glaring in its very absence. Information is dispersed and difficult to access, many relevant documents for collective memory

are in a very poor state of preservation, and there exists no institutional will to seek solutions. In this situation, YAXS launches its project of creation of a Centro de Documentación aiming to encompass the historic period extending from the second half of the 20th century to the present day by compiling the documents related to artistic practices of what we have come to call "contemporary art", and making them accessible to the public at large in order

to promote research, critical reflection, and the generation and circulation of knowledge.

While the project comes out of the personal concern of the cultural administrator Paulina Zamora de Otero, it is concei-



ved as a practice by the members of the foundation team as well as those of the Guatemalan and international communities who have approached it since its beginnings. Dialogs are established between artistic disciplines in a tone that blends academic rigor with multiple subjective approaches, placing special emphasis on those practices oriented toward investigation and experimentation in the art scene, understood as tools of critical thought with social impact, and distancing themselves from any commercial approach.

Though other archives and research centers exist in Guatemala, such as the Archivo General de Centroamérica, Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional or Archivo Histórico del Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica,

YAXS is the only documentation center for contemporary art in Guatemala.

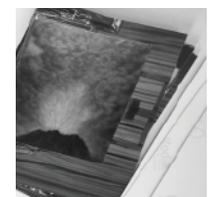
Within the entire collection held by the Foundation, there is one document that has special value, both in its historical relevance and for the catalyzing function it had for the project: the *Manifiesto Vértebra* (the Vertebra Manifesto), a founding document created in 1969 by Grupo Vértebra, establishing the basis of this collective. The discovery, almost by chance, of this document brought awareness to the initiators of the project of the great unfamiliarity with artistic practices in the country and with the fact that many documents related to those practices might have gone potentially lost – and, with them, all memories erased.

The name of the project – YAXS – is borrowed from a traditional Guatemalan game of Greek origin. The allusion to the playful component of the project, to its will to trial and error, as well as the approach from contemporaneity to indigenous artistic and creative traditions and their great cultural value, also resound in this name as some sort of declaration of intents.

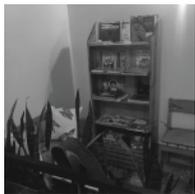
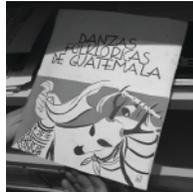
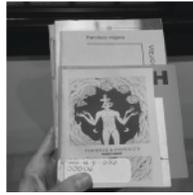
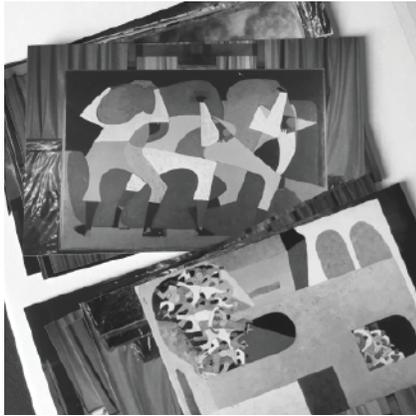
“Casa YAXS”, located in the historic Zone 1 of Guatemala City, houses the offices, the Library, the Archive, the dwellings for the artists in residency, a workshop and communal living spaces.

The holdings and documentary collections of the Centro de Documentación comprise documentary materials on consignment, donations and occasional purchases and are structured into three areas. The Specialized Library brings together reference bibliography for the visual, applied and performing arts and also bibliography related to other disciplines such as music, literature, philosophy, criticism, the history of Guatemala, psychoanalysis and the social sciences. The Archive of the Organization contains the documentation generated by the various departments of the Foundation along the development of their activity. And the Historical Archive contains historical documentation, organized into holdings and collections of physical and digital documents. Among these, some are particularly relevant, such as Fondo Tasso Hadjidoudu, Fondo Yasmin Hage, Fondo Irina Cabrera – with documents of Grupo Vértebra and Roberto Cabrera – and Fondo Jenny Paiz, containing the personal archive of Aníbal López.

Considering its limited resources, the acquisitions policy of YAXS has set strict priorities to deal with emergencies, work for the reconstruction of the art history of and in Guatemala, establish links with other documents already present in its holdings, and offer relevant resources for research into the subjects to which the Foundation’s work is most devoted. As for the archival handling of the materials, since its beginnings YAXS has stressed the training of its team and acquiring specialized knowledge in the areas of preventive and remedial preservation, as well as the cataloguing and contextualization of its materials, covering gaps not dealt with even by private



Different spaces of Casa YAXS.



companies in the country, and therefore becoming a reference for other projects and organizations.

The finance model chosen by the Foundation, as it happens to LACA, also aspires to be independent of possible contributions of institutional money, in order to maintain an independence which allows YAXS to collaborate with artists and researchers whose work may arise controversy in the social and political milieu. This freedom is obtained thanks to the contribution of a private fund, which provides some 85 percent of the project's budget and has ensured its survival for at least 20 years. The remaining 15 percent comes from contributions raised through acts of micro-patronage.

As many independent documentation centers and archive projects, YAXS's function exceeds that of a mere document container; it has become a hub of constant activity in which the public program is understood both as an extension of the resources offered to the research community and as a space necessary for the generation of critical thinking about the activities organized by the Centro de Documentació. YAXS extends its range of action through the exhibition series *Archivo abierto* [Open Archive], through its various educational activities and its residency program. The publication of books and materials related to its projects and to the artists with whom it collaborates is also a goal of the YAXS Foundation, which is currently working on several collections: "La caja verde", "Seminario de Investigación", the magazine *La Rotativa* and the Risozines series.

Some documents from the YAXS Archive.

Open Archive exhibition: the archive of artist Anibal López. YAXS, 2016.











**NAVIGATING**  
IN HISTORICAL  
**STRUCTURES:**  
HOW GRAMMARS  
AND METHODS  
OF **ARTPOOL**  
WERE SHAPED BY  
THE **INTERPLAYS**  
BETWEEN HISTORICAL  
**STRUCTURES**  
AND INDIVIDUAL  
AGENCIES?<sup>1</sup>

KRISTÓF NAGY

Artpool Art Research Center

The interior of the Artpool in the 1985 that at the same time also served as the founders' home and as Galántai's studio. Photo by György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.

Artpool Art Research Center and its collections have a history of 40 years that was not only shaped by the intentions of its founders and colleagues, but also by determining historical forces. The history of the Artpool has been thoroughly documented and published in the volume *ARTPOOL - The Experimental Art Archive of East-Central Europe*<sup>2</sup> in 2013. This article will focus on the interplays between historical structures and the Artpool founders' agency, which created the current shape of the institution and its collections. Assuming that neither historical structures nor individual agency could completely determine the historical trajectory of an institution, we will focus on the dialectics of these forces which shaped the history of the Artpool, because these reveal how the current structure of the institution, of the collection and of the archival methodologies has been developed.

### Prehistory and History of Artpool

Artpool Art Research Center was founded in 1979 in Budapest, Hungary, as a project of the visual artist György Galántai and his partner, Júlia Klaniczay. The grammar and methodology of the archive were profoundly determined both by the historical circumstances in which it was founded and by the fact that Galántai, since the beginning, conceived it as an art project. For this reason, Artpool had – and still has – motivations behind its practice different from the majority of art archives, which are primarily documenting, archiving and researching finished artistic tendencies, movements and *oeuvres*, and are rarely perceived as an art project. This difference is more than a project self-definition. Artpool is considered by its founders as an “active archive”, which in this context can also be understood as an artistic manifesto. Artpool's mission, since its establishment, was more than documenting a layer of the past: it also aimed to keep up with current experimental tendencies, and even to facilitate them. To understand this unique mission, we should see the historical circumstances that made archiving, particularly “active archiving”, so important for Galántai.

To grasp the significance of creative art institutions for Galántai, we should go back to the early 1970s, since Artpool



was not the first institution that he established. Galántai also launched, managed and curated the Chapel Studio at Balatonboglár, which operated between 1970 and 1973 as a free, alternative artistic space that was open to all new art forms and media.<sup>3</sup> In these four years, the Chapel Studio worked as an alternative institution in a context where art market did not exist, official cultural policies preferred figurative art and where, consequently, artists working outside of this field had no exhibition possibilities and were excluded from the state support system.

<sup>1</sup> This paper would not have been possible without the help of Júlia Klaniczay. She prepared the presentation for the Archives of the Common II seminar, where she could unfortunately not be present. Her role in this essay is also invaluable since, besides editing the most important sourcebooks on Artpool, she also provided numerous historical facts, background stories and clarification.

<sup>2</sup> <http://mek.niif.hu/13000/13024/13024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The history of the Chapel Studio of Balatonboglár has been primarily researched from the perspective of cultural politics that resulted in Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári (eds.), *Törvénytelen avangárd*, Budapest: Artpool - Balassi, 2003. [http://www.artpool.hu/boglar/konyv\\_e.html](http://www.artpool.hu/boglar/konyv_e.html). A significant part of history of the Chapel Studio of Balatonboglár is also available in English at the Artpool's website: [http://www.artpool.hu/boglar/default\\_e.html](http://www.artpool.hu/boglar/default_e.html).

July 1973. Exhibition of the Pécs Workshop in Balatonboglár, at the background Galántai's folder with the documentation of the previous exhibitions. Photo by Károly Kismányoky, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.



The Chapel Studio was more than an exhibition space. It opened in the summer, from June until August, on the shores of Lake Balaton, and it became a real meeting point and melting pot for different artist groups and artistic tendencies. During its operation, the Chapel Studio also became the most important venue for conceptual art in Hungary, as it has been defined by Gyula Pauer and Tamás Szentjóby among others; it was also a central space for the Hungarian pioneers of land art, experimental theatre, and visual and sound poetry.

The Chapel Studio of Balatonboglár was the most important precursor of Artpool. In its history we can observe how it emerged in the encounter of historical forces (the authoritarian cultural policy of Hungarian socialist State that, precisely in the early 1970s, had a short liberalizing period), and the individual agency of the young Galántai, who was continuously looking for new ideas and inviting to his Chapel Studio artists who later became relevant. The Chapel Studio was the precursor of Artpool not only in the sense that it aimed to create an alternative institution for artistic creativity in the actually-existing socialism, but also because the archivist practice of Galántai dates back to those years. In the Chapel Studio, Galántai photo-documented all exhibitions, performances and happenings as much as he could, and he also archived the documents of the previous exhibitions. These documents, prints and photos were displayed in the Chapel Studio in a graphic folder and are now precious pieces of Artpool's collection.

Ulises Carrión at the Other Books and So in Amsterdam, 1975. Archive for Small Press and Communication Reina Sofía. Courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.



This self-documentation became even more important after 1973 when, after several failed attempts, the State authorities closed down the Chapel Studio. In the next decades, State authorities not only hampered Galántai's artistic activities, but also tried to abolish the memory of the Chapel Studio. In this context, Galántai's archive of documents became even more valuable, since these remained almost the only records proving that the events of Balatonboglár had actually happened. Along the following decade – the 1970s –, Galántai was marked by isolation and produced works on issues related to the ego and the condition of being. Although he tried to get involved into the mail art network via Klaus Groh, his real change took place in 1976, when Galántai met Júlia Klaniczay, who became his partner and supporter, and with whom started to search new strategies in that situation.

One of their answers to the almost complete isolation within the local art scene was their deeper involvement in the already flourishing international mail art network. This involvement was fostered by Klaniczay's good command of foreign languages and new acquaintances. Klaniczay's foreign language knowledge was a crucial factor and requirement in the mail art cooperation, and was a base from which Artpool's rich international network started to bloom, resulting in an extensive international collection. Among their fresh acquaintances, Ulises Carrión was one of the first. Galántai and Klaniczay met Carrión in 1978 in Amsterdam, and this visit resulted in immediate cooperation: Galántai edited the Hungarian issue

of the *Ephemer* mail art magazine, run by Carrión, and this was the first step for the Artpool founders to join the international mail art network.

The mail art and alternative art institutions that Galántai and Klaniczay visited during their journey in Western Europe in 1978 – such as De Appel and Other Books and So in Amsterdam, and the Vitrine pour l'Art Actuel in Paris – served as inspiration to institutionalize their practice and to launch an alternative art institution in the Hungarian context. In the 1970s and 1980s an authoritarian regime ruled in Hungary,

so there was no chance to establish any legally recognized art institution; therefore, alternative institutionalization was the only viable route. Consequently, Artpool was born within the walls of their studio apartment and Galántai thus created his second “alternative institute” project.

Artpool was based on the already mentioned “active archive” conception, which Galántai synthesized as “a living institution that can be interpreted as an organic and open artwork or an activist kind of art practice. Its field of operation is the whole world; it works with a precise aim and direction, carefully de-



Direct Week. Exhibition and events, organized by Gyula Pauer and Tamás Szentjóby in Balatonboglár, July 6-9, 1972. Photo by György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.



Vitrine pour l'Art Actuel (ca. 1978), where Klaniczay and Galántai met with the richness of the alternative media, especially of mail art publications. Photographer: Eustachy Kossakowski, @ Anka Ptaszkowska

György Galántai in front of De Appel in Amsterdam, 1978. Photo by Júlia Klaniczay, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.

tecting changes and adjusting accordingly.” Besides Galántai’s statement, we can argue that Artpool’s active archive profile clearly reflects the personal experience of its two founders. On the one hand, for the archive to exist it was necessary to work with a certain rigour, that could be linked to Klaniczay, who worked as an editor during the first decade of Artpool’s existence. On the other hand, Artpool’s activist profile, which aimed to keep up with and make way for new, experimental artistic trends, clearly relates to Galántai’s artistic attitudes. His artistic and activist approach did not only manifest themselves in the content of the archive, but also in its structure. Documents were arranged in folders and archival boxes according to Galántai’s artistic needs. He applied a geographic system that followed a world map in order to arrange the international collection. Neighbouring countries forming cultural circles were displayed besides each other: for instance, Latin America, North America, Western Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Asia were each in a different set.

Artpool was established in the home of its founders, which provided safety for the operation of the archive. Despite the fact that it was based in a private space until 1992, Artpool aimed to act as a public institution and implemented all of its important attributes: as an example, it had a logo, stationary and a rubber stamp, all designed by Galántai. Self-institutionalization offered an opportunity for archiving and presenting artistic trends which existed at the fringe of the cultural policy of the time, and questioned the State’s monopoly over the institutional axis of the art scene. This questioning became even

more apparent and provocative when Artpool launched its own dissemination media. The first step in this direction was the newsletter *Pool Window*, published from 1980 to 1982 in 30 issues that channelled Hungarian artists into the international mail art network.

After the end of *Pool Window*, in 1983 Artpool started a new, even more ambitious publication, *AL* (Actual/Alternative/Artpool Letters).<sup>4</sup> Eleven issues of *AL* were published until 1985, and even though only Galántai and Klaniczay did all the editorial and distributing tasks, each issue could achieve a total print run of 500 copies. *AL* was an illegally published and distributed *samizdat* (clandestine) magazine, which aimed to compete with the official art press of the period. Since it was corresponding on the current tendencies and events of the local underground art scene, and had also an international horizon, it became much more cutting-edge than the official art press of the period. While *AL* partly fitted into the flourishing Hungarian *samizdat* scene of the decade, in contrast with the majority of the *samizdat* publications – which were dealing only with politics –, it focused on underground culture. Moreover, since it was run as a part of an artistic project, *AL* was also visually exciting, while the political *samizdat* publications were text-focused.

Besides *AL*, Artpool had additional projects to build its own communication channels. From 1983 to 1987 eight programmes of Radio Artpool were “broadcasted”, consisting in tapes through which Artpool distributed audio materials.<sup>5</sup> Galántai

<sup>4</sup> The complete *AL* series is available online: <http://www.artpool.hu/Al/al01hu.html>. The summaries and some of the articles are also accessible in English: <http://www.artpool.hu/Al/al01.html>

<sup>5</sup> The eighth issue of Radio Artpool is also available online: <http://www.artpool.hu/sound/radio/>



György Galántai (in the middle) with microphone, recording a concert of URH in 1985. Photo by Attila Pácsér, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.



Another form of international networking and collection-building were the two Artpool Art Tours of the founders in 1979 and 1982 in Western Europe. Besides the intensive art correspondence, mail art and other international projects, Artpool's collection was also growing thanks to its local exhibitions and projects, such as *Everybody with Anybody*, a ground breaking rubber stamp event and exhibition organized in 1982. However, Artpool's collection not only expanded by organizing events and sustaining network connections. Since 1979, Galántai and Klaniczay actively documented all relevant events of the local art scene, such as exhibition openings, lectures and concerts. They not only recorded events belonging to the non-official and experimental art scene in the narrow sense, but tried to document all the countercultu-

ral activities including, for instance, the rise of punk and new wave music in Hungary in the 1980s.

As already discussed, correspondence art was a central practice in the oeuvre of György Galántai from the late 1970s, and a key factor for building Artpool's archive. However, if we dig deeper, mail art was not valuable for Artpool and Galántai in itself, but as an artistic form that emphasized and built on the importance of communication in a period when, in Eastern Europe, keeping contact with the Western world was more than a challenge. This emphasis of communication within Artpool had its own historical context. Since the 1960s, communication – primarily its horizontal forms – became important, and disseminated utopian ideas among the countercultures

Covers of several issues of AL. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.

around the whole world. As Fred Turner argued in his book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*,<sup>6</sup> horizontal networking became extremely important in the bohemian circles from the 1960s. While the rising discourses and practices of communication and networking were a global phenomenon, these got even more particular meanings in those parts of the globe where communication and self-organization was controlled by the State, such as in Eastern Europe. While in the Western world mail art challenged the profit-oriented structures of cultural production, in Eastern Europe (and also in South America) it was a tool for artists to challenge and bypass the State-controlled institutional system of the art world.



After the banning of the Chapel Studio of Balatonboglár, and his subsequent marginalization, correspondence art achieved a special relevance for Galántai, because it was almost the only chance not only to build international connections, but also to participate in any kind of artistic activity at an international level. Consequently, in the 1980s Artpool was a central hub of the Hungarian mail art activities, and through the *Pool Window* newsletter Galántai and Klaniczay tried to involve more and more Hungarian artists in the international mail art network. Galántai also organized other artistic events which involved communication, such as the Vienna – Budapest – Berlin telephone concert held in 1983.<sup>7</sup> As countercultural ideas of horizontal networking started to merge with technological utopianism in the global scene, technological ways of communication became more and more important for Artpool too. Besides the above mentioned telephone concert, Artpool became a central hub of digital and Internet-based artistic tendencies. Just to mention some examples, in 1993 they re-enacted the telephone-concert in the form of an international low-fi video connection; and 1996 was named “The Year of Internet” by Artpool, after the archive had presented



<sup>6</sup> Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> *Telephone Concert*, April 15, 1983, held at Artpool, Budapest/Blix, Vienna/Aufbau-Abbau, Berlin.

Call for the 51th issue of the Commonpress mail art magazine, edited by György Galántai. The theme of this issue was Hungary, and the materials sent for the call, were exhibited at the Hungary Can Be Yours exhibition, which was the last banned exhibition in Hungary. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.

the first website on the Hungarian art scene in the previous year.

Today, Artpool is the only institution in Hungary where mail art is researchable in all its genres (bookwork, artist stamp, rubberstamp, artists' postcards, etc.), and its network connections are still very relevant, even at international level. It must be noted that, even though correspondence art became such a crucial genre in Artpool because it embodied free communication which was restricted under State socialism, Artpool did not give up the idea of horizontal and decentralized communication after the fall of the authoritarian regime, and these form of art continues to be focal in the mission of Artpool even today.

Galántai's personal interests hallmark Artpool's profile not only in the form of correspondence art. Galántai defined his own artistic credo as "artistic research" much before the current rise of the term in the global art world, and described Artpool as a place where research in art and art history can interact. As the concept of "active archive" stated: "The interrelation of historical and art research methodologies improves one's ability, in a manner never experienced before, to perceive problems and to venture into new, previously unknown, research methods."

In Artpool, art research was always initiated through art projects and carried out primarily by Galántai, and yet it was never a solitary practice, but rather a task that always involved numerous fellow-artists. Besides his networking activities, Galántai regularly launched projects as well, already since the 1980s. On the one hand, these projects – based on Galántai's research topics – fundamentally contributed to the growth and enrichment of the archive holdings; on the other hand, they often concluded in publications and exhibitions. To set up these projects, since the 1990s Artpool coordinated them



in a yearly agenda. Thus, for example, 1993 was the year of Fluxus, 1995 the year of performance and 1998 the year of installation. These were ideal nodes, because these artistic and art historical research projects could fruitfully interweave and facilitate each other. Along its decades of existence Artpool organized hundreds of art events, such as exhibitions and lectures, which served for the conceptualization of lesser-known artistic forms which are focal to Artpool's research, such as artist stamps, computer art, installation and performance. In these projects, the archive always acted as the background research for current artistic problems, and at the same time its documentary holdings always benefited from these research projects in the form of new archival materials.

In these projects, the archival collection served as the guarding-house of the past, while Artpool's exhibition space, "Artpool P60", was the laboratory for the present and future. Moreover, these research projects also bear educational functions: György Galántai considers Artpool primarily as his artistic medium and a work of art – the most suitable one for his own research projects, but a work of art that produces not only private, but also public knowledge in the form of publications and online platforms, for instance. This disseminating

<sup>8</sup> This section is built on Judit Bodor's line of thought. For her more detailed approach see Europe: Art Spots, Budapest, Artpool Art Research Center, [http://www.osp.art.pl/spots/budapest/budapest\\_en.htm](http://www.osp.art.pl/spots/budapest/budapest_en.htm)

function of Artpool was strengthened by the Artpool website, organized in a hypertextual way and thus able to make visible connections between art and other cultural and social fields.

Since the year 2000, the annual structure of Artpool projects changed, leaving aside art historical concepts. As the zero-year of the new century, was entitled “The Year of Chance”. From 2002 to 2009, the yearly project series were organized around the numbers between two and nine which, according to Galántai, aimed to break out from the linear structure of history.<sup>8</sup> In the current decade, Artpool’s artistic projects are partly based in the small village of Kapolcs, where every summer – in the context of a popular cultural festival – Galántai curates exhibitions and installations.

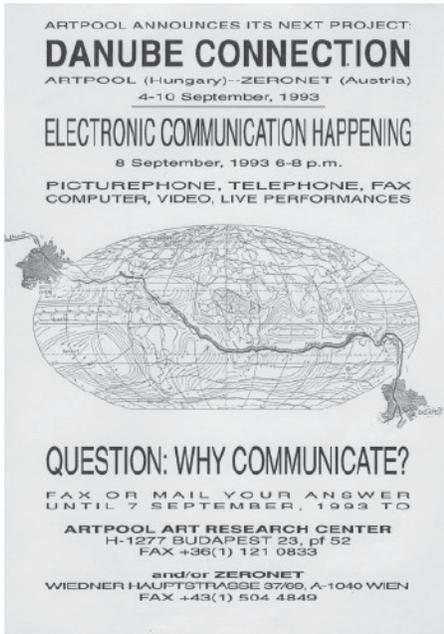
## Artpool in the Present Time

Last, but not least, it is worth to examine how Artpool’s institutional formats were changing in the last decades. Artpool, as all art institutions, has to operate, survive and develop in a social context in which institutionalization and the financial background are central issues. In 1979 Artpool was launched as an underground institution, and consequently did not have any legal format; rather, the creation of its founders was its institution-ness, and the project’s material conditions were built on their own self-exploitation. Despite the fact that at that time Artpool was not recognized by the Hungarian State, thanks to a more flexible control of the socialist regime since the mid-1980s it could gain external financial support from



Images from the *Budapest-Vienna-Berlin telephone-concert*, published in the AL No. 4. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.

Invitation for the Flux flag exhibition, 1992. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.



Invitation for the *Danube Connection*, 1993, a live interactive event of telecommunication between the Viennese Freihaus-Kunstlabor /organized by Robert Adrian X./ and Artpool. (It served also as a tribute to the ten years earlier Budapest-Vienna-Berlin telephone-concert.)

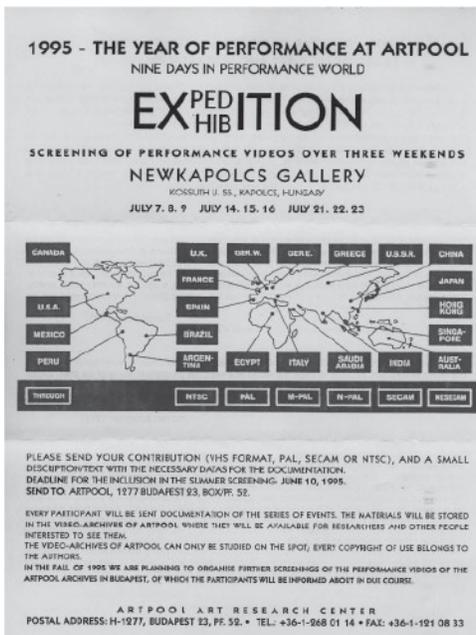


Soros Foundation, which extensively financed semi-dissident cultural and scholarly activities. Between 1985 and 1988 Artpool was one of the first art projects supported by the Soros Foundation, and the one which got the most generous support, with a yearly grant of 240,000 HUF (approx. 5,000 US\$). As a consequence, in the late 1980s Artpool could start functioning as a pseudo-NGO: archival equipment (such as archival boxes) could be purchased, and the first employee could be hired.

The legal recognition of Artpool could happen only after the political

transition of 1989. In the 1990s Artpool started functioning as an NGO, with state and municipal subsidies, and the Council of Budapest provided a location for Artpool. While after 1989 Artpool was no longer threatened by political retaliations, this transition did not imply a steady solution for financial issues, since the majority of the state subsidies were project-based and did not cover the fixed operating expenses. In the mid-2000s, it became clear that a non-profit art archive in the context of recurrent austerity policies is financially unsustainable in the long run. In 2005 the future of Artpool became uncertain, and, even though the organization of the Aid Concept festival temporarily solved the financial difficulties, these returned – even more critically – in 2010.

Artpool had existed as an illegal institution for more than a decade, and later for more than two decades as an NGO, but its survival in 2015 was guaranteed by its transformation into a state-institution, when it was integrated into the Museum of Fine Arts. This trajectory, in which not only an alternative collection but a whole, functioning alternative institution is integrated into the national museum, is a unique case not only in the Hungarian art scene, but also internationally. The founders of Artpool always thought about their project



1995 - The Year of Performance at Artpool, call for participation. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.

György Galántai in Kapolcs, 2017. Photo by Dóra Halasi, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center.



as something that should contribute to the local cultural heritage, and this is the reason why they did not consider selling the archival materials abroad – not even in the worst times. Consequently, Artpool’s transformation into a state institution was not against the will of its founders, even if it had to happen earlier than they imagined. Due to the continuous financial cuts affecting the cultural sphere, and to the highly restricted financial governance emerging in Hungary after 2010, the transformation into a state institution was the only way to preserve the archive. Within the Museum of Fine Arts, Artpool functions as a separate department in financial stability and with more personnel. It is ground-breaking as an experiment and as an experience that a countercultural institution can keep its original mission when becoming a state institution.

ACT I:

**TROUBLE**

IN THE ARCHIVE

NANCY DANTAS

(Former) Centre for Curating the Archive

ART IS THE STRUGGLE TO STAY AWAKE. WHICH MAKES AMNESIA THE TRUE TARGET AND PROPER SUBJECT OF POETRY.

### JEREMY CRONIN

For the historically minded, the self-conscious, the self-reflexive, the paranoid and vigilant scholar, turning to the archives is inevitable. This text attempts to show the unanticipated affordances of the archive<sup>1</sup>, establishing a distinction between the return to the archive as reification (via wonder) and archival return as disruption or trouble (via “epistemic disobedience”<sup>2</sup>). All paths of research ultimately lead to these old brown doors with their peeling enamel paint<sup>3</sup>. We all possess an image of the archive, but the colonial archive, and the South African archive in particular, although the same, is not identical. How we choose to engage with this repository, and which truths we choose to metaphorically lift from their dusty shelves and boxes, determines whether our intended work is linked to colonial reification and nostalgia or its opposite, to decolonial practice.

CONSIDERED MONUMENTAL AND SUPERHUMAN BY EVERYONE WHO SEES THEM, THESE CONSTRUCTIONS EXTEND FAR INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING, FARTHER THAN THE EYE CAN SEE, AND AT A CERTAIN POINT, DARKNESS TAKES OVER, THE LIGHTS BEING TURNED ON ONLY WHEN A FILE HAS TO BE CONSULTED.

### JOSÉ SARAMAGO

In South Africa memory is not fractured, “rather it is splintered, rent apart, torn into a multitude of pieces”<sup>4</sup>. It is these shards that historians, researchers and curators attempt to gather, restore and somehow put back together, to recount and envisage what has happened, in ways that are valid for the future. But why look at the past? Why this obsession with the politics of the past? In many ways, we are still living the aftermath of apartheid, although those in positions of privilege and power are likely to deny and defensively dismiss this claim. Millions of South Africans are still living with the ingrained and deep legacies of exclusion, division and dispossession brought on by slavery, settler colonialism and the regime of separate development, which still lingers, to many degrees, in our institutions, workplaces, schools and daily lives. Despite the Truth and Re-

conciliation Commission and its related policy of forgiveness, together with the Christian call to “let bygones be bygones,” a process of disremembering, endorsed by South Africa’s largely exogenous and conservative economic power structure, has left our social landscape largely unchanged. One needs only to look at unemployment statistics, or major cities from afar, to see these patterns of extreme imbalance and inequity unfold. The past still remains unresolved, and justice — the decolonial claim to land and its resources — is still a collective aspiration.

AN ARCHIVE MAY BE LARGELY ABOUT ‘THE PAST’ BUT IT IS ALWAYS ‘RE-READ’ IN THE LIGHT OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE: AND IN THAT REPRISE, AS WALTER BENJAMIN REMINDS US, IT ALWAYS FLASHES UP BEFORE US AS A MOMENT OF DANGER.

### STUART HALL

We all know that archives are not merely receptacles of the past or “dustbins of history”<sup>5</sup>. Essential concepts of history are shaped by them<sup>6</sup>. The relationship between power and knowledge can be found in the material and metaphorical spaces of the archive<sup>7</sup>, on its shelves, in its boxes, but also within its liminal spaces — its gaps, thresholds and exclusions, where lacunae and silences are hidden—in other words, within its broad discursive field. Within these repositories, we are able to determine who had the power to make, record and thereby produce and mould history, and in equal measure, through archival caesura and silences — what I refer to as the latent archive — we are able to determine who was excluded from history. We are able to envision who grabbed, and who was forced to let go. Janus-faced, the archive mirrors the empowered — the manifest archive — whilst withholding the disempowered — the latent archive.

1 Paul Basu y Ferdinand de Jong, “Utopian Archives, Decolonial Affordances”, *Social Anthropology*, vol. 24, n° 1, 2016, p. 10.

2 Walter Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 20, n° 7-8, 2009, pp. 1-23.

3 José Saramago, *All the Names*, San Diego, Harvest, 2001, p. 1.

4 Kenneth Christie, *The South African Truth Commission*, Nueva York, St. Martin’s Press, 2000, p. 8.

5 Tina DiCarlo, “Disassemblance: Eruptions and Incisions, Bastards and Monsters”, en Marcus Miessen y Yann Chateigné (eds.), *The Archive as a Productive Space of Conflict*, Berlin, Sternberg, 2016, p. 127.

6 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

7 Joan M. Schwartz y Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory”, *Archival Science*, n° 2, 2002, pp. 1-19.

Today, these silent repositories shape our knowledge. In equal measure, they determine who is allowed to enunciate that knowledge. Not everyone is allowed access to the archive. In many instances, one needs to provide the necessary credentials; the academic badge of a “bona fide researcher.” In other cases, access is determined by the amount of time we are given to spend with records, which is often shorter due to slow retrieval systems.

Then there is the issue of reproduction (which is particularly defining in the case of visiting scholars). Does the archive or library allow photographic reproduction? In the case of the South African Library, located in Cape Town, an important resource given its major newspaper collection, researchers are prohibited from photographing documents. Records can only be photocopied on order — this requires a detailed request form, the allocation of waiting number on a long cue, and at a symbolic price, which to many is still quite steep, reproduction is granted.

The archive is not just a physical repository of records but, as Michel Foucault has written, it is “the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events”<sup>8</sup>. The well-versed Foucauldian scholar will know that creators, guardians and gatekeepers of the archive are the archons. Picking up from Foucault, Jacques Derrida adds, “the archons are first of all the document’s guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives”<sup>9</sup>. By *interpreting* or re-reading archives<sup>10</sup>, researchers are faced with a responsibility, that of forestalling the perpetuation of archival violence of the past<sup>11</sup>. The latter is somehow revealing, and this is the measure of our success — articulating the archive’s significance and meaning to present and future generations, and perhaps its transmutations or afterlife in the realities we experience today. Should we be able to

reveal the absences and agencies in historical records, should we criticise the power of those who assemble and interpret archives, then perhaps we will have complied with what I have called elsewhere our “archival duty” (2017).

Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, believed that one had to write history to make history<sup>12</sup>. Records in South Africa are extremely warped with a huge mass of the country’s recent history unrecorded or ill recorded. It is clear that the apartheid regime and its supremacist ideologies devalued, despised and wilfully silenced the contributions of Black artists, their experience and their history. The task of mending this history, of setting the record straight, might be impossible, but it is certainly one researchers, particularly decolonial researchers, working in (post) colonial contexts should aspire to. The task is fraught. Bantu educational system discouraged the emergence of written expression and recording<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, “the instability of the life of the poor and marginal, subject to forced removals and the vicissitudes of inadequate shelter, led to the loss of many important historical and other documents”<sup>14</sup>. For the destitute, the physical weight of family keepsakes and heirlooms, obliged to relocate from one place to the next, may have been too much to bear. Added to this, archivist Verne Harris tells us how he, between 1996 and 1998, represented the National Archives at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was in this context that Harris attested to the “large-scale and systematic sanitization of official memory authorized at the highest levels of government”<sup>15</sup>. Between 1990 and 1994, huge volumes of public records were destroyed in an attempt to keep the apartheid State’s darkest secrets hidden. In fact, Harris tells us that the National Intelligence Service headquarters destroyed an estimated 44 tons of paper-based and microfilm records in a six-to-eight-month period during 1993<sup>16</sup>. It also destroyed many other non-public records during raids on and bombings of anti-apartheid structures and premises, both inside and outside South Africa<sup>17</sup>. One might argue that South Africa took this lesson in destruction from the British and *Operation Legacy*, set in place by the British Empire on exiting its former colonies, such as Kenya. According to investigative journalist Ian Cobain, on December 3, 1963, “nine days

SILENCE SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN ITS DUE.

KING-KOK CHEUNG

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Nueva York, Harper & Row, 1972, p. 219.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Hall, “Constituting an archive”, en *Third Text*, 15(54), p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> Cheryl McEwan, “Building a Postcolonial Archive? Gender, Collective Memory and Citizenship in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(3), 2003, p. 742.

before Kenya formally achieved independence, four large wooden crates had been loaded onto a British United Airways flight bound for Gatwick Airport south of London; there were persistent rumours in Nairobi that those crates contained hundreds of sensitive files. Some Kenyans spoke of other crates being flown over the Indian Ocean to be dumped at sea<sup>18</sup>.

It is a known fact that the British were meticulous record-keepers. Cobain tells us that there were no less than three different departments within the administration that kept records on more than 100,000 prisoners. Yet, only a few of those records appear to have remained. In April of 2011, the British House of Lords finally admitted that it held a total of 8,800 files in a purpose-built facility in Hanslowe Park. These files contained “hundreds of thousands of pages of official documents, from thirty-seven colonies. Some, such as Palestine, Cyprus and Aden, had been territories from which the British had withdrawn amid bloody conflict<sup>19</sup>.”

Most of the documents had been removed secretly from the colonies in line with a telegram of May 3, 1961 from Colonial Secretary Iain McLeod that set down four main criteria for selection. The documents were to be sent back to Britain would be those that might embarrass members of the police, military forces, public servants or others, such as informers; that might compromise sources of intelligence information; or that might be used unethically by ministers in a successor Government. They were to be loaded aboard RAF aircraft or a British-owned airliner and flown to London. If they must be transported by sea, they could be entrusted only to the care of a British ship’s master on a British ship<sup>20</sup>.

The British had a name for this hidden cache — “the migrated archive” — and files were still being added to it in the late 1970s<sup>21</sup>. It was thanks to this hidden stash that 5,228 Mau Mau claimants received £19.9 million in compensation and costs in June of 2013. As this case unfolded, a group of veterans from the rebellion against British rule in Cyprus watched closely. According to the EOKA, “at least fourteen Cypriots, including two seventeen-year-old boys, died under interroga-

THE ARCHIVE IS THE STUDY OF THE MEANING OF THE UNSAID. IT RESTS BETWEEN THE SAYABLE AND THE UNSAYABLE, WITHIN THE EVENT OF LANGUAGE AND THE ACT OF DISCOURSE – AS A SPACE OF ENUNCIATION.

#### TINA DICARLO

tion, and (...) hundreds more were beaten and waterboarded — allegations that appeared to be supported by some of the Hanslope Park papers, as well as by the International Committee of the Red Cross reports of the time<sup>22</sup>. I mention these examples to remind myself that archives are fundamental to projects of restitution and justice, but they are also subject to tampering and “migration”.

It is commonly held that archives mirror reality, that they provide an image of a process, an event or an action, that the traces we find in them have truth-value. This metaphor can be misleading and requires deconstruction, for the archive is a “product of a process<sup>23</sup>” (Harris, 2002: 65) shaped fundamentally by the act of recording and the many people or conduits behind that recording; the people who created those records, the functionaries who managed them, the archivists who selected them for preservation and make them accessible for use, and the researchers who use them in constructing accounts of the past. The archive is ultimately a medium and a non-neutral source of information. Its records have been impressed and shaped by the ideologies and intentions of its makers so as to deliver a particular composition or representation of reality to its users. As such, we have the archive, but we also have its reverse, the *latent archive*: an un-constituted, immaterial, invisible space of enunciation of all of the documents and voices that have been removed and deemed inconvenient to it. Archives — and their absence or *migration* — mediate what historians or researchers are given to *see*. We see the past through archives, like a frame, a window, a screen, or a lens. The outlook, which is likely to be a hegemonic, white, male and normative, has been carefully composed: what is foregrounded or carefully placed in relief is the result of an intention, an ideology, one that can distort other determining stories. Archives thus provide us with histories which in many instances have not only

12 Mamphela Ramphele quoted in Cherly McEwan, *op. cit.*, p. 742.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 743. | 14 Mamphela Ramphele, quoted in McEwan, *op. cit.*, p. 743.

15 Verne Harris, “The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa”, *Archival Science*, 2, 2002, p. 64.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 64. | 17 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

18 Ian Cobain, *The History Thieves: Secrets, Lies and the Shaping of a Modern Nation*, Londres, Portobello, 2016, p. 105.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 112. | 20 *Ibid.*, p. 112. | 21 *Ibid.*, p. 113. | 22 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

23 Verne Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

24 *Ibid.* | 25 *Ibid.*, p. 73. | 26 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

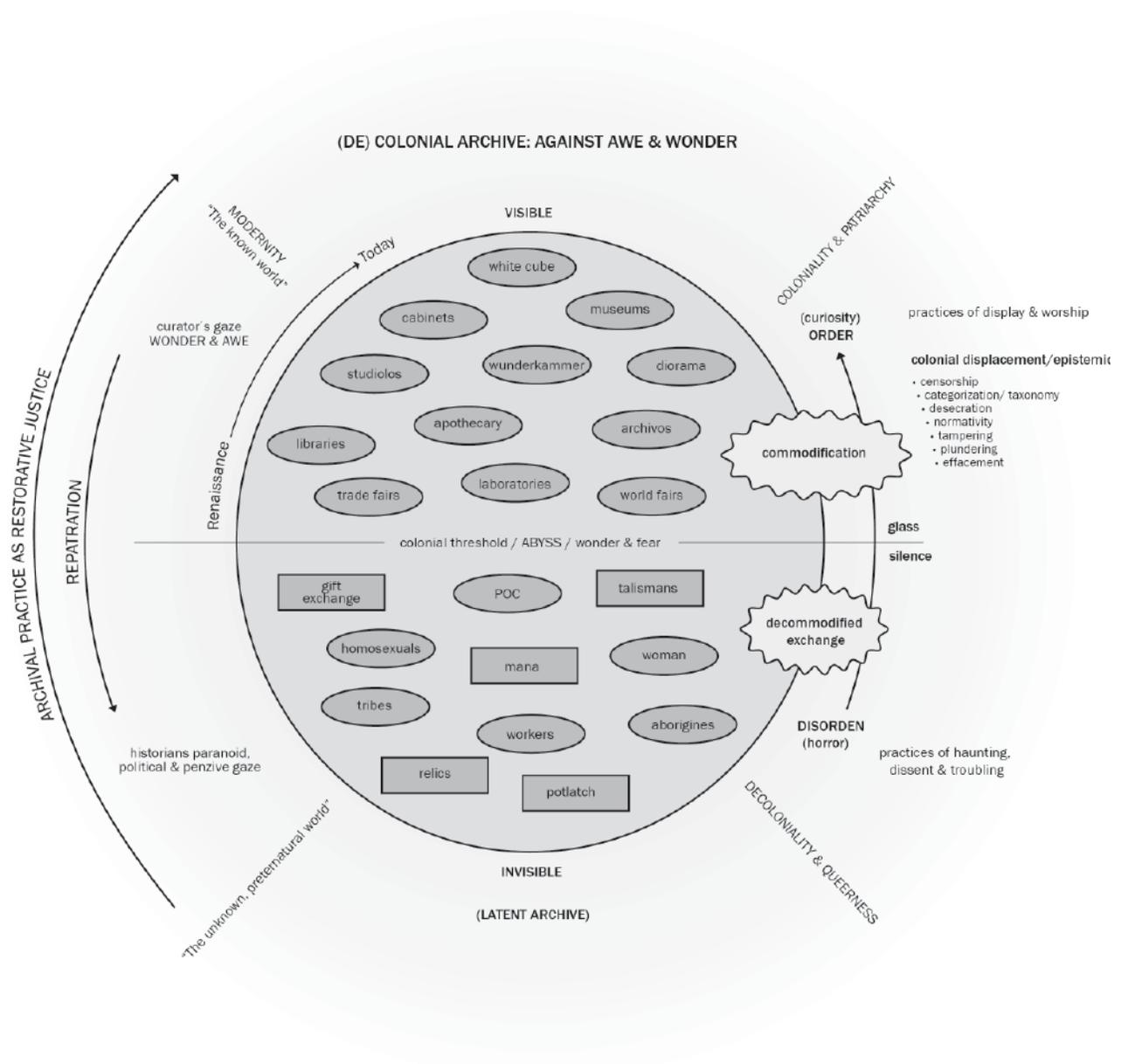
been torn apart, but decisively filtered and muted. Hence, to adopt Verne Harris' metaphor, archives in many instances only provide us with "a sliver of a sliver of a sliver"<sup>24</sup>.

In order to understand archival culture in South Africa and the "skewing of social memory"<sup>25</sup>, it is important to bear in mind that until the mid-1980s, public service legislation established that only whites could be appointed to professional and legislative posts. Senior positions were dominated by white, Afrikaans-speaking males. Harris writes that by 1990, not a single professional post in the State Archive Service had been occupied by a Black person. In 1990, the service's staff comprised 70 people: all of them were white, 39 of them were women, the remaining men<sup>26</sup>. Most of the service's appraisers had been educated at the university by historians aligned with the Afrikaner regime to ignore black experiences or narrate them through white eyes.

## ACT II:

# AGAINST AWE, WONDER AND NOSTALGIA

Fig. 01



If the archive contains the voice, it also contains its disappearance. To acknowledge this is to be cognizant of the expanded colonial archive. This expanded field of colonial practice extends from world fairs to colonial exhibitions and includes the lesser obvious of its manifestations, such as the philosopher's study, the contemplative's cell, the curiosity cabinet, the apothecary, the repository, the library, the nave of the cathedral, the princely banquet hall, but also the seemingly pristine and ostensibly neutral contemporary white cube. These *loci* belong to one and the same expanded or exploded colonial archive. They have perfected their effective divisions, whilst instilling binaries, upholding epistemes and maintaining hierarchies, not only between disciplines, but between peoples and their cultural production (as shown in the diagram). Put into effect and perfected over a *longue durée*<sup>27</sup> these spaces are presented as "a part of who we are." Their existence is unquestionable, their heritage-value doggedly relayed. The expanded colonial archive and its many guises, which include, to be clear, the museum of natural history, the museum of modern art, and the museum of ethnography, are all part of this greater colonial archive. Together and individually, they engender in us a sense of awe. We are humbled and silenced by these hallowed theatres of magnitude and Western "greatness." If they do not represent the tenacity of "the civilising mission" of an empire, they denote the steadfast character of a single hero, his solitude, vision and commitment to a personal, idiosyncratic cause (think Lawrence Weschler's *Mr Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*). I contend, certainly to the dismay of some of my colleagues, that to be infatuation with this expanded archive, and the cabinet of curiosity in particular, conveyed as an attractive aesthetic and baptismal mode of curatorial display to students, is highly problematic and tantamount to colonial reification. De-colonial scholars must indeed trouble this transmission.

Admittedly, like Genese Grill, in her text on cabinets of curiosity and reliquaries as portals, I too am impressed by crowded, stuffed *Kunstkammer* and am taken by the effects of multiplicity, shapes and textures that are contrasted together. I too am sensitive to signs of "bounty and scarcity, aesthetics and asceticism, feasts and crumbs, overeating and fasting" that these spaces translate<sup>28</sup> (Grill, 2016: 53). But I am also

weary that this heightening of the senses can imply a dulling of the mind. Like Walter Benjamin, many of us struggle with the ambivalence of materiality. We too often obsess and are thrilled by the great poem in display. We understand that the collector considers his task to divest things of their commodity character when taking possession of them. I quote from the *Arcades Project*: "The collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one... in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful." Benjamin simultaneously embraces and rejects matter, and this ambivalent condition, this difficulty is one many of us share, knowing that by disinvesting things, we are smothering the life out of them, "cutting them off from the circulating energy of their community, history, nature and the lifeblood of heritage and exchange"<sup>29</sup> rendering them hollow, sterile shells, severed from the forces that made them, silent behind a glass case.

Engaging with these storehouses, compiled of loot and amassed in glass cases to aggrandize and naturalize the European male of rank and his partition of the globe, is a task fraught with traps. Knowing that it is within these colonial spaces that certain statements gather dust, and traces of certain forgotten histories can be found, waiting to be resurrected under the historian's attentive gaze, we are drawn to them, like a moth to a flame. It is within these archives that traces remain, "unfathomed, unintegrated, as shadows and repressed pathologies"<sup>30</sup>. In order to find these traces, and work against the grain, I argue, we need to be cognizant of the archive – be it medical, ethnographic, geographic, graphic or other – firstly as a *political space*, and engage with these vertiginous, awesome colonial sites under a different lens, as opposed to the lens to which they appeal, the colonial lens of wonder and awe.

Wonder is "the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention"<sup>31</sup>. In order to achieve this effect, the archive and museum must hide the evidence "of alteration, tampering, and even deliberate damage" that is at the root of their creation:

27 Dale Tomich, "The Order of Historical Time: The Longue Durée and Micro-History", en *Almanack*, n° 2, 2011; y Wolfgang Gabbert, "The longue durée of Colonial Violence in Latin America", en *Historical Social Research*, vol. 37 n°3, 2012.

28 Genese Grill, "Portals: cabinets of Curiosity, Reliquaries and Colonialism", en *The Missouri Review*, 39(1), 2016, p. 53.

29 Ibid., p. 40. | 30 Ibid., p. 60.

31 Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder", en Ivan Karp, y Stephen D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, p. 43.

32 Ibid., p. 44.

First and most obviously, the act of displacement that is essential for the collection of virtually all older artifacts and most modern ones – pulled out of chapels, peeled off church walls, removed from decayed houses, given as gifts, seized as spoils of war, stolen or “purchased” more or less fairly by the economically ascendant from the economically naïve (the poor), the hard-pressed heirs of fallen dynasties, and impoverished religious orders<sup>32</sup>.

I argue that the gaze of wonder cannot predominate in the colonial archive if we try to engage with its contents critically, politically, morally, and decolonially, as justice projects. When entering the archival site, I argue, we need to realise that the *witness* we are looking for, by way of the *trace* or *sliver*, that “passive affect of an anomalous detail that resists recognition by common sense”<sup>33</sup>, will only be found if we leave awe and wonder at the door. The decolonial archive calls for a different gaze, a paranoid and self-reflexive, positioned gaze. Without its presence, we risk reifying the old divisions of modernity and colonialism. Without it, the world will remain veiled.

In their tome on *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park tell us that “René Descartes called wonder the first of the passions, a sudden surprise of the soul which makes it tend to consider attentively those objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary”<sup>34</sup>. A history of wonder, they tell us, is a history of the orders of nature. Wonder could be located at a cognitive threshold between the known world and the unknown world, the preternatural world. Thus, I argue, when European explorers looked at the world that was unknown to them, they looked at it with wonder. Said differently, wonder was the gaze European navigators and tradesmen cast on the unfamiliar environments they encountered on their seafaring journeys. It was this gaze that accompanied their travels into the unknown, and was bound up with other passions such as horror and curiosity – passions which Daston identifies as having later shaped and guided enquiry into the natural world<sup>35</sup>. Wonder then was fused with fear (with “anomaly” taken as a sign of divine wrath). Fear, as we know, can be paralysing, and inhibitive of consideration, ponderation, empathy and deep thinking.

In *The World at Home: Curiosity Collecting in the First Age of Globalisation*, Melissa Tan addresses how these archives of awe were seen. In her thesis, she reminds us that cabinets of curiosity have their roots in medieval aesthetic and practice, and continued to be informed by them, whether consciously or unconsciously. She reminds us how the precursors of these cabinets can be found in reliquaries, housed in churches, which held items that possessed sacred power and performed as the perfect preservation, mediating between the mortal and the divine worlds<sup>36</sup>. Objects contained in these spaces were baffling and “could have a portentous import”<sup>37</sup> and most certainly had a particular allure. During the Renaissance, the cult of the curious gained another dimension, but still tapped into its medieval vein, albeit in an unconscious manner. The Renaissance was undoubtedly a period characterised by a thirst for knowledge and accumulation. Tan tells us that visiting cabinets by the lay was seen as a substitute for travel in the same way that a relic was a surrogate for a saint’s presence. “Given that the New World was thought of initially as the new Eden, and given also the cabinet’s bias for American items, a visit to the collection could easily be painted in neo-religious terms, with the old Gods replaced by the new ones of empiricism and economics”<sup>38</sup>.

We have considered the audiences of chambers of wonder, but what about their owners and purveyors? How did they see their cabinets? Historian Isabel Yaya tells us that throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, cabinets of curiosity became the prime object of desire amongst the European elite, and become known under different appellations, “depending on the locality and proprietor’s aspirations”<sup>39</sup>. Essentially, the cabinet was a site where the elite demonstrated knowledge, status and wealth. These archives were a way of systematizing the world, of bringing it under control and framing the unfamiliar. Within these cabinets, *mirabilia* “were objects that stood out for their rarity and were intended to evoke curiosity and a sense of awe”; *artificialia* were also collected items, but combined the working of nature with the making of man; *naturalia*, found mostly in apothecaries, assembled fauna, flora and minerals, “as well as items that were intriguingly rare or possessed some affinity with the world of fables”<sup>40</sup>.

33 Tyson E. Lewis, “Teaching with Pensive Images: Rethinking Curiosity in Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, en *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 46(1), 2012, p. 36.

34 Lorraine Daston y Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750*, Nueva York, Zone Books, 2001, p. 13.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

36 Melissa Tan, *The World at Home: Curiosity Collecting in the First Age of Globalisation*, c. 1550-1750, tesis de doctorado, University of Warwick, 2010, p. 57.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 58. | 38 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

39 Isabel Yaya, “Wonders of America: The Curiosity Cabinet as a Site of Representation and Knowledge”, en *Journal of the History of Collections*, 20(2), 2008, p. 174.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 174. |

*Naturalia* would include “representations of deformed or atypical beings such as dwarves and giants, rare botanical specimens, unicorn horns, fossils and corals which defied the conventional classification of natural objects”<sup>41</sup>. Yaya significantly provides her readers with an example of how ethnographic items from cabinets were not only displayed, but also how they were effectively used in courtly festivities. She recounts how in 1599 Duke Friedrich of Wuerttemberg organized a carnival where he took the role of Queen of America, “surrounding himself with revellers decked in feathers and sporting American weapons from his curiosity cabinet.” She further recounts how Archduke Ferdinand II, on the occasion of his second marriage, adorned his helmet with feathers he had plucked from Pre-Columbian works in his collection!<sup>42</sup>. By displaying these wonders in the confined, restricted and intimate space of the European court, monarchies enraptured their audiences, “thereby consolidating their authority”<sup>43</sup>. Within the cabinet, it was hard to tell the difference between, say an American item and another from an equally distant and remote shore. There was no explicit indication regarding specific objects. Added to this, numerous items received ornamental additions once they entered the collection. For instance, masks and figurines were embellished with baroque frames and insets. As Yaya tells us “these aesthetic requisites disregarded cultural authenticity and particularism... Americana of the curiosity cabinets were incorporated into a homogenous mould that rarely acknowledged the origin”<sup>44</sup>. If we look ahead in time, Victorians too invested in cabinets and archives, but as places of “science as performance”<sup>45</sup>. The Victorian archive, presented in places such as the Royal Society, was a space carefully choreographed and “mattered a great deal (to) the presentation of the self”<sup>46</sup>. Through the archive, the scientist as curator embodied a particular model of scientific authority — the authority of empiricism — and impressed that same authority on the assembled gathering. Fluent in the language of wonder, which became the language of the visible — the language of spectacle — the Victorian man of the sciences learnt to appeal to the senses, conducting all sorts of mindboggling and astonishing experiments in front of lay audiences.

Should we agree to leap back into the present, there are many artists as curators working to reactivate the curiosity cabinet, which lost traction to the white cube and black box in the 1960s. For Philip Hoare<sup>47</sup>, this revival of the curiosity cabinet is a medium artists have found to speak to “our own vexed relationship with the natural world, at a time when we seem bent on destroying it.” I wish to problematize this resurgence and kindling of wonder in contemporary art and curating. Certainly for many artists or curators, the cabinet of curiosity affords a moment to disrupt the linearity of time, providing alternative histories. In the archive and cabinet, we find, as Tiffany Shafran has written, “material that sits outside the canon of knowledge or the specific story the institution is telling is hidden in deep storage. Through omission, a unified hegemonic narrative as knowledge is reinforced”<sup>48</sup>. But wonder also reflects a “desire to be amazed and distracted from the routine of everyday life”<sup>49</sup> and its complex social realities; for instance, the colonial theft and plundering, or the dehumanizing matrix subjacent to such displays, hardly ever evident to its European viewers.

Picking up on this, I propose we look at the work of Penny Siopis, a South African artist who regularly employs the trappings of wonder — accumulation, scale, spread and juxtaposition — in her oeuvre. Essential to my take on Siopis’s work is the question: who and what do we choose to exhume from the archives and ruins and to what effect? *Communion* (digital video, 2011) reconstructs the narrative of the death of an Irish nun, Sister Aidan, also known as Elsie Quinlan, a community doctor. In this video piece, as with the remainder of her production with moving image, Siopis pieces together the narrative of Sister Aidan, through found home movies — the once-intimate archives of strangers, shot in India, Greece, South Africa, Madagascar and former Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe). Siopis’s text is transcribed in the form of subtitles at the bottom of the screen. The text is taken from the John McFall biography she found in a second-hand bookshop<sup>50</sup>. It suggests that the spoken word (and by extension, the images themselves) are somehow foreign or strange, and require written translation to be intelligible. The author situates the voice of Sister Aidan, by way of subtitles, in the first person

41 *Ibid.*, p. 175. | 42 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 180. | 44 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

45 Iwan Rhys Morus, “Worlds of Wonder: Sensation and the Victorian Scientific Performance”, en *Isis*, vol. 101 n° 4, 2010, p. 806.

46 Iwan Rhys Morus, “Worlds of Wonder: Sensation and the Victorian Scientific Performance”, en *Isis*, vol. 101 n° 4, 2010, p. 807.

47 Philip Hoare, “Museum and gallery curators reopen the cabinet of curiosities concept”, en *The Guardian* [online], 13 de enero de 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jan/13/cabinet-curiosities-taxidermy-retro-museums> [Último acceso: 16/08/2017]

48 Tiffany Shafran “Archives of Wonder: Collecting the Liminal in Contemporary Art”, Christian Mieves y Irene Brown (eds.), *Wonder in Contemporary Artistic Practice*, Routledge, 2017, p. 19.

to “mark an imagined narrator rather than an empirical moment”<sup>51</sup>. I will try to provide an abbreviated account of Dr Quinlan’s death, which took place on November 9, 1952 in the town of Duncan Village, or “East bank location” as it was known then. On that day, a meeting had been organised by the African National Congress’ Youth League in Duncan Village, a celebration that the police had forbidden.

Duncan Village, an urban slum, housed more than 20,000 residents at the time, mostly living in shacks, with only 80 toilets between them<sup>52</sup>. It was characterised by unemployment, lack of education, poverty, disease, gangs, prostitution and police harassment, and was plagued with endless problems. A year before “Black Sunday,” as the massacre came to be known, residents were fighting alongside the ANC youth league against a levy council authorities had decided to implement as pay for road, lighting and sanitation upgrades. I mention this episode to provide some socio-historic context. This financial burden was deeply resented, as high rents already required lodgers to devote a third of their income to accommodation in small and overpopulated houses. The march by families at the time, and the official response to it, generated press coverage which successfully called attention to the inequity of these levies. In November of that year, the people of East Bank saw victory as the council was pressed to drop the 2 shilling charge in favour of a 1.5 shilling tax on landlords.

The uprising a year later (in 1952) was less fortuitous. Sister Aiden, born Elsie Quinlan, was sent to Duncan Village to start a clinic at the local mission in 1949. Situated on top of a hill in the centre of the slum, the mission included a church, a primary school with about 350 pupils, and a medical clinic, which Quinlan ran with the help of one nursing assistant, Sister Gratia Khumalo. She is said to have consulted around 170 people on the Friday before she died and made an effort to speak to them in their home language, isiXhosa. Although a woman of God, Dr Quinlan also had earthly passions: cars. According to historian Mignonne Breier, “she loved driving as was occasionally given the responsibility of driving a superior when she visited parts of South Africa, as a break from her duties as a doctor”<sup>53</sup>.

The riots in Duncan Village happened during the fifth month of the ANC’s defiance campaign, which was launched on June 26, 1952 to protest against a number of laws: pass laws and curfews, the Group Areas Act and the Suppression of Communism Act; the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Separate Representation of Voters Act. Led by Nelson Mandela, the campaign, which was intended to be non-violent, involved groups of volunteers “publicly flouting laws”<sup>54</sup> and inviting arrest. The Eastern Cape, where Duncan Village is located, was the most active province. It was here that the campaign began, led by Dr James Ngongwe, a former classmate of Sister Aiden. He was one of the first two Black medical graduates at Wits University. The campaign itself did not achieve the repeal of any of the aforementioned laws, but it did increase the ANC’s popularity. The events in Duncan Village on that fatidic Sunday marred the ANC’s non-violent campaign, and it is perhaps for this reason, amongst others, which I will address further on, that they have been silenced.

What happened exactly on this day is lost to us. What we do know is that permission was granted by the police for a prayer meeting in Duncan Village on November 9. This was surprising, given that the town was already on high alert, with reinforcements brought in following unrest in other cities. When the meeting finally got under way – at about 4 pm – with an estimated 1,500 people attending, the police decided that it was not a prayer meeting after all and ordered the crowd to disperse. When they did not do so, they charged them with batons. The crowd retaliated, throwing stones and the police in turn responded opening fire. According to Breier<sup>55</sup>:

“Sister Aiden entered the township at about 5 pm. She had been on an afternoon drive, and it is presumed she had heard about the riot and had entered the township to help the wounded. Whatever her intentions, she drove the black Austin motorcar straight into Bantu street, where a mob converged on her vehicle. In the murder trial, it was found that Vumile Nonqobo, 19, who had one leg severely injured while working in the mines, smashed the windscreen of Sister Aiden’s car and struck her forehead with the stick he used as a crutch. Albert Mgxwiti, 45, driver

49 Ibid., p. 22.

50 Mignonne Breier, “The Death that Dare(d) Not Speak its Name: The Killing of Sister Aiden Quinlan in the East London Riots of 1952”, en *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41(6), 2015, p. 1.161.

51 Penny Siopis, *Who’s Afraid of the Crowd*, Ciudad del Cabo, Stevenson, 2011, p. 51.

52 Mignonne Breier, *op. cit.*, p. 1.152

53 Ibid., p. 1.153.

54 Ibid., p. 1.153.

55 Ibid., p. 1.154.

for a traveling liquor salesman, stabbed her repeatedly with a knife, and others pelted her with stones. The mob then turned the car on its side and, with her still in it, and possibly still alive, set it alight (...) Another white person – an insurance salesman, Barend Vorster – was also killed in Duncan Village on that day, by another breakaway mob, which dragged him out of a church minister’s home, where he was attempting to hide, and beat him to death in the street. He was in the habit of collecting payments on Sunday, and entered the township that day despite warnings by the police. Three men were executed for his murder.”<sup>56</sup>

Rampage extended to the destruction of Catholic and other property belonging to whites. Officials put the number of deaths on “Black Sunday,” as it came to be known, at seven “natives” and two “Europeans,”<sup>57</sup> with 27 wounded<sup>58</sup>, but it is estimated that 214 inhabitants died that day.

“Police pumped many hundreds of rounds of live ammunition into running rioters over a period of several hours. Many of the bullets penetrated the homes of innocent residents”<sup>59</sup>. The effect these events had on the people of East London were profound. According to Breier<sup>60</sup>, “thousands of Africans fled the city for the rural areas in the immediate aftermath, fearing white reprisals. Many smuggled their dead and wounded out of the city to be buried, fearful that they would be implicated in the death of the whites.”

By way of the gaze of wonder, and its cousin, terror, *Communion* I argue, resurrects the forgotten martyr, Sister Aidan as *mirabilia*. Through her titling the work, Siopis signals, in the strongest manner possible, Sister Aidan as our collective saviour, a white messiah in whose body and blood we commune as a form of deliverance from (“black”) evil. This is a problematic revitalisation of this event in that it reinstates the colonial mission of white supremacy (veiled as missionary work). Siopis does little to excavate the identity of the 200 odd victims who died on this day – unlike Breier, who in her epilogue, mentions the struggle hero Skei Gwentshe’s (the chairperson of the ANC in East London, and also the president of the Cape ANCYL)<sup>61</sup> – focussing her research

Fig. 02 David Goldblatt, *Memorial to Sister Dr. Mary Aidan Quinlan who was murdered on November 9, 1952 by a mob near Duncan Village. Catholic Church, Duncan Village, East London, October 13, 2015.*



instead and almost only on Sister Aidan. Only she is entitled to a voice. Siopis chooses to mourn a white victim, one who, some may argue, chose her fate, just as her lesser-known companion, salesman Vorster. What I argue here is that the gaze of wonder, and its hidden subconscious companion, white terror (triggered by Conquistador legend of black and brown man-eaters), impedes the viewing subject from a deeper and fuller understanding of the archive as historical narrative. Wonder (and its cousin terror) cloud our judgement, impeding us from *seeing ethically*. The 214 victims of this day also deserve mourning as they were never openly mourned.

According to scholars Leslie Bank and Benedict Carton, “Government crackdown made it difficult in Duncan Village to mourn Black Sunday. One of the few ANC meetings called in its wake took place at the sea off an Africans-only beach. Due to banning orders preventing assembly, ANC members arrived separately, waded into the water, and communed while pretending to swim”<sup>62</sup>.

To conclude, I propose we counter, trouble and contest the idle, exoticizing and fetishizing gaze of curiosity and wonder, and the vice of “ocular desire,” as Augustus would have it, by employing a different lens – a paranoid, vigilant and pensive gaze; what Paulo Freire would call an ethics of attention – embracing the value of “letting the present interrogate the past”<sup>63</sup>. We need to be aware that wonder is the gaze of a particular late-Renaissance, colonial episteme, as Isabel Yaya tells us<sup>64</sup>. The practice of collecting and displaying “curiosities,” such as the death of Sister Mary Aidan Quinlan, provides a particular didactic approach, which reconstitutes a particular order of the universe, with the West at its apex. It is this Western gaze, the gaze of wonder, which we have been compelled to deconstruct and decolonise, using paranoia, vigilance and reflexivity as our first-order archival tools.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 1.154. | 57 *Ibid.*, p. 1.156.

58 Leslie J. Bank y Benedict Carton, “Forgetting Apartheid: History, Culture and the Body of a Nun”, en *Africa*, 86(3), 2016.

59 Mignonne Breier, *óp. cit.*, p. 1.156.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 1.156.

61 According to Saleem Badat (2013: 160) Gwentshe was a versatile man and the leader of the Hot Shots musical band. For a history of Gwentshe’s banishments after the events of 1952, whereafter he was forced to live in conditions not fit for human habitation, with no work and nothing to eat, a condition which he defied, see Badat, pp. 161-162.

62 Leslie J. Bank y Benedict Carton, *óp. cit.*, p. 473.

63 Harlen, Winne. *Teaching and Learning Primary Science*. London: Harper & Row, 1985, p.608.

64 Isabel Yaya, *óp. cit.*, p. 173.

# THE **ARCHIVE** AS ARTISTIC **PRACTICE** AND **ACTIVISM**

GRACIELA CARNEVALE

102 Archivo de Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia + RedCSur

During the sixties, I was part of the *Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia de Rosario* (Avant-Garde Art Group of Rosario). I kept materials, news articles, photos and texts that referred to actions of the group. Carlos Militello, who collaborated with this group as a photographer, stored the negatives. For years, they were packed away in folders and boxes. At one point, it was necessary to camouflage them, disseminating them among other papers, magazines and photos so that they would go unnoticed in case of a police raid. On one occasion, I got rid of some documents to avoid possible consequences for any of the group members, keeping only those which had a public nature. But in general, at a time when many people burned, destroyed or buried their libraries, we kept these documents as part of our personal archives, loaded with strong emotional ties.

Therefore, my archive shows what was preserved, but at the same time it hides what was censored and eliminated. Thus constructed, it is neither neutral nor objective, as it responds to both random factors and personal affections. It is a fragment.

At first, I kept only the things related to our group. During the years after its dissolution, I continued to keep materials on the social and political situation, repression and torture, and also documents of actions we carried out with some comrades and those of other groups, as well as demonstrations of activist practices and encounters held in Chile and Cuba in 1972 and 1973, which I piled up in folders and boxes in an eclectic order.

During the 1980s, I began to classify them. I invented these classifications, but they were never good enough and I had to modify them as my approaches to these events changed. Documents that I had once discarded gained sense later on, or were re-signified differently as the context changed.

The military process of 1976 buried these actions in silence.

Over the years, the archive became almost the only documentary record of the actions of this group of artists, which later became more visible. Until the late 1990s, few had seen or shown an interest in these documents.

While this archive developed spontaneously, a series of specific circumstances brought it to light. But especially the meeting with certain researchers interested in the subject – particularly Ana Longoni – allowed it to become an archive; as a result it was redesigned on multiple occasions.

Since then this archive has been visited by students, researchers and doctoral students from Argentinian and foreign universities. We receive regular requests about information and archive materials sent by critics, researchers and curators from very different places and intended for exhibitions and publications. Many researchers have consulted it on-site, while others have gathered information and materials via e-mail. Some have stayed at the archive during their research. In recent years, the materials in this archive have been part of numerous exhibitions, congresses and meetings on art and politics or art and activism in Europe and Latin America.

I conceive the archive as a space for reflection, dialogue and debate, open to multiple interpretations and readings. I think of it as an incomplete process that continues to be nourished by new events in the present.

By sharing experiences that occurred during a different historical moment and making them visible, we take the risk of stripping them of their contextual implications and making them appear as independent, non-political events.

How can this tension be maintained and be productive and not neutralized by the system?

How can we show our group's process of political and aesthetic radicalization, which led us to articulate a theory and practice that sought to create a different concept of both art and artists?

By presenting the primary evidence of these practices, the archive acts as a tool for knowledge and a trigger for memory. It helps establish genealogies with current events and lines of thought and research that help reflect on art and the role of the artist from different perspectives, beyond the paradigms

Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia de Rosario  
(Avant-garde Art Group of Rosario), 1968.



imposed by the market, which limit the changes produced by art only to the sphere of art. It opens up perspectives for reflecting on artistic practice from other coordinates, which surpass the white cube and the web of biennials and prizes, and help imagine it in a wider network of relationships characterized by searches open to other disciplines and territories.

The organization and exhibition of an archive poses questions related to editing and assembling. Even though the archive's organizational structure generates a text and therefore a meaning, each individual document has multiple layers which need to be read and discovered, and can be articulated through different narrations and voices, thus defying the existence of one single history and one single truth.

Each time archive materials are consulted, different readings are developed and new questions are raised, and this process turns the archive into something which is alive and constantly changing. Thus, the archive is conceived as an open space ready to be interpreted and discovered, a space that is proposed as an invitation to investigate, to observe, to question, and that does not resemble a ruin, nor a corpse.

Displaying an archive raises challenges and questions, and confronts us with the difficulty of showing events in all their complexity. Each experience of showing the archive is different. What is selected to be shown, where it is shown and how materials are presented are all significant facts.

The problems posed by archive exhibitions are related to the questions we ask ourselves today from the perspective of our own practices. Displaying the archive means activating it and, at the same time, intervening it. Each display is a way of reinventing the archive, since each presentation becomes a new visibility device and, therefore, an exercise in

critical reflection. Showing the archive's contents is necessarily an exercise in interpretation; it implies appropriating these actions and inserting them into a new scenario.

I assumed that our archive should remain in Rosario, projecting itself from there and confronting, on the one hand, the current market interest in the legacies of critical practices of that period and, on the other, the indifference of our own governments regarding the possibility of losing these patrimonies.

The conservation of archives challenges us to design different policies to experience and access culture, policies that may highlight the value of these legacies and prevent our cultural heritage from being taken to other more powerful countries as the only possibility for their preservation.

Preserving archives in their places of origin, and giving them visibility, is an important political act.

Showing archives and making them available to audiences and users becomes an effective instance of democratization because it opens up possibilities for participation, access to



archive contents and even its expansion by including new materials and documents.

Commitment to the archive not only relates to an experience of the past, but also to a concern and a need to reflect, in the present, on our current practices, and to find, out of such group experiences, new ways of thinking about art as a practice of subjectivity production, critical thinking and interventions in reality.

How can we show the series of images and texts belonging to the archive so that they do not appear crystallized, stripped of the vital and revulsive energy they had when they were created?

How do we address our concerns, doubts and searches?

The creation of our archive is not detached from the stories and journeys of other archives in Latin America. As many archives come to light, common relationships and circumstances appear. Materials, documents, photographs which have been saved and preserved by one of the main actors. Traces of past collectives and groups which recently were active in times

of repression and dictatorship. Documents, in many cases, are the only remains still available. Experiences remained hidden and ignored for a long time.

Archives were often built as part of a personal story and gained visibility when their materials became referential and unique because other sources have been destroyed, burned, stigmatized or made invisible.

Archives of artistic practices explicitly linked to their social contexts allow us to discover and investigate a multiplicity of expressions and actions that appeared during a specific period. Such documents open up the possibility of developing new critical analyses and interpretations from different visions of the present. Contextual interpretations update experiences and debates, reflections and actions that originated in contexts and concerns that may seem distant but, nevertheless, resonate in the present.

The archive, thus, constitutes a place that articulates the artistic-political experiences of some groups, and the personal and emotional reasons that made its preservation possible.

The task of preserving and later assembling and deploying an archive necessarily involves various types of discussions related to methodologies, devices and ways of thinking about history, art and politics.

In recent years, the hegemonic knowledge centers have shown interest in the artistic and political practices of the 1960s and 1970s, an interest that often serves as an excuse to implement policies of appropriation and dispossession.

In art institutions, certain concepts that previously were invisible now occupy a privileged position. Practices that were silenced or interrupted by dictatorial regimes circulate on the market, stripped of their critical potential. These practices are neutralized by the categorization of “political art”, that homogenizes and erases the singularity of processes and contexts, and forces us to implement actions to oppose these aestheticizing appropriations.

The memory of the sensitive experience generated by artistic practices cannot be reduced to their mere materiality, and makes it necessary to recreate new ways of socializing these legacies if we wish to reactivate their poetic-disruptive potential to enable new processes of subjectivation.

How should we now imagine new practices, other forms and other stories that can be understood in relation to multiple productions that defy schematic, simplified concepts of what is artistic and what is political?

The importance and the use value of this archive have different possibilities of enunciation. As we have mentioned before, this is in fact the only documentary collection of *Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia de Rosario*'s path of radicalization, which happened as a consequence of repression and censorship during the military governments of 1966 and 1976. Its mere existence constitutes a place of affirmation and a space of resistance.

This archive is continuously modified through the incorporation of new materials, including the products of its own circulation in exhibitions. As a living body, it is constantly being transformed through new interpretations and new

networks of relationships that take a more complex approach, in a constant experiment of reactivation. An archive conceived as a construction and preservation of memory, as a space for struggle and resistance, and as a work-in-process for articulating critical thinking.

This is one of the series of archives created in relation to practices that occurred under military governments in Latin America, which in recent years, thanks to the joint work of researchers and artists, are being recovered and made visible.

In a text that we wrote with Moira Cristiá for a presentation on personal archives, we said:

“This archive, which includes written documents, slides, photographs, negatives, correspondence, postcards, newspaper articles, posters, catalogs and publications originally related to *Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia de Rosario*, from the late sixties and early seventies, has the distinctive feature of having been built around a ‘we’ shaped by the experiences of a group and the unique historical circumstances in which these took place. Reflecting on the specific nature of this archive allows us to reflect on the collective and intersubjective nature of every personal archive, of a construction that, although it comes out of a personal experience, helps make visible the different layers of the social sphere that traverse it.”

In this specific case, the archive has been built through an intense interpersonal and collective interaction, through a reflection and a constant search for dialogue and exchanges, articulating the transformations produced by its public deployment in different environments and contexts.

The origin of this archive was not a single isolated individual; the motor was a group of young artists who, in the mid-sixties, tried to revolutionize art, and then revolutionize society. They went from experimentation to rebel action, from museums to non-conventional spaces, such as the streets, trade unions or shopping malls and, in some cases, from protests to abandoning art or to armed actions. From *Círculo de Arte Experi-*

1 Graciela Carnevale and Moira Cristiá, “Archivo subjetivo-colectivo: El caso del archivo de Graciela Carnevale como objeto social” (“Subjective-collective archive: The case of the Graciela Carnevale archive as a social object”), paper presented at the Personal Archive's International Congress: archival practices, methodological problems and historiographic uses, April 19, 20 and 21, 2017.

*mental*, where the group members were offered an individual exhibition with works by each one of them, the group went on to elaborate a collective type of work in which they effectively questioned the status quo, aiming to intervene that reality.

And we added:

“*Tucumán Arde* materialized such desire to do things collectively, breaking the wall between artists and social reality and including other social actors through the joint work of an interdisciplinary group. The experimental group of Rosario included artists from Buenos Aires and intellectuals from both cities, and developed a proposal in relation to the labor confederation, seeking to be directly involved in a political praxis. *Tucumán Arde* was a project of counter-informative action regarding the critical situation in that province after the closure of several sugar mills as part of the economic policy of the military regime of Onganía. The proposal contemplated a stage of research and trips in order to capture the social reality *in situ*, as well as an advertising campaign and an exhibition that denounced the devastating consequences of those measures

on the society of Tucumán, presenting it at the CGTA headquarters in Rosario and Buenos Aires.”

The collective did not survive for long: its activity was cut short after the Buenos Aires exhibition was censored a few hours after its inauguration. As a result, some of its members joined political organizations and all of them abandoned artistic production for a while. I returned many years later, as part of other groups and new experiences in the field of art which articulated those practices with current ones related to new problems in a context characterized by globalization, climate change and social inequalities.

I have been a member of the Red de Conceptualismos del Sur - RedCSur since its creation, in 2007.

In 2008, the first exhibition of the archive took place in Rosario, at the Parque de España Cultural Center, and was the framework for the second plenary meeting of the RedCSur network.

With the support of Museo Reina Sofía and RedCSur, we have recently published *Desinventario. Esquirlas de Tucumán*



*Tucumán Arde*. CGT.  
Rosario, 1968.



*Arde en el Archivo de Graciela Carnevale*, a book about our archive which was conceived collectively by several members of the network: Marcelo Expósito, Jaime Vindel, André Mesquita and myself, with the coordination of Mabel Tapia in the last stage of the process.

Since last year, we have been working on the archive's organization and structure together with Moira Cristiá,<sup>1</sup> a researcher and member of our network. Currently, thanks to the financial support that came from RedCSur, we are in a process of describing digitized documents in order to "socialize" them on the Internet through the website *Archivos en uso* ([archivosenuso.org](http://archivosenuso.org)). This task has triggered a new process of reflection to decide how to present these documents online, making them available and enabling their interaction with materials from other archives.

About one year ago, our archive was moved to a new space which is better fitted for display and consultation purposes.

Given the current impact of this archive, it is important for us to finish organizing, cataloging and digitizing it in order to socialize its content and make these documents available to a wider audience, facilitating its physical consultation.

These documentary materials are already partially organized and digitized, and are in good condition.

The progress made in the organization and digitization of part of our holdings has been based on own resources, but it has also been supported by Museu d'Art Contemporain de Barcelona (MACBA) and the Ex Argentina Project, organized by the Goethe Institute in collaboration with Laura Pelusso, Ana Wandzik, Lorena Cardona and Valentina Militello.

The current space where this archive is hosted is being maintained by the archive's own means, as well as with the income provided by selling an edition of a selection of documents from the archive that we created together with the art gallery Espai Visor, in Valencia.

What does it mean to democratize an archive?

How do we socialize an experience?

How do we promote a different concept of history, memory and archive than the one we have spoken of?

Who are we addressing, and how?

We must create spaces where archives can be physically consulted in their places of origin; establish networks among them, building narratives, stories. We must rescue, as much as possible, an oral memory that may accompany these materials.

I believe that the archive format we use must allow us not only to inform, but also to communicate, and that such format is connected to language. How can we deploy technology so that it is useful for the production of meanings?

I believe that these concerns open up a space for experimentation, for searches and for risks.

All archives have their own organizational logic and methodologies. This gives them their unique characteristics: subjective concepts that challenge the rational patterns by which everything should be organized according to universalizing concepts, patterns that are, in fact, based on paradigms that belong to other value systems or ways of thinking about art and archives.

Therefore, experimental searches are necessary to organize archives, edit CDs, design websites, set up networks where the sensitive memory of artistic/political experiences is present.

This is a sensitive, creative, experimental, political search.

Shaping archives. Safeguarding archives. Opening archives. By doing these we are questioning the notion of authorship, but also the market, the distribution of knowledge and the access to sources of knowledge. We are proposing other ways of thinking and historicizing.

RedCSur stands up against the fetishization of certain practices of the sixties and seventies. Circulating these practices among researchers and in general helps make them visible, and legitimize them as well. We are trying to produce a different type of legitimacy.

How can we strengthen the potential of certain practices and reactivate their revulsive power, which is still alive, in the current circumstances, so that it may have an impact in our present?

Interweaving relationships, sharing practices, writing stories, finding their commonalities and differences from a decolonizing (and decolonized) perspective, from the center and from ourselves. Starting a path where there are no footprints, where there will be confusions, but where certain actions will serve as milestones to begin creating the basis for a network of archives of the commons.

This basis should facilitate meetings such as this one, conversations, researches, seminars, exhibitions, debates that may lead to the creation of other actions that may empower and influence their environment by establishing relationships with current activists, creators and producers in each place. This basis should establish horizontal and trans-discipline relationships.

We may take multiple perspectives when thinking about the archives: the practices of the sixties, our current position, the relationships and affections these practices produced, the dialogues that gave rise to them, the visibility they acquired, their current institutionalization, the relationships the archive establishes with other historical moments, the importance of narratives, the archive's fragility... Also ethics and militancy. We can also value the archive by evaluating the events that it has caused, or the actions that created it; the connections it has established from body to body or between concepts and practices, through differences or similarities, through resonances and responses.

By revaluing the political dimension of the archives related to conceptual practices in Latin America, it is possible to consider the archive as a toolbox with use value in the present. By recovering memories and experiences from almost 50 years ago, the archive makes visible the disputed meanings of contemporary artistic and political practices, and challenges us to reactivate the memories of actions that were disruptive and that, until recently, belonged to no entity. The archive thus challenges us to find new uses and interpretations for its contents, and to explore ways of reactivating poetic-political practices emerged in other contexts, in order to think about what radical overflows may still exist in the present.

AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO  
**FLAT**  
TIME  
**HOUSE**

GARETH BELL-JONES

110 Flat Time House



*Flat Time House*. Photograph: Ken Adlard.  
Courtesy John Latham Foundation.



When commissioned to produce a sculpture for the regeneration of his street in Peckham, John Latham chose not to produce a traditional public sculpture, but rather his house itself. For the passer-by, the most apparent manifestation of his intention is the book sculpture that pierces the front of his house. Held by the glass pane of the front window of the house, it hovers, suspended half in the public realm and half inside. Latham renamed the space *Flat Time I-IO*, usually referred to as Flat Time House.

Latham had lived on Bellenden Road since 1983, but the process of commissioning and production led to him reconsidering the nature of the building he lived and worked in. At the point of the work's completion in 2003, he had come to think of it as an organism, describing it as a living sculpture. The space is anthropomorphised appropriately with each room taking the title of a part of the body. The first room is the Mind; the following, the office, is the Brain. Further on, through a corridor, lies the Body Event comprising of kitchen, living room, bathroom and bedroom. The Hand, which lies at the rear of the house, was Latham's studio and now forms the main gallery space. The large book intersecting the front window is the Face, a signifier for all the activity that takes place within.

Latham died in 2006, but Flat Time House was set up as an art institution in his former home two years later, with the intention of communicating his theoretical ideas and their continued relevance. With its large plate glass frontage, on a bright day the white walls and floor of the Mind make it luminous. It was fashioned as it is specifically for the communication of Latham's ideas. He considered this room a semi-public space and would sit in a folding chair and present his ideas to those interested. He selected four works to hang in the space to give a concise introduction to his work and ideas. They act almost as diagrammatic tools to aid access to his concept of Flat Time, and the institution continues to lead tours introducing his ideas to visitors.

The first work to consider is *Proto-Universe* (2003). Made from a two equally sized panes, the left is of glass and the

*Proto-Universe* (2003). Glass, foam board, wood.  
Photograph: Ken Adlard. Courtesy John Latham Foundation.



right is a white monochrome sheet of foam board. Latham began using glass in the late eighties, and in his system of signifiers, transparent glass represents “state 0”, literally nothing – no time, but also that outside of time – the atemporal. The white pane signifies what Latham defined as the “least event”; this can be understood as the shortest duration that can affect us. The “least event” can be understood as equivalent to a Planck Time, the time required for light to travel in a vacuum a distance of one Planck length, approximately  $5.39 \times 10^{-44}$  s. This unit of time, named after Max Planck, represents the rough time scale at which quantum gravitational effects are likely to become important. This essentially means that whilst smaller units of time can exist, they are so small their effect on our existence is negligible.

Latham ascribed to the Big Crunch theory of the universe. This proposed model for the universe suggests that the metric expansion of space eventually reverses and the universe recollapses, ultimately causing a reformation of the universe starting with another Big Bang. As such, his understanding of the cosmos was one that was infinitely cyclical; a succession of universes expanding from a big bang to a point of maximum extent and then contracting until another big bang takes place.

When considering *Proto-Universe* within this model, the plane of glass, or “state 0”, is not equivalent to a non-existent *before* the big bang, but rather as a non-dimensional

transition point between one universe and the next. The white plane, representing a “state 1” or “least event”, can thus be understood as the initial step in the creation of a new universe. *Proto-Universe* describes the creation of the universe as a point of transition, something Latham referred to as the “paradigm shift”.

Latham conceived Flat Time as a way of bringing together an understanding of the world as we experience it with scientific models of how the universe is constructed. Latham considered the Big Bang a paradigm shift, but so too was Einstein’s publishing of the Theory of Relativity within the history of science. All that was understood in Physics was put to one side as a new understanding of the universe came forth. Within the field of art history, he suggests Rauschenberg’s painting of white monochromes in 1951 was a paradigm shift as everything that went before was concluded and a fresh



*Organism Somewhere* (1980). Spray ink on paper.  
Photograph: Ken Adlard. Courtesy John Latham Foundation.

start began. Latham also understood there to have been a paradigm shift within his own practice through his first use of spray paint in 1954.

In the early fifties Latham and his partner Barbara Stevni moved to Fleet, Hampshire. Living nearby were Clive Gregory (1890–1964), a respected astronomer and the first director of the University of London observatory, and Anita Kohsen (1925–1984), a parapsychologist and animal behaviourist. Gregory and Kohsen shared a dissatisfaction with the perceived fragmentation of knowledge into myriad disciplines and beliefs. Together, they developed a unifying theory of the universe they named “psychophysical cosmology”. Latham was profoundly influenced by their ideas, and was named an honorary founder member when they later created the Institute for the Study of Mental Images.

In 1954, Gregory and Kohsen were hosting a Halloween party and invited Latham to paint a large mural in their house. Rather than using brushes as he had done previously, Latham used a spray gun to burst clouds of black paint onto the ceiling. At the time he had been doing some maintenance work on their house, using the device to paint the outside. But the invitation led to a revelation: the potential for a short eruption of spray to create a mass of painted specks led him to feel, for the first time, his work was embodying the ideas inspired by Gregory and Kohsen. The act of spraying paint was an expression of existence coming from nothing, a “least event” emerging from a “state 0”.

This breakthrough led to a continued use and development of the spray technique over the succeeding years. *Organism Somewhere* (1980) is an example of what he called his *One Second Drawings*, a series of spray works on paper he began in 1970. The sprayed mark simultaneously recalls a negative image of the cosmos, an atomic structure and an organic structure under microscope. In the Mind gallery, this work can be considered a step further in complexity and duration from *Proto-Universe*. Moving from a “state 0” in glass to the white plane of the “least event”, in this work the atomic, cosmological and the living are conflated in a one second event.

*Book Relief Triad* (2003/1959). Ink, plaster, books and white duck on wooden boxes.

Photograph: Ken Adlard. Courtesy John Latham Foundation.



*Book Relief Triad* (2003/1959) refers back to a series of works Latham made between 1959 and 1960 called the *Observer Reliefs*. These three canvases represent the three states of human existence that Latham identified. He argued that each state equals to a different duration, with more complex or enlightened modes of experience corresponding to longer durations. He used the three protagonists of the Dostoyevsky novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) to explain these states. Lowest on the wall, the canvas with a book partly burned and covered in plaster represents the Mitya state, the elder brother. The second work with a book emerging from the canvas represents the Ivan state, the middle brother of Dostoyevsky's narrative. The third uppermost, unmarked canvas represents the younger brother, the Alyosha state.

Mitya, the cluttered book relief, represents the instinctive being, whose behaviour is genetically determined and

*How the Univoice is Still Unheard* (2003). Mixed media cantilevered window sculpture.  
Photograph: Ken Adlard. Courtesy John Latham Foundation.



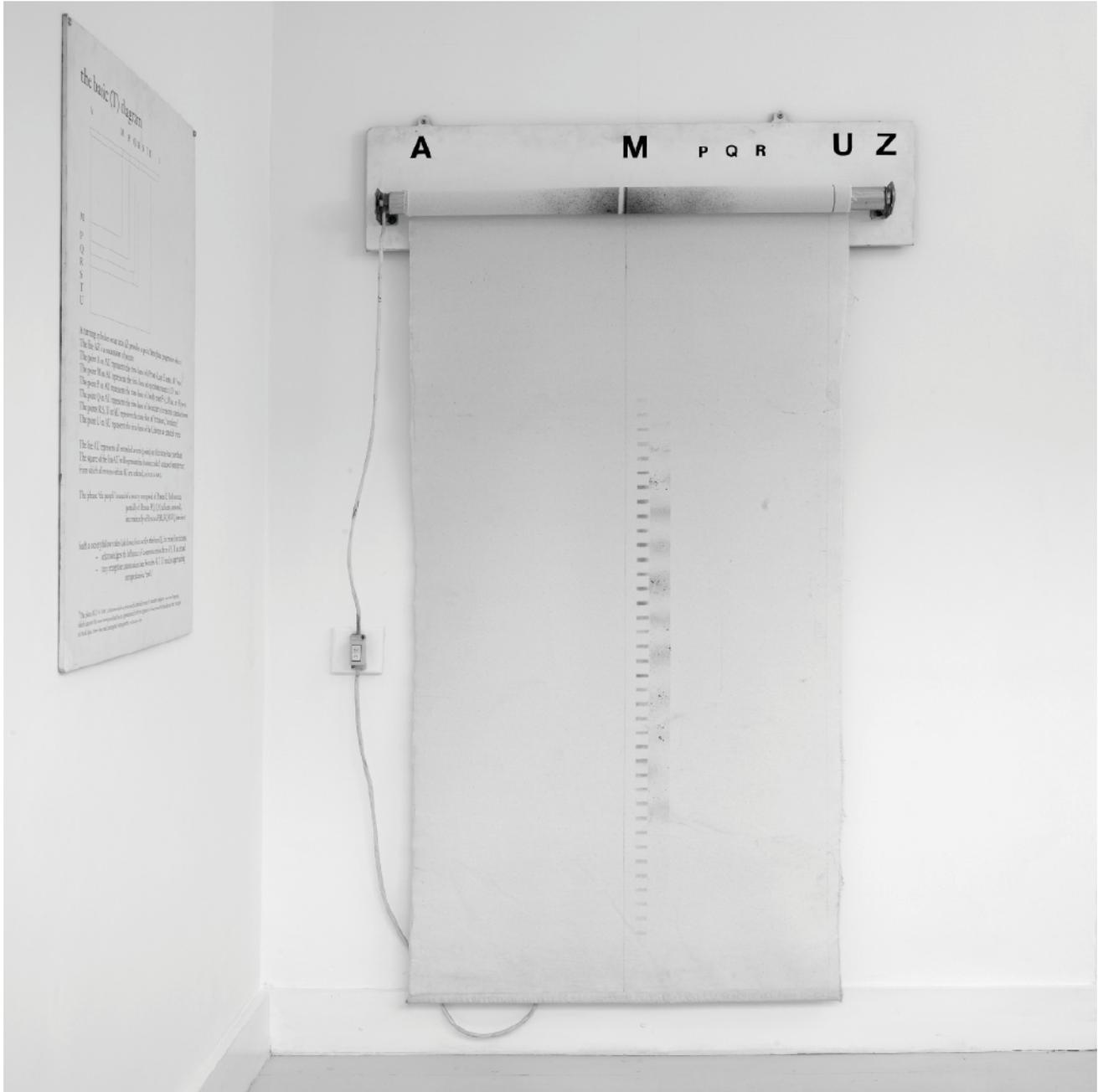
non-reflective, closest to an animal state. At Flat Time House this corresponds to the Body Event, the space for eating, sleeping and living, activities he thought of corresponding to a more immediate and shorter duration. The more ordered relief, Ivan, represents the rational being, at once empowered and limited by their intellectual state and learned or received knowledge. This state is represented by the Brain at Flat Time House, the office with archive and site for administration. For Latham this mode of rational thought requires a consideration of longer duration than that of pure survival.

The Alyosha state is the most enlightened and also considerate of the highest duration. It represents the reflective, intuitive being who can encompass the characteristics of the other two but also has the ability to observe things as a whole and is capable of original thought. For Latham, this position in society was held by the artist, but not limited to artists. He used the term “Incidental Person” to describe this individual, a phrase which first appears in an undated document titled *Definitions and Observations*. John Latham writes: “This term was invented to distinguish a new type of individual from the more general ‘artist’... The I.P. is a resource and an instrument of change with those organisations responsible for future societies everywhere.” He understood artists, in the first instance, to be best adept to this approach, as opposed to those who were institutionalised or “knowledge experts” within that system.

The Alyosha state is represented at Flat Time House in two spaces. The rear gallery, the Hand, was previously Latham’s studio, where he made his artwork and as such a site for intuitive production. The Mind space, where these works are displayed, is intended as a site for reflection upon the intuitive process. In the Mind, those that visit are encouraged into the state of the Incidental Person; a site for reflective and intuitive thought enacted through the works Latham selected.

Latham made his first book-relief in 1958, and continued to use books in his work until the end of his life. As with his use of the spray gun and glass, the material itself is imbued with meaning. Their extrusion from a surface represents the accumulation of human knowledge and experience over time from a common point, represented by the glass or canvas support. By intersecting, burning and interleaving the pages of the books they can no longer be read in a linear manner. Once manipulated, the books cannot operate as hierarchical structures of received opinion, but rather propose an intuitive understanding of themselves and, as such, of human knowledge.

Latham’s largest book-relief work is cantilevered through the front of Flat Time House. The spine of the first of two books bears the title *How the Univoice is Still Unheard*, the “univoice” being Flat Time as a unifying principle of everything. The pages of the books are interleaved so they cannot be opened and the sculpture is intersected by the plane of glass, which makes up the front window of the space. For Latham this work cons-



*Time-Base Roller with Graphic Score* (1987). Canvas, electric motor operating metal bar, wood, graphite.  
Photograph: Ken Adlard. Courtesy John Latham Foundation.

titutes the “Face” of Flat Time House as a living sculpture. It exists at the membrane between the body and the exterior.

The final work that Latham selected as representative of his ideas is *Time-Base Roller with Graphic Score* (1987). A long canvas with spray-painted stripes is wound round a turning barrel operated by an electric switch. Above the barrel, at the top of the canvas is the time-base, a spectrum of durations from short to long, demarcated by letters from A to Z.

At the extreme left end of the canvas is point A – the “least event”, the shortest duration. As we move to the right durations get exponentially longer until we reach point M. This is the shortest duration perceptible to a human, Latham suggested this as 1/24<sup>th</sup> second, or equivalent to standard film frame rate – the point where a film frame transitions from a series of static images to constant movement.

Consequently, points A to M represent durations outside the realm of direct human reference, the atomic. Moving towards the right, durations become increasingly lengthier until we get to point P, Q and R. The instinctive, bodily interaction with the world of Mitya and the Body Event space at Flat Time House is at point P. Position Q corresponds to a rational interaction with the world, as with Ivan and the Brain. R is the longer duration of the reflective intuitive Incidental Person, Alyosha and the Mind.

Continuing right along the time-base towards longer durations, Latham suggested that points R, S and T are where “art” is positioned, and, although Latham did understand there to be such a thing as definitive truth, S, T and U would be the location of what humans understand truth to be. As such, in Latham’s cosmology art (RST) forms a bridge between human experience (PQR) and truth (STU). At the very end of the right side of the canvas, U represents the Universe as event, the duration of the entire universe at present, the duration since the big bang. Beyond the end of the canvas at U to the extreme right of the time-base and above the bare barrel is point Z. This is the duration of the Universe at maximum extent, or of all possible universes.

These sequences of letters correspond to Latham’s “Time-base”, a mode of understanding time according to the artist. The barrel of the roller itself represents a second conception of time. This is where we find State 0, both nothing and the atemporal, beyond the edges of the canvas and omnipresent beneath it. The third and final notion of time is activated when a switch is turned on and the canvas begins to unravel: this is passing time. The spray painted flecks on the canvas represent events occurring on different frequencies, or time-bases, as described by the letters along the top edge. These marks face away from us and can only be seen through the reverse of the canvas and along a narrow band along the front of the roller.

When the switch is flipped, the barrel turns, unrolling canvas until the whole length is unfurled. Most of the painted surface of the canvas remains obscured from our view most of the time, as it is either rolled up around the barrel or visible only from behind. The surface becomes only briefly visible along the narrow strip of the time-base along front of the cylinder before falling down behind, where only the reverse is visible. The continuous change in what can be seen on this narrow strip represents the passage of time and our understanding of the universe being restricted to our lived experience of it. The impression of the painted surface through the reverse of the canvas lacks the immediacy of the present, denoting an estrangement from events that have passed and those yet to come.

The *Time-Base Roller with Graphic Score* diagrammatically brings together the concepts explored in the other works in the Mind. Operating in four dimensions, Latham uses the roller as model of the universe understood as a musical score. The capacity of a flat canvas to represent an entire Universe is at the root of the term Flat Time.

An introduction to Latham’s cosmology shows that the investigation of time expressed in these works is apparent throughout the work of his entire career. The mode he chooses to express the name for his house is an extension of this; choosing Flat Time I-IO, the “House” becomes a transition point between state 0 and state I. This is one way the artist

Handwritten notes in French, including phrases like "L'histoire de la vie privée", "XVIII", "1968", and "programme".

expressed his intention for the house itself to be understood as an artwork and culmination of his understanding of time. Integral to its position as an artwork and living sculpture is the activity that takes place within, and its relationship to the world outside.

The Face sculpture constitutes a symbol of the accumulation of received opinion by human kind. It acts as an interface between the activity within Flat Time House and that outside. It is positioned half outdoors in the sphere of wider society, transitions through a sheet of glass – a State 0 paradigm shift – into The Mind, the space of reflective thought which operates in tandem with The Hand, the space for intuitive production. This mode of thought is dependent upon the rational administrative work that takes place in the Brain, and this in turn is dependent upon the instinctive and domestic activity that takes place in the Body Event. Flat Time House operates as a system, and each of these modes of activity need to be active for the living sculpture to stay alive.

In order for Flat Time House to remain the work Latham intended, it needs to be inhabited and domestic activity needs to take place in the Body Event. Consequently, the space has become a site for residencies, artists living in the house, eating and making artwork in the same spaces as Latham. Administrative work for the institution continues in the Brain, which remains a space for rational thought. It now also houses the John Latham Archive and academics travel from around the world to research the artist's thinking in this

space. However, the institution's primary function is as a site for reflective-intuitive thought. This is demonstrated through an original artistic programme that includes exhibitions, experimental curating, workshops, screenings, publications, event-based performances and educational programming. Flat Time House aims to facilitate new discoveries and research into the fields of experimental art from the 1950s onwards in Britain and beyond, as well as to support the work and thinking of young and emerging artists and curators by creating a safe space in which to experiment.

Until his death, Latham opened his door to anyone interested in thinking about art. It is in this spirit that Flat Time House opened as a space exploring the artist's practice, his theoretical ideas and their continued relevance. Flat Time House aims to make a wider audience aware of Latham's work and ideas, his spirit of discovery, and through his example to understand and appreciate the crucial role of art and the artist in society.

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# ACCESS AND SOCIALIZATION

Open since 2008  
Catherine wanted to find a space  
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Bready - Shurkin & Ben O'Keefe

Influence on Great

Responsibility - Community

- all are common products

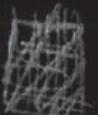
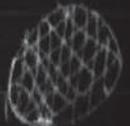
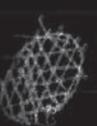
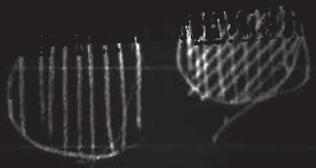
Nature of Concepts not Arbitrary

recreation through use

Physical Material in world but returns aren't

Environment research and re-orientation

Coopman & Myrland 2016



# ARCHIVE AND REUSE

*A PHANTOM TRAVELS THE WORLD AND FRIGHTENS ALL CAPITALIST  
AND SOCIALIST OBJECTS: IT IS THE PHANTOM OF REUSE.*

*EVERY OBJECT, FROM THE MOMENT OF ITS CREATION, MUST BE  
THREATENED WITH REUSE.*

*DIE GUTE FORM IST, DIE, DIE WIEDERBENUTZTWERDENKANN / "GOOD  
FORM" IS ONE THAT CAN BE REUSED.*

ERNESTO OROZA  
Desobediencia Tecnológica

I did not set out to create an archive. It is true that I have systematically collected and documented countless artifacts created to meet basic needs in Cuba during the 1990s. It is true that I have developed categories to defend the value of this production against institutions and individuals who have tried to reduce the discussion to a problem of popular taste or poor design. It is true that the categories that I developed – even from a militant perspective – ended up relating and modifying these artifacts. It is true that I have insisted that they can be read as a whole – as a critique and a techno-political position against both neoliberal capitalism and State capitalism, and its logics of contemporary production and consumption. It is true that, at times, to avoid others calling this assembly of artifacts a mere “collection,” I have used the word “archive” to refer to this group of objects. I did so convinced that the provisional nature of this production would allow me to find another term in the future, or even that it would make it unnecessary to find one. If I have learned anything, it is that this provisional accumulation/provisional archive/provisional collection/provisional series can be patient. I also know that the ideas of which these artifacts are indexes still await me and others, no matter how long it takes to associate them. In any case, all structures, whether physical or conceptual, will be disrupted and reused each time. I hereby clarify what all Cubans know: the provisional is permanent, and in Cuba, what is assumed to be permanent does not last very long. It is also true that, in recent years, like many other people who have become archivists, I decided to use the Internet to disseminate contents and expand the context of interpretation.

I have many questions about the possible archival nature of some processes in my practice. The production I have been interested in has not been easy, neither from ethics nor from practice. Can an object that is part of an archive return to everyday life to respond to an urgent deficiency through its function? Did my mother-in-law have the right to demand the return of some artifacts as soon as the power outages returned or a need re-appeared? Should I have protected the integrity of the supposed archive with my life? Can an archive be consolidated while understanding this intermittency?

If an object is taken from the archive and reinserted into household activities, does it lose its function as a document? Does the archive close its doors on that object, or does that object drag daily life into the archive alongside it? What happens when the object, already registered/archived, is repaired or reused? To what extent does the archive contaminate this new information? How can an archive of everyday objects overcome the *unstoppable* forces of reuse, specifically in a context of economic urgency? Many of the objects created in Cuba since the crisis of the nineties were imagined from the perspective of what is temporary. It is common for people, sometimes because of the shame of having created or possessing them, to refer to these objects as provisional. But even if people had not used the verbal alibi of the provisional to justify their creations, their provisional nature can be confirmed through their composition, the general binding and manufacturing solutions of the devices. We Cubans prefer to believe that the *Special Period*<sup>1</sup> was actually a special period, a passing situation. That is why the parts that make up these substitute objects seem ready to return to their original functions. Imagine a temporary shaving device manufactured by combining a double-edged razor blade and a pencil that serves as a handle. Imagine now that it is disassembled every morning to accompany the shaved young man to his classes.

Why did I become interested in one state and not the other? Why the shaving device and not the independent pencil and blade? What is the difference between my provisional accumulation of provisional objects and the provisional accumulation of things and parts of things that all Cubans undertake while awaiting the next crisis? Let me explain. For years, my mother has kept many things that she believes will be useful to her in the future. An aluminum container for beer, a glass milk container, a torn pocket of a shirt and a piece of wire lie in her dresser, among dozens of things. These same objects and fragments of objects constitute, in my “archive,” a kerosene lamp. It is evident that I decided to pay attention and record only the provisional union, the moment in which these objects or parts were combined in response to a shortage. One of the first terms that I used in the nineties was, precisely, *Declaration of Need*: the object as an unders-

1 *Período Especial en Tiempos de Paz* was the term used by the Cuban government to name the crisis the country faced in 1990.

tanding, as a physical diagram that relates the awareness of the need with the solution to it. “To know is to solve,” José Martí would say.<sup>2</sup>

In order to save the objects in the archive, I would often disassemble them, so that they would occupy less space and because I could then protect the most fragile elements. My shelves are no different from my mother’s dresser drawers. Every time I have to show them, I assemble them, as if the force of the need to socialize the contents corresponded to the need that created them. I could say that the archive only exists when it is displayed. What happens when the presentation of an archive depends on its reworking? What new information filters into the archive when it is mediated by the mood, the memory or the creativity of the archivist?

I conclude this segment with an anecdote about this effort to develop a record of objects in continuous transformation, something like an archive of the vortex. In 2004, Fidel Castro launched an initiative: the so-called *Energy Revolution*. Among other measures, this campaign was based on a program to replace “inefficient appliances” that were collected house by house in order to convert them into scrap metal. In exchange, families acquired – on credit – refrigerators, fans, stoves and water heaters that were supposed to reduce electricity consumption in homes, businesses and factories. In the framework of the *energy revolution*, the appliances considered “inefficient” were especially those vernacular inventions manufactured in response to the crisis. For example, if you had manufactured a fan for yourself using the motor of a Soviet *Aurika* washing machine, you were a perfect candidate to receive a Chinese fan and could pay it on credit (I must clarify that there was no other way to purchase these devices). Government inspectors purged the cities, following a precise program of neighborhood collection. The place where all the vernacular electronic artifacts of the Special Period were deposited was, in my imagination, something like the *El Dorado* of reinvention. I never had access to these places, but I witnessed a new and unexpected creative phenomenon. The people who did not have at home an “energy-devouring monster” – as Fidel called them – to exchange for a Chinese

fan decided to create one at the last moment. Wherever that *El Dorado* of “genuine” Cuban inventions is, it will be plagued with thousands of last-minute improvised artifacts. The inspectors were astonished witnesses of very dangerous electronic experiments, of types of fans only imaginable in dystopian science fiction, of funny and spectacular gadgets whose only function was to entertain and convince the government officials. I saw one of these improvised fans before it was exchanged in 2006. It had been made with the engine of an old cassette player that was spinning at a ridiculous speed and of course did not produce any wind. When the inspector asked “Are you sure this is a fan?,” my friend answered, sweating and very sincerely: “You don’t know what we’ve been through in these years!”

#### Technological Disobedience

My research on the material culture of the Cuban crisis began in 1994, but it was not until 2005 that I came up with the idea of *technological disobedience*. I received an invitation from a group of French political scientists and designers to participate in a field study on three flows present in Cuban homes: food, laundry and communication. A Cuban research group was formed for this project, featuring a historian, a sociologist and myself as a designer. When we entered the homes to study these flows, I once again discovered the processes present in my previous studies: reuse, repair and reinvention associated with primary needs. These practices not only severely impacted the daily activities of the three flows we studied, but they had also diversified. Additionally, I understood that the new study was indirectly financed by the French Ministry of Industries and other founding partners, i.e. important industries. I understood that what we were doing to the Soviet and Korean washing machines (the latter entered the Cuban market in those years), we would also do to French washing machines and to all machines that arrived to the island. *Technological disobedience* arises as a concern related to technological sovereignty and as a criticism of the closed and exclusionary nature of contemporary industrial objects. The term refers to the transgressive nature of a group of creative and productive practices that, parado-

xically, seemed discrete: accumulation, reuse, repair, reinvention, among others. The term “discrete,” previously used as a synonym for moderate or cautious, has other uses in physics, mathematics and topology, where it means separate, divisible, open collections; and this re-reading of the discrete<sup>3</sup> as opposition to what is continuous dissolves the paradox.

Three factors shaped the family production of the island, compared to other vernacular productions of countries such as Brazil or Mexico:

1. When the crisis arrived, Cuba had thousands of graduates in engineering and technical disciplines in all branches of science and technology; this tremendous number was fostered by free access, for more than three decades, to secondary and higher education.
2. Cuba had very standardized products and material means, due to its exchange with Eastern socialist countries and a highly standardized but undiversified industry. Since everyone had the same fans, televisions, washing machines and refrigerators, they all shared technical and practical knowledge that was used to repair and manufacture spare parts for these objects.
3. The crisis affected 99 % of the population. With no distinction of social origin, profession or gender, all individuals were exposed to the same deprivations and limitations.

#### “Worker, Build your Machinery”

“Worker, build your machinery” was the claim that Ernesto Guevara, then Minister of Industries, made to the workers who participated in the first national meeting of replacement parts (1961). The phrase, which seems to encourage breaking away from dependency on the capitalist industry and its distributive logics, invites us to rethink social and productive relations. Guevara asked workers to reinvent themselves in the context of production, to be agents of change in the social machinery. I do not think he was asking these workers to become patent holders (with the capitalist activity that the practice of patents generates), or the kind of engineer

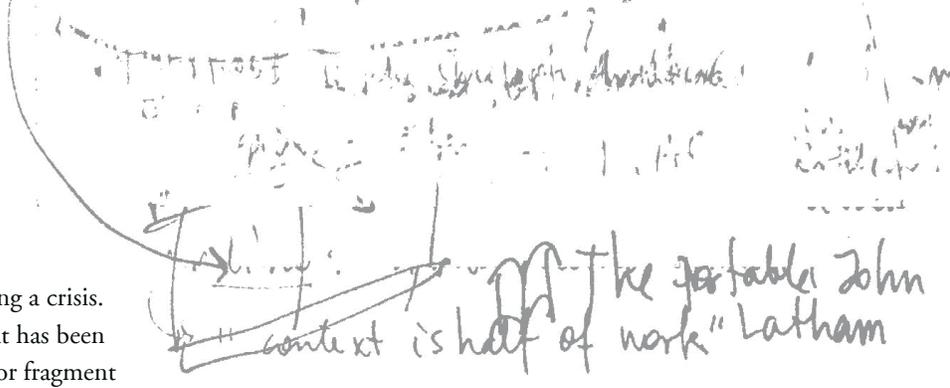
who occupies a hierarchical spot in production and receives a bonus for inventing his own machine. His call was aimed at the collective, to create machines that included both the producer and the user, and he even seems to propose, in Marxist terms, the dissolution of the dichotomy between producer and user. The machinery he was asking for must respond not only to individual needs but also to collective needs. Only two weeks after that meeting, Guevara requested Cuba’s registration in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). It was a tactical move in times of urgency, but it could be interpreted today as a political inconsistency. Unless we believe in the ideological neutrality of the standard. In any case, both events, the phrase spoken to the workers and the integration into a regulated world, had consequences when the economic crisis of the 1990s arrived. Cubans built their own machines to survive the economic inefficiencies and bureaucracy of the same regime that encouraged them to build them. Standardization, achieved especially through Cuba’s participation in the COMECON (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance) and its exchanges with socialist countries, became the main vector for the spread of the creative solutions during the crisis.

#### Accumulation

During the first months of 1970, despair invaded the commercial country’s networks. The workers, who had experienced a revolution for 10 years, saw how a decade of efforts was unable to solve the problems of daily life. In the family context, a preventive behavior emerged that has remained in the organizational cornerstone of the Cuban creative phenomenon: “accumulation.” The lack of confidence in the success of the revolution turned every corner of the house into a warehouse area: each material or object—or fragments of them— became the subject of accumulation. With this simple initial gesture, industrial processes and logics were radically questioned, revisiting them from an artisanal perspective.

To accumulate is to anticipate, to prefigure and to respond to our needs in advance. To accumulate is not to keep things; it is to collect ideas for uses, constructive solutions, techni-

3 I owe this reconsideration of what is discreet to the artist Bachir Soussy Chiadmi.



cal systems and archetypes that will flourish during a crisis. By accumulating, we create a mental map of what has been collected, an echo of the potential of each object or fragment saved. By repairing and reusing, we analyze the industrial object and the industrial culture from an artisanal perspective. Accumulation is not a passive act, it is creative. It is the action that initiates family production in precarious contexts. By accumulating objects or parts of them, because we trust their potential, we bring them together under a new category: object-raw material. By accumulating an object or its parts, the moment of its disposal is postponed, the life cycle assigned by the designer, the industry or the market is ignored. Every object can be reused, even in a context different from that for which it was designed. Accumulating broken artifacts is a manual gesture that pushes “the industrial” towards the popular field of crafts. By accumulating, the hierarchies between an industrial object (a TV, for example) and a stone or a seed are eliminated. When using a branch to reach a fruit, or a book to fix a piece of furniture, the rhetorical values of the object used do not matter. When you need to leave the door open with a stone, only its weight matters.

### Reuse

Reuse is the process by which we take advantage of the attributes – matter, form, function – of a discarded object, to make it work again in its context of use or in a new one. This definition includes the parts of the object and the functions that these parts fulfill in it; therefore, it includes operations such as metamorphosis and re-contextualization. Among the systems of domestic objects, the objects associated with feeding receive the most actions of reuse; specifically, in terms of the packaging and re-packaging of food. When reuse brings objects – or parts of them – together in a new product or solution, then the operation can be considered a reinvention.

Function: when we reuse objects in functions similar to their original one: a street painter that uses water bottles (PET) as containers.

Physical attributes: when we reuse this same type of plastic container, punching some holes in it to use it as a water dispenser in a bathroom or shower. The reuse of an object because of its physical attributes is often part of a repair process.

### Repair

Repair can be defined as the process by which we partially or totally return the characteristics – whether technical, structural, of use, of function or of appearance – to an object that has lost them completely or partially. This practice is the most widespread in the island, and is expressed from the family scale to the State scale.

Since many household appliances in Cuba came from massive standardized productions, repair solutions were normalized, fostering the development of a huge system of spare parts. When things are repaired, a more complex relation with the object is established; this process may even extend beyond its use as such. In a way, it balances our dependence on objects, placing them in a subordinate position with respect to ourselves. In other words, the domain imposed by the object over the user, through its limitations, finds its balance in the forced domination of its technology by the latter. In another sense, when the repair is capital or when its scope includes the reuse of the object, then it generates a new type of authorship: that of the repairman.

This subject ends up being a depository of the technical secrets of the product. Repairs are not always definitive; sometimes they are recognized as palliatives or “make-ups” that allow the product that receives them to appear as new. To repair is somehow to recognize, to restore, and to a certain extent to legitimize the attributes of the objects; that is why it is the most moderate of the forms of *technological disobe-*



invited us to live in darkness. José Luis Cortés, the “Lacan of the Timba,” sensed this when he told Fidel Castro in one of his songs: “Hey Superman!<sup>4</sup> Careful with the stalactites and stalagmites!” It was “El Tosco,” with that line – which could well initiate a forthcoming anthropophagic manifesto – who prefigured the dream of *La Cuevita*<sup>5</sup> as a nation-market.

The main national sector is an economy of local spare parts. The scale, compared to other productions, gives it the presence and rank of an invasive monoculture that takes over both the State stores and the tables of street vendors. At a *Neptuno* showcase, there are 77 types of different parts, some cast in aluminum, others made from brass, many injected in plastic by machines built for this purpose in the rooms, halls and courtyards of many houses in San Miguel del Padrón and other neighborhoods and provinces. The joints of coffee machines, blenders and rice cookers are vulcanized, stamped or turned. There are abundant nickel steel blades, couplings and turntables for the most common blenders: Daitron, Hamilton, Magnum, National, Osterizer, Phillips, Vince. The names of manufacturers are written, more or less as they sound, in bas-relief on the surfaces of these parts. These engraved marks accelerate recognition and sales; this is the didactic of *La Cuevita*. The spare parts cover the entire exhibition area of all windows of all shops in all the municipalities. It is the official decoration of the *inside*, an infinite wallpaper dedicated to the issue of spare parts. This landscape is visited by hundreds of people each day, who carry in their hands broken parts of blenders, washing machines or fans. They walk to the repair shops or to the vendors, confident that, with that part in their hands, they will better identify its replacement. Competing with the suggestive *Cubatón* (Cuban reggaeton) that envelops the city, the no less eschatological proclamations of the vendors demand guts and corpses out loud: “I buy broken blenders and fans! I buy old engines! I buy washing machine chassis!” Hordes of scavengers, with their carts behind them, dig up the mornings of Monaco, Miramar and the inner streets of Lawton with their calls, or *pregones*, as the repair workers wait for them in their workshops.

The old city metabolized the threat of Fidel. The façades of the houses exist only as the plane that projects their internal domestic battles. The façade no longer hides: it reveals. You look at the house and you know that its inhabitants do not love each other anymore, or at least they do not want to run into each other anymore: where there was a door, there are now two. It is easy to know which Ministry – or which key – sustains them. The block, which was a series of façades, is now a series of projection screens. An architecture of the reality show. A window to illuminate the cradle of a newborn emerges at the center of an elaborate Art Nouveau cornice: the windows are designed and perforated from within, the exterior does not exist, it is an old order. A balcony appears one morning and transforms the pattern of the north face of the building that previously consisted of 12 balconies carefully distributed by its architect in 1949. Since everything now is inside, mentioning the architectural object “façade” can betray dissident thinking or mental illness. It is no coincidence that the most efficient State agency in the *inside* is the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>6</sup>

Electrical and hydraulic connections wind along the walls; they are the nervous veins of vampire buildings. Sometimes cables and tubes cross them in unexpected directions, climbing the emptiness in search of support or a place to bury their roots. The city is a mess of guts exposed to the sun, a unique open device, an extensive territory of flesh. Water facilities branch out like 3D graphics of family ties; here, hydraulics is more efficient in offering filial information than the civil registry. Electric, telephone and video lines diagram complex economic transactions. A video wire goes through the windows, crossing city blocks to feed the television set of a neighbor who pays 20 CUC each month to see what you see. The *Intranet* is the maximum technological expression of the inside. Now the term has become fashionable and is used to name both the official way to possibly connect computers in the inside, and a non-legal way to connect inside homes in order to share bootleg movies, chat and access the offline version of *Revolico*; but we know that a water Intranet has always existed, just ask about it in Old Havana, or in Cerro. And another one for phones, and another for beef (that is

4 Phrase from the unpublished song *Superman*, by José Luis Cortés and NG La Banda.

5 *La Cuevita* (San Miguel del Padrón, La Habana) is an informal market often visited by residents of Havana and nearby territories.

6 Nor is it by chance that the name given in slang to the Ministry of the Interior is the apparatus.

why it is called *hilo rojo*, or “red thread”). Intranet are all ways to breathe in the *inside*.

What else do the mechanical insides ooze, besides fat and oil? That is why the entire *inside* is stained. Drains from automobile differentials and pistons, threads of burnt oil run down the seams between the concrete slabs on the sidewalks. Oil is the saliva spit out by the difficult pronunciation of a hybrid, convoluted language. Car mechanics has become a secret cult. In a few decades it will be the dominant religion, although it will be syncretic. Mechanic workers are already saints and guardians of the *inside*. Among themselves, they make fun of *The Matrix*, they call it the “obvious film.” Because of the time they spend lying on their backs under the cars, both gossip and popular humor suggest – because there are also conspiracy theories in the *inside* – that mechanics are the true *reptilians*. The permanent hybridization, the scarcity of resources and other technical fatalities of the *inside* force the mechanic worker to inhabit the code. He is the poet of productivism, the linguist of the echo in the cave, the dialectical mechanic worker, something like a Spinoza in overalls. He is the one who knows and the one who serves. He is the one who understands affection and the one who responds.

The mechanic worker has only one rival in the *inside*: the cannibalistic interior designer, but that’s another story.

### Transparent Object

The disappearance of the Soviet Union stopped bilateral trade, causing a deep economic crisis in the island, called the *Special Period in Times of Peace*. Cuba’s international isolation and internal scarcity was exacerbated by the U.S. embargo.

Commercial networks collapsed. There was no fuel to maintain the public transport system or the electricity grid. All industries slowed down drastically due to the shortage of raw materials and the lack of access to international markets. Cubans watched as their surroundings, from their domestic spaces to their urban environment, quickly deteriorated.

The country’s centralized economy imploded in its inner nucleus: the home. The family became an autonomous economic unit. Workers, musicians, doctors, athletes, everyone had to face the severe shortage of resources with creativity and cooperation.

The *transparent object* is a concept formulated in the early 20th century by Boris Arvatov, a Soviet theorist of productivism. In his critique of the object and the capitalist mode of production, he advocated a *transparent object* that did not hide the tracks of its production. In the absence of a favorable economic context for the production of transparent socialist objects, Arvatov suggested the provisional transformation of capitalist objects, according to the new social demands.

From this perspective, many of the objects produced in Cuba during the crisis can be considered *transparent objects*. They are artifacts that make visible the social relations and collaboration between individuals who are confronted with pressing needs and limited material, technological and intellectual resources. Apparently, useless objects were dismantled for repair, reuse and recycling, and the technical knowledge obtained was socialized among friends and neighbors. In many cases, the reinvented objects were self-explanatory, and their technological production process was easily replicated.

One more time around. A vinyl record rotates like the blade of a repaired Soviet fan. They rotate, the vinyl records and the fan, in a revolving commercial showcase that becomes a productivist tactical showcase that seeks to active the passersby. Another time around...



AN ARCHIVAL  
**SCIENCE**  
FOR ARCHIVES OF  
THE **COMMONS**

PAULINA BRAVO CASTILLO

128 Archiveros sin Fronteras Chile

Some time ago, I wrote a review about the boom of the archive in visual arts, understood as discourse, metaphor, symbol or manifestation of power. My reflection, at that time, sought to give an account of the different notions of the “concept of archive” considered by the arts and the archival discipline, since, according to my professional experience, there was not a mutual understanding between these two. In that review I quoted archivist Terry Cook,<sup>1</sup> who stated that the difference between the notion of archive in the arts and the definition of archive in the archival science has created a major obstacle. Cook therefore raised the imperative need to dialogue, as well as to question the different definitions and applications associated with this concept.

I am convinced that this dialogue, to my joy, exists today, and is already fruitful. In fact, just as an instance of such dialogue, the second seminar devoted to “archives of the commons” at Museo Reina Sofía brought together artists, researchers and archivists to talk about anomic, accessible and especially diverse archives.

In the conversations generated during the seminar’s presentations, one of the participants commented that she felt that over the past 15 years more had been written about archives than in the last three centuries. Certainly, much has been written about the archive in the fields of arts, history, memory studies... and archival theory. It is interesting to consider the latter – I guess, the less popular of these fields – since archival science has changed: we have changed.

Archival science began its journey in the mid-19th century, enunciating then one of its fundamental principles, that marked and delimited its scope of action: the principle of provenance.

Since then, archival science has evolved in both its theoretical and practical dimensions, and in recent decades it has been updated with new paradigms that have left behind the image of the archivist as the guardian of memory linked to the exercise of power.

Currently, post-custodial archival science is situated in what Charlotte Hess proposed to us in the present seminar as a

“galaxy of small archives in a polycentric context.”<sup>2</sup> This results in shifting thoughts in relation to multiple and diverse collective memories, adding new voices until very recently not contemplated in national memories/archives. These voices can compose, as proposed in the call for the first edition of this seminar, “a new framework of social and political imagination that strengthens the democratic character of our societies.”<sup>3</sup> In this view, each archive, then, reflects the actions and functions of persons, communities or entities that produce it, bringing forth a subjective and particular fraction of knowledge. Archives, therefore, act as recipients of multiple collective memories.

In this “galaxy of small archives”, archives created by social, territorial or sexual dissidence as well as LGBTBI movements, among many others (flanks of struggle), have been a fundamental field of work for archival theory and practice in recent years. These archives pose significant challenges, since they aim to work with collaborative approaches, which imply, among other aspects, moving away from the logics of property, opposing the privatization of knowledge (not least in neo-liberal contexts such as the Chilean one) and moving away from the idea of *public* as exclusively State patrimony.

In my talk during the seminar at Museo Reina Sofía, I presented some examples of archives that address these issues:

*Desclasificación Popular* (Popular Declassification), a project developed since 2014 by the visual artist Francisco Papas Fritas and Coordinadora de Santiago de Ex Presas y Presos Políticos del Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (Santiago Coordinator of Former Political Prisoners of the Leftist Revolutionary Movement), breaks the 50-year-old secret norm imposed by the Chilean State on the archives of the Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión

<sup>1</sup> Terry Cook, “Panoramas del pasado: archiveros, historiadores y combates por la memoria”. *Revista Tabula*, no. 13, 2010, pp. 153-166.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, *Los Bienes Comunes del Conocimiento*, Madrid, Traficantes de Sueños, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Presentation of the seminar Archives of the Common I, 2015, Museo Reina Sofía with Fundación de los Comunes and Red Conceptualismos del Sur.

Política y Tortura (National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture). Through this project, witnesses are invited to request their case files from State agencies, in order to make them available on a website. This project also proposes to bring together political, artistic and legal resources in order to achieve a “collective declassification”.<sup>4</sup>

*No más Archivos Secretos* (No More Secret Archives), a project developed by *Londres 38, Espacio de Memorias* (London 38, Memory Space) which seeks to give access to archives held by the armed forces, police and intelligence agencies. These institutions are exempted from the obligation to transfer their records to the National Archives, and are able to remove their records without respecting national regulations on the destruction of archival materials. In addition, they restrict access to their archives, which prevents them from serving the community and violates citizens’ right to access public information, and especially due to the fact that these archives contain information on human rights’ violations in a dictatorial context.<sup>5</sup>

The discussion that arose from this kind of examples highlighted detention about the role of the State as a privileged agent which decides what to remember and what to forget. They also brought into light the difficulties involved in the process of accessing documents, be they secret or declassified, when they contain important information for judicial processes. And the fact that, too often, even though these archives become visible in many different ways (art exhibitions, journalistic investigations, etc.), they actually remain invisible to justice.

Perspectives from civil society claim other memories and bring into play fundamental questions about the access and democratization of archives. By doing so, they also set into question methodological aspects that have emerged in their development.

In relation to the latter point, I would like to underscore two issues that were mentioned in the first edition of this seminar.

The first one was mentioned in more than one of the presentations: the difficulties involved in working with these new

archives by means of traditional archival methodologies and tools. For example: when it comes to describing these archives, the nomenclatures and categories covered by international archival standards often do not help to reflect the content in these archives, so that, in the end, archive professionals end up disregarding the use of such consensual standards from the archival world. Daniel G. Andújar, in his presentation, showed us that there are as many categories as there are world construction systems. Taking this certainty as a fact, we must work together in order to generate new methodologies and tools, developing networks to build and consolidate them over time.

However, we should not underestimate some principles forged from the archival point of view. I think we should start by properly defining our working object in each case: what do we have? An archival fund? A series of publications? An archive with several funds? A bibliographic collection? A series belonging to a fund located elsewhere? The materials that we are working with on a given moment may or may not be an archive. If they are not an archive, it is not a problem: they will continue to be equally valuable, and the relevance of its processing and access will not diminish in any way. But if we can define exactly what we have, we will know where to find the tools to manage it.

The well-known confusions between Archival Science and Library Science should not persist if we manage to correctly identify the object of our study in each occasion. For example: if we work with archival principles, we will always describe a given set of records starting with the most general features, and then moving on to the particular ones. This is an unthinkable issue in a library. This is justified by the need to maintain the link between the fond and the records, to ensure the archive’s integrity. Therefore, the first description that we will aim to make (and sometimes the only one) will always be

<sup>4</sup> <http://desclasificacionpopular.cl/>

<sup>5</sup> *No más Archivos Secretos*, <http://www.londres38.cl/>

<sup>6</sup> For information on archival principles, see *Archival Resources for Professionals and Researchers*. <http://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/areas-cultura/archivos/recursos-profesionales.html>

<sup>7</sup> Peter Horsman, Eric Ketelaar and Theo Thomassen. “New Respect for the Old Order: The Context of the Dutch Manual.” *The American Archivist*, vol. 66, no. 2, 2003, pp. 249-270.

<sup>8</sup> Archivist Andrew Flinn has some important publications on this subject, in particular: Andrew Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28 (2), 2007, pp. 151-176.

general, along the lines proposed by the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD-G), which will guide us in the way to evidence the logic of record's production. This point relates to the fundamental principles proposed by Archival Science: provenance, respect for structure, and respect of the original order. These three principles establish the natural and inseparable relationship of records with their origin of production.<sup>6</sup>

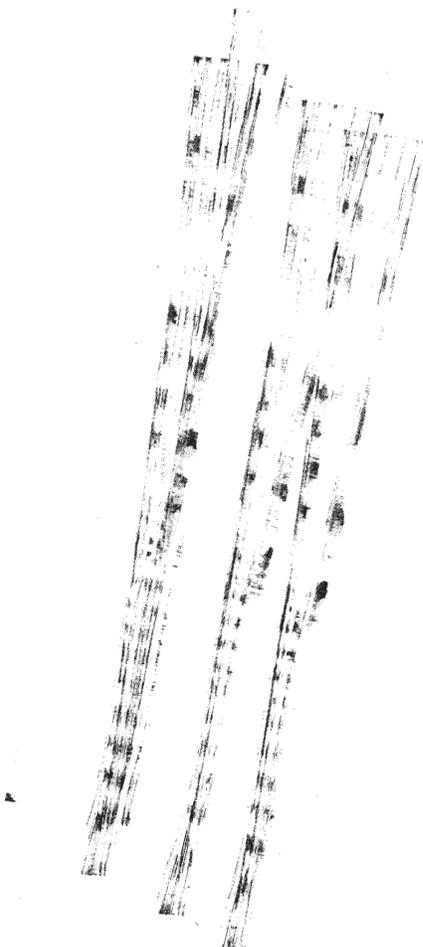
The second issue I would like to point out concerns how Archival Discipline, in harmony with the developed notion of "archives of the commons", highlights the importance of studying the links between the archive's creator (one person, one collective, one institution, etc.) and the documents s/he has produced, focusing on how to preserve the authenticity, reliability and integrity of documents.

In order to do so, we will ask ourselves questions such as: why have these records been produced? For which purpose? What function do they fulfill? What activity do they reflect? These questions are important; they reflect relationships which have been raised by archival theory and practice and been then translated into some working principles, such as not to mix records of two different creators, or to respect the original order that creators gave to records (although the latter is a matter of conceptual rather than literal order).

It is my belief that, when we speak of "archives of the commons", we should take into account the communities that produce those archives. And when doing this we should also be faithful to the archival principles, which have been questioned, redesigned and validated over a long time. Let us remember that, by definition, Archival Science is "the method that allows records to be appraised and used from different perspectives without losing their form, structure and context as an essential framework for their interpretation."<sup>7</sup>

As a conclusion, I would like to leave for future meetings or working groups of Red Conceptualismos del Sur an invitation to strengthen the relationship between archives and their communities,<sup>8</sup> bearing in mind the references already traced

by the archival discipline. I am sure that we will agree that what we keep in our archives is not just documents, but also the community that has produced them, that is, the collective, artist or social movement who proves its existence and political project through its document production.



**WE DON'T WANT  
THIS  
TO TURN INTO  
AN  
"EXHIBIT"**

EVA WEINMAYR

132 **The Piracy Project**

# The Piracy Project

Andrea Francke, Eva Weinmayr

[www.andpublishing.org](http://www.andpublishing.org)

Hello and good morning,

Thanks a lot for coming! I am excited to be here because I have detected many shared questions and concerns which were already addressed by other speakers yesterday. In my presentation for this seminar, I would like to discuss and think through some experiences and concerns that came up in the five years working on and with the Piracy Project. The following observations are not necessarily fully explored. I see this workshop as an opportunity to perhaps disentangle them – jointly with you today.

I have structured this presentation in five parts. First, I will tell you how the project started to give you a bit of context. Then, I will present three cases of book piracy from the collection to give you a rough idea of the range of approaches and piratical tactics used. Third, I will explain how we work with the collection – and how the collection works with us. This will lead to questions around the politics of framing and cataloguing, and how the institutional framework of the various art spaces that hosted the Piracy Project over the last five years affected what can happen – or not.

You see, it is quite a lot to go through. I will only touch on some of the concerns triggered by the project and point out some key questions and dilemmas as a starting point for a more in-depth discussion.

Piracy Project bookshelf, AND Studio, London.



## Piracy as Social Agency

The Piracy Project is a research and publishing project exploring the philosophical, legal, and social implications of book piracy. It questions common-sense assumptions about ownership, authorship, and the implications policy development has had on the current debate around intellectual property.

It was initiated in 2010 by London-based artist Andrea Francke and myself, as part of AND Publishing's research program in London. ([www.andpublishing.org](http://www.andpublishing.org))

First important point: The Piracy Project is not about BitTorrents and online piracy. It is about books: physical books. It is a publishing, exhibition and archive project which explores cultural piracy by building up a collection of physical books from across the world. What all the books have in common is that they have been produced – altered, improved, translated, reprinted, re-circulated – building upon somebody else's work without previous authorization.

So far, the collection consists of roughly 150 books which are catalogued online on the AND Publishing website: [http://andpublishing.org/PublicCatalogue/PCat\\_thumbs.php](http://andpublishing.org/PublicCatalogue/PCat_thumbs.php)

The Piracy Project started as a response to restrictive university policies when, in 2010, the university management



Piracy Workshop, Byam Shaw School of Art Library (Central Saint Martin's), 2011.

announced the closure of Byam Shaw School of Art Library, due to a merger with Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts in London. Students were advised to visit the library on the main campus in the city center instead. In a joint effort, students and staff took over the Byam Shaw Library and turned it, supported by its acting principal, into a self-organized library that remained public – and an intellectually and socially generative space.

It was a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, we (students and staff) were able to take ownership of the library space to experiment with what a library could be – a lively, informal, social, intellectual and political space around books and printed knowledge. On the other hand, we were volunteering for services that should be provided by the university. It felt entirely wrong in the face of the “Big Society” mantra, which was promoted by the Tory government at the time, and which introduced funding cuts for public services (including public libraries) calling for volunteers to sustain these services via unpaid labor.

By taking on collective ownership over the library space and its books, it shifted from being a controlled resource validated by institutional policies (what is worth to go on the shelves and what misses out?) to becoming an assemblage of knowle-



Byam Shaw Reading Room: Join the Coop, poster designed by Åbåke, 2011.

dges with potentially obscure, self-published, and not-institutionally validated materials.

At this time, Andrea had come across Daniel Alarcon’s research on pirate book markets in Peru (*Life Among the Pirates*, Granta Magazine) claiming that some book pirates in Peru are modifying the content of the titles they copy and circulate. That fact triggered our imagination!

The concept of modified books was also a relevant fit with AND Publishing’s interest in the immediacy and accessibility of digital print technologies, and the resulting instability of the book.

This slide shows an Espresso Book Machine, a fully automated print-on-demand device for paperback format. It does everything, from uploading the PDF file to the server to printing and creating the cover, printing the content block, gluing the spine, trimming the edges – to the finished paperback within a few minutes.

The ease and immediacy of production and reproduction that this new digital printing technology provides turn our understanding of a book as a stable and authoritative object upside down.



Espresso Book Machine at the American Book Centre, The Hague.

The name of our publishing activity is **AND**



#### AND publishing announces: The Piracy Lectures

The Piracy Project is an international publishing and exhibition project exploring the philosophical, legal and practical implications of book piracy and creative modes of reproduction. With a series of talks from guest speakers, workshops and an open call for pirated book projects to add to a Piracy Collection we aim to develop a critical and creative platform for issues raised by acts of cultural piracy. After a period of research and production at Byam Shaw School of Art Library in London this unique collection of books will travel to international venues making temporary reading rooms.

The Piracy Project is not about stealing or forgery. It is about creating a platform to innovatively explore the spectrum of copying / re-editing / translating / paraphrasing / imitating / re-organising / manipulating of already existing works. Here creativity and originality sit not in the borrowed material itself, but in the way it is handled.

**James Bridle** is a publisher, writer and artist based in London, UK. He makes things with words, books and the internet; sometimes the results look like businesses, and sometimes they don't. He speaks at conferences worldwide and writes about what he does at [booktwo.org](http://booktwo.org).

**Eleanor Vonne Brown** set up X Marks the Bökship, a London based project space for independent publishers. It is specialising in publishing works by artists and designers, books, journals and discourse. The Bök in Bökship refers to Christian Bök, an experimental poet of the North American Conceptual Writing movement.

**Daniel McClean** is an independent curator, writer, and art-legal adviser. McClean is a solicitor at Finers Stephens Innocent LLP where he specializes in art, media and intellectual property law. McClean writes regularly on art legal matters. He was the commissioning editor of *The Trials of Art*, (2007) and *Dear Images: Art, Copyright and Culture* (2002).

**Maria Fusco** is a Belfast-born writer based in London. Her first collection of short stories *The Mechanical Copula* has just been published by Sternberg Press. She is founder/editor of *The Happy Hypocrite* a semi-annual journal for and about experimental art writing, and Director of Art Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London.

**Bobbie Johnson** is a journalist, writer and trouble-maker who specialises in covering the intersection of technology and society. He has written for a range of outlets from the BBC to Wired, and acts as European editor for technology blog GigaOM. For nearly a decade he was an editor and reporter with the Guardian, based in London and San Francisco.

**Prodromos Tsiavos** is the legal project lead for the Creative Commons-England and Wales and Greece projects, and an associate in Avgerinos Law Firm in Athens. Among other academic engagements he is a research officer at the London School of Economics. He advises the Greek Prime Minister's e-Government Task Force on legal issues of open data and is the Special Secretary for Digital Planning.

**When:** Lectures start at 6.30 pm. **Pirate Labs** run from 3 – 6 pm  
**Where:** Byam Shaw School of Art Library, 2 Elthorne Road, London N19 4AG

Please see our open Call for Contributions for piracy book projects. We will run a Pirate Lab prior to the lectures. Here we offer conceptual and/or practical support to develop your book project. Please drop in to talk to us or use our printing facilities.

The Piracy Project is developed by Andrea Francke, Lynn Harris and Eva Weinmayr.

AND Publishing  
Byam Shaw School of Art  
2 Elthorne Road  
London N19 4AG  
[and.publishing@csm.arts.ac.uk](mailto:and.publishing@csm.arts.ac.uk)  
[www.andpublishing.org](http://www.andpublishing.org)

The assumed authority of the book results partly from industrial-scale printing (since 1900) that allowed for print-runs of many thousand copies. Therefore, one just tends to assume that the copy of a book one is reading is identical to other copies of the same title circulating on the market. With new digital printing technologies and print runs down to one copy, constant rewriting, modifying, and reprinting, i.e., versioning, becomes a viable option. In fact, many artists use this mutable production process as a part of their work and keep changing the content to test the conceptual boundaries of the printed book.

Through an international open call for pirated and copied books, as well as workshops and a series of lectures, we built a structure that allowed us to share our concerns – concerns about the intended closure of the library, the government’s budget cuts for education, and the subsequent monetization of education – while at the same time playfully subverting the dire and frustrating situation.

Our open call received a vivid response, both locally and internationally. The contributions arrived from students and staff, and the wider art college community, as well as from writers, artists, designers, and activists. The submissions we got vary immensely in their strategies and approaches to copying. I will come back to this in a minute.

It is interesting to note that the Piracy Project, in practical terms, differs from the digital library underground, from collaboratively maintained digital text sharing sites and peer-to-peer sharing platforms such as [aaaarg.fail](http://aaaarg.fail) or [memoryof-theworld.org](http://memoryof-theworld.org). Firstly, the Piracy Project engages with physical books. And secondly, our focus is on the approaches and strategies of copying and pirating – in short, the transformations and modifications and, most importantly, the motivations behind these acts.

Sean Dockray, for example, started [aaaarg.fail](http://aaaarg.fail) as a tool to share the texts that the participants in the various *Public School* classes had been reading. Similarly, Marcell Mars counteracts institutional and corporate monopolies when he states: “When everyone is a librarian, the library is everywhere.” Mars invites users of the online archive [memoryof-theworld.org](http://memoryof-theworld.org) to upload their scanned books and make them freely available.

The Piracy Project, by contrast, is dealing with physical books and is bound to a physical space. It studies the approaches and strategies applied by individuals or collectives which – for different reasons – copied, pirated, modified, reproduced, and circulated other’s authors work. These “cases” vary immensely in their motivations and tactics, ranging from (i) creative appropriation and critical rewriting to (ii) political activism



136 *The Piracy Project*, panel discussion at Printed Matter, New York, 2012, with Sergio Muñoz Sarmiento, Joanne McNeil, Anthony Huberman and David Senior.

Neil Chapman, pirate copy of *Proust and Signs*, *The Piracy Project*. Source: Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, London, The Athlone Press, 2000.

and civil disobedience (to circumvent enclosures such as censorship and market monopolies), and (iii) acts of piracy generated by commercial interests.

The Piracy Project can be described as a research project studying the aspirations of these interventions and their clashes with the law. Articulating, sharing and discussing these multifaceted moral and legal questions with the public constitutes a big part of our activity. It happens in the form of seminars, workshops, and lectures that explore ideologies around the concept of originality and authorship, and the protracted politics of intellectual property and copyright. Our job as “archivists” consists of trying to frame, research, and discuss the pirates’ circumstances and their political, social and economic context. As explained before, these books are not necessarily consulted for their content but for their trajectories and strategies – and the broader questions they raise.

### Three Examples

My first example raises questions about the physicality of print. It is a handmade facsimile of Gilles Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs*. This book looks rather authentic, close to the original copy in terms of format, front cover, and weight. If you saw it sitting next to the original book, you would almost not tell the difference. But when you take it out and open its pages, it feels strange!

The maker of this pirate version is London-based artist and writer Neil Chapman. He made a facsimile of his copy of *Proust and Signs*, including even the binding mistakes of the original, which had a few pages upside down. Chapman scanned and printed the entire book on his home inkjet printer, then bound and trimmed the pages, and laminated the cover. His copy has a crafty feel to it; the ink soaks into the paper, creating a slightly blurry text – very different to an offset-printed or laser-printed type with sharp edges. When you open the pages expecting a mass-produced book, you are surprised by its DIY appearance. This book speaks the language of amateurism, makeshift, self-made: “Not as good as the mass-printed version.”



Anonymous pirate copy (Peru) of *No se lo digas a nadie*, The Piracy Project. Source: Jaime Bayly, *No se lo digas a nadie*, Madrid, Punto de lectura, 1994.

This material transformation is very subtle, and it is this subtlety that makes the book subversive. How do students – expecting authoritative knowledge in the library – respond to the encounter with a book that was printed and assembled by hand? This book has circumvented institutional authorization, including all the levels of implicit validation: the author, the publisher, the chain of distribution, i.e., the book trade, and the acquisition librarian purchasing and cataloguing the book according to the standard library catalogue.

There are lots of steps of institutional validation a book must travel through to enter institutional library holdings. Of course, more unconventional stuff is being collected as well. Still, these are often more arty objects: flimsy, oversized or undersized, and frequently ending up in special collections – kind of locked away in treasure cabinets. They are framed and categorized as “different” from the main stacks of the collections.

Jaime Bayly’s *No se lo digas a nadie* (Don’t tell anyone) Andrea found when visiting pirate book markets in Lima, Peru is my second example. This book may look pirated to the trained eye, but it could easily pass as the original if you were not looking for differences. However, this pirate copy has two extra



chapters. In this book, somebody has infiltrated the official author's voice, a fact which becomes even more puzzling when one realizes that this is an autobiographical novel. Did somebody invent two chapters of somebody else's life? What are the motivations for such an action? It entails no cultural capital – the pirate author remains anonymous – nor financial gain.

Pirate books in Peru are sold in small markets, bookshops, or by street vendors at traffic crossings. Andrea did buy several books and compared them with their originals page by page, while she was hunting to find modified books. Asking the vendors for help didn't work. They were often quite offended by the insinuation that they were selling altered books. Buyers don't want to read a chapter by an anonymous author when buying Mario Vargas Llosa. Andrea's friends in Peru seemed extremely surprised to see this altered book. How many modified books have they been reading over the years?

My third example is from a copy shop in Istanbul. During a residency at SALT, Istanbul, I was taken to a copy shop holding over 3,000 pirate copies of academic titles – each book sewn-bound with a monochrome cover the title printed in black and white. My guide swiftly singled out one book in the crammed shelves: Routledge's reader *Feminism/Postmodernism, Thinking Gender*, edited by Linda J. Nicholson. It was my guide who had brought this title to the copy shop, many years ago, to get copies for all members in her study group at the university. The copy shop scanned the book, printed the ordered copies for my guide, and archived the

scan for future orders. That, I would claim, is print-on-demand in the proper sense.

This copy shop is a crucial resource for the Istanbul-based academic community (hardly any student could afford to buy the original title at its exorbitant cost) and operates under the radar of the authorities. Discussing it in the framework of artistic research, an exhibition, revealing name or location could have potentially severe consequences for such disobedient, but crucial practices. Historically, Turkey used to have very lax copyright enforcement, resulting in a thriving fake brand fashion industry. Since Turkey signed the Berne Convention and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), it has become relatively unpredictable to foresee which kind of "infringements" are tolerated, and which ones are not.

#### The Piracy Project – Why and How?

Now that you have a bit of an idea about the range of books in the collection, I would like to think about what it means to create such an archive.

First, the reasons: why do you start something? Because you feel there is a need for it to come into existence – and that often involves outlaw and underground activities. The point is: the power relations will be different if you do not ask for permission. Power relations keep reproducing themselves in a permission culture.



*A Day at the Courtroom*, The Showroom London, June 15, 2013. With Lionel Bently, Professor of Intellectual Property at the University of Cambridge; Sergio Muñoz Sarmiento, Art and Law, New York; and Prodrimos Tsiavos, Creative Commons, England, Wales and Greece.



*A Day at the Courtroom*, The Showroom London, June 15, 2013. Courtroom drawing by Thandiwe Stephanie Johnstone.

From the very beginning, when we were the art school library, we organized public events, debates, workshops and lectures around a set of questions. Is there something like moral piracy and immoral piracy? What anxieties are being generated by a project called “Piracy Project” in the current cultural climate of polarization between copyright and open culture advocates?

All that was, of course, also an intervention into institutional politics. By inviting people to copy and pirate books, we debated and challenged the “good practice” policies of the neoliberal university that openly promotes the idea of cultural creation as “property.”

Our call for submissions was also an attempt to test one’s moral boundaries. To find out, negotiate and make your own decisions where you stand, and whether your operations are ethically okay.

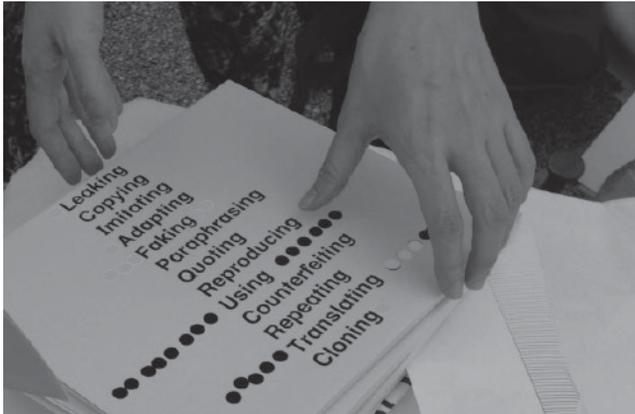
The law tries to draw boundaries where one work ends, and another begins. But these concepts are based on the premise that “original” works exist. An “original contribution” is the

prerequisite for claiming authorship and subsequent property rights – in the logic of copyright law.

To define originality in a derivative work, for example, has been the task of many court cases. And because copyright is case law, verdicts are informed by many different factors. This messiness and blurriness of the legal framework can create a climate of anxiety and subsequent self-censorship: you don’t do stuff because you don’t know whether it might be interpreted as copyright infringement.

During the Piracy Project’s one-year residency at The Showroom in London, we organized a performative debate called *A Day at the Courtroom*. We invited three copyright lawyers from different cultural and legal backgrounds to assess selected cases from the Piracy Project. The lawyers represented American, Continental European, and UK jurisdiction.

The audience operated as a jury in this “trial” and spoke the final verdict after listening to each lawyer’s legal assessment. Important: we dropped the “infringing – non-infringing” binary and asked the audience to decide where exactly to



Book launch of *Borrowing, Poaching, Plagiarising, Pirating, Stealing, Gleaning, Referencing, Leaking, Copying, Imitating, Adapting, Faking, Paraphrasing, Quoting, Reproducing, Using, Counterfeiting, Repeating, Translating, Cloning*, New York Art Book Fair, MoMA PS1, 2014.

place the case on a scale of color shades from red (illegal) to blue (legal).

The lawyers' discussion made it very clear that there are substantial differences in the respective jurisdictions. For example, one case would be regarded as fair use exception in Europe, but not in the United States. Many efforts went into discussing the threshold of "originality" and the law's criteria of defining "authorship."

These events help us to collectively unpack the contested complexities with the concept of intellectual property. However, they also made us realize that the language of "intellectual property" used in policy debates has become so ubiquitous that it just pervades our thinking and working, not least our social relationships.

We have published the transcript of *A Day at the Courtroom* in a book. The long title – *Borrowing, Poaching, Plagiarising, Pirating, Stealing, Gleaning, Referencing, Leaking, Copying, Imitating, Adapting, Faking, Paraphrasing, Quoting, Reproducing, Using, Counterfeiting, Repeating, Translating, Cloning* – points to a set of terms that have become relevant while

working on the Piracy Project. We chose 23 terms and set up a funding campaign. Anyone could become a patron of a chapter in the book and help commission an essay to explore these terms from different perspectives and fields of knowledge. The introduction reads:

"This book is not finished. In this version, alongside the already written and published essays, you can meet some prospective authors whose pieces will be included in the next version. In other words, this book is a platform that creates conversations: essays in one version may be rewritten in a later one, or passages may disappear entirely as discoveries, new possibilities and ideas arise – or as the landscape, we are exploring might simply shift beneath our feet."

### Naming and Framing

When we set up a reading room that is open to the public the books need to communicate on their own without us present. For each book in the collection, we have written a "library card." This card functions partly as an index catalogue (which is searchable online), but it also describes every book's genesis. It names the source, the material properties of the pirate copy, what strategy has been used, who the pirate is, how it got into the collection. Basically, it works as an entry point to the book.

*The Piracy Project* at the New York Art Book Fair, MoMA PS1, 2011.





Putting the Piracy Collection on the Shelves, cataloguing workshop with Karen Di Franco, Grand Union, Birmingham, January 25, 2014.

During the New York Art Book Fair, a librarian from Pratt Institute passed by our reading room every single day because she was so fixated on the questions the books raise concerning normative cataloguing practices and bibliographic standards. Take Jaime Bayly's *No se lo digas a nadie*, for example – who would be named as the author? How would you do justice to the protracted multiple authorships in this work when filling in the categories in the catalogue record?

The issue is that those standard modes of classification are based on a controlled vocabulary. The most widespread standard classification systems (Dewey Decimal, Library of Congress) claim to be universal and neutral so that each object can find its place within its structure. However, we know that the organization and framing of knowledge are not impartial and determine, to a degree, whether the material can be found and how it is being read.

To dig deeper into these questions related to ways of framing the cases in our collection, we organized a workshop at Grand Union in Birmingham. Archivist Karen Di Franco helped us to collectively develop an alternative vocabulary by thinking through how selected cases operate. A set of useful new terms came up: “unauthorized”, “impersonated”, “hijacked”, “invisible/ghost”, “altruistic”, “esoteric”, “accidental”, “communal”.

For the temporary reading room installed at Kunstverein Munich, we looked for classification criteria to organize the books in the space. Parallel to the reading room, we also run a two-week workshop which included visits to independent publishers, bookshops, archives and a copy shop in Munich, all of which operated off the mainstream and developed alternative ways of distribution. Correspondingly, we organized the displayed books in The Piracy Project Reading Room according to their modes of distribution:

- White Market
- Grey Market
- Black Market
- Archive as Distribution
- Print on Demand

The “**White Market**” encompasses all legal and authorized distribution through traditional channels. The books in this selection have been produced through publishing houses, have ISBNs and are printed in higher quantities that allow for commercial distribution.

The “**Grey Market**” includes publications produced in an edition higher than the one that circulates through specific, unofficial networks. In this section, we have fanzines and artists’ books that are sold only at specialized shops.

The “**Black Market**” encompasses distribution through illegal and non-authorized commercial channels. The books in this section were purchased at pirate markets and copy shops.

The books in the selection “**Archive as Distribution**” are examples of pirated books that are produced for archival reasons. They are out of circulation and were sent to us in order to remain accessible. Here we also gather books that are one-offs, produced specifically for The Piracy Project in response to our open call.

“**Print on Demand**” points to a new type of market. It produces books, with professional finishing and ISBN, in potentially unlimited quantities that can circulate in mainstream commercial distribution channels. A book produced



by lulu.com, for example, will be a one-off until a second copy is purchased. Only then the second copy will be printed and shipped. Distribution triggers production; it defines the market dynamically. “Print on Demand” allows books to oscillate between grey and white market zones seamlessly.

These experiments in organizing the collection were exciting because they showed the power of naming and framing. Depending on the organizing criteria, the collection can be explored in many different ways. And because there are many questions to be asked, we keep changing the classification criteria when we display the books for the public. Each time, the collection appears in a new light holding different questions and answers. Thus, the catalogue itself turns into a meaning-making structure.

We don’t want this to turn into an “exhibit”

In my final point, I would like to reflect on “touring” the collection to a range of cultural institutions and contexts, after the art college library was eventually shut down.

During the first two years, this project was embedded in the daily practice of an art college community. It drew inspira-

tion from people regularly popping in, joining the workshops or coming to the lectures. Many random chats and encounters took place in the corridors, in the yard or café, which contributed immensely to the project – indirectly and socially – just through daily presence.

When the library was eventually closed (and converted to offices), we moved the pirated books to The Showroom in London. This public-funded art space intends to stretch the boundaries of traditional gallery work by focusing on collaborative and process-driven approaches as well as building relationships with local groups in its neighborhood. This one-year residency at the

Showroom allowed us to conceptualize a new set of events, apply for funding and get to know the new situation. AND Publishing also ran the evening class *Working in the Edges* over a couple of months. This self-publishing course helped to connect to and develop publishing practices and discourse in the Showroom community.

However, once we progressed and were invited by several art institutions to set up temporary reading rooms, things got a bit muddled. The institutional framework of an exhibition seemed to turn the Piracy Project reading rooms – meant as a starting point for collaboration and exchange – more and more into mere exhibits.

Of course, it takes much more effort to create a meaningful or nuanced conversation when, on each new occasion, discourse needs to be built from scratch. That, inevitably, led us to repeat ourselves and deliver the narrative over and over again. In these circumstances, it is hard to build upon what we already developed, and to grow with each encounter as we hoped. Sometimes the traditional exhibition time frame is simply too short. (Or we are too exhausted to pull off a well-organized event in each new context in quick succession).

Exciting and thought-provoking as the books in the Piracy Project are, they are at risk to be seen and treated as curiosities, rather than serving as a starting point for a debate. It is not as black and white as it sounds here, but I would like to bring up this dilemma for our discussion.

When you see these books exhibited on the wall, like in this picture, you might also want to ask whether it is doing justice to the books to take them out of circulation and frame them as specific objects? Ultimately, the two anonymous chapters in the pirate copy of Jaime Bayly's *No se lo digas a nadie* only really work when circulated in secrecy. Once revealed and pointed at, they lose their explosive power.

I guess this is a rather provoking question. Maybe I'll end here, and we'll take it from there.



Piracy Project Reading Room in the exhibition *Resource*, The Bluecoat Liverpool, July 18 –September 27, 2015.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## **Daniel G. Andújar**

Artist, activist and historical member of irational.org (international benchmark of online art). Founder of Technologies to the People (TTTP), a non-profit organization whose objective is to facilitate the access of the most disadvantaged to the information society. In 2015, he held a retrospective exhibition at Museo Reina Sofía.

## **Philippe Artières**

Historian, curator, researcher of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS, París) and president of the Michel Foucault Center. He has oriented his research towards what he calls "ordinary forms of writing" of the 19th and 20th centuries, working with medical, police, personal diaries, etc.

## **Mela Dávila Freire**

Has been responsible for research and advise on art archives, artist's publishing, biographical collections and other related areas. At the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) she was responsible of the Publishing Department and became the first director of the Center of Studies and Documentation. Recently, she has been the director of Public Activities at the Museo Reina Sofía.

## **Alessandro Ludovico**

Artist, media specialist and chief editor, since 1993, of *Neural Magazine*, specialized in cultural criticism of the digital environment and media art. He is one of the founders of Mag.Net, an organization of electronic publishers in the cultural field.

## **Red Conceptualismos del Sur (RedCSur)**

Research, discussion and collective position network from Latin America, founded in 2007 and constituted by researchers, curators, artists and other specialists. Archives of contemporary art and political practices have been one of the RedCSur network's main focuses.

**Archiveros sin Fronteras (Chile)**

Independent, non-profit organization formed by volunteers who promote the evaluation of archives, underline their importance and support their public conservation, as well as access policies based on a reflexive and critical perspective.

**Archivo Desobediencia Tecnológica (Florida, US)**

Project of the Cuban designer Ernesto Oroza, devoted to archiving hundreds of objects of domestic invention that systematically resist standard protocols of use and classification.

**Archivo del Grupo Arte de Vanguardia (Rosario and Buenos Aires, Argentina)**

Archive of historical documentation relating to Argentinian Grupo Arte de Vanguardia. In early 1968, this artist collective carried out several actions aimed at denouncing the distance between artistic and political practice through art – and specifically through the exhibition *Tucumán Arde*.

**Artpool Art Research Center (Budapest, Hungary)**

Artists' initiative created in 1979 with the goal of gathering information about Hungarian artists and connecting them to the international cultural scene, as well as documenting the avant-garde movements of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Hungary.

**Center for Curating the Archive (Cape Town, South Africa)**

Dependent on the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Cape Town, the CCA works with different types of collections, developing curatorial and creative profile tasks including exhibition projects, publications and academic courses.

**Flat Time House (London, UK)**

In 2003 the artist John Latham (1921-2006) declared his home and his studio "living sculptures", giving them the name of Flat Time House, and making them available to those who wanted to think about art. In 2008 the space opened as a gallery with a program which includes exhibitions, activities and residences.

**Fundación YAXS (Guatemala City, Guatemala)**

Private, non-profit initiative that focuses on research and training in contemporary art in Guatemala, with the intention of promoting and disseminating artistic practices that articulate experimentation, creative processes and the activation of new audiences.

**Interference Archive (Brooklyn, New York)**

Archive founded in 2011 with the mission of exploring the relationships between cultural production and social movements. Its activity includes a documentation archive, a publication series, a study center and diverse public activities.

**La Neomudéjar (Madrid, Spain)**

Independent entity which opened in 2013 as a self-managed exhibition and artistic residence space. It has launched the Video Art Research and Documentation Center (Centro de Investigación y Documentación del Videoarte – CIDV) and the Cuir Transfeminist Archive.

**Los Angeles Contemporary Archive – LACA (Los Angeles, California)**

Archive and library managed by artists and specialized in contemporary creative processes. It focuses on the study and dissemination of materials that document the artistic production of the present, through a practice that challenges the established concepts of archive and artistic space.

**Piracy Project (London, UK)**

International publishing and exhibition project which explores the philosophical, legal and practical implications of editorial piracy, as well as the most innovative forms of reproduction. It has gathered a collection of more than 150 books which have been copied, modified or appropriated, coming from all over the world.

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*Archives of the Commons II The Anomic Archive*

This publication constitutes an editorial epilogue to the international seminar *Archives of the Commons II The Anomic Archive*, which took place in Madrid from September 28 to September 30, 2017 and was organized by Museo Reina Sofía and Red Conceptualismos del Sur. The seminar and this publication were supported by the Foundation for Arts Initiatives – FfAI.

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la gestión de los bienes  
etc. cómo compartir



Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia

Rosario, Argentina

Graciela Casanovi

(Francisco Sade)

Los Angeles Contemporary Art

INTERFERENCE  
A ZEPHYRUS

N.M.O.S. by

LACA

Archivo Desobediencia Tecnológica

In the past few years, we have seen emerging alternative and autonomous experiences of archive management and production that move away from the legitimized principles and regulations to explore the **possibilities of the common**. If what is common implies to **leave the logic of property**, if it implies to work against the privatization of knowledge and to abandon the consideration of what is public as exclusive patrimony of the State, the challenge is to find **collaborative ways of production**, distribution and circulation of knowledge. The experiences tackled in this book multiply the ways of conceiving and facilitating access to different types of documentary collections, so as to favor the plural becoming of history and its different writing and re-writing, elaborating and re-elaborating, in a continuous movement, that what we can call **common**.